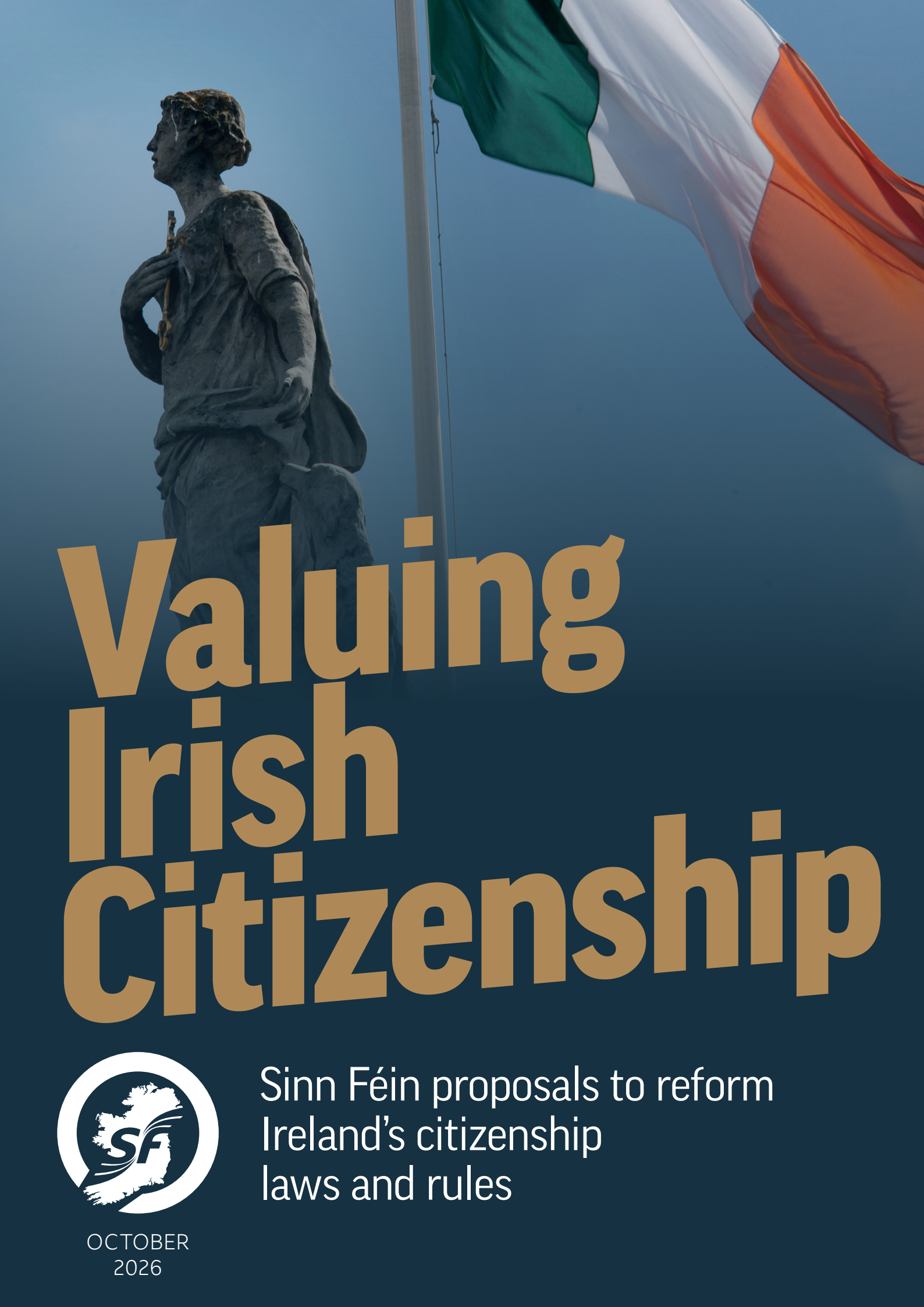


Valuing Irish Citizenship

Sinn Féin proposals to reform Ireland's citizenship laws and rules

OCTOBER
2026



Introduction

Irish citizenship is something to be valued. It constitutes membership of our nation, a source of rights and responsibilities and a statement of belonging. For those who acquire it through naturalisation, it should mark a genuine and lasting commitment to Ireland and to the responsibilities that come with citizenship.

Sinn Féin believes that migration must be managed in the best interests of the people of Ireland, north and south, taking into account our needs in terms of workers for key sectors such as health; the availability of housing and the capacity of public services; and including a humanitarian response to those fleeing war and persecution.

