

# LOCAL AND REGIONAL BODIES IN IRELAND 2012-2016

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# 1.

## INTRODUCTION

Irish government has undergone substantial reform in the last number of years at local, regional and national level. This report focuses on local and regional governance, identifying the main changes to local and regional non-commercial public bodies that have occurred between 2012 and 2016, building on previous reports published by the Institute of Public Administration in 2007 and 2013<sup>1</sup>.

*Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government* was launched by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in October 2012. It was heralded as the 'most fundamental set of changes in local government in the history of the State from regional and county level through to the municipal level of governance' (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012, p. i). Many of the reforms set out in *Putting People First* were introduced with effect from 1 June 2014 under the *Local Government Reform Act 2014*.

These reforms were announced during a period of austerity and set in the context of a series of reports and programmes, stemming from the OECD's 2008 report *Ireland: Towards an Integrated Public Service*. This report, while primarily concerned with the central level of government, stated that:

At the local level, inefficiencies seem to arise from the co-existence of weak local government with a direct accountability relationship to a line department and little autonomy, and the presence of local agencies reporting to other departments... Ireland would be more in line with other OECD countries if it were to strengthen local government in service delivery (OECD, 2008, p. 309).

In response to this, the government published *The Report of the Task Force on the Public Service: Transforming Public Services* in 2008. This was followed by a series of reports which directly or indirectly made recommendations for reforming Irish sub-national governance. These are briefly outlined in section 2.1, before moving on to more recent developments.

For the purpose of this study, and in keeping with previous studies undertaken by the Institute<sup>2</sup>, the working definition of a public service body is an organisation that has the following characteristics:

- It is structurally differentiated from other organisations
- It has some capacity for autonomous decision making

<sup>1</sup> MacCarthaigh (2007) and MacCarthaigh (2013).

<sup>2</sup> See for example the reports referenced in Footnote 1 and McGauran, Verhoest, & Humphreys (2005).

- It has some expectation of continuity over time
- It performs some public function
- It has some personnel
- It has some financial resources

Using a database of local and regional non-commercial public bodies compiled by the Institute of Public Administration in 2007 as the baseline, this study identified 130<sup>3</sup> organisations currently in operation in Ireland, reduced from 360 in 2007 (see Table 3.1). Chapter three provides an overview of these organisations and the major changes resulting from the various programmes of reform, alignment and rationalisation that have occurred in the last number of years.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to Appendix 1 for a complete list of the 130 organisations included in this study.

# 2.

## CONTEXT: BACKGROUND AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The landscape of sub-national governance in Ireland has changed substantially since 2012 and the then Government's publication of *Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government*. These reforms are a result of numerous reports and programmes, which are discussed briefly below before moving on to more recent developments.

### 2.1 BACKGROUND: 2008-2012 AUSTERITY-DRIVEN CHANGES

Since the publication of the OECD's seminal report *Ireland: Towards an Integrated Public Service* in mid-2008, a series of reports and programmes were published which directly or indirectly make recommendations for reforming Irish sub-national governance, both in structural terms with a view to consolidation, but also in relation to resource allocations. They are:

- The Report of the Task Force on the Public Service: Transforming Public Services (2008)
- The Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes (the McCarthy Report) (2009)
- Report of the Commission on Taxation (2009)
- The Report of the Local Government Efficiency Review Group (2010)
- The Public Service Agreement 2010-14 (the Croke Park Agreement) (2010)
- The National Recovery Plan 2011-14 (2010)
- Programme for Government (2011)
- Public Service Reform (2011)
- Report of the Steering Group for the Alignment of Local Government and Local Development (2012)
- Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government (2012)

The above reports and programmes were created in the context of austerity and while the majority focused on the national, central government level and identifying opportunities for increased efficiency and savings, there were a number of recommendations for reform at the sub-national level. Among the most prominent recommendations were reducing the number of city and county councils and moving to a single tier of local government; introduction of a property tax to be collected at the local level; shared services for functions such as payroll and human resources; and greater alignment between the local and community development sector and local authorities<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion of the principal issues arising from the above reports for local and regional public organisations see MacCarthaigh (2013).

## 2.2 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS 2012-2016

### 2.2.1 Local and Regional Government Reform

In October 2012 the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government published *Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government*. This action programme involved the most fundamental set of changes in local government in the history of the State from regional and county level through to the municipal level of governance.

Many of the reforms set out in *Putting People First* were introduced with effect from June 1st 2014 under the *Local Government Reform Act 2014*.

