

**Annual Report of an tArd-Chláraitheoir to the Minister for Social
Protection under Section 11 of the Civil Registration Act 2004 for
the year 2015**

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Report of an tÁrd Chláraitheoir to the Minister for Social Protection under Section 11 of the Civil Registration Act 2004 for the year 2015

Structure of the Civil Registration Service

1. The Civil Registration Service was formally established under the provisions of the Civil Registration Act 2004. The Act provides for the reorganisation, modernisation and naming of the system of registration of births, stillbirths, adoptions, marriages and deaths. Civil registration was first established in Ireland in 1845 under the Marriages (Ireland) Act 1844, for the purpose of regulating the solemnisation and registration of protestant and civil marriages in Ireland. The 1844 Act provided for the establishment of the General Register Office (GRO) and the appointment of a Registrar General to oversee the system. Registration was extended to births, deaths and Roman Catholic marriages in 1864. Local registration services were provided by registrars and Superintendent Registrars assigned to various districts. The office of Registrar General was re-named an tÁrd Chláraitheoir by the Vital Statistics and Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1952, and the GRO was re-named Oifig an Árd Chláraitheora. The 2004 Act provides for the continuation of these offices. Responsibility for local registration services is assigned to the Health Service Executive (HSE) which is responsible for the appointment of Superintendent Registrars and registrars in each registration area, and for the provision of accommodation and support services.

Functions of the Civil Registration Service

Ard Chláraitheoir

2. The main functions of an tArd- Chláraitheoir under the 2004 Act are to maintain, manage and control the system of civil registration in the State and to maintain the registers, indexes and other records required to ensure an effective and efficient system. Other functions are assigned under individual provisions of the Act.

Health Service Executive

3. The HSE is required, through each Superintendent Registrar, to manage, control and administer the Civil Registration Service, under the overall management, control and supervision of an tArd Chláraitheoir. The HSE is required by the 2004 Act to appoint a Superintendent Registrar and registrars to each of the registration areas. (These areas equate to the geographic areas covered by the former health boards.)
4. The functions carried out by the Civil Registration Service include registration of births, stillbirths and deaths; late registration and re-registration of these events; ensuring that the legal preliminaries for valid marriages are complied with; solemnisation of civil marriages; registration of all marriages; and issuing certificates of vital events. Registration of civil partnerships was assigned to the Civil Registration Service under the provisions of the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Responsibilities of Cohabitants 2010. It is important to be aware that the complexity of civil registration has increased greatly in recent years, owing to changes in societal composition and norms.

5. A list of the principal legislation governing civil registration during 2015 is contained in Appendix 1.

Why does a State have a system of civil registration?

6. The United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs defines civil registration as the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events pertaining to the population as provided through decree or regulation in accordance with the legal requirements of a country. Civil registration is carried out primarily for the purpose of establishing the legal documents provided by the law. These records are also a main source of vital statistics. Complete coverage, accuracy and timeliness of civil registration are essential for quality vital statistics. The system of civil registration in Ireland corresponds with the definition and requirements published by the UN.
7. In its report to the United Nations Human Rights Council (17 June 2014) the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that birth registration is a fundamental right, recognised by article 24, paragraph 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Birth registration establishes the existence of a person under law, and lays the foundation for safeguarding civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. As such, it is a fundamental means of protecting the human rights of the individual.

Modernisation of Civil Registration in Ireland

8. The system of civil registration underwent a modernisation programme over a number of years. In addition to updating the law governing civil registration with the passing of the Civil Registration Act 2004, the system of registration has been computerised. This entailed capturing all civil registration records, dating back to 1845, in a digitised format and implementation of a computerised system of registration. The use of modern technology has enabled the introduction of a more flexible service for the public, whereby a vital event can be registered at any registrar's office, regardless of where it took place, and a certificate may be obtained from any registrar's office, regardless of where the event was registered. The 2004 Act requires births and stillbirths to be registered by the parents, deaths to be registered by relatives, and for notice of intention to marry to be given in person at the registrar's office. This promotes a more active citizenship and improves the quality of the registration process.
9. The modernisation programme has also made a significant contribution to the eGovernment agenda. Electronic data interchange enhances delivery of public services and facilitates better control over those services. Currently, deaths data are available to all public service bodies and are a valuable source of information for control of services, including pensions. Births data are transmitted to the Department of Social Protection where a PPSN is assigned to each record. The data are then used by that Department for the purpose of processing automated child benefit payments. Data in respect of all vital events are transmitted to the Central Statistics Office to assist in the compilation and publication of vital statistics. Birth notifications are transmitted electronically from certain maternity hospitals to the local registrar's office. It is intended that these services will be expanded and enhanced in the coming years.

