

How We Are Governed



How We Are Governed

Margo Delaney C.H.F.

This material is a part of a series developed in request for follow-up Units to the original Active Citizenship/Voter Education Programme.

The other Units in the series are:

Your Community Your Role, Working for the Public Good - *Mary Connaire D.C.*

Working for Policy Change at Local Level - *Bernadette Mac Mahon D.C.*

The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice with gratitude acknowledges the part funding for this project received from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice wishes to acknowledge the generous permission of NETWORK, Washington DC to adapt their material for use in the Irish situation.

Prepared for printing by Mary Murphy

Illustrations by Helen Mac Mahon

Printed by Genprint (Ireland) Ltd.

Copyright The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice 2006

How We Are Governed

What is Explored in this Unit

- **Foundations of Our Government**
- **The Oireachtas**
- **Seanad Éireann**
- **Dail Eireann**
- **The Democratic Link**
- **Local Government**
- **The European Union**

How We Are Governed

Learning Tasks

Task 1: The Foundations of Our Government

Task 2: Key Roles in The Oireachtas

Task 3: Seanad Éireann

Task 4: Dail Eireann

Task 5: The Democratic Link

Task 6: Local Government

Task 7: The Need for Local Government

Task 8: The Need for Local Councillors

Task 9: The When and How of Local Government Elections

Task 10: The Beginning and Growth of the European Union

Task 11: How the European Union is Governed

Task 12: Feedback

Learning Task 1 – Chart 1

The Foundations of Government

- 1A Identify** the four pictures you see on the worksheet.
Work in pairs
- 1B Listen** to the presentation.
- 1C Agree** in pairs on four key words from the presentation. Give reasons for your choice.

We'll hear all.

Note for facilitators:

The aim of the learning task is to clarify with the group the basic elements in our governmental structures, and the foundations on which our democracy rests.

Learning Task 1A

- Distribute - **Worksheet 1**
- Invite the participants in pairs to identify each of the four pictures by writing their name underneath. Allow 5 minutes for task
- Gather back into large groups and affirm the work done by each pair.
- Thank the group for the work done, pointing out that they will identify the correct answers in Learning Task 1B

Learning Task 1B

- This task depends on input to complete the identification of the core elements that make up our Government structures.
- Present the material below.

Input:

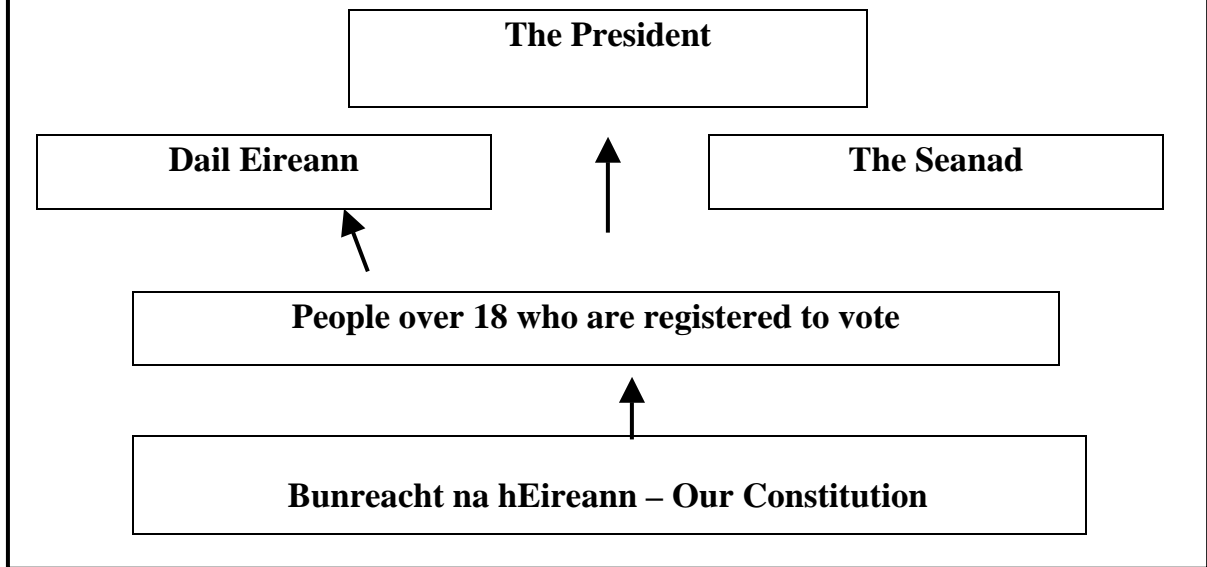
- *“The word democracy comes from two Greek words “demos” = people, “Kratia” = to rule”, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States in 1863 said that democracy is “Government of the people, by the people for the people”, So we - you and I – are the basis of democracy. It is our Constitution that gives us this right.*
- Now we look at the 4 pictures,

Picture A is our present Constitution, called ”Bunreacht na hEireann”. The Constitution was adapted by the people in 1937. It sets out the type of Government we have, which is organised like this: refer to Learning Task 1 – Chart 2.



Learning Task 1 – Chart 2

The Oireachtas



“You can see that people who vote are the foundation stone of the Government. It is they who elect the President and the members of the Dáil”.

Picture B is the Ballot Box.



Picture C is Government Buildings where the Dáil and Seanad sit.

Picture D is Áras an Uachtaráin where the President of the country lives. These two pictures – Áras an Uachtaráin and Government Buildings represent the way our system of Government is organised. This is called the Oireachtas.



Learning Task 1C:

- In pairs invite participants to name the 4 key words that they consider most important in the presentation and why.
- We hear all.

Learning Task 2 – Chart 1 Key Roles in the Oireachtas

2A Complete the worksheet “Who Am I?”

2B Listen to the presentation.

2C Complete in pairs: “The President’s key power in keeping Ireland’s Government democratic is -----”

We’ll hear all.

Note for facilitators:

The aim of the worksheet, “Who Am I?” is to begin to introduce the various roles of key members of the Oireachtas. It is not intended to be more than an introduction.

Learning Task 2A: “Who am I?”

- Distribute **Worksheet 2** and invite participants to work in pairs.
- Allow 5-7 minutes and then gather back into the large group
- Listen to responses, affirming the work done.

Learning Task 2B

The first person named is The President of Ireland or Uachtaran na hÉireann.

What do we know about the President from this handout?

- Elected for 7 years. Can be elected for a second term. Who was recently elected for a second term of 7 years?
- Is known as the first citizen.
- Represents Ireland abroad.
- Has to be over 35 years on first election.