The key structural reforms are:

- the number of local authorities reduced from 114 to 31 by dissolving 80 town councils and merging Waterford City and Waterford County Councils, Tipperary North and Tipperary South County Councils, and Limerick City and Limerick County Councils.
- the number of elected members reduced from 1,627 to 949
- 95 municipal districts established
- 8 regional authorities and 2 regional assemblies replaced by 3 regional assemblies
- the number of regional members reduced from 290 to 83

Other key actions are:

- The introduction of a local property tax to fund local services, and which can be varied by local authorities
- Expanding the role of local authorities in economic development and closer alignment of local and community development supports with local government. This has had a significant impact on the landscape of local and regional bodies by abolishing both City and County Development Boards (CDBs) and City and County Enterprise Boards (CEBs). These changes are discussed further in Chapter 3
- More robust performance monitoring of local authorities by a new National Oversight and Audit Commission
- Establishment of a public water utility, Irish Water, and transfer of responsibility for all aspects of water services investment and operation from local authorities to the new national agency
- Stronger policy making powers for councillors and a greater level of control over the actions of the local authority chief executive<sup>5</sup>

In order to ensure that the new system is being operated effectively and as intended, a review commenced in 2015 in relation to the operation of the new structures and arrangements generally. The review involves an advisory group, on which both elected members and

<sup>5</sup> The *Local Government Reform Act 2014* established the position of chief executive to replace the position of city/county manager.

local authority chief executives are represented, together with a Local Government Forum for engagement with the Association of Irish Local Government. The outputs from this examination are intended to help in the assessment of the new system and whether any adjustments might be needed.

### **Review of Local Government Boundaries**

In January 2015 reviews of local government arrangements in both Cork and Galway City and County were announced. The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government published the findings of the Cork Local Government Review (CLGR) in September 2015 (Local Government Arrangements in Cork, 2015). Three of the five committee members recommended merging the city and county councils, while the other two members co-authored a minority report opposing a merger and recommending a city boundary extension. A majority of county council councillors supported the merger proposal, but the city council were opposed to it. In October 2016, the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (formerly the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government) announced the established of a new expert advisory group to re-examine the findings of the CLGR while also identifying and examining a wider range of options. The Galway Local Government Review (GLGR) has also recommended a merger of city and county councils, to be known as the Greater Galway Authority<sup>6</sup> (Local Government Arrangements in Galway, 2015).

Boundary reviews were also announced in June 2015 in Athlone, Carlow, Drogheda and Waterford. The main rationale cited for the potential boundary alterations was to bring the administrative jurisdictions into line with the current settlement and development position. In the four cases selected for review, there is an overspill of population from towns into another county. The reports of the boundary review committees have yet to be submitted to government, delayed in part due to the large number of submissions which were received by each of the committees.

### **Regional Government Reform**

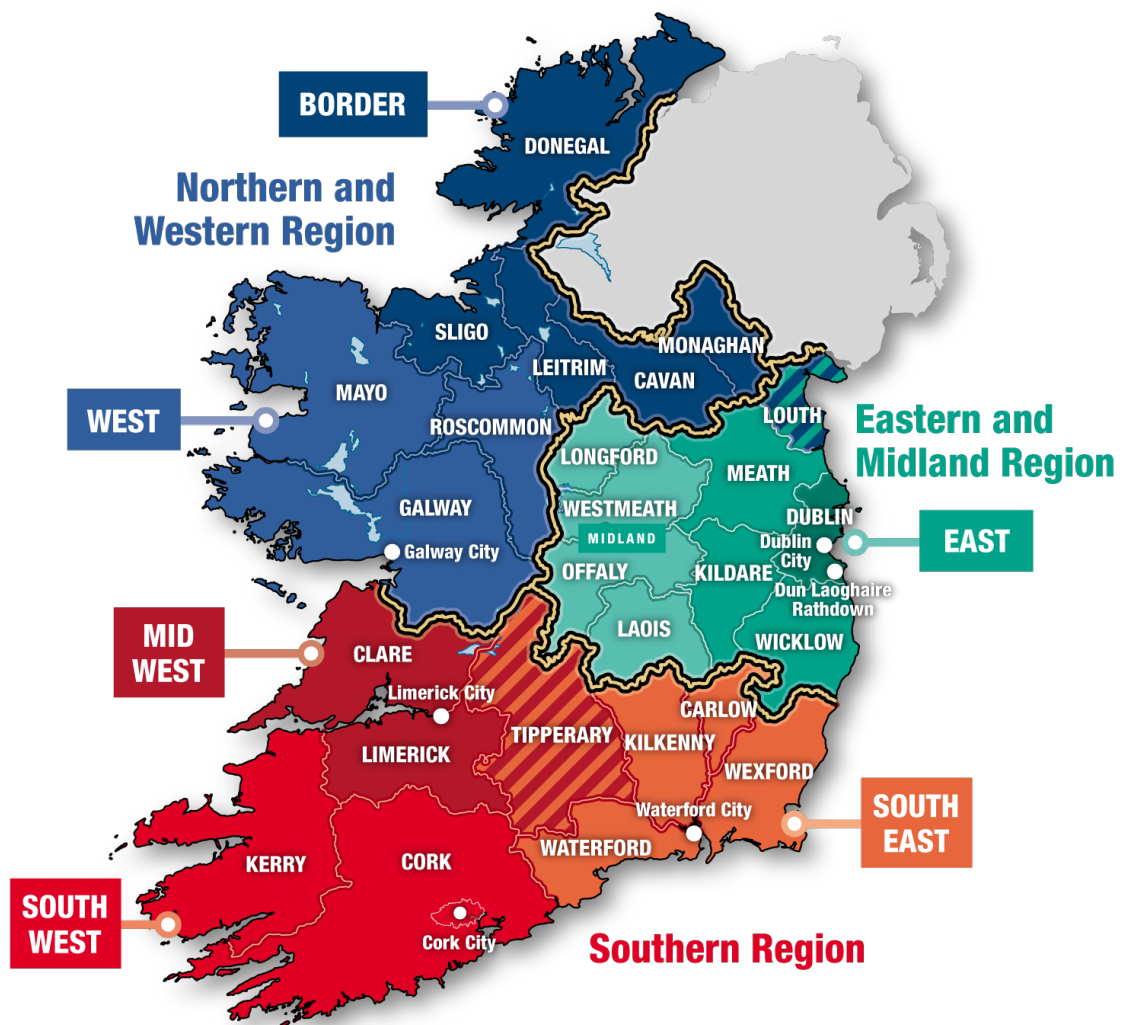
A variety of non-elected regional authorities have been in existence in one form or another since the 1970s, and are an extension of the regional development organisations established in 1969. In 1994, eight regional authorities were established to coordinate the activities of public authorities in their region and later were given functions in relation to the planning and management of EU funding. In order to apply for the 2000 to 2006 round of EU structural funds, the government created two regional assemblies in 1999.