Staffing

10. The GRO has an approved complement of 60 whole-time equivalent staff. Of these, 52 are based in the Roscommon headquarters and 8 in the dedicated Genealogy Research Room in Dublin. In addition, there are approximately 170 HSE staff assigned to registration duties across the country.

Significant Developments & Issues Arising During 2015

11. A number of significant developments and issues arose during 2015 including the commencement of the marriages of convenience provisions of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014, the passing of the Gender Recognition Act 2015, the passing of the Marriage Act 2015 and the making available of historic genealogical records online by the Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Marriages of convenience

12. Section 3(b) of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 created a new impediment to a marriage in that a marriage that would constitute a marriage of convenience is invalid. Section 18 of the Act provides that a registrar consider certain matters where a notice of intention to marry is received from a foreign national in order to form an opinion as to whether the proposed marriage would constitute a marriage of convenience. Where a registrar forms an opinion that an intended marriage would constitute a marriage of convenience, the registrar is obliged to make a report of the matter to the Superintendent Registrar and provide a copy of all documents and information to the Minister for Justice & Equality. The Superintendent Registrar is required to decide the matter. A party or parties dissatisfied with a decision of a Superintendent Registrar may appeal that decision to the Circuit Court. The relevant provisions were commenced on 18 August 2015. Industrial action was taken by registration staff required to operate the scheme. The scheme did not come fully into operation until January 2016. Parallel provisions were introduced for civil partnerships, although the scheme of civil partnerships was discontinued under the provisions of the Marriage Act 2015.

Gender Recognition Act 2015

13. The Gender Recognition Act 2015 was passed by the Oireachtas in 2015 and commenced by order of the Minister for Social Protection on 4 September 2015. Broadly, the Act provides for application by a person to the Minister for Social Protection for a gender recognition certificate and for the issuing of a gender recognition certificate following consideration of the application. The effect of issuing a gender recognition certificate is that the person is considered to be of the preferred gender for all purposes from the date it is issued. The Act also provides for the establishment by an tArd Chláraitheoir of a register of gender recognition, and for the making of an entry in the register following an application from a person who has a gender recognition certificate. The effect of this is to enable a birth certificate showing the new preferred gender of the person to be issued. Fifty-four entries had been made in the register of gender recognition as at 31 December 2015.

Marriage Act 2015

14. The Marriage Act 2015 was passed by the Oireachtas in 2015 and commenced operation by order of the Minister for Justice & Equality on 16 November 2015. The Act removes the impediment to a marriage of the parties being of the same sex, repeals the scheme of civil partnerships, provides that parties to an existing civil partnership may marry each other and various other provisions and consequential

amendments. The first marriage under the 2015 Act took place on 17 November 2015. The number of marriages registered up to and including 31 December 2015 under the Act was ninety-one.

Access to historic records

15. In June 2012 the Ombudsman published a report of an investigation into access by members of the public to historic records of births, deaths and marriages held by the GRO. The main recommendation contained in the Ombudsman's report is that the GRO engage with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to explore options for facilitating enhanced public inspection of records. Discussions have been had with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and agreement reached that that Department would make historic¹ index and register data available on-line via www.irishgenealogy.ie. Section 20 of the Social Welfare and Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2013 makes legislative provision for making the index data available.. Work on this initiative progressed during 2014 and the indexes went live on the website in 2014. The legislation was further amended by section 27 of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 to provide that the Minister for the Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht may make historic register data available online. There is a project underway in the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht to give effect to the provision and the GRO has been working closely with that Department to support the project.

Litigation

16. The amount of litigation involving civil registration or requiring the involvement of the GRO has grown considerably in recent years and now takes up a significant amount of management resources. During 2015 the GRO was involved in thirty-seven separate legal proceedings, either as defendant/respondent/notice party, or by way of assisting other Departments/Offices. These cases mainly involve applications for recognition of foreign and domestic marriages, recognition of foreign divorces, surrogacy, and issues relating to identity.

