



HOW DEMOCRACY WORKS IN IRELAND AND THE CONSTITUTION

LEARNING OUTCOME

This lesson details the articles in the Constitution and explains how living in a democracy gives you certain rights which are protected under the Constitution.

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

The way in which our Democracy in Ireland works is outlined in a very important document called 'The Constitution' or Bunreacht na hÉireann.

This is the second version of the constitution of the state since independence. It replaced the original 1922 version of the Constitution of the Irish Free State and came into force on 29 December 1937 following what is called a national plebiscite or vote held on 1 July 1937.

The opening lines read, 'We, the people of Ireland...,' because in a democracy all power comes from the people. This document was accepted by the people of Ireland by 75.8% to 24.2% in 1937.

The Constitution defines our system of government and it outlines what constitutional rights we have as Irish citizens, therefore we have what's called a 'constitutional democracy' in Ireland.

The Constitution is divided up into Articles. Each Article sets out an important rule or law. There are 50 articles in total.

Living in a Democracy gives you certain rights and these are protected under the Constitution. Sometimes people think that democracy is only about how the majority rule. This is not strictly true. In a democracy decisions are made based on what the majority agree, but the rights and freedoms of the minority must always be respected and listened to as well.

Why do you think Ireland being in a Democracy is important? How important is the Constitution?



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i DETAILS OF THE CONSTITUTION

A. ARTICLES

As the video outlined The Constitution is divided up into Articles. Fifty in total. Each Article sets out an important rule or law.

These Articles are divided up as follows:

Article(s)	Theme
The Preamble Articles 1 to 11 Articles 12 to 14	The Introduction to the Constitution They explain exactly what is meant by the state, Ireland Describe the role of the President of Ireland
Articles 15 to 27 Article 28 Article 28A Article 29	Deal with the National Parliament Describes the role of the Government Local Government Sets out the international arrangements between Ireland and other countries
Articles 30 to 33	Describe the role of some important advisors to the State including the Attorney General, Council of State and the Comptroller and Auditor General
Articles 34 to 39 Articles 40 to 44	Explain the court system and how trials should be held Set out the rights that people have – personal rights, family rights, education rights, property rights and religious rights
Article 45 Articles 46 to 50	Explains how the State should look after the welfare of the Irish people Describe how the Constitution can be changed (amended) by a special type of election, called a Referendum, or rewritten altogether

B. RIGHTS

The video outlines that living in a Democracy gives you certain rights and these are protected under the Constitution.

Some of these rights are:

- 1) The right to equality
- 2) The right to protest
- 3) The right to vote
- 4) The right to freely express your opinions
- 5) The right to practice your religion
- 6) The right to join associations, such as political parties, trade unions or organisations.



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DEMOCRACY

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 **ACTIVITY**

Go to The Constitution online or a hard copy of The Constitution -
https://www.constitution.ie/Documents/Bhunreacht_na_hEireann_web.pdf
- to find the answers to the following Questions:

Identify the specific Article of the Constitution that you would have to read to find out about:

- (a) Your right to an education
- (b) What work should be done by the President
- (c) The system of voting in Ireland for elections to Dáil Éireann
- (d) How the Constitution can be changed
- (e) Who appoints judges to the courts.