



Tionól Réigiúnach
an Deiscirt

Southern Regional
Assembly

Southern Regional Assembly

Understanding the Role and Functions of
Regional Governance



Cumann Réigiún na hÉireann
Association of Irish Regions



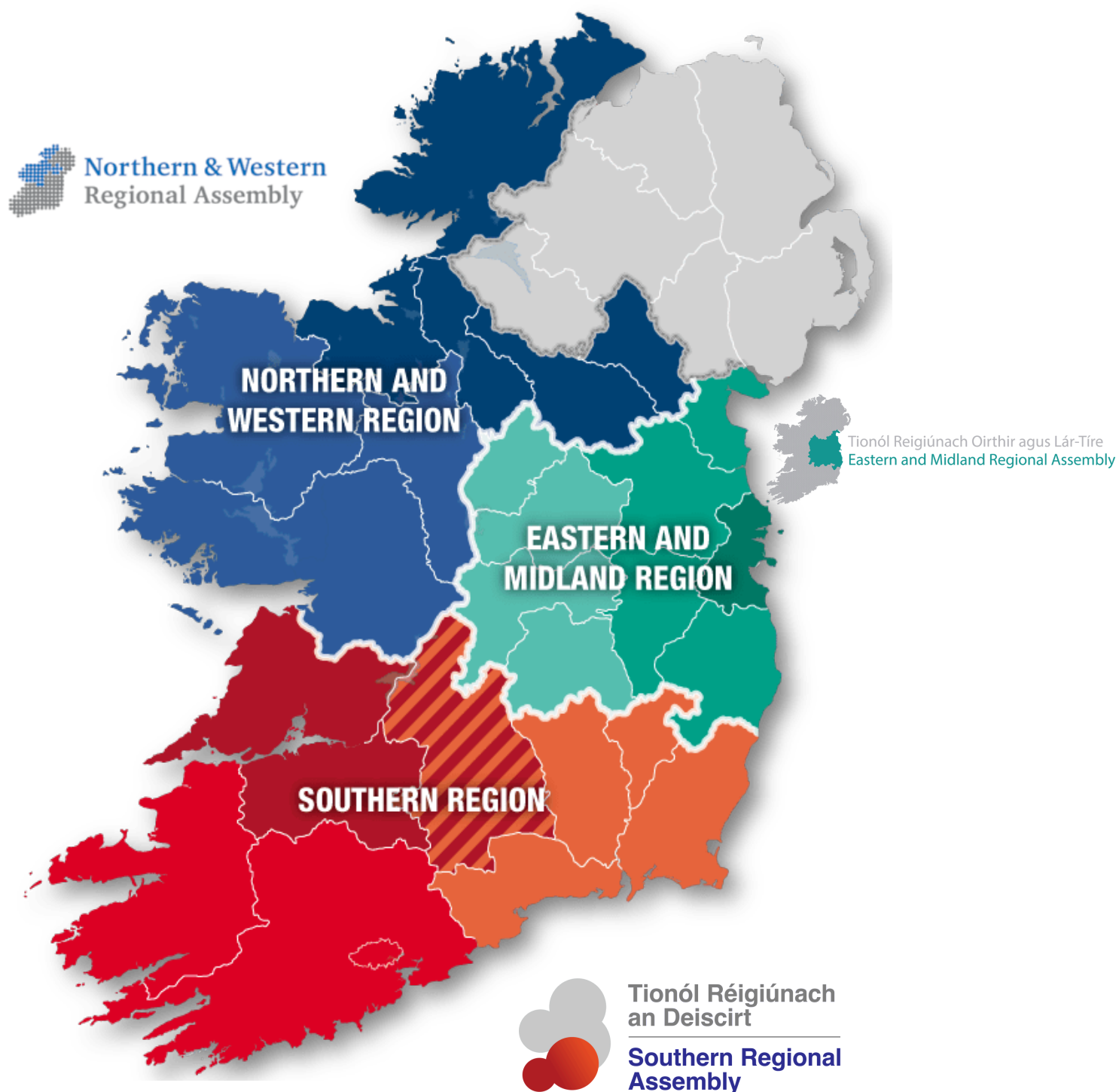
Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach

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The Regional Assemblies of Ireland



Historical Overview

In 2014 the Government undertook a significant reform of the Local Government Act and rationalised the regional level by abolishing the eight Regional Authorities and two existing Regional Assemblies, and replacing them with the following three Regional Assemblies with enhanced responsibilities:


- Southern Regional Assembly (SRA): Southern Region
- Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA): Eastern & Midland Region
- Northern & Western Regional Assembly (NWRA): Northern & Western Region

The Southern Region consists of **10 Local Authorities**: Carlow, Clare, Cork City, Cork County, Kerry, Kilkenny, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford, and Wexford.