A key aspect of migration policy must be ensuring that those who legally make Ireland their long-term home are integrated into our society and communities. International evidence clearly shows that the best way to do this is by providing a clear, transparent and fair route to citizenship, a route that prioritises civic engagement and contribution.

For too long, successive Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael governments have failed to develop a coherent citizenship policy.

The law, as it stands, allows for broad ministerial discretion, key tests are vague and applicants often face delays and uncertainty. In practice, the principal consideration to date has been the length of time a person has lawfully spent in the state.

Time spent in the country matters. But on its own it does not establish integration, contribution, good character or commitment to Ireland. Sinn Féin proposes reforming citizenship laws to ensure all applicants can demonstrate integration into Irish society, a meaningful contribution and commitment to Ireland, and that they are of good character.

The failure of governments to address this issue before now is particularly striking given the scale of change over recent decades. Our population has grown, north and south; the number of people seeking naturalisation has increased; and citizenship now carries the rights of EU citizenship in a post-Brexit Europe as well as the rights and duties attached to Irish nationality.

Government should have reviewed the system carefully and openly years ago. Instead, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael allowed pressure to build and then announced major changes without first publishing a complete policy, accompanying assessments, an implementation plan or a secure alternative status for people who have lived here lawfully for many years but do not seek, or who may not qualify for, citizenship.

Sinn Féin will approach reform constructively. The Irish five-year naturalisation residence requirement was at the lower end of the EU range. While a number of EU states have similar requirements, many others require between eight and ten years' residence before a person can apply for citizenship.

Given that Ireland's five-year residency requirement is at the lower end of the EU range, and that applicants are not currently required to pass formal language, civic knowledge or integration tests, the Irish citizenship process may have appeared more accessible than those in other EU states.

We support stronger, clearer and more consistent rules. We also insist that the rules must be fair, capable of being understood in advance and administered within appropriate timelines. Citizenship must not be reduced to a passport secured by the passage of time. Neither should it become a privilege reserved for the wealthy and well paid, or a process governed by political discretion and inaccessible tests.

This paper sets out a balanced republican approach. It protects the value of citizenship; recognises lawful residence, work, care, education and community contribution; vindicates the rights of people in the Six Counties; and creates a statutory long-term residence status as a secure alternative to naturalisation.



Matt Carthy TD
SINN FÉIN SPOKESPERSON
ON JUSTICE, HOME AFFAIRS & MIGRATION


An tAontas Eorpach
European Union
ÉIRE
IRELAND
Pas
Passport

Réamhrá

Tá meas ag dul don saoránacht Éireannach. Fágann an tsaorántacht gur ball dár náisiún an duine, go bhfuil cearta aige agus freagrachtaí air agus go bhfuil muintearas cothaithe. Má fhaightaer saorántacht tríd an bpróiséas bronnta ba cheart go gciallódh sé fíorthiomantas buan d'Éirinn agus do na freagrachtaí a eascraíonn as saoránacht.

Creideann Sinn Féin gur gá an imirce a bhainistiú ar bhealach a rachaidh chun tairbhe do mhuintir na hÉireann, Thuaidh agus Theas, ag cur san áireamh na riachtanais atá againn ó thaobh oibrithe in earnálacha tábhachtacha ar nós na seirbhísí sláinte; tithíocht a bheith ar fáil agus acmhainneacht na seirbhísí poiblí; agus gur cheart déileáil go daonnúil leo siúd a bhíonn ar a dteitheadh ó chogadh agus géarleanúint.

Caithfear a chinntiú, mar chuid tábhachtach den bheartas i leith na himirce, go mbíonn daoine a chuireann fúthu in Éirinn go dleathach agus go fadtéarmach imeasctha inár sochaí agus inár bpobal. Is léir ón bhfianaise idirnáisiúnta gurb é an chaoi is fearr chun é sin a chinntiú ná bealach soiléir, trédhearcach agus cothrom a leagan síos le saoránacht a bhaint amach, bealach a thugann tús áite don rannpháirtíocht phobail agus don chomhoibriú.

Le fada an lá anois, tá teipthe ar rialtais éagsúla de chuid Fhianna Fáil agus Fhine Gael as a chéile polasaí stuama don saoránacht a fhorbairt.