In January 2015, as set out in *Putting People First*, the eight regional authorities and two regional assemblies were replaced with three new regional assemblies (Northern and Western, Eastern and Midland, and Southern). Figure 2.1 shows the configuration of the three regional assemblies and the sub-regional strategic planning areas. The membership of the regional assemblies consists of members from each local authority within the region. The number of regional members has been reduced from 290 to 83 as a result of the structural reforms.

<sup>6</sup> At the time of writing, no official decision has been made regarding the recommendations of the GLGR.

The three new regional assemblies incorporate the functions of both the former regional authorities and assemblies, with specific functions regarding spatial planning and economic development as well as EU funding programmes, oversight of local authority performance and Local Economic and Community Plans, and implementation of national policy. It is proposed that the regional assemblies will prepare regional spatial and economic strategies for their regions, to replace the current regional planning guidelines (RPGs) prepared by the former regional authorities. The current RPGs cover the period from 2010 to 2022 and remain in place until the new regional spatial and economic strategies (RSES) are prepared and approved<sup>7</sup>.

**FIGURE 2.1** MAP OF REGIONAL ASSEMBLIES (3) AND SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING AREAS (8)



Source: Southern Regional Assembly, [www.southernassembly.ie/en/about/about](http://www.southernassembly.ie/en/about/about)

<sup>7</sup> A new National Planning Framework is currently being developed to replace the National Spatial Strategy 2002. The new framework will act as the strategic planning context for the RSEs.



## 2.2.2 Local and Regional Governance Developments

As outlined above, Ireland's subnational government has undergone significant reform since 2012. *Putting People First* and the subsequent *Local Government Reform Act 2014* allowed for these changes. A number of other reports and programmes have been published since 2012, and new structures established, which shape the reform agenda at local and regional level. They are:

- The Report of the Local Government Efficiency Review Implementation Group (2013)
- Public Service Stability Agreement (the Haddington Road Agreement) (2013) [and subsequent extension under the Lansdowne Road Agreement 2015]
- Energising Ireland's Rural Economy – The Report of the Commission for Economic Development of Rural Areas (2013)
- The Public Service Reform Plan (2014 - 2016)
- The National Oversight and Audit Commission (2014)
- A Programme for a Partnership Government (2016)

### **The Report of the Local Government Efficiency Review Implementation Group (2013)**

The Local Government Efficiency Review (LGER) Implementation Group was established in April 2011 to oversee and advise on the delivery of efficiency gains and savings in areas such as shared services, procurement, value for money and audit in the local government sector. It was asked to focus particularly on driving key recommendations of the 2010 LGER Report (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2010) that will remove costs and yield earliest financial savings for the sector and the economy generally.

In 2013, the Implementation Group reported that the sector achieved overall savings in excess of those targeted in the 2010 LGER Report with no major deterioration in the quality of services. The savings reported between 2010 to end of 2012 were €561m.

The work of the Implementation Group has since been subsumed into the work programme of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) (see below for further details on progress to date).

### **Public Service Stability Agreement (the Haddington Road Agreement) (2013) [and subsequent extension under the Lansdowne Road Agreement (2015)]**

The Haddington Road Agreement is the outcome of negotiations between public service management and unions, which took place in May 2013 under the auspices of the Labour Relations Commission. The Agreement acknowledged the significant level of reform that took place across the public service under the previous *Public Service Agreement 2010-2014* while outlining further reform measures to underpin the delivery of a more

integrated, efficient and effective public service in the areas of redeployment, performance management, flexible working arrangements, work-sharing arrangements and workforce restructuring.

The Agreement also included specific measures for the local authority sector with regards to outdoor staff, pay measures, overtime and flexible working arrangements. In the context of overall workforce planning, it was also agreed to discuss the regularisation of long-term acting positions.

As part of the Lansdowne Road Agreement (2015) the parties re-committed to effective engagement across the platform of the Government's delivery of its change and reform agenda, which in the local government sector includes *Putting People First* and the Irish Water Programme.

### **Energising Ireland's Rural Economy – The Report of the Commission for Economic Development of Rural Areas (2013)**

The Commission for Economic Development of Rural Affairs (CEDRA) was established in 2012 with the key function to investigate the potential for economic development in rural Ireland and to prepare a report to underpin the development of future strategies to support the medium term economic development of rural areas for the period to 2025.