¹ Historic records means birth records more than 100 years old, marriage records more than 75 years old and death records more than 50 years old (see section 27 of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014)

Births, Adoptions & Stillbirths

17. Registration of births and stillbirths is governed by Part 3 of the Civil Registration Act 2004. Registration of adoptions is governed by Section 84 of the Adoption Act 2010. The following table sets out the main activities carried out under these provisions for the years 2011-2015:-

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Births registered	74,913	72,406	69,208	67,750	66,232
Adoptions registered ²	46	49	116	112	88
Stillbirths registered	325	282	279	240	233
Late registrations	257	246	260	272	290
Re-registrations	2,081	1,997	1,975	1,871	1,751
Section 65 enquiries	143	188	199	241	258
Errors corrected	4,321	3,990	4,051	3,904	3,711

18. The growth in the number of births registered annually over the past decade and a half has been very substantial, increasing from 54,239 in 2000 to a high of 76,015 in 2008, a rise of about 40% . The trend, however, has not been even over the period. There was significant growth in the period from 2000-2002 when annual registrations grew from 54,239 in 2000 to 60,521 in 2002. In four years from 2002-2005 there was little growth, with registrations averaging 61,191 in each of the four years. The numbers grew rapidly again from 2006 onwards when 64,237 births were registered. Since then the numbers peaked in 2008, at 76,015, and remained steady in 2009, 2010 and 2011. The declines registered in the years 2012-2015 are very substantial. The number of births registered in 2015 was 9,783 or 13% less than in the most recent peak year, 2008. The year 2012 is the first year in which the number of births declined significantly since 1994.

19. The figures for late registrations refer to births registered more than 12 months after the event. The number of late registrations has fallen from a high of 619 (1.0% of all births) per annum in 2006 to 290 (0.4% of all births) in 2015. Applications for the late registration of a birth are normally triggered by the requirement for the person to produce a birth certificate for pension or passport purposes. Re-registration of births refers to the addition of a father's details after the original registration where the parents are not married to each other, and the re-registration of births where the parents of the child subsequently marry each other. The proportions of births re-registered under these two headings are 43% and 57%, respectively.

² The figures for adoptions refer to domestic adoptions only, which are registered under Section 84 of the Adoption Act 2010. These figures do not represent the total number of adoptions, as they do not include foreign adoptions by Irish residents. The register of foreign adoptions is maintained by the Adoption Authority of Ireland.

20. Enquiries under Section 65 of the Civil Registration Act are carried out where there is an error, omission or other difficulty with a registration which cannot be corrected under any other provision of the Act. The bulk of these enquiries concern a request to remove the details of a man registered in error as the father of a child. Prior to the commencement of the 2004 Act, there was no provision whereby a father's details could be removed from a birth entry, even if adequate proof of non-paternity existed. Such applications may be at the request of the mother, the father, or the man named as father in the register of births. By its nature, this is a problematic and sensitive area, with significant legal and constitutional implications for those concerned. Typically, amendments are made on the basis of DNA evidence and statutory declarations made by the persons involved. In some cases, applications to amend paternity are supported by court orders granted in custody and maintenance proceedings. A growing number of cases concern the use of false names and identities on the part of parents when registering the births of their children. These cases normally involve asylum seekers who have travelled to Ireland using false identities and who need to regularise their positions for the purposes of completing the asylum application process, and for access to other public services.
21. The correction of errors normally arises as a result of a request from a member of the public. Errors typically arise as a result of incomplete or incorrect information having been initially supplied to the registrar, or as a result of a clerical error in the registration process. While the level of error appears high, relative to the number of annual registrations, it should be borne in mind that such corrections apply to all records registered, not just those registered in any particular year. Prior to computerisation of the registration system, all registers were manual and this process was susceptible to a higher level of error. The potential for error was increased by the fact that, prior to the commencement of the 2004 Act, most births were registered by maternity hospitals, and these organisations would not necessarily have had direct knowledge of all of the particulars required for registration. The introduction of the requirement for all parents to register births personally, and the use of computerisation, has contributed to a significant decline in the number of corrections annually. The number of errors corrected has fallen from 4,321 in 2011 to 3,711 in 2015, a drop of 14%.
22. The register of gender recognition was established under the provisions of the Gender Recognition Act 2015. The Act was commenced with effect from 4 September 2015. Fifty-four entries were made in the register of gender recognition by 31 December 2015.

Deaths

23. Registration of deaths is governed by Part 5 of the 2004 Act. The following table sets out the main activities in respect of deaths registrations under the Act for the years 2011-2015:-

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Deaths registered	29,664	29,465	30,635	29,638	30,581
Coroners certificates	8,547	7,704	8,682	8,514	8,695
Late registrations	936	903	1,008	1,099	1,057
Correction of errors	1,376	1,335	1,429	1,423	1,307

24. The number of deaths registered in Ireland has remained relatively static over a lengthy period. Since 2000, the number of deaths has ranged from a low of 27,441 in 2005 to a high of 31,115 in 2000. The numbers for the years 2011-2015 are within this range.