Fágann an dlí, mar a sheasann sé, go mbíonn cuid mhaith den rogha faoin aireacht, go bhfuil na príomhthástálacha doiléir agus go gcaitheann iarratasóirí go minic aghaidh a thabhairt ar mhoilleadóireacht agus ar éiginnteacht. I ndáiríre, is é an t-achar a bhí caite go dleathach ag duine sa stát an rud ba mhó a chuireadh san áireamh go dtí seo.

Tá tábhacht ag baint leis an méid ama a bhíonn caite sa tír ag duine. Ach ní cruthú atá ann ar imeascadh, rannpháirtíocht, dea-theist ná tiomantas d'Éirinn. Tá sé i gceist ag Sinn Féin leasú a dhéanamh ar na dlíthe saoránachta lena chinntiú go mbeidh gach iarratasóir in ann a léiriú go bhfuil siad imeasctha i sochaí na hÉireann, go bhfuil siad ag cur go fiúntach le hÉirinn agus iad tiomanta di, agus go bhfuil dea-theist orthu.

Is díol suntais é gur teip ar na rialtais aghaidh a thabhairt ar an gceist seo, go háirithe agus an oiread sin athraithe tar éis tarlú le blianta beaga anuas. Tá fás tagtha ar ár ndaonra, ó thuaidh agus ó dheas, tá níos mó daoine ag lorg eadóirseachta agus anois, san Eoraip iar-Bhreatimeachta, téann cearta saoránachta san AE leis an saoránacht Éireannach chomh maith leis na cearta agus na dualgais a bhaineann le náisiúntacht Éireannach.

Ba chóir go mbeadh an rialtas tar éis athbhreithniú cúramach agus oscailte a dhéanamh ar an gcóras i bhfad ó shin. Ina áit sin, is amhlaidh gur lig Fianna Fáil agus Fine Gael don cheist dul go cnámh na huillinne agus ansin d'fhógair siad athruithe móra gan polasaí iomlán a bheith foilsithe roimh ré, ach an oiread leis na measúnuithe agus an plean forfheidhmithe a rachadh leis an bpolasaí, agus ní raibh aon stádas malartach seasmhach leagtha síos acu do dhaoine atá ina gcónaí anseo go dleathach le blianta fada ach nach bhfuil ag lorg shaoránacht, nó nach bhfuil ina theideal.

Rachaidh Sinn Féin i ngleic leis an leasú ar bhealach fiúntach. Bhí riachtanas cónaithe na hÉireann don eadóirseacht, ag cúig bliana, ar cheann den chuid ab ísle ar scála an AE. Cé go bhfuil riachtanais cosúil leo seo ag roinnt stát eile de chuid an AE, tá go leor eile a éilíonn go gcaithfeadh daoine a bheith ag maireachtáil sa tír idir ocht agus deich mbliana sula bhféadfaidís cur isteach ar shaoránacht.

Ó tharla go bhfuil riachtanas cónaithe cúig bliana na hÉireann ar cheann den chuid is ísle san AE, agus nach gceanglaítear faoi láthair ar iarratasóirí pas a fháil i dtrialacha foirmiúla teanga, eolais shibhialta nó imeasctha, d'fhéadfadh gur mheas daoine go raibh phróiseas saoránachta na hÉireann níos éasca ná an phróiseas atá i stáit eile de chuid an AE.

Teastaíonn rialacha níos géire, níos soiléire agus níos seasmhaí uainn. Tá muid ag éileamh freisin go mbeadh na rialacha sin cóir, éasca le tuiscint roimh ré agus riartha taobh istigh d'amlínte atá oiriúnach. Níor cheart go mbeadh an tsaoránacht ina rud suarach ar nós pas, a bhronntar bunaithe ar achar ama. Níor chóir ach an oiread go mbeadh sí ina pribhléid a bhronnfaí ar na daoine is saibhre agus orthu siúd atá ar thuarastal maith, ná ina próiseas a bheadh bunaithe ar bhreithiúnas polaitiúil agus ar thástálacha doshroichte.

Sa pháipéar seo tá cur chuige leagtha amach atá tomhaiste agus poblachtach. Tugann sé cosaint don luach a bhaineann leis an saoránacht; tugann sé aitheantas don chónaitheacht dleathach, don obair agus don chúram, don oideachas agus an rannpháirtíocht sa pobal; seasann sé le cearta na ndaoine sna Sé Chontae; agus cruthaíonn sé stádas reachtúil cónaithe fadtéarmach mar leagan seasmhach den eadóirseacht.



