

# Constitution & Rules (Bunreacht & Rialacha)

## Young Fine Gael

### As amended after the 31<sup>st</sup> YFG National Conference (April 2021)

Young Fine Gael, the Young United Irelanders is an Irish Nationalist Youth Movement that pledges allegiance and fidelity to Ireland and derives its inspiration and endeavour from this bedrock. Young Fine Gael is an autonomous yet integral part of the Fine Gael party; it seeks to advance the political representation and objectives of the youth of Ireland through the vehicle of the Fine Gael Party. Young Fine Gael is wholly committed to the development of young people at all levels of political life, and in communion with the Fine Gael Party seeks to maximise the electoral objectives of Fine Gael.

#### 1. NAME

- 1.1 The name of the Organisation shall be Young Fine Gael (The Young United Irelanders), or in Irish shall be Ógra Fhine Gael (Na Gaeil Aontaithe Óga) and referred to the Organisation in this Constitution, shall be deemed to be an organ of Fine Gael.
- 1.2 The Organisation shall foster, promote and develop an interest among young people in political activity and shall seek to promote young candidates<sup>1</sup> in Fine Gael.
- 1.3 The<sup>2</sup> Organisation shall formulate policy representative of the membership of Young Fine Gael.
- 1.4 The Organisation shall take all possible measures to achieve the implementation of all such policies.
- 1.5 The Organisation shall work for the electoral success of Fine Gael.

#### 2. UNITS AND ORGANS OF THE ORGANISATION

- 2.1 The Units of the Organisation shall be:
  - (a) The Branch (An Cumann)
  - (b) The Regional Councils (Na Comhairlí Réigiúnacha)
- 2.2 The organs of the Organisation shall be:
  - (a) The Young Fine Gael National Executive (Ardchoiste Ógra Fhine Gael)
  - (b) The National Conference Steering Committee (Coiste Stiúrtha na Comhdhála Náisiúnta)
- 2.3 All elections to office within the Organisation shall be carried out by the proportional representation single transferable vote system (PR-STV).
- 2.4
  - (a) At least three days notice in writing of any meeting of any unit of the Organisation shall be given to all members of that unit plus the Constituency Youth Officer and the National Youth Officer.
  - (b) At least six days notice in writing of any meeting of the National Executive shall be given to all Secretaries of the Organisations branches, save where the National Executive deems the nature of the meeting to be of particular confidentiality or urgency in nature.

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<sup>1</sup> This text restores an unintended deletion from the Constitution.

<sup>2</sup> This text restores an unintended deletion from the Constitution.

- 2.5 Except where specified in this Constitution where for any reason an officer vacates office such office shall be filled by election from amongst and by the members concerned.
- 2.6 A person may not hold the same office within the Organisation, for more than three terms.
- 2.7 The quorum for a Branch meeting shall be five; for branches with a membership of over thirty the quorum shall be eight.
- 2.8 Units may draw up Standing Orders to govern their proceedings provided such Standing Orders do not contradict any provision of this Constitution and provided that such Standing Orders are accepted by the National Executive and passed at the Annual General Meeting, or a meeting called for that purpose, of the unit concerned and notified in writing to all members of the unit.
- 2.9 An Officer of any unit who, during his term of office, absents himself from three consecutive meetings of that Unit without furnishing the Chairperson or Secretary of that Unit with a written explanation acceptable to that Unit will be subject to a vote of confidence at the next meeting.
- 2.10 No member of the organisation may be elected an officer of any unit or organ of the organisation in absentia.

### **3. MEMBERSHIP**

- 3.1 The means by which a person attains membership are as follows:
  - (a) Membership of a Branch of where they are ordinarily resident, Or
  - (b) Where no functional branch exists, a person may be affiliated to their nearest local branch.  
And/or
  - (c) Any member attending a third-level college shall have the right to join that college branch.
  - (d) At the discretion of the National Executive of Young Fine Gael a member may join a branch in a district/constituency where they are not normally resident on written application to and agreement from the National Executive of YFG only in the circumstance whereby a functional branch exists in their place of normal residency.
- 3.2 No person shall be a member of the Organisation before the age of 15 and shall not be eligible to renew membership beyond the age of 35.
- 3.3
  - (a) Any member of the Organisation may not be a member of any other political organisation
  - (b) Only members of the Organisation may hold office within the Organisation.
- 3.4 By accepting membership of the Organisation, each member agrees to be bound by and shall submit to the rules and by-laws of the Organisation.
- 3.5 The National Executive may, at any time, refer any member of the Organisation to the Fine Gael Executive Council for any breach of this Constitution and Rules, or for any actions which, in its consideration, have damaged the interests of the Organisation.