What does the President do? Review Learning Task 2B - Chart 2: The President’s role

Learning Task 2 - Chart 2

The President's Role

- Sign bills into law.
- Represent Ireland abroad.
- Be Supreme Commander of the Defence Forces.
- Refer a bill to the Supreme Court
- Refer a bill to the People
- Set a limit to the Seanad's discussion on a bill
- Appoint a Committee of Privileges
- Dissolve the Dáil
- Call a Meeting of the Oireachtas
- Address the Oireachtas/ or Nation.

Learning Task 2C

- To deepen the learning in this presentation invite participants, in pairs, to consider the question: "*The President's key power in keeping Ireland's Government democratic is -----*".
- Allow 5 minutes for this task.
- Hear all responses comparing them with Chart 2.

Conclude the task asking - "*Are there any other questions about the President and the role of the President?*"

Learning Task 3 - Chart 1

Seanad Eireann – The Senate

- 3A** **Imagine** that you have been elected as a Senator.
Introduce yourself to the group and describe three of your duties as a Senator.
- 3B** **Listen** to the presentation.
- 3C** **Complete the sentence:** “*The most important task of a Senator is -----, because -----*”.

We’ll hear all.

Note for facilitators:

The aim of this task is to clarify the Seanad’s place as the upper house of the Oireachtas and to highlight the key functions of a Senators’ role.

Learning Task 3A

- Invite participants to work in pairs to imagine themselves as an elected Senator and to identify three things a Senator must do as a member of the Seanad. Remind the group to refer to the worksheet “*Who Am I?*” in this task.
- Distribute Post-Its, inviting participants to use a post-it for each fact.
- Allow 5-7 minutes for the task; then gather into large group and hear all, affirming the work done.

Learning Task 3B

The purpose of the presentation is to give some key facts on the role of the Senator and how s/he is elected to the Seanad.

Input

Refer to Learning Task 3 – Chart 2 as a guide. Explain as follows:

- A Senator is elected to the Seanad, one of the two houses of Parliament.
- The Senator’s main job is to:
 - Review laws sent by the Dáil
 - Sit on Joint Committees with TDs
 - Help people who need advice about Government

The Constitution limits the power of the Seanad

- It cannot bring in any money bills.
- It cannot change any money bills.

Learning Task 3 - Chart 2

The Senate



There are 60 Senators elected to Seanad

11 - Taoiseach's Nominees

43 - Elected on 5 panels to represent special interest, e.g. agriculture, education, etc.

6 - Elected by graduates of 2 Universities.

Learning Task 3C

- Complete the sentence, "The most important task of a Senator is -----, because _____."
- Allow 3 minutes for Task.
- Gather into large group, hear all. Affirm work done.
- Conclude Task by pointing out that the main purpose of Senators work in the Seanad is to hold the Dáil accountable, especially regarding laws.

Learning Task 4 - Chart 1

Dáil Eireann

4A Identify key figures in the Dáil Chamber.

4B Listen to the presentation.

4C Identify Government Departments.

We'll hear all.

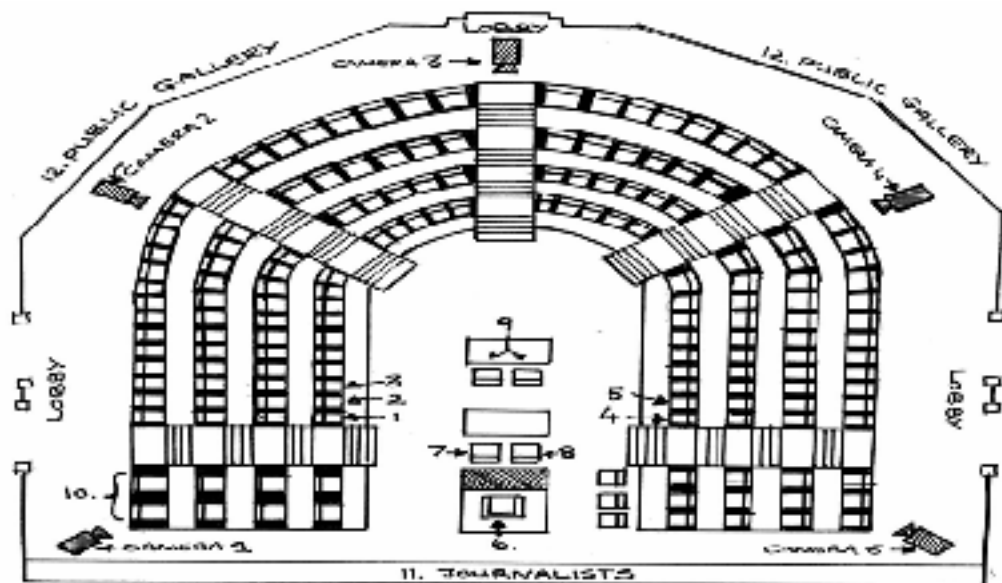
Note for facilitators:

The purpose of this task is to explore the identities, position and responsibilities of TDs in the Dáil.

Learning Task 4A

- Distribute **Worksheet 3**. Invite participants, in pairs, to identify any roles from the 10 marked out. For example, No. 4 = Leader of Opposition.
- Remind the group that the Dáil proceedings are on TV and their memory of seeing these will help them complete the task.
- Allow 5 minutes for completion. Affirm the work done.
- Compare responses with Learning Task 4 - Chart 2: Dáil Chamber

Learning Task 4 - Chart 2 - The Dail Chamber



1. Taoiseach
2. Tanáiste
3. Minister for Finance
4. Leader of the Opposition

5. Deputy Leader of the Opposition
6. Céann Comhairle
7. and 8. Clerk and Assistant
9. Stenographers
10. VIP Gallery

- Remind the group that when 2 parties form a Government, it is known as a Coalition Government.

Learning Task 4B

The aim of this task is to clarify the group's understanding of the Government in power.