The Eastern & Midland Region consists of **12 Local Authorities**: Longford, Meath, Westmeath, Offaly, Laois, Louth, Kildare, Wicklow, Fingal, South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Councils, and Dublin City Council.

The Northern and Western Region consists of **9 Local Authorities**: Galway City & County Council, Roscommon, Leitrim, Sligo, Donegal, Monaghan, Mayo, and Cavan.



 Viking Triangle, Waterford City.

What is a Regional Assembly?

- A regional tier of government, consisting of elected representatives nominated by our local authorities and the Committee of the Regions.
- Leading the implementation of the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES).
- Promoting balanced regional development through the management of, support for, and involvement in European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funded programmes and projects.
- Linking local, regional, national and EU policy goals through regional planning and EU regional development.

What are the functions of the Regional Assembly?

The Regional Assembly has responsibilities with a democratic mandate set down under the terms of **Statutory Instrument Number 573 of 2014, the Local Government Act, 1991 (Regional Assemblies) (Establishment) Order, 2014**.

The formal functions of the Regional Assemblies include:

- The formulation, adoption, and implementation of statutory Regional, Spatial, and Economic Strategies (RSES). These strategies will integrate city and county development plans and Local Economic Community Plans (LECPs).
- Management of EU regional operational programmes, participation in European Territorial Cooperation programmes, supporting the Irish national delegation to the Committee of the Regions, EU project participation, and other EU regional focused actions.
- Facilitation and provision of assistance to local authorities in engaging with EU institutions on matters related to regional, and local development.
- Providing a regional platform through which national, local, and regional public bodies, and other agencies can be coordinated within the context of national policy. Regional Assemblies can also undertake research studies, surveys, or the collection of information, data, or statistics, in relation to any of its functions or on any matter to which the functions of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) apply.

What are the Responsibilities of the Regional Assembly?

The Regional Assemblies must have regard for the general welfare of the region which the order specifies as including:

1. The physical, economic, social, demographic, infrastructural, and environmental situation of the region, its economic and other development potential, and the protection or improvement of its environmental, heritage, amenity, and cultural resources.
2. The programmes, plans, policies, proposals, and objectives of the Government and of any Minister of the Government and of local authorities and other public authorities, as appropriate, and the need to promote coordination of and/ or consistency with them.
3. The resources that are available, or are likely to be available, for the performance of their functions.
4. The specific need for coordinated action to promote effectiveness in local government and public services, to promote consistency with the programmes, plans, policies, proposals, and objectives of the Government or Minister of the Government, and to ensure coherent spatial planning and sustainable development within and between regions.

How do I become a member of the Southern Regional Assembly?

The Southern Regional Assembly's work is overseen currently by **33 elected members**, **27 nominated** from the constituent local authorities and currently **six councillors from the Committee of The Regions**, nominated by the Government. In addition, the directly elected Mayor of Limerick will also be an ex-officio member of the SRA following the mayoral elections in Limerick City and County Council in June 2024.

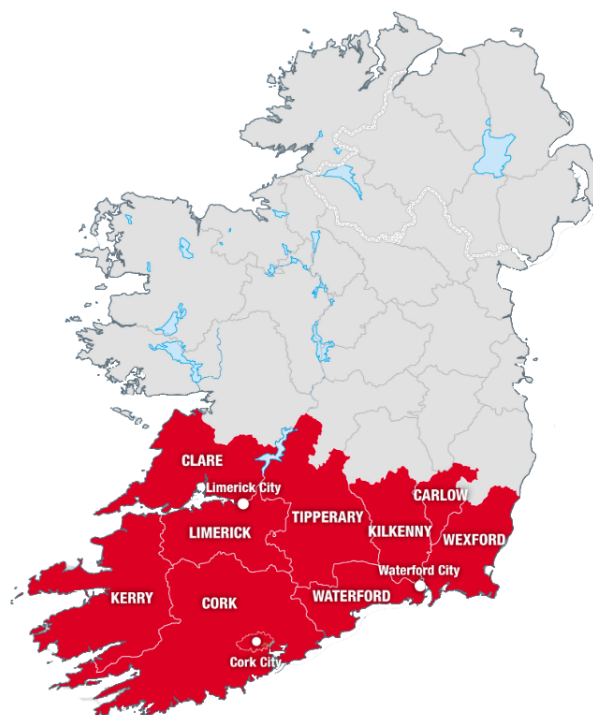
S.I. No. 573/2014 of the Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Assemblies) (Establishment) Order 2014 sets out the procedure for the nomination of Regional Assembly members, by their respective councils, to the Regional Assembly as follows:

“the persons to be appointed by a local authority in accordance with Article 5 to be members of a Regional Assembly shall be appointed at the annual meeting of such local authority held next after every election of the members of such local authority, or so soon thereafter as may be”.