## 4. THE BRANCH

- 4.1 The basic unit of the organisation shall be the Branch. Each Branch shall consist of not less than eight members.
- 4.2 Each Branch shall be affiliated to Fine Gael as provided for in Part II of the Fine Gael Constitution.
- 4.3 The National Executive may establish local branches whose functional area shall comprise of more than one Dáil constituency.
  - A branch established in this manner shall have the same status as any other branch of the organisation and members of this branch shall have the same status as any other local member of the organisation.
  - Members of a branch established in this manner should have voting rights for the purposes of constituency executive meetings and selection convention in one and only one constituency and this shall be the constituency in which the member is resident in.
  - This provision shall be in government and implemented in accordance with the provisions of the Fine Gael Constitution and Rules.
- 4.4 The Officers of the Branch shall consist of a Chairperson (Cathaoirleach), a Vice-Chairperson (Leaschathaoirleach), a Secretary (Rúnaí), two Treasurers (beirt Chisteoirí), a Public Relations Officer (Oifigeach Caidrimh Phoiblí) and an Inclusion Officer (Oifigeach Ionchuisitheach ). The Branch Chairperson shall act as the second treasurer. The Branch may elect other officers if it so desires.
- 4.5 A member may not hold the position of Chairperson in more than one unit of the organisation without the approval of the National Executive. Approval may only be granted exceptional circumstances and for a set period of time.
- 4.6 Branches shall be required to furnish particulars to the National Executive on request.
- 4.7 Approval for the establishment of a Young Fine Gael Branch is at the discretion of the Young Fine Gael National Executive.
- 4.8 In order to establish a local branch of Young Fine Gael an official launch must be held, written notice of a launch must be furnished to the National Executive and the National Youth Officer at least 21 days in advance of the proposed launch date.
- 4.9 Fourteen days written notice of any branch launch must be furnished to all elected Fine Gael representatives in that Dáil Constituency, the Fine Gael Constituency executive for that Dáil Constituency to also include the Youth Officer appointed for that Dáil Constituency and to the National Executive of Young Fine Gael and to the National Youth Officer.
- 4.10 In the case whereby a previously established Young Fine Gael branch, which has lapsed in its affiliation for a minimum of one year the above procedure (articles 4.7 to 4.9) must be followed in order to re-establish the branch as a functioning unit of the Organisation.
- 4.11 A branch may run a local campaign in their area or campaign for official policy of the Organisation, provided that the campaign is not contradictory to official policy and that the relevant Regional Organiser is informed not less than seven days before any campaign commences.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Passed by a quorate session at the 31st YFG National Conference. This new article allows local branches to run local campaigns provided they do not contradict official Young Fine Gael policy.