25. The number of deaths registered on foot of a coroner's certificate rose significantly in recent years and now represents 29% of all deaths registered. Deaths are referred to a coroner where the death has occurred in suspicious circumstances, has been unexpected, or for other reasons as may be requested by a coroner. The increase in the number of deaths referred to coroners in recent years is mainly as a result of coroners requesting that deaths due to hospital-acquired infection and deaths occurring in nursing homes are referred to them as a matter of course.

26. The figures for late registration of deaths refer to deaths registered more than 12 months after the event. The reasons for the relatively high level of error correction are similar to those for births outlined in paragraph 21 above.

Marriages

27. Registration of marriages is governed by Part 6 of the Civil Registration Act. The marriage provisions of the Act were commenced on 5 November 2007, thereby replacing legislation dating back to 1844.³ The main changes to the law governing marriages are the requirement for all couples to give notice of intention to marry in person; the introduction of common preliminaries for all marriages; the requirement to issue a marriage registration form prior to marriage (essentially a marriage licence); establishment of a register of solemnisers (civil and religious); and a choice of venue for civil marriages. The Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2012 provides for the inclusion in the register of solemnisers of members of secular bodies, thereby permitting them to legally solemnise marriages in the State. The Marriage Act 2015 removed the impediment to marriage of the parties being of the same sex. The Act was commenced on 16 November 2015. The first marriage solemnised under the Act was on 17 November 2015. The number of marriages registered in 2015 under the new Act was ninety-one.

³ Prior to the commencement of Part 6 of the Civil Registration Act 2004, registration of marriages was governed by the Marriage Acts 1844-1972.

28. The following table sets out the main marriage registration activities for the years 2011-2015:-

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total number of marriages registered	19,828	20,694	20,670	22,033	22,113
Religious marriages	14,059	14,896	14,579	14,972	14,560
Civil marriages	5,769	5,798	5,882	6,167	6,244
Secular marriages	N/A	N/A	209	894	1,309

29. The number of marriages taking place annually since 2000 (19,168) increased steadily up to 2007, when 22,756 marriages were registered, The number of marriages registered in 2015 represents a substantial increase on the lowest recent year 2011, of 11.5%. There has been a significant shift in the form of marriages, as between religious, secular and civil in recent years. The number of religious marriages, as a proportion of total marriages, fell from approximately 71% in 2011 to 66% in 2015. 2014 was the first full year when secular marriages were recognised under statute.

30. While there are no statistics available on the incidence of marriages of convenience, anecdotal evidence suggests that the increase in the number of civil marriages in recent years is partly accounted for by marriages of convenience, following the Judgment by the European Court of Justice in the Metock case.⁴ The following table contains information on the numbers of notifications of intention to marry, and subsequent level of registration of marriages relating to these notifications, involving EU and non-EU nationals for the years 2011-2015:-

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1. Notifications of intention to marry:-					
(a) EU and non-EU citizen	1,979	2,086	2,457	2,878	3,106
(b) Irish and non-EU citizen	1,199	1,203	1,320	1,369	1,521
(c) Non-Irish EU and non-EU citizen	780	883	1,137	1,509	1,585
2. Marriages registered in respect of these notifications:- ⁵					
(a) EU and non-EU citizen	1,565	1,647	1,995	2,226	1,992
(b) Irish and non-EU citizen	965	942	1,070	1,063	1,151
(c) Non-Irish EU and non-EU citizen	600	705	925	1,163	841
3. Percentage of notifications resulting in marriage:-					
(a) EU and non-EU	79%	79%	81%	77%	64%
(b) Irish and non-EU	80%	78%	81%	78%	76%
(c) Non-Irish EU and non-EU citizen	77%	80%	81%	77%	53%

31. In the period 2011-2015 the number of marriages involving EU and non-EU nationals peaked at 2,226 in 2014, having risen rapidly from 1,565 in 2011.

32. The Metock judgment applies only to marriages between non-EU nationals and non-Irish EU nationals. Non-EU nationals marrying Irish nationals are not entitled to EU Treaty rights. There was a decline in the number of non-Irish EU nationals marrying non-EU nationals from a high of 1,242 in 2009 to a low of 600 in 2011. The numbers increased sharply in 2013 and 2014, but there was a substantial decline in 2015.

