

Congress of Local & Regional Authorities Europe

Successful Territorial Reform

Eupen, 5 May 2017

The Irish Experience

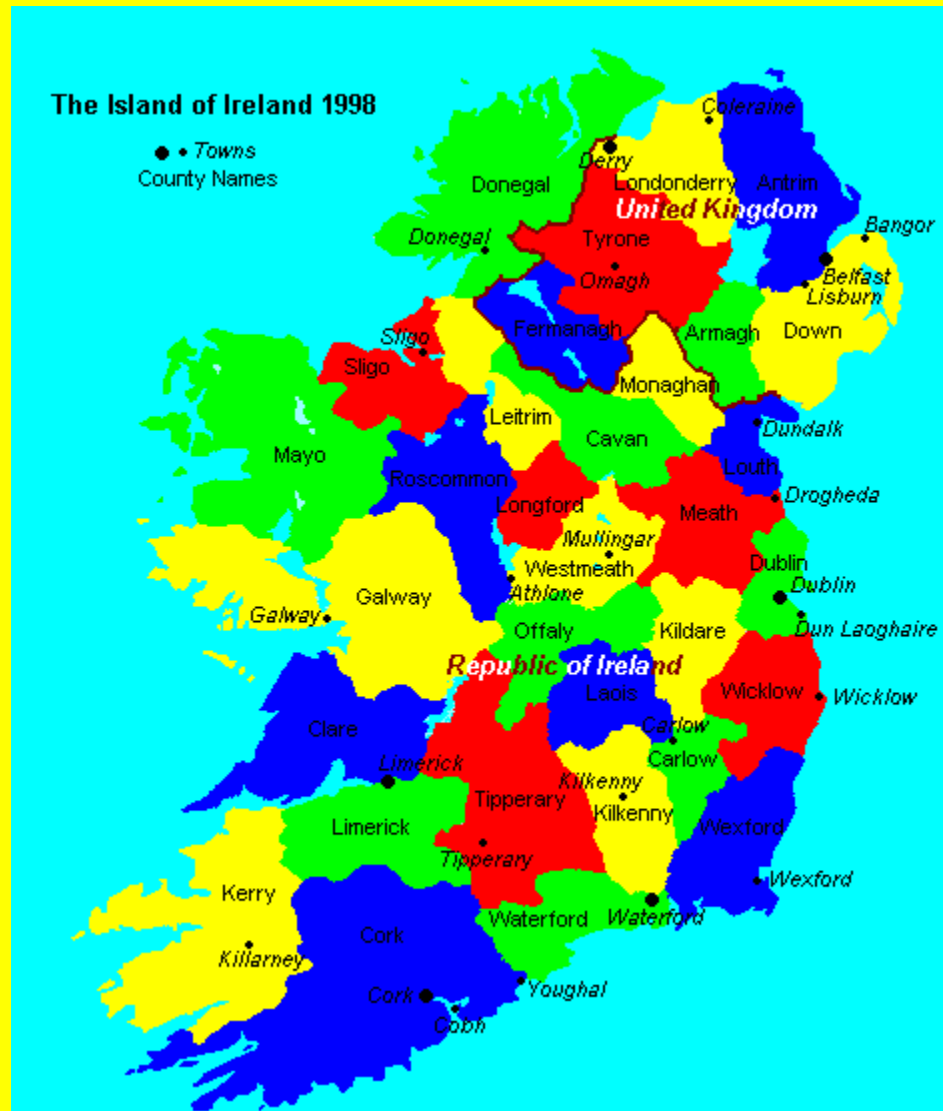
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1899