## 5. NATIONAL EXECUTIVE (An tArdchoiste)

- 5.1 Subject to the authority of the National Conference the management, control, government and administration of the Organisation shall be vested in and exercised by the National Executive.
- 5.2 The National Executive shall consist of:
  - a) A President (An tUachtarán), who shall be the Leader of the Organisation, chair of the National Executive and shall be the nominee for the Organisation's first seat on the Fine Gael Executive Council.
  - b) The Vice-President (An leasuachtarán) who shall be nominee for the Organisation's second seat on the Fine Gael Executive Council.
  - c) Eight ordinary members of the National Executive elected at the National Conference in the manner prescribed in Section 6.11.
  - d) Up to three additional members co-opted by the President to redress any imbalances that exist as regards region and skills.
- 5.3 The National Executive shall take office at the close of the National Conference.
- 5.4 The National Executive may adopt Standing Orders from time to time to govern the conduct of its meetings and its day-to-day operations.<sup>4</sup>
- 5.5 Members of the former National Executive must provide a handover document to their counterpart on the new National Executive within a month of National Conference to provide information, advice and guidance.
- 5.6 Members of the National Executive shall not be the Chairperson or Secretary of any other Unit of the Organisation without the express permission of the National Executive.
- 5.7 The National Executive shall meet at least ten times per year.
- 5.8 The President shall assign portfolios and responsibilities to the members of the National Executive. He shall have the authority to change these portfolios at his discretion.
- 5.9 The National Executive shall produce a report to be presented to the National Conference.
- 5.10 All members of the National Executive as elected at the National Conference shall work as a unit to furnish all members with, within 45 days of the National Conference a proposed programme of activity for the coming term of the Executive. The National Executive must furnish all members with an update of this programme of activity 8 months in to their term.
- 5.11 No person shall remain a member of the National Executive in the same capacity for more than three terms.
- 5.12 No person shall remain a member of the National Executive for longer than four terms.
- 5.13 In the event of the President failing to serve his full term of office, the position will be assumed by the Vice-President. The vacancy for the position of Vice-President shall accordingly be filled by appointment of the President, in consultation with the National Executive.
- 5.14 In the event of any other officer failing to serve his full term of office, the vacancy shall be filled by appointment of the President, in consultation with the National

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<sup>4</sup> Passed by a quorate session at the 31st YFG National Conference. This amendment clarifies that the National Executive may adopt Standing Orders to govern its workings.

Executive. In such circumstances the branches from the electoral region where the vacancy arises may submit names for consideration. The appointee must be a member of a branch in the region concerned.

- 5.15 A National Youth Officer, who shall be employed by Fine Gael, in consultation with the President and the National Executive, shall act as a Cabinet Secretary to the National Executive and shall be required unless reasons are given 5 working days in advance to the President and General Secretary of the Party, to attend all meetings of the National Executive.
- 5.16 The members of the National Executive and the National Youth Officer may attend any meeting of any unit or organ of the Organisation.
- 5.17 The National Executive may appoint sub-committees as deemed necessary and shall determine the power and duration of such sub-committees. Save with the express consent of the National Executive, any member of the National Executive who is a member of any such sub-committee will be deemed to have resigned from that sub-committee on ceasing to be member of the National Executive.
- 5.18 A Women's Network Committee shall be established at the start of each Executive term in accordance with Article 5.17 of this Constitution. The President in agreement with the National Executive shall nominate a member of the National Executive to act as liaison to the Network.<sup>6</sup>
- 5.19 Any member of the National Executive who, during his term of office, absents himself from three meetings of that body without furnishing an acceptable written explanation will be deemed to have resigned their position.
- 5.20 Officers or units of the organisation wishing to select or appoint members to officially represent the organisation at external events must obtain the approval of the National Executive before making the appointment. Notification for the request for nomination to external bodies must be furnished to all branch chairpersons who in turn if desired may make recommendations to the National Executive who will appoint the nominee to be sent forward.
- 5.21 The President in agreement with the National Executive shall appoint an International Secretary and Deputy International Secretary who from time to time will represent the organisation abroad. Neither the International Secretary nor Deputy International Secretary have to be members of the National Executive.
- 5.22 Regional Organisers in agreement with the National Executive may call an EGM of any branch in their region if deemed necessary.

## **6. NATIONAL CONFERENCE (An Chomhdháil Náisiúnta)**

- 6.1 The National Conference shall be the supreme authority of the Organisation.
- 6.2 The National Conference shall be held once in every 18 months on a date set by the National Executive unless specifically opposed by the Fine Gael Executive Council with the National Executive elected on every occasion.
- 6.3 Every member of the Organisation who attained membership as prescribed in Article 3.1 no later than 31 October preceding the National Conference shall be entitled to one vote at the National Conference subject to the presentation of photo ID.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Passed by a quorate session at the 31st YFG National Conference. This amendment allows the President, in agreement with the National Executive, to appoint a chair, Exec Liaison and committee for the Women's Network.