Matt Carthy TD
URLABHRAÍ DLÍ AGUS CIRT SHINN FÉIN

Our Republican Approach to Citizenship

Citizenship is a legal bond between a person and the State, but Irish citizenship is also membership of a nation that is older and wider than the 26-county state.

Article 2 of the Irish Constitution affirms the entitlement and birthright of every person born on the island of Ireland to be part of the Irish Nation. The Good Friday Agreement recognises the birthright of the people of the Six Counties, as defined in the Agreement, to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both.

A republican citizenship policy must therefore be national, democratic and transparent. It should welcome those who legally make Ireland their permanent home while requiring respect for our laws, our democratic institutions, the equal status of every citizen and the rights and responsibilities that citizenship entails.

It must also distinguish citizenship from permission to reside. A person can be a valued and lawful member of society without choosing to become an Irish citizen. Conversely, a citizenship process that asks only how many years have passed, does not sufficiently examine the quality and durability of a person's connection to Ireland.



Our approach is guided by the following principles:

- **VALUE:** Irish citizenship should be a significant status, not an automatic administrative outcome.
- **FAIRNESS:** the same published rules should apply consistently, with reasonable accommodation for disability, age and circumstances outside an applicant's control.
- **CONTRIBUTION:** work, tax compliance, education, care, family responsibilities, volunteering and participation in community life should all be capable of demonstrating contribution.
- **INTEGRATION:** the State should support applicants to become part of Irish communities, learn Irish, English or Irish Sign Language and understand Irish civic life in a way that goes beyond a simple test.
- **GOOD CHARACTER:** criminality, fraud and deliberate abuse must carry consequences.
- **DUE PROCESS:** applicants are entitled to a decision within a reasonable time, reasons for refusal and an independent appeal.
- **ALL-IRELAND RIGHTS:** partition must not diminish the Irish citizenship rights guaranteed to people in the Six Counties.
- **CERTAINTY OF RESIDENCE:** citizenship should not be the only means by which a lawful long-term resident can secure a stable future in Ireland.

Why Reform Is Necessary

The core naturalisation law remains the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, amended repeatedly over seventy years. The result is a system that combines detailed residence calculations with broad ministerial discretion. Applicants may meet the stated conditions and still have no entitlement to a certificate of naturalisation. There is no full statutory appeal on the merits of a refusal.

Successive governments have relied too heavily on length of residence as the primary measure of connection. Other requirements, including good character and the intention to continue residing in the State, have lacked sufficient statutory definition. The State has not built a universal civic integration programme or a clear language pathway into naturalisation.

Long-term residence remains a narrow administrative scheme, mainly tied to employment-permit history, rather than a comprehensive status placed on a statutory footing.

This neglect has consequences. It makes the system appear both too loose and too arbitrary: too loose because important ideas such as integration, character and commitment are not properly defined; arbitrary because the Minister retains wide discretion and applicants cannot always predict how their circumstances will be treated.

The Government's response has also been disjointed. In November 2025 it announced self-sufficiency restrictions and increased the residence requirement for people granted international protection from three to five years, with the latter change applied from 8 December 2025. In September 2026 it announced a wider bill proposing an eight-year standard residence period, language proficiency, a civics test and economic self-sufficiency. Further proposals reported by Government include stronger consequences for breaches of immigration law and wider revocation grounds involving national security and public order.

The Government has been far too slow to ensure that our citizenship process and rules are up to date and fit for purpose in light of the significant changes of recent years, particularly the substantial increase in citizenship applications. However, major reform must be based on published evidence and debated as one coherent reform package. It should not be constructed through successive announcements designed to appear tough while the practical questions are left unanswered.

From the Government announcements we have headlines, rather than detailed proposals.

Sinn Féin Approach to Government Headline Proposals

Government proposal	Sinn Féin position	Conditions and safeguards
Increase standard residence from five to eight years	**Support an eight-year standard adult route as part of a complete reform**	Possible statutory long-term residence after five years; retain specific shorter protected routes; fair transitional arrangements
Language proficiency in English, Irish or Irish Sign Language	**Support practical basic proficiency**	Provision of courses and assessment; accessible formats; exemptions for disability and other compelling circumstances
Civics, society and politics test	**Support a fair and transparent assessment**	Published syllabus; support with preparation; focus on democratic life, Irish history & society, rights and responsibilities
Economic self-sufficiency	**Support contribution and compliance, not a wealth test**	Economic self-sufficiency and income guidelines rather than blanket salary floor; protect carers, people with disabilities, those who are ill, people made redundant and essential lower-paid workers
Stronger good-character rules	**Support clear statutory rules**	Focus on criminal offending - both in Ireland and elsewhere - fraud and deliberate dishonesty; proportionality; written reasons and right to appeal process
Consequences for immigration law breaches	**Support action on serious and deliberate abuse**	Distinguish fraud, evasion and repeated non-compliance from technical or employer-caused breaches
Wider citizenship revocation	**Support with clear definitions**	Independent inquiry with High Court confirmation
Exclusion of time under Temporary Protection	**As Sinn Féin has stated Temporary Protection is an emergency status and not an appropriate citizenship route**	