In its report published in April 2014, the Commission recommended an integrated approach to rural economic development, advocating a coordinated and collaborative approach by central, regional and local government, local development organisations and other stakeholders to maximise the impact of the potential in, and the resources available to, the people of rural Ireland.

CEDRA acknowledge that the reforms announced in *Putting People First* will strengthen both the regional and local planning process to include socioeconomic planning and implementation but they also believe these initiatives should also consider rural economic development. Furthermore, they identify a need to take a more tailored approach to planning at both regional and local level and suggest that such an approach should not be restricted by current administrative boundaries.

One of the Commission's main recommendations is the establishment of Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ) that consider functional rather than administrative boundaries and facilitate full community participation in local economic development. They believe that the reform of both the regional and local government structures and processes outlined in *Putting People First* has the capacity to support a new approach to planning that is participative as well as integrated. A REDZ pilot project was announced in September 2015 which provided funding to 51 areas through local authorities.

CEDRA also supports the increased role envisaged for local government in economic development, enterprise support and community development at local level in conjunction with other local development bodies.

### **The Public Service Reform Plan 2014-2016**

The second Public Service Reform Plan, published in 2014, builds on the progress made on implementing the first Reform Plan (2011 - 2013) and sets out key cross-cutting and sectoral reform initiatives to be implemented over the following three years. Local government is identified as one of five key sectors, outlining the priorities for reform as set out in *Putting People First*.

As part of the Public Service Reform Plan 2011 – 2013, an agency rationalisation programme was also announced. Although this largely focused on the national level it included within its remit a number of subnational bodies such as City and County Enterprise Boards, Dublin Regional Tourism Authority, Local Government, Shannon Development and Vocational Education Committees. The resulting changes are discussed in Chapter 3.

### **The National Oversight and Audit Commission (2014)**

The National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) was established in July 2014 under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 to provide independent oversight of the local government sector. The statutory functions assigned to NOAC include the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of public service reform, including enhanced efficiencies by the local government sector.

As mentioned above, the NOAC have subsumed the work of the LGER Implementation Group. In April 2016 they published a progress report from the Programme Management Office (PMO) of the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) regarding the implementation of the LGER reforms/proposals. This report indicates that by the end of 2015, 69 out of the original 106 recommendations of the LGER Group have been or are being implemented as recommended. A further 15 are being implemented by way of a policy modification of the original recommendation, while 8 are on hold and the final 14 have not progressed or a decision has been made not to implement the recommendation (National Oversight and Audit Commission, 2016a). The NOAC considers this a high level of implementation of the reforms and significant change within the local government sector yielding a substantial reduction in overhead costs. They do not intend to produce any further reports covering all 106 recommendations but will continue to monitor specific aspects of the local government efficiency reform agenda on an on-going basis.

One particular area where local government has made significant progress is shared services. A recent report published by the NOAC outlines progress on 19 shared services advanced through the LGMA Programme Management Office (National Oversight and Audit Commission, 2016b). Many of these cases follow the lead authority model recommended by the 2010 LGER Group where one local authority provides a service on behalf of others. For example, Laois County Council is operating the shared services centre, MyPay, for local government payroll and superannuation. As of March 2016, 17 local authorities have transitioned their payroll function to MyPay and it is expected that all local authorities will transition to the service by 2017.

### **A Programme for a Partnership Government (2016)**

*A Programme for a Partnership Government* was published in May 2016. As part of the next wave of local government reform, the new partnership Government commit to preparing a report for Government, and for the Oireachtas, by mid-2017, on potential measures to boost local government leadership and accountability. They will also:

- encourage county councils to play a significant role in the Regional Action Plan for Jobs
- examine the possibility of extending the remit of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee to include expenditure by local authorities
- ensure that local government funding, structures and responsibilities strengthen local democracy
- give councils greater discretion in how they spend their money on local and regional roads
- examine the possibilities for new and innovative roles for local authorities in housing provision, via means such as Municipal Housing Companies and arm's length management organisations
- examine the possibility of mandating local authorities with better land management powers, including the possibility of additional Compulsory Purchase Orders

They will also consider:

- Directly elected mayors in cities
- Devolution of new powers to local authorities
- Reducing the size of local electoral areas
- Establishing town and borough councils subject to a local plebiscite and local funding
- A review, involving consultation with the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) and the Local Authority Members Association (LAMA), of the supports provided to councillors to enable them to carry out their functions.

# 3.

## THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL PUBLIC BODIES IN IRELAND

The reforms, reports and programmes discussed in the previous chapter have had a significant impact on the landscape of local and regional non-commercial public bodies in Ireland. Table 3.1. presents an overview of the changes to each category<sup>8</sup>.

This chapter discusses the following organisations, providing a brief background to each before outlining the effect of reform, alignment and rationalisation programmes:

- City and County Enterprise Boards
- City and County Development Boards
- Local Development Companies
- City and County Childcare Committees
- Vocational Education Committees
- Regional Tourism Development Boards
- Shannon Development
- Western Development Commission
- Údarás na Gaeltachta

### 3.1 LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: FROM CITY AND COUNTY ENTERPRISE BOARDS TO LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICES

City and County Enterprise Boards (CEBs) were established in 1993 as companies limited by guarantee and subject to companies legislation. The CEBs were designed to complement the work of existing state agencies and to provide direct support (both financial and non-financial) to individuals and smaller indigenous enterprises. Their funding was provided by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) through Enterprise Ireland.

