

Lead topic: Government Reform Unit	Sub-topic: State Board Appointments	Contact: Evelyn O'Connor Ext: 5311
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FAST FACTS

Significant changes were made to the process of State board appointments during 2014 which had the broad objectives of:

- providing access to State board opportunities to as wide a pool of candidates as possible;
- strengthening the performance of State boards by identifying and securing high-quality membership; and;
- attaining a high level of transparency in the selection and appointment of board members by Ministers.

My Department issued *Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards* in November 2014, setting out details of how the revised process was to work in practice. Since that time, some 418 appointments have been made under the new system to March 2017.

There were three key elements to the revised process which underpin its robustness and transparency as follows:-

- The publication on *stateboards.ie* of a clear and detailed specification of the particular requirements for vacant roles on State Boards.
- The maintenance and extension of the open application process currently in place for submission of expressions of interest in such roles.
- The operation by PAS of an independent, expert, rigorous and transparent system of assessment.

Q&A'S

1. Why was there a Review of the 2014 Guidelines

The guidelines provided that that the operation of the new process should be reviewed within eighteen months and subsequently the Programme for Government committed to further strengthening this process by:

- increasing female participation on State boards;
- putting the process on a statutory footing;
- requiring Ministerial nominees for the role of board Chair to be assessed and have their suitability for appointment confirmed by the Public Appointments Service, and;
- requiring nominees for board Chair to be to have their nomination ratified by the relevant Oireachtas Committee prior to their appointment being made by Government.

The Review, which sought to progress the Programme for Government commitments on board Chairs as part of the process, was completed during 2016. It was carried out in conjunction with the Public Appointments Service and NewERA and it is intended to bring recommendations to further improve the process to Government in the near future.

2. What is the role of individual Ministers?

The Guidelines on State Board Appointments make it clear that, ultimately, it is the responsibility of the relevant accountable Minister to make appointments consistent with their statutory responsibilities and proper governance and accountability.

The Public Appointments Service supports Ministers in exercising this function by seeking to ensure the Minister receives a sufficient list of suitable candidates from those who have submitted expressions of interest to the Public Appointments Service.

Where, notwithstanding the Public Appointments Service efforts,

- The PAS process has not yielded the number of suitably qualified candidates required, or

• an exceptional alternative candidate is separately identified by the Minister, the Guidelines are clear that it remains open to the Minister to ultimately appoint board members other than those that emerge from the Public Appointments Service process, provided that candidates separately identified by the Minister are assessed by the Public Appointments Service and meet the criteria laid down for the specific State board role.

3. What is the progress to date?

Progress continued to be made over the past decade to meet the target, set in 1993, that women should constitute at least 40% of State board members. Women comprised 34% of all board appointments in 2006. The Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards included a package of measures to meet the 40% target, including the requirement for Government Departments to publish implementation plans. The Government also set an enhanced target of 45% for boards already meeting the 40% target.

Since the launch of the Guidelines, 30% of over 7,500 applications received for state board appointment came from women, who made up some 45% of the appointments made. As of March 2017, women constitute 39% of board members, the highest percentage since the target was introduced. 101 boards (47%) have met the 40% target while 44 boards have met the enhanced 45% target, an increase of 8% since December 2013.