The Government has not yet answered several essential questions. It has not produced any impact assessments. It has not explained the level or design of the language test, the content of the civics test, the social-protection payments that would be considered. It has not offered a statutory long-term residence alternative. It has not committed to an appeal process or to binding processing timelines.

Sinn Féin will deal constructively with each stage of any legislation against the framework in this paper and will seek robust pre-legislative scrutiny by the Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

We will also seek to ensure that at each stage the bill is subject to proper scrutiny; unlike the International Protection Bill during which Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael routinely imposed guillotines, unnecessarily tight timeframes and prevented the Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Home Affairs & Migration from conducting Committee Stage deliberation. The International Protection Bill, which gave effect to Ireland's decision to participate in the EU Migration and Asylum Pact in its entirety, has transferred significant powers in the area of migration, with serious implications for Irish sovereignty.



Sinn Féin's Approach:

An Earned and Accessible Route to Naturalisation

Standard residence requirement

Sinn Féin supports a standard requirement of eight years of lawful reckonable residence for adult naturalisation. That period must include a substantial recent period of continuous residence and must be calculated under clear rules published in primary legislation or binding regulations.

An eight-year period should not stand alone. After five years, an eligible lawful resident should have the option to apply for statutory long-term residence subject to a number of criteria. Citizenship at eight years would then represent a further decision to join the Irish political community, supported by evidence of language, civic knowledge, good character and commitment to the country.

The following shorter or distinct routes should be maintained in a proportionate form:

- people granted refugee status or subsidiary protection;
- spouses and civil partners of Irish citizens where the relationship is genuine and continuing;
- children born in Ireland who have grown up, established Ireland as their home and been educated here but did not acquire citizenship automatically;
- children whose parent becomes an Irish citizen;
- stateless persons; and
- persons who have rendered exceptional service to Ireland.

The precise residence periods for these routes should be set out in legislation. Ministerial power to waive conditions should be retained for genuinely exceptional cases, but every waiver should be recorded by category and reported annually without identifying the person concerned.

Citizenship through commitment and integration, not wealth

Sinn Féin has been a consistent critic of the Immigrant Investor Programme, which effectively operated as a "cash-for-visas" scheme, enabling wealthy individuals to obtain Irish residency through financial investment. Residency acquired under the scheme could provide a pathway to citizenship.

Sinn Féin remains opposed to any form of golden visa programme as a route to citizenship. Irish citizenship should never be influenced by wealth or privilege. Instead, it should be grounded in a genuine commitment to Ireland, meaningful integration into society and a sustained connection to the country.

Transitional fairness

People who have established their lives in Ireland under the existing rules should not have their qualifying residence period extended retrospectively. Sinn Féin would provide an express statutory transitional entitlement, using the date on which the Government first publicly announced the proposed increase as the cut-off. The legislation should therefore provide that:

- Applications validly lodged before commencement are determined under the previous rules.
- Transitional arrangements should apply, so that any person who was already lawfully resident in the State before the Government's announcement remains subject to the residence requirement that applied to their particular citizenship route at that time. Those individuals should be permitted to complete the remaining period after the announcement and apply when eligible, without being required to satisfy the new eight-year requirement or comply with an arbitrary application deadline.
- People using this transitional route must meet the new civic knowledge and language requirements and all other applicable requirements, including good character, subject to the exemptions, reasonable accommodations and integration supports set out in this policy. Residence must remain lawful and satisfy the applicable reckonability and continuity rules; no person loses reckonable residence already lawfully accumulated because the classification of a permission is changed after the fact.

Residence and absence rules

Applicants need certainty about travel for work, family emergencies and ordinary holidays. The law should state clearly how absences are counted. Limited and reasonable absences should not interrupt residence. Longer absences should be capable of being excused only for work assignments, study, medical treatment, caring responsibilities, bereavement or other compelling reasons where Ireland clearly remains the person's principal home.