Introduce:

- There are 166 TDs in the Dáil.
- Warm up: If a party needs a majority to form the Government in Parliament (50% +1), how many TDs must a party have elected to go into Government?
- The Government in power is made up of the Cabinet, Ministers and Backbenchers. The Cabinet must have at least 7 and not more than 15 members. It must include the Tánaiste and the Taoiseach and the Minister for Finance.
- The Taoiseach is leader of the Government. S/he chairs the Cabinet meetings. S/he decides the time for a General Election, meets with leaders from other countries and selects 11 of the 60 Senators in the Seanad.
- The Tánaiste is like the vice captain of the team. S/he takes the place of the Taoiseach when s/he is absent.
- The Ministers are the leaders of the Government Departments.
- The Main Business of Government:
 - Care/Management of Public Finances
 - Administration of Departments
 - Legislation in economic, financial and social areas.
- Invite the participants to ask any questions arising

Learning Task 4C: Identifying Government Departments

- The aim of this task is to aid the group's knowledge of the Departments in Government.
- Distribute **Worksheet 4A: The Departments** and **Worksheet 4B: The Match Up Sheet**. Invite participants to match the pictures with the Departments, (see example A). Review work done
- Conclude with the Questions "Which Department do you consider most important in your community?"
- Allow 5 – 7 minutes for task. Hear all and affirm the work done.

Learning Task 5

The Democratic Link

5A Enjoy “A Day in the Life ----“.

5B Explore how a TD’s work improves the life/area of those who elect her/him

5C Listen to the presentation.

5D Which is the most important – **looking** at the Committee system

5D “How did that law come to be?”

We’ll hear all.

Note for facilitators:

The purpose of this task is to focus on the link between the TD and the people who elect him/her.

Learning Task 5A

- Distribute the **Worksheet 5** “A Day in the Life of a TD”. If appropriate involve the group in reading the account
- Conclude: *What one word best describes your reaction to that description?*

Learning Task 5B

- Keeping the account of a TD’s day in mind, invite the group to complete in pairs: “Two ways in which a TD helps improve the life of our area are”
- Allow 5 -7 minutes to complete. Hear all

Learning Task 5C

Using the group’s responses as the foundation, present input as follows:

- TDs represent all of the electorate in their own Constituency. Each TD provides the democratic link between the people and the Government. The TD’s main role is to pass laws and decide on policies that affect the lives of the people. For example after the Budget, TDs must vote on the Finance Bill which gives approval for any changes made by the Budget, such as increases in social welfare. TDs also have representative functions. They may represent the Government on various committees such as the V.E.C. Boards. A TD can make submissions on behalf of constituents to Ministers, Government Departments, etc.
- Very often the TD sets aside a special time and place to hear the concerns of her/his constituents. These are called ‘clinics’ or ‘advice centres’. For example, a family may need help for a child in need of special assistance. They can visit the clinic and bring this matter to the attention of the local TD who can then use Dail procedures to have this item raised on the floor of the Dáil.

Dáil Procedures

Question Time: Every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, Dáil Éireann sets aside a period of time commencing at 2.30 pm for Question Time. During this time a TD may ask questions of the Government on matters for which they are responsible. This is one of the most important procedures which TDs use to make the Government accountable to Dáil Éireann and through it, to the people. Questions must be prepared in advance and given to the Taoiseach or the Minister who is responsible for answering questions on any given day.

Sometimes, TDs will want to ask a question on a matter of great public importance which has come up suddenly. The Ceann Comhairle can accept such a question at very short notice. A question that comes up in an urgent way like this is known as a Private Notice Question and is taken at the end of Question Time.

Adjournment Debates

Another means of raising an issue is through a procedure called Adjournment Debates. At the end of each Dáil session, the Ceann Comhairle allows 4 members to raise matters of national or local concern. This is the Adjournment Debate

The Chief Whip must decide the order of business and make sure the Dáil gets through all the work it has to do.

Learning Task 5D

- The Government does much of its work through committees. There are two kinds of Committees – Special and Select.
- An example of a special committee is the Committee of Public Accounts. This is responsible for examining and reporting on the work of the Comptroller and Auditor General on how Government Departments spend their allotted income.
- A Select Committee has the power to take oral and written evidence and to seek any documents it requires.

The Select Committees are:

- Select Committee on Social Affairs.
 - Select Committee on Legislation and Security.
 - Select Committee on Enterprise and Economic Strategy.
 - Select Committee on Finance and General Affairs.
- The Joint Committees of both the Dáil and the Seanad are being used more and more to do Government business on issues of public concern.
 - Ask participants in pairs to identify which committee is most important to make sure that Ireland is a country where all people are treated fairly. Give reasons for their choice.
 - Allow 5-7 minutes for work. Hear all and affirm the work done.
 - Complete the task by asking “*Are there any questions on how the Oireachtas is organised?*”

Learning Task 6 – Chart 1

Local Government: The Democratic Link

6A You **wake up** tomorrow morning, convinced that you want to be **actively involved** in local Government.

In pairs suggest two ways you can become involved.

We'll hear all.

6B **Listen** to the presentation

6C Of the 3 structures described here, which one, in your opinion is most likely to **enable you** to be really involved in local Government?

We'll hear all.

Note for facilitators: Learning Task 6

The aim of this task is to create an awareness and a knowledge of how individuals can become actively involved in local Government structures.

Learning Task 6A

In pairs, the group considers ways in which they can become actively involved in Local Government. Answers will include – voting at time of Local Elections, writing letters to local councillors and or visiting them in the constituency office or becoming a part of one of the structures outlined below.

Learning Task 6B

In 1996, the Government published 'Better Local Government: A Programme for Change'. The aim of this was to set up new forms by which local groups, institutions, or agencies could be more involved in local Government. Let us look at these new structures.

1. County/City Development Boards (CDBs)

What is their purpose?

- To draw up a plan for social, cultural and economic development of the county/city.
- To see that this plan is implemented.

Who are the members of the County Development Boards?

- Local Government representatives.
- Local Development Agencies
- State Agencies
- Social Partners.

2. Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs)

What is their purpose?

To develop policy in key areas, in particular:

- Planning/Environment
- Housing
- Roads
- Community and Enterprise Developments.

Who are the members of Strategic Policy Committees?

People from different sectors such as local government, local development, community/voluntary/disadvantaged sector and so on.

3. Community Forum

What is its purpose?

- To provide a two-way exchange between Community Development Boards and community
- To be a sounding board for the local authority
- To be a pool from which representation can be drawn on specific interest, e.g. childcare, women's issues, housing etc.

We will conclude this task by looking at how structures enable better local involvement. Refer to Learning Task 6B – Chart 2.

Learning Task 6 – Chart 2

Local Government: The Democratic Link - County/City Development Boards; Strategic Policy Committees; Community Fora

What is the value of these structures?

- They create an active relationship with the community
- They improve collaboration, planning and implementation
- They involve people not in agencies
- They see the community as a source of learning
- They enable local debate
- They help better service delivery
- They draw people into decision-making and consultation
- They strengthen democracy.