CEBs were dissolved in 2014 in line with the Government's commitment in the *Action Plan for Jobs 2012* to reform the system for delivery of State supports to micro and small enterprises by dissolving the CEB structure and creating an enhanced national enterprise support model to be delivered by local authorities on behalf of Enterprise Ireland through Local Enterprise Offices.

Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) were thus established in April 2014 as offices within the 31 local authorities to provide enhanced resources to support start-ups and microenterprises in their areas. They are the 'first-stop shop' for individuals seeking information and

<sup>8</sup> As well as the organisations discussed in this chapter, Table 3.1 also includes regional fisheries boards, harbour commissions and the Dublin Transportation Office. The functions of these bodies were transferred to a local authority or a central parent agency by 2012 and are not considered in this report. See MacCarthaigh (2013) for further details. Local and regional government reforms are discussed in detail in section 2.2.1.

support on starting or growing a business in Ireland. LEOs are not considered independent agencies although policy direction and funding is provided by Enterprise Ireland and the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

LEOs operate through a framework service level agreement between Enterprise Ireland and the city/county council and provide service under the four headings:

- Business information and advisory services
- Enterprise support services
- Entrepreneurship support services
- Local enterprise development services

LEOs are required to develop an annual enterprise development plan which addresses a number of broadly agreed metrics with Enterprise Ireland and establishes targets for the year ahead. The new *Programme for a Partnership Government* also commits to mandating LEOs to set county-specific targets on job creation.

### 3.2 LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: FROM CITY AND COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARDS TO LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES

City and County Development Boards (CDBs) were established in 2000 in each of the then 34 local authority areas to develop a strategy for economic, social and cultural development as well as more coherent delivery of services. The boards of the CDBs were comprised of representatives of the local authorities (both elected and administrative), national bodies (such as An Garda Síochána, Enterprise Ireland and FÁS), the social partners, local development bodies and various other local non-governmental organisations and charities. They were normally supported by the community and enterprise section of the local authority and had little resources directly at their disposal.

*The Local Government Reform Act 2014* came in to effect on June 1st 2014, dissolving the CDBs and establishing in their place Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) with the purpose of developing, co-ordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. Membership of the LCDCs includes local authority elected members and officials; state and non-state local development agencies; community and voluntary organisations; and other representatives of civil society, including business interests, farming interests, etc.

A key function of the LCDC is to prepare the community elements of a 6-year local economic and community plan (LECP) and to work with partners in the implementation of the plan. LECPs are developed as part of an integrated local, regional and national planning process. This ensures that each plan will be consistent with county development plans, regional spatial and economic strategies and regional action plans for jobs. The first set of LECPs cover the period from 2016 to 2021. LECPs will be the key mechanism to bring forward

action arising from measures under the National Action Plans for Jobs and other relevant national government policies and strategies.

LCDCs are also responsible for coordinating, managing and overseeing the implementation of all local and community development programmes in their areas. This is intended to enhance the role of local authorities in relation to planning, oversight and management of locally-focused programmes and to provide for greater coordination across the full breadth of these programmes.

### 3.3 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANIES

Local development companies (LDCs) are non-profit organisations that deliver a range of programmes that tackle poverty and social exclusion, assists enterprise creation, support the long-term unemployed and offer education and training supports.

In 2006, an initiative was launched to integrate more closely the work of LEADER groups, partnerships and various national social inclusion programmes at local level. Integrated local development companies are a result of this process of cohesion which was designed to eliminate duplication of efforts and more closely align the various social development programmes within city and county council boundaries. LDCs are therefore known by many different names including Local Area Partnerships, LEADER Partnerships, Integrated Development Companies as well as the more obvious Local Development Company.

There are a number of key features which all LDCs share:

- Bottom-up approach of working with communities to develop local solutions to local issues
- Focus on promoting local economic development
- Focus on addressing inequality and social exclusion
- Governed by a multi-sectoral partnership structure. A typical local development company voluntary board comprises:
  - 35 per cent community / voluntary representatives
  - 26 per cent statutory representatives
  - 22 per cent social partner representatives
  - 17 per cent local authority representatives
- Not-for-profit companies limited by guarantee<sup>9</sup>

As of August 2016 there are 48 LDCs<sup>10</sup> delivering a range of programmes in partnership with a number of government agencies.

<sup>9</sup> Source: <http://ildn.ie/about-local-development-companies/>  
<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 1 for a complete list.

**Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)** SICAP is a new social inclusion programme, launched in April 2015 and running until December 2017. It is the successor to the outgoing Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP). It aims to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality by engaging with local communities and working with the most disadvantaged and hardest to reach in communities. SICAP is overseen and managed by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) in each local authority area. Each LCDC agrees annual targets for their area based on local needs to ensure the programme achieves its goals. SICAP is delivered by programme implementers (PIs) who are engaged by the LCDC in each area<sup>11</sup>. The Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government has engaged Pobal to work on its behalf to manage and oversee the delivery of SICAP nationally.