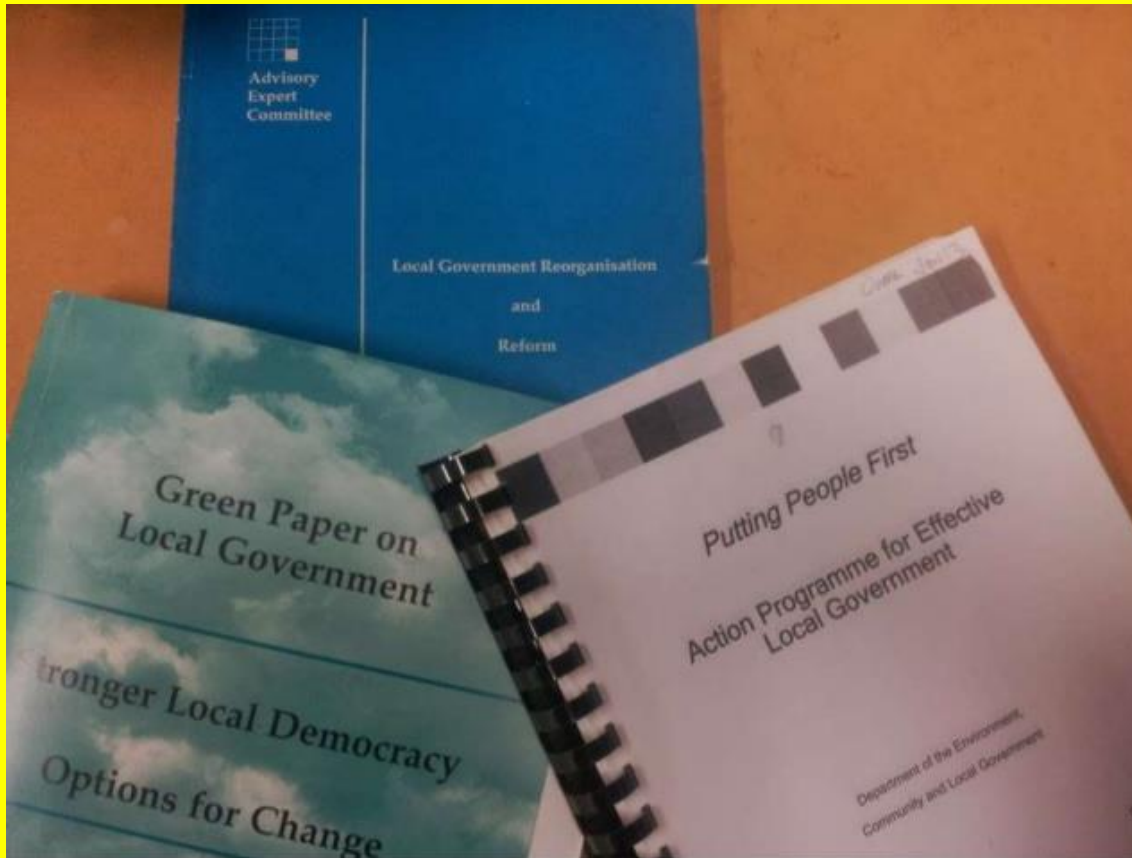




For Most of the 20th century Ireland's local government territorial configuration was as follows:

- **5 City Councils with full competences**
- **29 County Councils with full competences**
- **80 Town Councils with a varying range of competences**



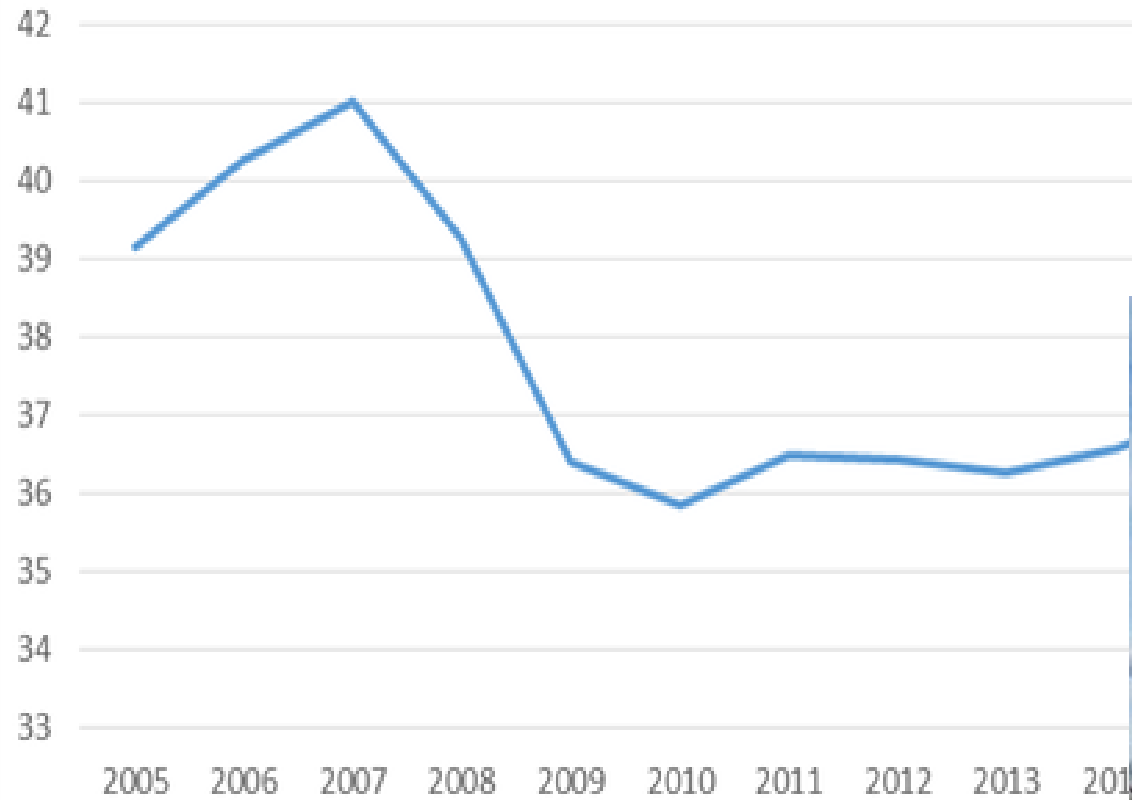


From 1981 numerous consultations, reports and green papers were produced on the question of local government reform.

There was general agreement that reform was needed but there was always another political priority to be addressed.

2008

Ireland: Real GDP per capita



A range of reforms including the following territorial changes:

- **The merger of two County Councils – North Tipperary and South Tipperary;**
- **The merger of two City Councils with their hinterland County Councils –**

Waterford City Council merges with Waterford County Council

Limerick City Council merges with Limerick County Council

*** The abolition of 80 town councils**

Note that all of the above changes were within the framework of the “traditional counties”.

No of Councillors reduced from 1,627 to 949



Round Table 2: Reform for better governance

- **Town Councils represented 46% of Councillors but only 14% of the population**
- **In many towns most of the population was living outside the 19th century town boundaries**
- **In 14 towns the population living in the Census town area was bigger than in the local government town area**
- **Democratic deficit: people living in towns had 2 votes – 1 for the Town Council and 1 for the County Council; people living in the rural areas had only 1 vote – for the County Council**
- **In terms of planning and allocation of resources the concept of the town and its hinterland suggested a modern approach – the towns were replaced with Municipal Districts, a form of sub-unit of the County Council but with some independent powers.**

Have the reforms been successful?

It is too early to tell as it is just three years since the reforms took effect. This is a short time in a system that was embedded for more than a century. However on the metric of money there is some evidence of savings in excess of five percent emerging.

The programme of the current Government declares that it will consider measures to strengthen town government - while stopping short of saying it will reinstate Town Councils.



**Round table 3
accommodating
strong regional
identities**