6C In pairs decide which of the 3 structures described here, in your opinion is most likely to enable you to be really involved in local Government?

Learning Task 7 – Chart 1

The Need for Local Government

7A **Imagine** we here in this group make up the local council, (city, county, borough or town).

7B **Listen** to the points made by the Taoiseach on a recent “Prime Time” programme in response to the question: **“Why do we need Local Government?”**

7C In pairs **complete:**

“ The responsibilities and powers we have as a Local Council are _____ ”

We’ll hear all.

Note for facilitators:

Very often groups are confused regarding the difference between National and Local Government. The aim of this task is to differentiate between the two and to focus on clarifying the responsibilities of Local Government.

Learning Task 7A

“Imagine that we here make up the Local Council and we are meeting for the first time. We want to review the main areas of our responsibility and powers (functions). Firstly we must be clear that we are distinct from National Government. Let us listen to a very brief presentation from a recent ‘Prime Time’ Programme in which the Taoiseach makes four brief points to explain the difference between National Government and Local Government”.

Learning Task 7B

Invite the group to listen to the points made by the Taoiseach on a recent “Prime Time” programme to the question: “Why do we need Local Government?”

- Read Chart 7:2 - **‘Prime Time’ Programme: “Why do we need Local Government**
- Point out that it would not be good or practical for the National Government to be concerned with the provision and organisation of swimming pools, fire brigades, refuse collection, drinking water, road works and other such services for each local area in Ireland.

- Also it is important that the opinions, needs and hopes of the local communities be heard. Hence the need for Government at local level.
- Invite the participants in pairs to complete the sentence:
The responsibilities and powers we have as a local council are
- Model the task by sharing your own answer with a brief explanation.
- Allow a short time (about 4 minutes) for sharing in pairs. Then invite the group together to share their list. Affirm the work done, inviting all to consider **Chart 7:3 The Impact of Local Government**, asking participants to identify the areas they have mentioned that coincide with those named on the chart. Distribute **Worksheet 6: The Impact of Local Government**.
- Highlight any of the eight programme areas of service listed on **Chart 7:3 The Impact of Local Government**, that have not been mentioned by the group.
- Next, using **Chart 7:4 Powers of Local Government**, show how Local Government is made up of both elected members (councillors) and employed members (the Manager and staff of the Local Authority). Involve individual members of the group in reading through this chart where appropriate.
- Allow a short time (about 3 minutes) to share in groups of three their responses to the question: “Which of these services/functions do you think are most important for your local area?”
- Gather into the large group and listen to the responses of each small group, echoing key words and thanking all for the work done.
- Conclude the task by pointing out that the Local Government system and services play a very important role in the economic and social life of the people. It is needed to serve the interests and needs of the local area. It is essential to the good running of the local area.

Target Time: 25 minutes from start to finish.

Learning Task 7 – Chart 2

Prime Time Programme “Why do we need Local Government?”

Points from the Taoiseach’s speech:

- **National Government** has responsibility for the entire country.
- It is engaged with areas of national importance, such as security, the budget, national roads, the education and health systems, etc.
- **Local Government** is government at local level.
- It is necessary for the service of local communities, providing such facilities as local water supply, sewerage systems, refuse collections, etc.

Learning Task 7 – Chart 3

The Impact of Local Government

1. Housing and Building
2. Road Transport / Safety
3. Water Schemes/ Sewerage
4. Development Incentives and Controls
5. Environmental Protection
6. Recreation and Amenities
7. Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare
8. Miscellaneous Services

Learning Task 7 – Chart 4

Powers of Local Government

These are separated into Reserved and Executive Functions

Duties of Local Councillors (reserved functions)

Examples:

- Approves the yearly budget
- Borrows money
- Makes development plans
- Nominates persons to public bodies.

Duties of County Manager (executive functions)

Examples:

- Employs staff
- Accepts tenders
- Manages Local Authority property
- Organises the day-to-day administration.

Learning Task 8 – Chart 1

The Role of The Local Councillor

8A In new pairs, **share** your response to the following:

*“What word or image comes to mind when you hear the words
“LOCAL COUNCILLOR”?”*

Record on a Post-It™ using a wide-tipped marker.

8B **Review** the role of the local councillor.

8C Together in the large group let us **complete** a candidate profile card for an ideal local councillor.

We'll hear all.

Learning Task 8 – Chart 2

The Role of The Local Councillor

- To carry out the wishes of the people who elect them.
- To draw up policies which affect people in their local areas e.g. housing, water supply etc.
- To organise certain matters of importance to the local community.
- To control the financial affairs of the Local Authority.
- To represent the Local Authority on Health Boards, VECs and Harbour Boards.
- To represent and promote the interests of the local community.

Note for facilitators: Learning Task 8

This task explores the role of the Local Councillor.

“There are over one thousand five hundred elected local councillors in the country. They share the responsibilities for finance, policy and development with the Manager. They serve in directing policies and actions. We will now look at the role of the Local Councillor and how an ideal Local Councillor might be described”.

Learning Task 8A

Invite participants in pairs to share their response to the question:

“What word/image comes to mind when you hear the word ‘Local Councillor’?”

- Model the task by sharing your own word and attaching it to the chart headed “The Role of the Local Councillor” (The facilitator makes this heading and attaches it to a large blank sheet of paper).
- Distribute 2/3 Post-It™ cards and a marker to each pair to record their word.
- Allow about 4 minutes for the task and then invite all pairs to share their words in the large group.
- Echo words and draw together the overall view of the group regarding local councillors.

Learning Task 8B

This section of the task aims to explore in detail the role of the local councillor.

- Remind the group again of the many areas of responsibility held by local councillors.
- Refer **Chart 8:2 Role Of Local Councillor**.
- Invite individuals to read sections of the chart where appropriate.
- In pairs invite the group to complete the sentence: *“The duties/responsibilities of the Local Councillor that we regard as most necessary for the good running of our local area are...”*
- After 3 minutes invite all back into the large group to share their responses.
- Conclude this section of the task using the responses of the group to show how important the role of the Local Councillor is as s/he works with the appointed Manager in providing services for the local area.

Learning Task 8C

This task builds on Unit III “*Candidates*”. It recalls the work done on the *Power Cycle* process, especially that of the **Profile of the Candidate Worksheet 1 (page38)**

- Place a blank A3 Candidate Profile Form on the board.
- Lead participants through each section, using their responses to complete the profile of an ideal councillor.
- Invite one member of the group to read through the completed profile. A council that would be made up of councillors such as this would work for the best interests of those who elect them.
- Conclude this section of the task by reminding the participants that Local Councillors are elected to carry out the wishes of the people who elect them. In voting for a candidate who will work on their issues they are ensuring that Local Government fulfils its core function which is to enable local communities make decisions about local issues that will result in a well organised, well serviced, and well run local area.