33. While it would be wrong to characterise all marriages between EU and non-EU nationals as marriages of convenience, the relatively low rate of conversion of notices

⁴ Case C-127/08: Metock & Others v Minister for Justice, Equality & Law Reform. In its Judgment, the court ruled that a non-community spouse of a citizen of the EU can move and reside with that citizen in the EU without having previously been lawfully resident in a Member State. The judgment does not apply to a non-EU spouse who marries an Irish citizen.

⁵ These figures do not refer to the number of such marriages registered in the particular year. Rather, they refer to the number of marriages registered in the year in which notice of intention to marry was given and in subsequent years. Notice of intention to marry must be given at least three months prior to the intended date of marriage. Therefore, where a notice of intention to marry is given in the fourth quarter of a year, the marriage will not be registered until the following year.

of intention to marry to actual marriage would suggest that marriages of convenience are a significant problem. This is borne out by the experience of individual registrars, representations from foreign embassies, as well as media reporting and commentary, both national and international, over recent years. The Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 includes measures to prevent marriages of convenience and it is to be hoped that these measures will help to curtail the problem. It should be noted, however, that stratagems adopted to avoid immigration controls are many and varied, and it is unrealistic to expect that any single measure will solve the problem.

34. The following table gives a breakdown of the number of marriages involving an Irish and non-EU citizen showing the top ten nationalities of the non-EU spouse for the years 2012-2015:-

2012		2013		2014		2015	
United States	186	United States	190	United States	207	United States	217
Australia	111	Australia	158	Australia	167	Brazil	185
Brazil	76	Brazil	97	Brazil	133	Australia	184
Canada	62	Canada	61	New Zealand	60	Canada	91
China	58	South Africa	53	China	52	Nigeria	55
South Africa	52	Pakistan	45	Nigeria	51	China	50
Philippines	39	Mauritius	41	Canada	48	New Zealand	50
Nigeria	32	China	39	South Africa	38	South Africa	41
New Zealand	30	New Zealand	38	Pakistan	36	Venezuela	24
Mauritius	28	Nigeria	37	Mauritius	33	Philippines	22

35. The following table gives a breakdown of the number of marriages involving a non-Irish EU citizen and a non-EU citizen showing the top ten nationalities of the non-EU spouse for the years 2012-2015:-

2012		2013		2014		2015	
Pakistan	180	Pakistan	242	Pakistan	376	Pakistan	396
Bangladesh	61	Bangladesh	79	India	166	Brazil	126
Nigeria	57	India	74	Bangladesh	96	India	125
Brazil	56	Brazil	68	Brazil	87	Bangladesh	73
India	52	Mauritius	53	Mauritius	63	Venezuela	49
Mauritius	44	Nigeria	43	Nigeria	35	Mauritius	41
Egypt	30	Egypt	39	Egypt	28	Egypt	35
United States	18	Algeria	22	United States	28	United States	26
China	14	Moldova	18	South Africa	19	Nigeria	25
Moldova	14	South Africa	18	Ukraine	15	Nepal	20

36. Of the 44,116 persons whose marriages were registered in 2015, 40,856 (93%) were single, 2,932 (7%) were divorced and 326 (0.7%) were widowed. Two persons had a civil partnership dissolved.
37. Under Section 52 of the Civil Registration Act 2004 civil marriages are permitted to be solemnised at a venue chosen by the couple. The following table gives a breakdown of the civil marriage venues in the years 2011-2015:-

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Registrar's Office	3,720	3,668	3,886	4,195	4,158
Outside Venue	2,049	2,130	1,996	1,972	2,086
% at Outside Venue	36%	37%	34%	32%	33%

38. Typically, outside venues are hotels, stately homes, civic buildings and restaurants with suitable accommodation. Clearly, the decision to introduce a choice of venues for civil marriages has proved very popular, with 33% of civil marriages taking place at outside venues in 2015.
39. The register of solemnisers is maintained under Section 53 of the Civil Registration Act. This provision was amended by the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2012 to provide for registration of secular solemnisers. The first secular solemnisers were registered in 2013. Religious and secular solemnisers are nominated by their respective religious and secular bodies. Civil registrars are employed by the HSE. The following table shows the numbers of solemnisers registered as at 1 January in the years 2011-2015:-

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Religious solemnisers	5,413	5,476	5,506	5,602	5,604
Civil solemnisers	113	105	107	105	107
Secular solemnisers	N/A	N/A	14	14	19
TOTAL:	5,526	5,581	5,627	5,721	5,730