The online residence calculator should have a statutory basis, allow applicants to see how each permission and absence is treated and produce a record that can accompany an application.

Language, Integration and Civic Participation

National language requirement

An applicant should demonstrate practical proficiency in English, Irish or Irish Sign Language. The purpose is to show an ability to participate in everyday and civic life, not academic fluency.

Sinn Féin proposes an initial standard, broadly equivalent to functional proficiency. The final level should be set only after consultation with stakeholders such as language-education specialists, disability organisations, migrant groups, trade unions and employers. It should be reviewed after three years using evidence on pass rates, access and integration outcomes.

Sinn Féin also proposes that the system includes additional advantages for those applicants who have gained proficiency in the first national language, An Ghaeilge. That may include measures such as reduced certification fees or a reduced residency requirement.

The State should provide:

- Citizenship focused language courses throughout the State, with evening, weekend and online provision;
- educational leave supports for lower-paid workers where necessary;
- recognition of Irish schooling and qualifications completed through English or Irish;
- assessment through Irish Sign Language on an equal basis; and
- proportionate exemptions for people with disability or other compelling circumstances.

Civics assessment

The citizenship process should provide evidence of an understanding of:

- the Constitution and democratic institutions;
- the electoral processes;
- the rule of law and basic provisions of the legal system;
- the rights and responsibilities of citizens;
- Irish history and society;
- Irish culture, including the Irish language;
- core principles of equality between women and men, freedom of religion and conscience, freedom of expression and respect for minority rights; and
- practical civic matters such as local government, education, health, taxation and participation in community life.

The syllabus should be accessible and publicly available. Preparation materials should be provided to applicants. Completion of an approved civic course should be available as an alternative to a single high-stakes examination.







Contribution and Economic Self Sufficiency

Sinn Féin agrees that naturalisation should recognise contribution and that applicants should be honest in their dealings with the State. While income guidelines are one important way of determining self-sufficiency, we reject the idea that contribution can be reduced to a blanket salary level or the absence of any social-protection claim.

Social insurance payments are earned entitlements. Illness Benefit, Maternity Benefit, Parent's Benefit and Jobseeker's Benefit cannot reasonably be treated as proof that a person has failed to contribute. The receipt of means-tested supports secured due to disability, caring responsibilities, domestic violence, temporary unemployment or low wages should not negate wider contribution to Irish society.

Instead, legislation should require an overall assessment covering:

- economic self-sufficiency;
- compliance with tax and social-insurance obligations;
- lawful employment, self-employment, education or vocational training;
- full-time care, including in the home, of children, older people or people with disabilities;
- voluntary and community activity;
- efforts to secure work where the person is able to work;
- any significant debt to the State; and
- circumstances such as illness, disability, caring, redundancy or exploitation by an employer.

Regulations must define the evidence required and the safeguards that apply.

Good Character Immigration Compliance

A statutory good-character test

The present concept of good character is too open-ended. Sinn Féin proposes a statutory test requiring consideration of:

- convictions for serious offences;
- repeated offending or persistent disregard for the law;
- fraud or material deception in immigration, citizenship, tax or social-protection matters;
- compliance with court orders and significant lawful debts to the State;
- International Policing information subject to fair procedures; and
- conduct towards Ireland's democratic institutions and constitutional order.

Where criminal proceedings are pending, a decision may be deferred.

Compliance with Immigration Law

Citizenship should not reward deliberate evasion of immigration controls. Proven identity fraud, sham arrangements, concealment of material facts, unlawful re-entry following deportation and repeated intentional breach should render an application unsuccessful.

The law must distinguish those matters from short administrative gaps, mistakes promptly corrected, delays caused by the State, and breaches attributable to an exploitative employer or sponsor. A person should know the allegation, see the substance of the evidence, have an opportunity to answer it and appeal the final decision.

Revocation of Naturalised Citizenship

Citizenship acquired through fraud should be revoked. There must also be consequences where a naturalised citizen commits serious crimes that fundamentally repudiate the declaration to faithfully observe the laws of the State and respect its democratic values.

Sinn Féin would legislate to ensure that any proposal to revoke citizenship is evaluated by an independent inquiry panel with findings to revoke subject to confirmation by the High Court.

Children Born and Raised in Ireland

The people of the 26 Counties decided by a large majority in 2004 to amend the constitutional rules on citizenship by birth. Sinn Féin opposed that referendum at the time, but we fully respect the democratic decision.