Target Time: 20– 25 minutes from start to finish

Learning Task 9

The When and The How of Local Government Elections

9A In small groups **recall** your memories of the last Local Government Elections.

When did it take place?

What Local Councillors were elected in your local area?

We'll hear a self-selected sample.

9B **Listen** to the presentation

9C In small groups **complete**: "Three good reasons why a person should vote in the Local Government Elections are -----"

9D Feedback.

We'll hear all.

Note for facilitators: Learning Task 9

The purpose of this task is to develop an understanding of the structural arrangements and timing which underpin Local Elections.

"National Government has consistently failed to recognise the importance of Local Government. However, since 1999 a change in the Constitution states that Local Elections must now be held every five years.

Learning Task 9A

Invite participants to gather in groups of three and to recall their memories of the last Local Government election.

"When did it take place? Who was elected as Local Councillors in your area"?

- Allow a short time for discussion, then invite groups to share their responses.
- Conclude this section of the task by pointing out that National Elections usually receive much greater attention than Local Elections. However, local councillors together with the appointed personnel play a vital role in the running and organisation of local areas.

Learning Task 9B

This section of Learning Task 9 aims to show how Local Government Elections are organised.

- Distribute **Worksheet 7: The When and the How of Local Government Elections** to each participant.
- Invite individuals to read through the points on the handout, expanding on the headings as shown in the material below.

Note for facilitators: Below is an expansion of the information given on Learning Task 9: The When and the How of Local Government Elections to provide additional material for this task.

The When and the How of Local Government Elections

When:

Local Government Elections must be held every 5 years

How:

For the purposes of Local Government Elections, the county is divided into a number of electoral areas and councillors are elected for each area. People who live in towns may vote in two separate elections, one for the county council and one for the town authority. There are 114 directly elected local authorities in the country containing 1,627 seats divided into 268 electoral areas.

There are 4 categories:

• City Councils	5
• County Councils	29
• Borough Councils	5
• Town Councils	<u>75</u>
Total =	114

County Councils: Dublin has 3, Tipperary has 2 and each of the other 24 counties have one, making a total of 29.

City Councils: Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.

Borough Councils: Clonmel, Drogheda, Kilkenny, Sligo and Wexford.

Town Councils: All other towns, for example Athlone, Carlow, Dundalk, etc., have town councils. (Formerly, the bigger towns had Urban District Councils and the smaller towns, Town Commissioners).

Organisation:

A designated official of the local authority is responsible for conducting (local) elections in his/her capacity as returning officer. The running costs are met by the Local Authority.

Nomination of Candidates:

Candidates must be nominated one month before polling day. A person may be nominated to stand in more than one area.

Who can be elected?

Any person over 18 years is eligible for election to Local Government except persons who are Government Ministers, Ministers of State, Members of the Gardai and the Defence Forces and certain groups of public employees. The grounds for disqualification include failure to pay money due to a local authority and certain court convictions and prison sentences.

Who can vote at a Local Election?

Every person over 18 years whose name is included in the electoral register is entitled to vote in the local area in which s/he lives. It is not necessary to be an Irish citizen to vote in a Local Election.

Learning Task 9C

The purpose of this task is to consolidate the learning of this unit. Invite participants to imagine the following situation.

“The date of the Local Government Elections has been announced. Candidates are beginning to get out onto the streets looking for votes. You meet an 18 year old who has dropped out of school. For the last year s/he has been searching for something to do. There are few facilities in the areas – no playing fields, no shopping areas, no place to get even a low-skilled job. You speak about the Local Elections and ask if s/he is going to vote. The response is swift and definite: “Why should I? I can’t see anything that the Local Councillors have done for this area. Give me three good reasons why I should vote”.

- In groups of three invite participants to complete the sentence *“Three good reasons why a person should vote in the Local Government Elections are -----*
- Supply paper for those who wish to write down their conclusions. Allow a short time (about 4 minutes) for this task.
- Bring the groups together to listen to the responses of each group.
- Conclude the task by pointing out that each one has the right and responsibility to have a say in influencing the policies and actions of Local Government. This is done by choosing and voting for a candidate who knows the issues that are important to the local areas and is committed to working for the common good of the people.

Learning Task 9D: Feedback

- Invite each person to share. *“What will you take away with you from these sessions on Local Government?”*
- Conclude the task by reminding the group that in exercising their right to vote in Local Government Elections they can become influential and can have a say regarding decisions affecting them, their families and their local area.

Target Time: 40 minutes from start to finish.

Learning Task 10

The Beginnings and Growth of the European Union

10A Listen to the presentation

10B Your task is to build a new Europe which will be united by peace and prosperity. This new Europe will not be divided by war or poverty.

What 2/3 wishes would you make for this new Europe?

Record your wishes on a Post-It™ card.

10C The Growth of the European Union: **naming** the 25 present member countries.

We'll hear all

Note for facilitators:

The purpose of this task is to help the participants

- know the origins of the E.U.
- identify the present members.
- understand the conditions for new membership.

Before introducing this learning task, welcome the participants, inviting them to write their name on a name tag and to introduce themselves to the group.

Learning Task 10A

This task aims to highlight the devastation and destruction which characterised Europe in the aftermath of World War II by means of a presentation (see next page).

- Begin the task by placing a picture of the bomb attack on Dublin in 1941 in a prominent position on a large background sheet of paper.
- Invite participants to look at the picture and to record on a Post-It™ card any word or image which comes to mind as they look at the picture.
- Allow 4 minutes for this activity.
- Ask individuals to share his/her word while sticking their Post-It™ cards around the picture.
- Echo key words, using each participant's name.
- Next present the story of war-torn Europe, inviting participants to sit in a relaxed position, and to close their eyes as they imagine themselves in the unfolding scene.

Another Time, Another Place: War Torn Europe

“For a few minutes imagine you are living in another time and another place. The time is the 1940s, around 1948. The place is war torn Europe. All around you are derelict buildings: the remains of houses, hospitals, schools, offices and churches which were destroyed by bombs. There is little traffic on the roads. Elderly people, women and children form long queues hoping to get some food for the family. Suffering, sorrow and hunger mark many faces. You hear that many of the men folk are dead or badly injured. Others are missing. You realise that Europe has just seen the end of two world wars.