### 3.4 CITY AND COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEES

There are currently 30 City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs), reduced from 33 in line with the local authority mergers<sup>12</sup>. The CCCs are funded by the Early Years Policies and Programmes Unit of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), and work in collaboration with the unit in implementing government policy for the early childhood care and education sector. The membership of the CCCs includes representatives from the statutory sector, the social partners, local development partnerships/groups, national voluntary childcare organisations, parents and providers of childcare in each local area. Pobal coordinates case management between individual CCCs and DCYA.

### 3.5 EDUCATION: FROM VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEES TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARDS

Education and Training Boards (ETBs) replaced the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) in 2013. VECs were originally established in 1930 and acted as legal patrons for second level schools commonly known as vocational schools or community colleges. They also played a role in respect of adult and further education programmes, including post-leaving certificate courses.

*The Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes (2009)* suggested reducing the number of VECs from 33 to 22, in line with their suggestion to reduce the number of local authorities to 22. However, the Government announced plans in 2010 to reduce the overall number to 16. *The Education and Training Boards Act 2013* abolished VECs and statutorily established 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The 16 ETBs were formed from mergers of existing VECs and continue to operate along local authority boundaries.

ETBs incorporate training functions previously delivered by FÁS. The *Further Education and Training Act 2013* abolished FÁS, established SOLAS (An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna) as the new further education and training authority and provided for the transfer of the former FÁS training division (16 training centres) to the ETBs. The board of ETBs consist of 21 members consisting of 12 elected members of local authorities, 2 staff representative, 2 parent representatives and 5 representatives of special interest

<sup>11</sup> The vast majority of SICAP Programme Implementers are local development companies

<sup>12</sup> While there are 31 local authorities, Galway City & County have just one childcare committee between them.



bodies. ETBs each have their own executive, they employ teaching, administrative and maintenance staff, and provide education and ancillary services for their administrative areas. The activities of ETBs are financed mainly from Exchequer funds and partly from receipts generated locally through fees charged for services they provide.

### **3.6 REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BOARDS**

In 2006 the five regional tourism authorities, which had existed as private companies since 1964, were dissolved and subsumed into Fáilte Ireland with new regional tourism development boards being established in each area. The five regional tourism development boards published their regional development plans for the years 2008–2010 in late 2007, as did Dublin Tourism (an autonomous body for Dublin) and Shannon Development (see section 3.7). The Public Service Reform Plan published in late 2011 suggested further consolidation of the local and national tourism structures and in early 2012 Dublin Tourism was merged with Fáilte Ireland.

In response to the tourism crisis, in mid-2009 Fáilte Ireland launched a new business development strategy for the 2010-2012 period. This strategy signalled a move away from the traditional regions in favour of 'destination development'. The focus on key destinations as the 'basic building blocks of tourism' aimed to target the 'limited resources available to Fáilte Ireland...at those parts of the country where there is strong tourism activity and where, consequently, there are viable networks of tourism enterprises' (Fáilte Ireland, 2009, p. 13)

### **3.7 SHANNON DEVELOPMENT**

Shannon Development was set up as Shannon Free Airport Development Company in 1959 to promote the airport and region, and also acted as the regional tourism authority for the region. In 2014, in line with the state agency rationalisation programme, the tourism functions of Shannon Development were subsumed into Fáilte Ireland while enterprise functions were transferred to the IDA and Enterprise Ireland. Also in 2014, Shannon Group plc was established as a commercial semi-state company incorporating Shannon Airport Authority Limited, Shannon Commercial Enterprises Limited<sup>13</sup>, Shannon Castle Banquets and Heritage Limited and the International Aviation Services Centre (IASC).

### **3.8 WESTERN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

The Western Development Commission (WDC) was established as a statutory body in 1999 to promote economic and social development in the 7 western counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway and Clare. The three areas of WDC operation are: policy analysis and development; the promotion and development of strategic initiatives in various sectors in the west; and management of the WDC Investment Fund. The WDC is made up of 8 members appointed by the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

<sup>13</sup> Shannon Commercial Enterprise Limited ('Shannon Commercial Properties') was previously known as Shannon Development. The regional development and tourism functions have been transferred to the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and Fáilte Ireland. Shannon Commercial Properties has retained ownership and management of business and technology parks.

In an effort to stimulate jobs and rural development, as announced in the *Programme for a Partnership Government (2016)*, the Government intend to reinforce the role of the WDC, so that it supports the implementation of regional jobs plans in the West and North-West. As part of this, the WDC will be given a specific mandate to stimulate the development of enterprise networks in these two regions and to stimulate innovative approaches to development. This builds on the recent allocation of €2million in additional funding to support regional economic development in the west of Ireland, which the WDC will administer across a number of economic development projects.

### 3.9 ÚDARÁS NA GAELTACHTA

Údarás na Gaeltachta is the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht. Their overall objective is to ensure that Irish remains the main communal language of the Gaeltacht and is passed on to future generations.