40. A fee of €200 is charged per couple for giving notice of intention to marry. Fees are also charged by the HSE for solemnisation of civil marriages at venues other than the registrar's office. In 2011, the total value of fees paid to the HSE in respect of marriages was approximately €3.285 million. The amount was €3.388 million in 2012, €4.427 million in 2013, €4.706 million in 2014 and €4.749 in 2015.
41. A very important activity of the GRO not directly governed by the Civil Registration Act is the recognition of foreign divorces. Under Section 2(2)(b) of the Civil Registration Act, there is an impediment to a marriage if one of the parties is, or both are, already married. As foreign divorces are not automatically entitled to recognition in the State, persons with foreign divorces who wish to marry must have their divorces recognised in accordance with the law in force in the State. Divorces granted in EU countries (excluding Denmark) are recognised in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 2201/2003, the so-called Brussels II regulation. All other divorces are recognised in accordance with the Domicile and Recognition of Foreign

Divorces Act 1986. The estimated number of applications for recognition of foreign divorces for the purpose of marriage during the period 2011-2015 is as follows:-

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Applications for recognition of foreign divorce	1,249	1,113	1,211	1,276	1,249
Divorces recognised	967	914	989	1,064	1,033
Divorces whose status could not be determined	282	199	222	212	216

42. For divorces granted in EU countries (excluding Denmark) the recognition process is relatively straightforward, provided the documentation required by the Brussels II regulation is in order. However, the recognition process for other divorces is highly complex and turns on the domicile of the parties to the marriage at the time the divorce proceedings commenced and on the nature of the divorce itself. Particular problems arise in respect of divorces granted in the United States. Under the 1986 Act, each state of the United States is treated as a separate jurisdiction, due to the fact that laws governing divorce differ from state to state. Owing to the propensity of US residents to change place of residence fairly frequently, obtaining evidence as to the domicile of the parties to a divorce can be difficult. In recent years, the numbers of applications for recognition of a foreign divorce as a prelude to marriage in the State coming from African and Asian countries has increased significantly. These applications are particularly problematic, owing to difficulties in obtaining evidence as to the nature of the divorce⁶ and the domicile of the parties to the divorce. In these circumstances, the persons concerned are advised that the GRO is unable to reach a conclusion on the matter, that they may wish to seek legal advice, that their legal adviser will be aware of the provisions of section 29 of the Family Law Act 1995 (which provides for the recognition of a foreign divorce by the courts), and its potential application to their circumstances.

Civil Partnerships

43. The Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010 provides for the registration of civil partnerships in the State. The provisions of the Act dealing with civil partnerships were commenced with effect from 1 January 2011. The following table shows the number of civil partnerships registered in the years 2011-2015 and the sex of persons entering civil partnerships in each of these years:-

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of civil partnerships registered	536	429	338	392	376
Males	335	263	208	242	250
Females	201	166	130	150	126

44. Of the 752 individuals who entered civil partnerships in 2015, 434 or 58% were Irish citizens. Excluding Ireland, 45 other nationalities entered civil partnerships in 2015. The following table shows the top five nationalities, excluding Ireland:-

⁶ In many African and Asian countries there can be a myriad of legal systems within the same jurisdiction, including received European law, native law and custom, and religious law.

Nationality	
Brazil	113
Venezuela	25
United Kingdom	24
Poland	19
Italy	18

45. The table below gives a breakdown of the age groups of persons entering civil partnerships in 2015:-

Age Group	
18-20	7
21-30	222
31-40	279
41-50	154
51-60	63
61-70	23
Over-70	4

46. A fee of €200 is charged per couple for giving notice of intention to enter a civil partnership. Fees are also charged by the HSE for registering civil partnerships at venues other than the registrar's office. The number of civil partnerships registered at outside venues was 114 or 30% of the total. In 2015 the total value of fees paid to the HSE in respect of civil partnerships was approximately €84,285.
47. The Marriage Act 2015, which abolished the prohibition on persons of the same sex marrying each other, repealed the provisions of the Civil Partnership Act, thereby bringing an end to the scheme of registration of civil partnerships. The Marriage Act contains transitioning provisions that provide for (a) the registration of civil partnerships after commencement of the Act, where notice had been given to a registrar prior to commencement, and (b) conversion of a notice of intention to register a civil partnership to a notice of intention to marry at the behest of the parties concerned. Registration of a civil partnership finally ceased to be available from 13 May 2016. The last civil partnership was registered on 7 March 2016. Twenty civil partnerships were registered between commencement of the Marriage Act 2015, on 17 November 2015, and registration of the final civil partnership on 7 March 2016. Civil partnerships registered under the 2010 Act continue to be valid, and the rights, obligations and status created by such civil partnerships continue to have effect, notwithstanding the repeal of the provisions. The provisions of the 2010 Act relating to dissolution of civil partnerships continue to have effect. A civil partnership is automatically dissolved where the parties to the civil partnership marry each other.