The Constitution now provides that a person born on the island without at least one parent who is an Irish citizen or entitled to be an Irish citizen does not have an automatic constitutional entitlement to citizenship unless legislation provides otherwise. The law also recognises parental citizenship, unrestricted residence and specified periods of parental residence on the island.

There must nevertheless be a clear and humane route for children who are born here, grow up here and know no other home. The reduced residence route introduced for Irish-born children should be retained. Decisions must give primary consideration to the best interests of the child, education in Ireland, family unity, identity and the child's own views according to age and maturity.

No child should be disadvantaged by an administrative error for which they were not responsible. Applications concerning children should be prioritised and decided within six months.

Irish Citizenship and the Six Counties

Irish citizenship policy cannot be confined to the twenty-six-county state. The Irish nation encompasses the whole island. The Good Friday Agreement recognises the birthright of the people of the north to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, and confirms that the right to hold both citizenships would not be affected by any future constitutional change.

Anyone born on the island before 1 January 2005 is an Irish citizen or entitled to claim Irish citizenship. For those born on or after that date, entitlement depends on the citizenship or residence status of a parent, including whether a parent was Irish or British, entitled to reside on the island without a time limit, or had the required period of lawful residence.

Sinn Féin will ensure that these rights are real in practice.

A Northern Citizenship Section

Sinn Féin proposes a dedicated all-island section within the Department of Justice to:

- provide clear advice on citizenship and passport entitlements;
- assist with complex birth, adoption and parental-status records;
- co-ordinate with relevant authorities while protecting personal data;
- publish processing times for six-county applications; and
- ensure affordable and accessible documentation for children, older people and low-income applicants.

Where a person already possesses citizenship as a matter of law, the process should be one of recognition and documentation, not naturalisation.

A facilitated Route Based on Enduring Connection

Some people born in the north after 1 January 2005 may not meet the automatic parental conditions, despite being raised and ordinarily resident on the island and developing an enduring connection to Ireland.

Sinn Féin would introduce a facilitated statutory registration process allowing persons born in the Six counties who are ordinarily and lawfully resident on the island of Ireland, and who have established a genuine and enduring connection to the State, to acquire Irish citizenship without having to rely on the standard naturalisation process.

We would also provide a mechanism for those who have legally moved to the North, including those married to Irish citizens, and who meet the same conditions including commitment to Ireland, language proficiency, civic assessments, contribution to Irish society and good character assessments.

Citizenship must carry meaningful national participation. Sinn Féin supports the right of Irish citizens in the north and abroad to vote in presidential elections. We will also expand civic information, access to consular services and participation in citizens' assemblies and other national consultative processes.

Statutory Long Term Residence

Ireland's existing Long Term Residency Scheme is administrative and narrow. It generally requires sixty months of qualifying residence connected to employment permits, while a separate Stamp 5 permission without condition as to time normally requires eight years of legal residence. This fragmented system leaves many lawful residents repeatedly renewing temporary permissions and encourages people to seek citizenship primarily to obtain security.

Sinn Féin would enact a statutory Long Term Residence Act.



Eligibility

An applicant would normally qualify after five years of continuous lawful reckonable residence. Qualifying residence would include lawful employment permissions, family permissions, refugee or subsidiary-protection status and other durable permissions prescribed by regulation.

Time as a short-term visitor or on a student permission would not count.

Applicants would have to:

- establish identity and five years of qualifying residence;
- comply with immigration law;
- be of good character under clear statutory criteria;
- meet tax obligations; and
- show that Ireland is their principal home.

There would be no civics test for basic long-term residence, as it does not confer the same rights and entitlements as citizenship. However, language and integration supports should be made readily available, actively encouraged, and properly resourced.

Rights Attached to the Status

Long-term residents would receive a five-year renewable permission, moving to permission without time limit after a further qualifying period.

The status would include:

- the right to work, change employer, be self-employed and establish a business without an employment permit;
- access to education and healthcare and other public services as defined by law;
- a transparent route to family reunification, subject to proportionate conditions, including self-sufficiency in housing and income;
- protection from arbitrary cancellation or non-renewal;
- the right to leave and return, with status normally lost only after a prolonged absence or permanent settlement elsewhere; and
- written reasons and an independent appeal against refusal, cancellation or loss.

Long-term residence would not confer an Irish passport, the right to vote in Dáil or presidential elections, eligibility for offices reserved to citizens, unconditional consular protection as an Irish national or the right to transmit Irish citizenship to children. Those are citizenship rights.