Údarás na Gaeltachta operates on a national level through a service level agreement with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (formerly the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht). Údarás na Gaeltachta has a dedicated team working in three regional offices and covering all seven Gaeltacht regions offering a range of support services at local and regional and national levels and implementing the authority's functions in enterprise development and job creation, promotion of Irish language and culture, and community development. A governing board of 12 members and a staff of 80 implement the agency's development brief.

### 3.10 SUMMARY OF RATIONALISATIONS

Table 3.1 provides an overview of the changes discussed above, and in relation to the reform of local and regional government. Agency rationalisation and alignment programmes have resulted in the reduction of local and regional non-commercial public bodies by 49.7 per cent between 2012 and 2016. If we include the reforms to local and regional government, this figure is almost 59 per cent.

In nearly all cases outlined in this report, the reduction in the number of organisations has been a result of vertical integration. At the local level, enterprise and development functions have been integrated into the local authorities. At the regional level, organisations have been subsumed by their parent departments or agencies. For example, tourism functions at the regional level (including Regional Tourism Development Boards, Shannon Development and Dublin Tourism) have been subsumed into the national tourism development agency, Fáilte Ireland. It should be noted however, that in most cases agencies have retained a regional structure. Fáilte Ireland, for example, maintain a sub-national presence through regional offices in Cork, Sligo, Westmeath, Galway and Limerick.

TABLE 3.1 LOCAL AND REGIONAL BODIES IN IRELAND 2007 - 2016

Category	Number of Organisations as of May 2007	Number of Organisations as of July 2012	Number of Organisations as of October 2016
City and County Enterprise Boards	35	35	0
City and County Development Boards	34	34	0
Local Development Companies	38 (LEADER companies)	51	48
	36 (Partnership companies)		
City and County Childcare Committees	33	33	30
Education and Training Boards	33 (VECs)	33 (VECs)	16
Regional Tourism Development Boards (formerly Regional Tourism Authorities)	5	0	0
Dublin Tourism	1	1	0
Shannon Development	1	1	0
Harbour Commissions	10	1	0
Regional Fisheries Boards	7	0	0
Dublin Transportation Office	1	0	0
Western Development Commission	1	1	1
Údarás na Gaeltachta	1	1	1
<b>Local and Regional Non-Commercial Public Bodies</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>96</b>
Regional Authorities	8	8	3
Regional Assemblies	2	2	(Regional Assemblies)
Town Councils*	80	80	0
City/County Councils	34	34	31
<b>Local and Regional Government</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>130</b>

\* including those titled as Borough Councils

## 4.

## CONCLUSIONS

This report has outlined the changes to the landscape of sub-national governance in Ireland. In the last four years, local and regional government has undergone some of the most substantial changes in the history of the State. Most notably, the number of local authorities (including town councils) has been reduced from 114 to 31. The local government level was also the hardest hit by employment cutbacks. While numbers have fallen in all sectors since 2008, the biggest drop proportionally has been in local authorities (22 per cent) (Boyle, 2015).

Agency rationalisation has occurred at all levels of government, particularly since 2011 with the introduction of the first Public Service Reform Plan (which included an Agency Rationalisation Programme). At the national level, allowing for both the new agencies created and the agencies terminated, there has been a 13 per cent reduction in the number of non-commercial agencies between 2010 and 2015 (Boyle, 2016). As this report has established, the corresponding reduction at the local and regional level between 2012 and 2016, including government reform, has been almost 59 per cent.

At the local level, the alignment of community and economic development functions with local authorities has resulted in substantial changes to the systems of local governance. City and County Enterprise Boards and City and County Development Boards have been abolished, and their functions transferred to local authorities. While the number of local development companies (LDCs) has not changed significantly since 2012, their work has also become more closely aligned with local government through the establishment of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs). While this represents an opportunity to align the strategies of local authorities with the Rural Development Programme and the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), the 'bottom-up' work performed by local and community development organisations must also be considered. As recommended by the Steering Group for the Alignment of Local Government and Local Development, in January 2016 the government published a framework policy for local and community development in Ireland (Inter-Departmental Group, 2015). The framework provides an overarching national policy for, and a 'whole of government' approach to, local and community development. It advocates the use of a community-led approach to local development with a strong local government system as the key means of achieving this.

At the regional level, eight regional authorities and two regional assemblies have been replaced by three new regional assemblies. Eight new 'sub-regional strategic planning areas' have also been established. These broadly equate to the previous regional authorities, with some minor changes (see Figure 2.1). The government are currently developing a new National Planning Framework, which intends to provide the strategic context for planning at regional and local levels, including the preparation of new Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies. The regional versions of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation's 'Action Plan for Jobs' have been prepared along the boundaries of the new sub-regional strategic planning areas. This aligns well with the approach that is being taken by the regional assemblies, whereby key planning and economic development functions will be performed at sub-regional level.

The changes to the local and regional governance landscape, outlined in this report, present unique challenges and opportunities. Ireland's system of governance remains highly centralised, however a streamlined local and

regional government system has been given strengthened roles in relation to specific functions. Local authorities now have an increased role in coordinating community and economic development. While this is a largely positive development and can present a model for the role of local authorities as coordinators of service delivery, it should be cognisant of the bottom-up, community-led approach used by local development organisations. While the remit of regional assemblies remains limited, their enhanced functions regarding spatial and economic planning and oversight of local authorities, alongside the development of a national planning framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, provides an opportunity for greater coherence between national policy making and local action.