Sixty million Europeans died in wars since the beginning of the century. There were terrible abuses of human rights and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights has just been passed because of the horror at the genocide which took place during World War II. A small group of European Leaders sit down together. They are devastated by what has happened and they realise that war must not happen again. They want a new Europe in which the threat of war has gone. As they begin to plan for a new Europe they ask: “What are some of the things we must begin to do to ensure peace for all our countries?”

Show the picture of two of the leaders who had a vision of a Europe united in peace and prosperity – Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, and invite comments.

Learning Task 10B: Towards a Vision of New Europe

Invite the group to place themselves in the position of these two leaders who were attempting to build a new Europe.

“Your task is to build a new Europe which will be united by peace and prosperity. This new Europe will not be divided by war or poverty. What 2/3 wishes would you make for this new Europe”?

- Model the task by sharing your own wish, recording it briefly on a Post-It™ card and attaching it to Learning Task I Chart.
- Invite participants to gather in pairs to share their own wishes for a new Europe.
- Distribute 2/3 cards for each group.
- Allow about 4 minutes for sharing, then invite all back into the large group to share their wishes as they place their cards on the learning chart.
- Echo the wishes, using participants’ names.

Learning Task 10C: Growth of The E.U.

“In order to prevent another World War Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman approached the leader of the German people Chancellor Adenauer and shared their dream with him. He immediately saw the value of their vision and agreed to work for a peaceful and prosperous Europe. The leaders of the 4 neighbouring countries, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, quickly supported the idea of creating a new Europe. These leaders were like all politicians. Each had his own ideas and his own personal hopes for his own country. However, they were committed to building a peaceful and prosperous Europe. They knew that this would take time and patience. It would also require a lot of effort to work together for the good of all and not just for the good of their own country. So at the beginning in 1951 the European Union, known as the European Coal and Steel Community, had 6 members – France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. Other countries, among them Ireland, asked to join and at present there are 25 countries in the E.U. and 3 more (Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey) have applied for membership. Let’s divide into 2 teams and see which team comes up with the most names of the countries which belong to the E.U. at this point in time.”

Naming the 25 Present Members of the E.U.

- Divide the group into 2 teams, Team A and Team B. Beginning with Team A, ask participants to name one of the present member countries of the E.U. Then invite someone from Team B to name another country. Continue until all the countries have been named. Check the answers against the following list:

Austria	Estonia	Hungary	Luxembourg	Slovakia
Belgium	Finland	Ireland	Malta	Slovenia
Cyprus	France	Italy	Netherlands	Spain
Czech Rep.	Germany	Latvia	Poland	Sweden
Denmark	Greece	Lithuania	Portugal	UK

- Name the ten countries that joined the E.U. in March 2004:

Cyprus	Estonia	Latvia	Malta	Slovakia
Czech Rep.	Hungary	Lithuania	Poland	Slovenia

- Record answers on a flip chart with the correct responses of Team A written under the heading *Team A* and the correct responses of Team B under the heading *Team B*.
- Explain that in 1973 Ireland, Denmark and the U.K. were the first 3 countries to join the founding countries and that the remaining countries joined in the 1980s, 1990s and in 2004.
- Then show the map of the E.U. pointing out the present members including the new member states and invite comments.

Learning Task 11 – Chart 1

How the European Union is Governed

11A To get things done in a local area we need a number of organisations.

Name 5 or 6 that you think work for the common good.

11B Listen to the presentation on the 5 main institutions of the European Union.

11C The Role of an MEP

11D Poster to encourage Irish people to vote in next EU election.

In pairs decide which of these powers are **most important** for the common good of all the people in the EU.

We'll hear all.

Note for facilitators:

This task aims to facilitate the group in identifying how the E.U. is governed.

Learning Task 11A: Working for The Common Good

“Imagine all of us here have moved into a brand new housing estate. We have come together to identify organisations that might work for the good order of our community. Can you name 5 or 6 organisations we need for the common good of our area?”

- Model your own answer
- Invite participants to work together in pairs to draw up their list, distributing paper to those who need it.
- Allow a short time for sharing, then gather pairs back into the large groups to share their findings.
- Conclude this section of the task by pointing out that these organisations are all necessary for good things to happen in the local area.

Learning Task 11B

Distribute **Worksheet 8 : The 5 Main Institutions.**

- Review this Worksheet, focusing especially on the powers of the EU Parliament
– see Learning Task 11: The Powers of The EU Parliament – Chart 2

Learning Task 11 - Chart 2

The Powers of the EU Parliament – Chart 2

The E.U. Parliament is the only institution directly elected by E.U. citizens. In recent years the Parliament has been given more power. It must be consulted by the European Council before decisions can be made.

The Parliament has power to:

- influence European laws and policies
- accept or reject EU legislation proposed by the Commission
- approve international agreements
- accept or reject the budget
- approve the admission of new members
- approve the appointments of the President of the Commission and members of the Commission
- dismiss the Commission.

- Invite participants to consider (in pairs) which of these powers/responsibilities are most important and why.
- These powers require that we have competent and good people representing us and working for the good of all European citizens. It is essential that we use our vote wisely to elect such people for they have a say in decisions and policy making that affect our lives and those of our children. (Remember Unit V – EU Elections for additional material)

Learning Task 12

- What are the three main ideas you will take from this workshop?
- Why did you choose these three issues/facts/ideas?

Worksheet 1 - Foundations of Government

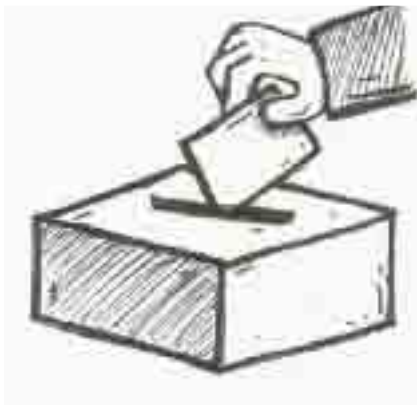
Match the titles to the pictures below:

A. *Irish Constitution*

B. *Ballot Box*

C. *The Dail*

D. *Aras an Uachtarain*





.....

Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice Active Citizenship/Voter Education Programme

Worksheet 2 - Key Roles in the Oireachtas

“Who Am I?”

- a) *“I am over 35 years old”*
- b) *“I am elected to my job for 7 years”*
- c) *“I am the first citizen in the State”*
- d) *“I travel to represent Ireland”*

Have I been Elected As

Tick the correct box:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| The Minister of Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| An Taoiseach | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The President of Ireland | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A TD | <input type="checkbox"/> |
-

“Who Am I?”