This distinction protects the value of citizenship while giving lawful residents the stability necessary to work, raise families and participate in their communities.

Fair Decisions and an Accountable Service

STRONGER RULES REQUIRE STRONGER ADMINISTRATION. SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:

An Independent Appeal

An applicat refused naturalisation or long-term residence should have a statutory right to an independent appeal on fact and law.

The appeal body would be able to affirm, vary or overturn a decision or direct that an application be reconsidered.

Cases where security material have affected decisions special procedures will be required, but secrecy must be kept to the minimum necessary. A security-cleared special advocate model should be examined to protect both security and fair procedures.

Written reasons

Every refusal should identify the legal requirement not met, the relevant facts and the principal reasons for the decision.

Service standards

The State should aim to decide complete standard applications within twelve months and priority child applications within six months. Complex cases should receive a written update every six months. When targets are missed, the Department will be required to provide explanations and identify the next step and new time frames.

Independent Oversight and Annual Reporting

An annual report to the Oireachtas should set out:

- applications, grants, refusals, withdrawals and pending cases;
- median and longest processing times;
- outcomes by application route;
- the broad grounds for refusal;
- appeals and their outcomes;
- waivers of conditions by category;
- revocation proceedings and outcomes;
- language and civics assessment results and exemptions; and
- long-term residence applications and decisions.

Supporting Integration Before the Application

Citizenship policy begins long before a form is submitted. Government cannot demand integration while failing to provide the means to achieve it.

Sinn Féin would develop a national integration programme delivered through Education and Training Boards, Local Authorities and community partners. It would include language learning, civic orientation, workplace rights, information on public services and opportunities for participation in community life.

Employers recruiting workers from outside the European Economic Area should be required to provide time and information for integration courses. The State should ensure that sponsorship arrangements do not trap workers with exploitative employers or prevent them from demonstrating economic participation.

Local organisations should receive support to provide conversation groups, civic courses, mentoring and volunteering opportunities. Integration should be a two-way process: new residents undertake to participate and respect the law, while the State and communities ensure that participation is possible.

Implementation Plan

In government, Sinn Féin would implement this framework in three stages.

WITHIN SIX MONTHS

- publish the evidence, assessments and legal analysis supporting citizenship reform;
- legislate for transitional protection of the previous qualifying residence timeframe for people already lawfully resident before the Government's announcement, while applying the new civic, language and other applicable requirements;
- publish draft language and civics standards for consultation;
- begin legislation for an independent citizenship and residence appeal;
- establish an implementation group on citizenship rights for those living in the Six counties; and
- publish a resourcing plan for the Citizenship Division and Passport Service.

WITHIN FIRST YEAR

- enact the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Reform Act;
- enact statutory long-term residence;
- launch language and civic courses;
- establish the Northern Citizenship Section;
- put residence and absence calculations on a clear statutory footing; and
- commence the independent appeal mechanism.

WITHIN THREE YEARS

- review the impact of operation of new framework;
- review language and civics outcomes;
- assess the operation of revocation legislation;
- report on the take-up and labour-market impact of long-term residence; and
- publish recommendations for any further reform required, including in preparation for constitutional change and Irish unity.

Conclusion

Irish citizenship is not a commodity and it should not be an afterthought in migration policy. It is a bond of rights, responsibilities and belonging.

Successive governments failed to keep citizenship law aligned with a changing Ireland. Their inaction left a system in which the passage of time carried too much weight, other requirements remained unclear and applicants had too little certainty or recourse. It failed to prioritise integration and contribution to Irish society.

The answer is not another series of disconnected announcements. It is a complete, fair and enforceable framework.

Sinn Féin's proposals protect the value of citizenship while recognising the contribution of people who have made Ireland their home. They defend the national rights of Irish citizens in the Six Counties. They distinguish citizenship from secure residence. They are firm on fraud, serious criminality and deliberate abuse; and fair to workers, carers, families, refugees, people with disabilities and children.

Sinn Féin's approach to citizenship is just one element of a wider approach to managing migration. Citizenship policy must form part of a comprehensive migration strategy that reflects the needs of the State, the availability of housing and public services and our ability to successfully integrate those who come here. That strategy must also encompass how and when work permits, visas and other immigration permissions are granted, ensuring that migration is managed in a fair, sustainable and planned manner.

That is the basis on which citizenship can command public confidence, support integration and strengthen the Irish nation as we prepare for constitutional change and a united Ireland.



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