In practice the members are decided at the inaugural annual meeting of each of the newly elected council amongst consideration of nominations for a range of other bodies. There will be a range of elected members, some who are experienced and others who will be councillors for the first time.

Southern Regional Assembly

Carlow	2 Members
Clare	2 Members
Cork City	2 Members
Cork County	5 Members
Kerry	3 Members
Kilkenny	2 Members
Limerick	4 Members*
Tipperary	3 Members
Waterford	2 Members
Wexford	3 Members



Current Committee of the Regions - 6 Members

*Including newly elected Mayor




European Committee of the Regions

Established in 1994, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) is an EU advisory body and political assembly of 350 local and regional elected representatives from all EU countries. It advises on new laws that have an impact on regions and meets six times per year, to debate proposed legislation, and agree on resolutions for further action by the EU.

The Committee of the Regions works to bring EU citizens closer to the EU. By involving regional and local representatives who are in daily contact with their electorate's concerns, but also by inviting citizens to participate in various events and debates, the CoR contributes to reducing the gap between the EU institutions' work and EU citizens.



 Assembly Members with Deirdre Clune and Billy Kelleher MEPs, 2023.

What are my duties as a member of the Regional Assembly?

S.I. No. 573/2014 of the Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Assemblies) (Establishment) Order 2014 sets out the duties and responsibilities for nominated members of the Regional Assembly.

These duties are as follows:

- Approval of annual accounts and budget
- Adoption of an annual programme of work
- Adoption of a Corporate Plan
- Adoption of an Annual Report
- Attendance at Regional Assembly Meetings, and Committee Meetings (as set up by the Assembly)



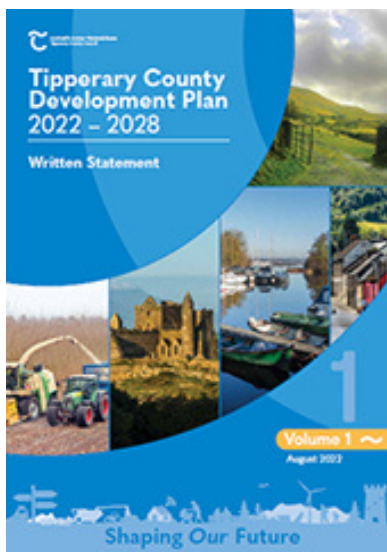
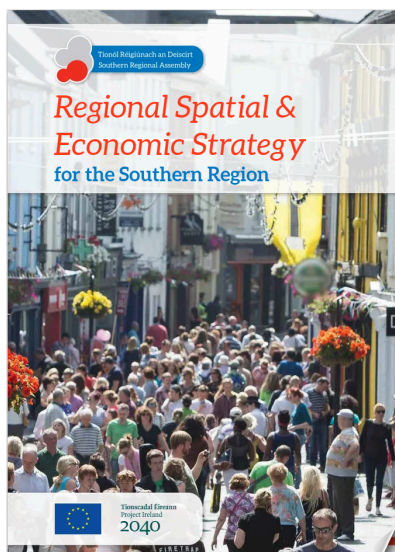
Regional Development Monitor launch, 2022.

Ordinary meetings of the Assembly take place every month (except August), currently on the second Friday of the month. The meetings are held at Assembly HQ in Waterford, with an online attendance option for those who cannot attend in person.

The key statutory functions that Assembly Members are involved with include:

- Preparation of the RSES.
- Observations of draft Development Plans and variations to Development Plans.
- Adoption of a Statement of Alignment with RSES for all Local Economic Community Plans (LECPs).

Participation in these statutory planning processes can be interesting and challenging as members often deal with agreement of regional or cross boundary issues based on national policy, rather than local issues.



The Regional, Spatial, and Economic Strategy (RSES)

The RSES provides the statutory framework for City and County Development Plans in the region and includes:

- A Spatial strategy
- Economic Strategy
- Investment Framework
- Transportation Strategy
- Maritime Strategy
- Climate Action Plan including regional renewable energy strategy
- Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans for Cork, Limerick – Shannon, and Waterford

The review of the RSES is likely to be a key challenge for the new Regional Assembly and will involve members in discussion and decision making in relation to national and regional issues following the review of the National Planning Framework (NPF) later this year.