- a) *“I am a member of the Oireachtas”*
- b) *“I am elected by a postal vote”*
- c) *“I am one of 60 members in this House”*
- d) *“I sit in the upper house of Parliament”*

Have I been Elected As

Tick the correct box:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| A Dail Deputy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| An Taoiseach | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A Senator | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The Minister of Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
-

“Who Am I?”

- a) *“I am a member of the Oireachtas”*
- b) *“I am elected by my constituents”*
- c) *“I am responsible for making decisions that affect your life as a citizen”*
- d) *“I am one of the 166 members who sits in the lower house of Parliament”*

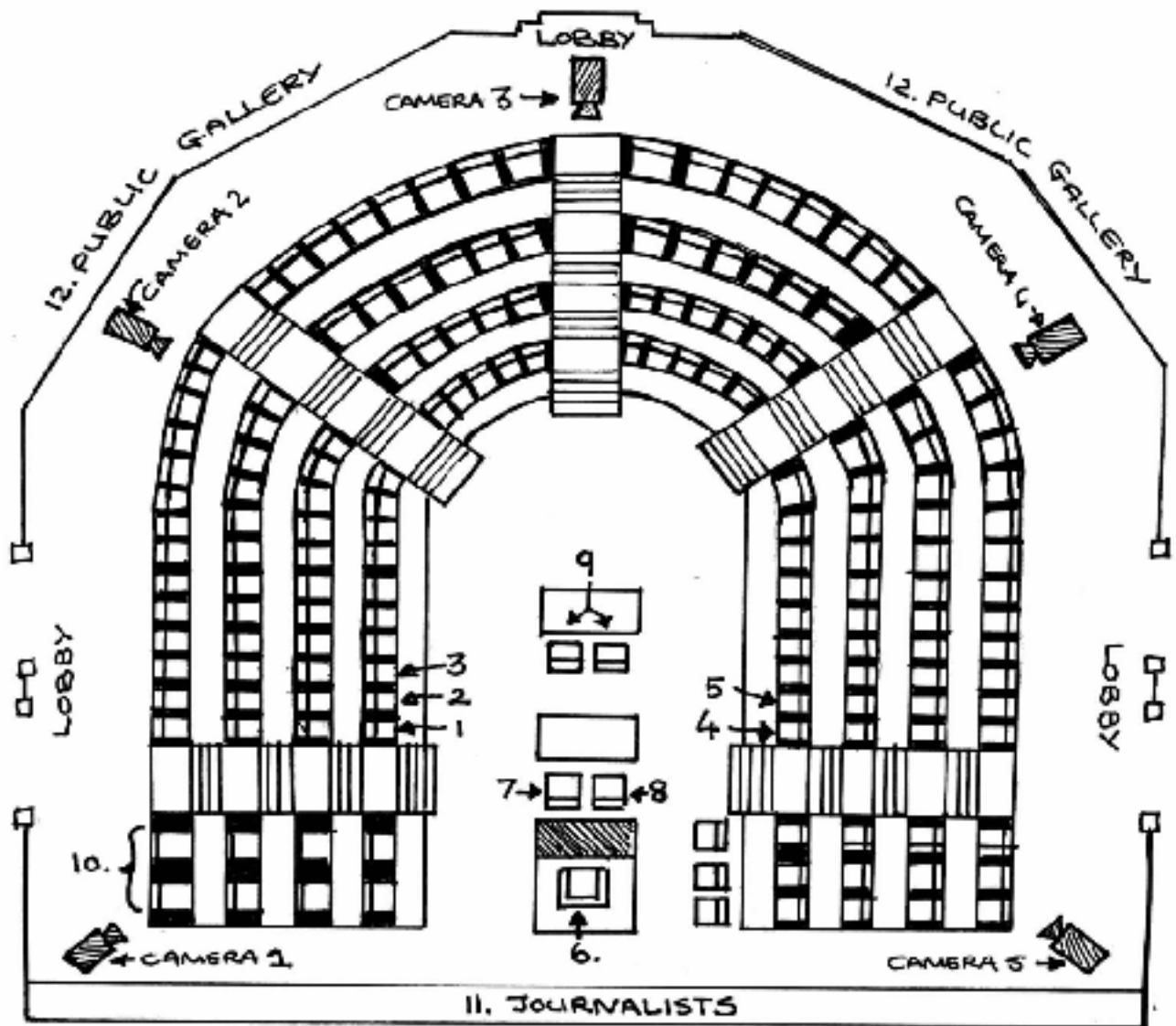
Have I been Elected As

Tick the correct box:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| TD (A Dail Deputy) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| An Senator | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The President | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The Attorney General | <input type="checkbox"/> |

We will hear all

Worksheet 3 - The Dail Chamber



1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. Leader of the Opposition

5. _____
 6. _____
 7. and 8. _____
 9. _____
 10. _____

Worksheet 4A - Ministers/Government Departments

**Minister for Communications, Marine
and Natural Resources**

-----A-----

Minister for Transport

**Minister for Social
and Family Affairs**

Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Minister for Environment, Heritage and
Local Government**

Minister for Health and Children

Minister for Finance

Minister for Defence

**Minister for Agriculture
and Food**

**Minister for Arts, Sport
and Tourism**

**Minister for Community,
Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs**

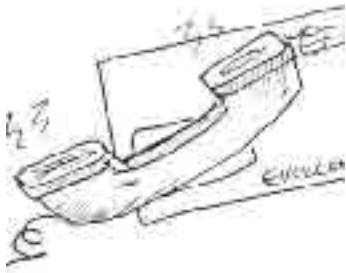
Minister for Education and Science

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law
Reform**

**Minister for Enterprise, Trade and
Employment**

Worksheet 4B – Match Up Sheet

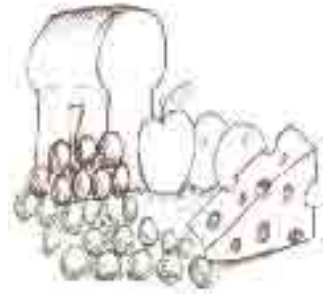
Match the pictures with the Ministers/Departments in Worksheet A