Certificates of Vital Events

48. Provision of certificates of vital events to members of the public represents a significant activity for the Civil Registration Service. The following table shows the volume and value of transactions in respect of this activity for the years 2011-2015:-

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Birth certificates	311,778	302,767	244,780	253,444	251,445
Stillbirth certificates	446	405	326	274	258
Death certificates	113,326	113,278	90,264	81,206	82,722
Marriage certificates	60,118	60,495	52,214	55,575	57,490
Civil Partnership certificates ⁷	704	605	417	502	500
TOTAL:	486,372	477,550	388,001	391,001	392,415
Income (€million)	4.081	4.014	6.541	6.603	6.537

49. Certificates of vital events are required for many purposes, including access to public services, and for the purpose of verifying certain facts concerning a person or family for various legal, financial and other reasons. Certificates of vital events are widely accepted as evidence as to the facts stated, owing to the independence and integrity of the system built up over many years, and the fact that each entry in the register has an independent evidential basis. This removes the requirement for members of the public to constantly prove those facts through other means.

50. The requirement to produce actual certificates for access to public services, particularly social welfare, has declined in recent years, mainly as a result of electronic data transfers. This significantly reduces the workload in registrars' offices, is more convenient for members of the public, and helps to make the processing of social welfare claims more efficient. The total number of certificates issued has declined from 486,372 in 2010 to 392,415 in 2015, a reduction of 93,957, or 19%, over the period.

51. A list of fees payable for civil registration services during 2015 is contained in Appendix 2.

⁷ Registration of civil partnerships began in 2011 following commencement of the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010 on 1 January 2011.

Genealogy

52. The GRO operates a dedicated genealogy research room in Dublin, with capacity for 40 people. Members of the public can search indexes of births, deaths and marriages and obtain photocopies of entries they require. The following table gives a summary of research activity for the years 2011-2015:-

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
General search ⁸	2,353	2,093	1,809	1,480	1,453
Limited search	21,805	20,380	17,548	14,614	14,004
Copies of register entries issued	64,214	61,715	56,068	50,628	51,493
Fee income (€million)	0.35	0.33	0.30	0.26	0.26

Vital Statistics

53. The existence of a system of civil registration is essential for the compilation of vital statistics. Data collected as part of the registration process are transmitted electronically to the Central Statistics Office at regular intervals. This enables the provision of longitudinal, up to date information on the population for the analysis and publication of vital statistics necessary for planning and policy formulation. Vital statistics are published quarterly by the Central Statistics Office. A summary of vital statistics from 1950-2013 compiled by the Central Statistics Office is at Appendix 3. More extensive data relating to vital statistics, including movements in population, fertility rates and analysis of causes of deaths is available from the Central Statistics Office website at www.cso.ie.

Kieran Feely
Ard Chláraitheoir
27 June 2016

⁸ A general search is for any period, whereas a specific search is limited to periods of 5 years. The fee for a general search is €20 and for a specific search €2.

Appendix 1

Principal Legislation under Which the General Register Office Performed Functions Relevant to Civil Registration during 2014.

(a) Primary Legislation

1. Civil Registration Act 2004 (as amended)
2. Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2012
3. Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010
4. Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014
5. Marriage Act 2015
6. Gender Recognition Act 2015
7. Adoption Act 2010
8. Family Law Act 1995
9. Status of Children Act 1987
10. Domicile and Recognition of Foreign Divorces Act 1986
11. Vital Statistics and Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1952
12. Legitimacy Act 1931

(b) Regulations

1. Civil Registration Act, 2004 (Section 27) (Commencement) Order 2004
2. Civil Registration Act, 2004 (Section 65) (Commencement) Order 2004
3. Civil Registration Act, 2004 (Commencement) Order 2005
4. Civil Registration (Reduced Fees) Regulations 2005
5. Civil Registration (Short Birth Certificate) Regulations 2005

6. Registration of Adoptions and Marriages (Abridged Certificate) Regulations 2005
7. Civil Registration Act, 2004 (Commencement) Order 2007
8. Health Act, 2007 (Commencement) (No3) Order 2007