The RSES is the key mechanism for the Regional Assembly to deliver the programme for change set out in Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan 2018-2027. Critical to achieving transformative change for a region are:

1. A structural realignment for the overall betterment of our society and environment in population, homes, and jobs away from the greater Dublin area, with a 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midlands region, and the Southern, and Northern, and Western regions.
2. The achievement of an additional population in the Southern region of 380,000 people by 2040 bringing the population to almost two million, with an additional 225,000 people in employment (880,000 people in total).
3. A transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society. The RSES encompasses spatial, economic, social, communication, transport, and environmental issues focussing on compact growth, placemaking, responding to the challenge of climate change and resilience. It contains ambitious targets for change across the region impacting on each local authority area.



Since 2015, Ireland is a signatory to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and this is heavily reflected throughout the RSES.

Transformative Regional Assembly Initiatives



Member of
the Global Network
of Learning Cities
[www.uil.unesco.org/
learning-cities](http://www.uil.unesco.org/learning-cities)

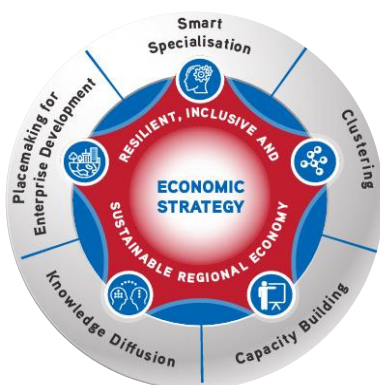
Initiative: Prepare a Learning Region Action Plan and establish Waterford as a UNESCO Learning City.

Progress: In February 2024 Waterford was designated a UNESCO Learning City and has been invited to join the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities.



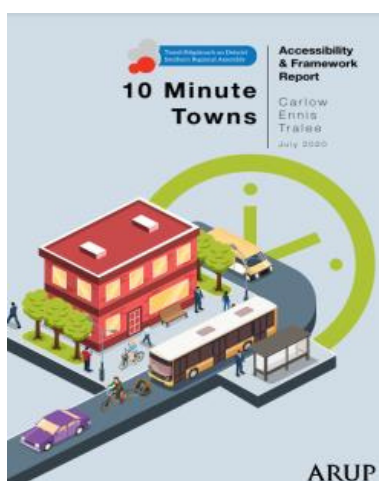
Initiative: Developing Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) and Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) for placemaking.

Progress: The framework was launched in 2022 and a BGI network of local authorities was established.



Initiative: Develop a framework/toolkit to support a regional approach for a smart specialisation strategy in the Southern Region.

Progress: The SRA worked with Bable consultancy to develop a toolkit for smart specialisation. The SRA worked with Maynooth University in 2022 to finalise a definition for a Smart Southern Region.



Initiative: Regional Sustainable Mobility and 10 Minute Cities & Towns.

Progress: In January 2022 the SRA hosted a regional sustainable mobility webinar for local authorities and transport stakeholders. In October, the Department of Transport approved the initiative as Pathfinder 30. In December 2022 the SRA as the managing authority for Pathfinder 30 requested a tender to design and deliver the programme.

EU Functions and Role of the Regional Assembly

The Regional Assembly acts as Managing Authority for EU Co-funded Regional Programmes and has done so since 2000. It is now on the fourth generation programme which supports a variety of activities in the Southern, Eastern & Midlands regions, including innovation in research, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) supports, low carbon, coronavirus response and sustainable urban development with a mix of national and European Regional Development Funds (ERDF).

The Assembly is also a Programme Partner and Irish Contact Point for a number of European Territorial Co-operation programmes including Interreg North-West Europe and Interreg Europe.



The Regional Assembly participates in a range of EU Projects to support, develop, and deliver better policy for the Southern Region, and to facilitate access to a wealth of knowledge from other EU regions, to develop better policy solutions to common regional challenges and leadership in sustainable economic, social and environmental development to benefit the Southern Region.

The Association of Irish Regions (AIR)



The Association of Irish Regions (AIR) acts as a cohesive representative body for the three Regional Assemblies in Ireland, particularly on matters concerning their role and responsibilities as regional government in Ireland.

It offers collective advice, guidance and makes submissions to the Government, its agencies and EU bodies on behalf of the three Regional Assemblies on matters of regional governance, cooperation, and balance.

It is the fulcrum for knowledge transfer between Regional Assemblies, their members, the Local Authorities, Irish Government, and EU bodies, and agencies.

It comprises the Directors, Cathaoirigh, Leas Cathaoirigh, outgoing Cathaoirigh of the Regional Assemblies, and two other members nominated at the Annual meeting.



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Online Information Session

The Southern Regional Assembly will host an online information session to outline the roles and functions of the Southern Regional Assembly in more depth. This webinar will take place following the election but before the annual meeting of the Local Authority; further details will be circulated through each of the local authorities.



If you have any questions regarding the functions of the Southern Regional Assembly, and are considering becoming a member of the assembly, then please contact us using the email address or phone number provided in the contact details section.

Southern Regional Assembly Contact Details



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