A



B



C



D



E



F



G



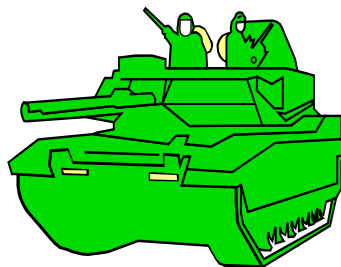
H



I



J



K



L



M



N

Worksheet 5 - A Day in the Life of a TD



My name is Orla Fortune. I am a TD or Dáil Deputy. I was elected to Party A to represent the people in my Constituency in National Government. A typical week in my life as a T.D. looks like this:

- Each Monday and Friday I work from my constituency office where I meet people who come to talk about issues relevant to them or their areas.
- At least four evenings a week I attend meetings on local community issues, party meetings and social gatherings.
- Tuesday to Thursday I am in Dublin, mainly in Government Buildings. What do I do there? On Tuesday morning I meet with my party to discuss policy issues and Dáil concerns for the week ahead and the rest of the time is spent in the Dáil Chamber.
- I spend time preparing for and participating in the Joint Committee on Women's Rights, or in my office where I research and prepare Parliamentary Questions and Speeches. Sometimes I speak at Question Time.
- I also track proposals to change laws and prepare amendments to new laws and I meet groups who wish me to work on issues regarding laws that affect them.
- In the evening I attend functions. At weekends, especially on Sunday, I take time off with family and friends.

Do you to know that?

- 51% of our population are women
- Only 13.8% of the elected members of the Dáil are women
- At the present rate, it will take 370 years for 50% of Dáil representatives to be women

Select Committees

Four Types: Standing, Joint, Select and Special Committee.

Standing Committee e.g. Committee of Public Accounts.

Joint Committees e.g. Education and Science (consists of Dail and Seanad Members).

Select Committees: (consists of members of one House only either Dail or Seanad).

Special Committees: Set up rarely. They consider a specific Bill.

Worksheet 6 - The Impact of Local Government

The Powers and Functions of Local Authorities

City Councils, County Councils and Borough Councils have the maximum number of responsibilities of all Irish local authorities. Since 1976 these functions have been classified into eight programme groups. In contrast, Town Commissioners have responsibility only for the maintenance of houses, allotments, meals for school children, parks, licensing cinemas and markets, etc.

EIGHT PROGRAMME GROUPS

1. Housing and Building

- management and provision of local authority housing
- assistance to persons housing themselves or improving their houses
- traveller accommodation
- enforcement of certain housing standards and controls, etc.

2. Road Transport / Safety

- road upkeep and improvement
- public lighting
- traffic management facilities
- safety education and information
- collection of motor taxation
- licensing of draws, etc.

3. Water Schemes/ Sewerage

- public water supply and sewerage schemes
- assistance towards the provision of piped water supply to existing dwellings
- sewerage facilities for same
- public toilets, etc.

4. Development Incentives and Controls

- physical planning policy
- control of new development and building
- promotion of industrial and other developments, etc.

5. Environmental Protection

- waste collection and disposal
- burial grounds
- safety of structures and spaces
- fire protection
- pollution control, etc.

6. Recreation and Amenities

- swimming pools
- libraries
- parks
- open spaces
- recreation centres
- art galleries
- museums
- theatres
- conservation
- improvement of all of the above.

7. Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare

- appointment/election of public representatives to county committees of agriculture, vocational education committees, regional health boards, regional tourism organisations, fisheries boards, harbour authorities
- joint drainage committees
- unemployment assistance
- rates/service charge waiver schemes.

8. Miscellaneous Services

- financial management
- rates/service charge collection
- elections
- courthouses
- coroners and inquests
- consumer protection measures
- markets, fairs and abattoirs
- gas works.

Worksheet 7 - The When and The How of Local Government Elections

When:

Local Elections must be held every five years.

How:

- Each city and county is divided into electoral areas for the purpose of holding local elections.
- Councillors are elected in each district.
- There are 114 directly elected Local Authorities.
- There are 4 Categories:
 - ❖ **City Councils** **5**
 - ❖ **County Councils** **29**
 - ❖ **Borough Councils** **5**
 - ❖ **Town Councils** **75**

Who can be elected?

Any person over 18 years of age.

Who can vote?

Persons over 18 years of age who are registered.

Organisation:

The Local Authority is responsible for the organisation of Local Government Elections.

Nominations:

Candidates must be nominated one month before polling day.

Worksheet 8 - How the European Union is Governed

The 5 Main Institutions of the European Union

- A. The European Council:** This consists of leaders of each country and the President of the European Commission. It makes all the important European laws and policies. The European Council is obliged to consult the European Parliament about the decisions it wants to take.
- B. The Council of Ministers:** This consists of ministers from the member states with similar responsibilities – e.g. health. They make legislation for their areas of responsibilities. However, important matters and decisions must go to the European Council.
- C. The European Parliament:** This is the only institution directly elected by European Citizens. At present it has 732 MEPs. Until 2007 13 of them will be Irish. The members of the E.U. Parliament cannot number more than 736. With the addition of new member states to the E.U. the number of MEPs representing each state will change. The Parliament was set up to give the people of Europe a direct voice. It can question decisions and has more and more power to change or delay draft laws. The Parliament must be consulted by the European Council.
- D. The European Commission:** At present the Commission consists of at least one representative from each member country. It ensures that European laws and policies are carried out. The Commission also proposes new laws and policies to the European Council and Parliament. The Commission has little decision making power although it has considerable influence. The number of commissioners will change with the number of countries joining the E.U.
- E. The European Court of Justice:** This consists of one judge from each member state. It is responsible for enforcing European law.

Worksheet 1

Candidate Profile: Getting To Know The Candidate		Name:
Election to the Office of:		
His/Her Vision of Just Society:		
GROUPS WHICH ARE IMPORTANT TO HIM/HER : (e.g. Union, Church, Local Groups)		
POLITICAL PARTY (if any)		
MY KEY ISSUES	Candidate's position on these issues?	How does it compare with my position?
		<input type="checkbox"/> agrees <input type="checkbox"/> some agreement <input type="checkbox"/> does not agree
		<input type="checkbox"/> agrees <input type="checkbox"/> some agreement <input type="checkbox"/> does not agree
		<input type="checkbox"/> agrees <input type="checkbox"/> some agreement <input type="checkbox"/> does not agree
		<input type="checkbox"/> agrees <input type="checkbox"/> some agreement <input type="checkbox"/> does not agree



Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice,
Ozanam House, 53 Mountjoy Square, Gardiner Street, Dublin 1
Telephone: 01 878 0425 Fax: 01 878 0423
E-mail: vpj@eircom.net Web: www.vpsj.ie

Vincentian Initiative for Social and Economic Change,
Tackling Poverty and Exclusion