9. Register of Solemnisers (Correction of Errors) Regulations 2007
10. Civil Registration (Fees and Allowances) Regulations 2007
11. Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants (Commencement) Order 2010
12. Civil Registration (Delivery of Notification of Intention to Marry) (Prescribed Circumstances) Regulations 2010
13. Civil Registration (Marriage Registration Form) Regulations 2010
14. Civil Registration (Register of Marriages) (Correction of Errors) Regulations 2010
15. Civil Registration (Delivery of Notification of Intention to Enter a Civil Partnership) (Prescribed Circumstances) Regulations 2010
16. Civil Registration (Register of Civil Partnerships) (Correction of Errors) Regulations 2010
17. Civil Registration (Civil Partnership Registration Form) Regulations 2010

18. Adoption Act (Section 85) (Fees) Regulations 2010
19. Adoption Act 2010 (Abridged Certificate) Regulations 2011
20. Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2012 (Commencement) Order 2013

21. Civil Registration (Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships) (Fees) Regulations 2015
22. Civil Registration (Certified Extract of Register of Deaths) Regulations 2014
23. Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 (Commencement) Order 2015
24. Gender Recognition Act 2015 (Commencement) Order 2015
25. Marriage Act 2015 (Commencement) Order 2015

Appendix 2

Fees payable for civil registration services during 2015:-

Service	€
Fee for issue of a certified copy of an entry in a register	20.00
Fee for issue of a copy of an entry for specified services	1.00
Fee for issue of an uncertified copy of an entry in a register	4.00
Fee for notice of intention to marry	200.00
Fee for notice of intention to enter a civil partnership	200.00
Fee for registration or alteration of a forename in a register of births	5.00
Fee for search facilities for research purposes	
- limited to 5 years	2.00
- unlimited	20.00

The various fees are specified in Statutory Instruments made under the provisions of the Civil Registration Act 2004, as amended. In addition to the above, Section 52 of the Act provides that the HSE may charge fees in respect of attendance by a registrar for the solemnisation of a marriage, or registration of a civil partnership at a venue other than the registrar's office.

Appendix 3

Number of Births, Deaths and Marriages

Year	Marriages		Births		Deaths	
	No.	Rates ¹	No.	Rates ¹	No.	Rates ¹
1950	16,018	5.4	63,565	21.4	37,741	12.7
1960	15,465	5.5	60,735	21.5	32,660	11.5
1970	20,778	7.1	64,382	21.9	33,686	11.4
1980	21,792	6.4	74,064	21.8	33,472	9.8
1990	17,838	5.1	53,044	15.1	31,370	9.0
1991	17,441	4.9	52,718	15.0	31,305	8.9
1992	16,636	4.7	51,089	14.4	30,931	8.7
1993	16,824	4.7	49,304	13.8	21,148	9.0
1994	16,621	4.6	48,255	13.5	30,948	8.6
1995	15,604	4.3	48,787	13.5	32,259	9.0
1996	16,174	4.5	50,655	14.0	31,723	8.7
1997	15,631	4.3	52,775	14.4	31,581	8.6
1998	16,783	4.5	53,969	14.6	31,563	8.5
1999	18,526	5.0	53,924	14.4	32,608	8.7
2000	19,168	5.1	54,789	14.5	31,391	8.3
2001	19,246	5.0	57,854	15.0	30,212	7.9
2002	20,556	5.2	60,503	15.5	29,683	7.6
2003	20,302	5.1	61,529	15.5	29,074	7.3
2004	20,979	5.2	61,972	15.3	28,665	7.1
2005	21,355	5.2	61,372	14.8	28,260	6.8
2006	22,089	5.2	65,425	15.4	28,488	6.7
2007	22,756	5.2	71,389	16.3	28,117	6.4
2008	22,187	5.0	75,173	16.8	28,274	6.3
2009	21,627	4.8	75,554	16.7	28,380	6.3
2010	20,594	4.5	75,174	16.5	27,961	6.1
2011	19,879	4.3	74,650	16.3	28,995	6.3
2012	21,245	4.6	72,225	15.8	28,848	6.3
2013	20,680	4.5	68,930	15.0	30,018	6.5
2014	22,045	4.8	67,462	14.6	29,095	6.3
2015	22,025	4.8	65,909	14.2	29,952	6.5

Note 1: Rates per 1,000 of the estimated population.

Source: Central Statistics Office.