## 5.

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## APPENDIX 1

### LOCAL AND REGIONAL NON-COMMERCIAL PUBLIC BODIES 2016

#### Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (83)

##### Local Authorities (31)

- Carlow County Council
- Cavan County Council
- Clare County Council
- Cork City Council
- Cork County Council
- Donegal County Council
- Dublin City Council
- Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
- Fingal County Council
- Galway City Council
- Galway County Council
- Kerry County Council
- Kildare County Council
- Kilkenny County Council
- Laois County Council
- Leitrim County Council
- Limerick City and County Council
- Longford County Council
- Louth County Council
- Mayo County Council
- Meath County Council
- Monaghan County Council
- Offaly County Council
- Roscommon County Council
- Sligo County Council
- South Dublin County Council
- Tipperary County Council
- Waterford City and County Council
- Westmeath County Council
- Wexford County Council
- Wicklow County Council

##### Regional Assemblies (3)

- Northern and Western Regional Assembly
- Southern Regional Assembly
- Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

## Local Development Companies (48)

- Avondhu/Blackwater Partnership Limited
- Ballyfermot/Chapelizod Partnership Company Limited
- Ballyhoura Development Limited
- Blanchardstown Area Partnership Limited
- Bray Area Partnership Limited
- Breffni Integrated Limited
- Carlow County Development Partnership Limited
- Kildare LEADER Partnership (Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Teoranta)
- Clare Local Development Company Limited
- Comhar Chathair Chorcaí Teoranta
- Comhar na nOileán Teoranta
- County Kilkenny Leader Partnership Company Limited
- County Sligo LEADER Partnership Company Limited
- County Wicklow Community Partnership Limited
- Dublin North West Area Partnership (may also trade as Tolka Area Partnership Limited)
- Dublin South City Partnership (may also trade as Canal Communities Partnership or the Bluebell, Inchicore, Islandbridge, Kilmainham and Rialto Partnership Company)
- Donegal Local Development Company Limited
- Fingal Leader Partnership Company Limited
- Forum Connemara Limited
- Galway City Partnership Limited
- Galway Rural Development Company Limited
- Inishowen Development Partnership
- IRD Duhallow Limited
- Laois Community and Enterprise Development Company Limited
- Leitrim Integrated Development Company Limited (Leitrim Development Company)
- Longford Community Resources Limited
- Louth Leader Partnership
- Mayo North East Leader Partnership Company Teoranta
- Meath Community Rural and Social Development Partnership Limited (Meath Partnership)
- Monaghan Integrated Development Limited
- North and East Kerry Leader Partnership Teoranta (North East and West Kerry Development)
- North Tipperary Leader Partnership
- Northside Partnership Limited
- Offaly Integrated Local Development Company Limited
- PAUL Partnership (People Action Against Unemployment Limited)
- Roscommon Integrated Development Company Limited (Roscommon LEADER Partnership)
- SDC South Dublin County Partnership Limited
- South and East Cork Area Development Partnership Limited
- South Kerry Development Partnership Limited
- South Tipperary Development Company Limited
- South West Mayo Development Company Limited
- Southside Partnership DLR Limited
- Waterford Area Partnership Limited



- Waterford Leader Partnership Limited
- West Cork Development Partnership Limited
- West Limerick Resources Limited
- Westmeath Community Development Limited
- Wexford Local Development Company Limited

Western Development Commission

### **Department of Children and Youth Affairs (30)**

City and County Childcare Committees (30)

- Carlow County Childcare Committee
- Cavan County Childcare Committee
- Clare County Childcare Committee
- Cork City Childcare Committee
- Cork County Childcare Committee
- Donegal County Childcare Committee
- Dublin City Childcare Committee
- Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Childcare Committee
- Fingal County Childcare Committee
- Galway City & County Childcare Committee
- Kerry County Childcare Committee
- Kildare County Childcare Committee
- Kilkenny County Childcare Committee
- Laois County Childcare Committee
- Leitrim County Childcare Committee
- Limerick Childcare Committee
- Longford County Childcare Committee
- Louth County Childcare Committee
- Mayo County Childcare Committee
- Meath County Childcare Committee
- Monaghan County Childcare Committee
- Offaly County Childcare Committee
- Roscommon County Childcare Committee
- Sligo County Childcare Committee
- South Dublin County Childcare Committee
- Tipperary Childcare Committee
- Waterford Childcare Committee
- Westmeath County Childcare Committee
- Wexford County Childcare Committee
- Wicklow County Childcare Committee

**Department of Education and Skills (16)**

## Training and Education Boards (16)

- Cavan and Monaghan ETB
- Cork ETB
- Donegal ETB
- City of Dublin ETB
- Dublin & Dun Laoghaire ETB
- Galway & Roscommon ETB
- Kerry ETB
- Kildare & Wicklow ETB
- Kilkenny & Carlow ETB
- Laois & Offaly ETB
- Limerick & Clare ETB
- Longford & Westmeath ETB
- Louth & Meath ETB
- Mayo, Sligo & Leitrim ETB
- Tipperary ETB
- Waterford & Wexford ETB

**Department of Arts, Heritage, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (1)**

- Údarás na Gaeltachta