<sup>7</sup> Passed by a quorate session at the 31st YFG National Conference. This amendment clarifies which members of the Organisation are entitled to vote at a YFG National Conference.

- 6.4 The National Conference Steering Committee shall draw up the agenda for the National Conference.
- 6.5 The President of Young Fine Gael, the Vice President and the ordinary members of the National Executive shall be elected at every National Conference.
- 6.6 All candidates for election to the National Executive shall be proposed and seconded by not less than two Branches in the constituency in which they are a candidate. All nominations shall be submitted to the National Conference Steering Committee not less than twenty-one days before the commencement of the National Conference. For a national constituency a candidate requires a nomination from not less than 2 branches in no less than 2 regions as defined by Article 6.11 (a).
- 6.7 There shall be at least sixty days written notice of the National Conference to all members of the Organisation.
- 6.8 All elections at the National Conference shall be carried out using the Seanad Electoral system. The General Secretary of the Fine Gael Party or his Nominee shall act as returning officer.
- 6.9 In the election of President all members of the Organisation are entitled to one vote.
- 6.10 In the election of Vice-President all members of the Organisation shall be entitled to one vote.
- 6.11 The ordinary members of the National Executive shall be elected as follows:
- (a) One ordinary member of the National Executive of Young Fine Gael shall be elected from each of the following regions:
    - I. The province of Leinster (excluding Dublin)
    - II. The county of Dublin
    - III. The province of Munster
    - IV. The provinces of Connacht and Ulster.

The persons elected shall act as Regional Organiser for the region from which they are elected.
  - (b) Four ordinary members of the National Executive of Young Fine Gael shall be elected from a National Constituency, as in the manner of the Presidential Executive Council Representative Elections. The member elected to the first seat in the National Constituency shall be the nominee for the Organisation's third seat on the Fine Gael Executive Council.
  - (c) All affiliated members of Young Fine Gael shall be entitled to contest the election to ordinary membership of the National Executive of Young Fine Gael in either one of the regions outlined in 6.11(a) or in the National Constituency.
- 6.12 Motions and Resolutions for the National Conference, and amendments to the Constitution, may be put forward by the National Executive and units and organs of the Organisation not less than twenty-one days before the date of commencement of the National Conference.
- 6.13 The National Flag of Ireland and the flag of the European Union will be displayed at the National Conference.
- 6.14 Amhrán na bhFiann shall be played to signify the start and the end of the National Conference.

## **7. THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE STEERING COMMITTEE (Coiste Stiúrtha na Comhdhála Náisiúnta)**

7.1 The National Conference Steering Committee shall be appointed by the National Executive and shall consist of not less than five and not more than eight persons and shall be comprised of:-

- (a) The President and Vice-President (if not seeking re-election)
- (b) Members of the outgoing National Executive (not seeking re-election), such that the total number of members of the National Executive shall be at least four
- (c) The National Youth Officer
- (d) Not less than two other members of Young Fine Gael or Fine Gael who possess particular skills or experience which would be essential to the arrangement of the logistics of the National Conference, or who are members of Fine Gael in the constituency where the National Conference is taking place.

The National Executive shall appoint a Chair of the National Conference Steering Committee, who shall not be a member of the outgoing National Executive, and issue Standing Orders to it upon its appointment which shall govern its operations.<sup>8</sup>

7.2 The functions of the Steering Committee shall be:

- (a) to organise the logistics of the National Conference,
- (b) to draw up Standing Orders for the National Conference,
- (c) to select the motions for discussion at the National Conference, noting any direction from the National Executive regarding the compilation and adoption of the organisation's Policy Manifesto.
- (d) to ensure that all proceedings are ethically conducted and in accordance with the Constitution and Rules of the Organisation,
- (e) to draw up the agenda for the National Conference.
- (f) to organise a minimum of four Regional Hustings to take place no more than 21 days before the National Conference noting any direction from the Regional Councils.

7.3 No candidate may be a member, at any stage, of the Steering Committee for the National Conference at which he is a candidate.

## **8. POLICY**

8.1 The sole responsibility for the co-ordination of policy creation within the organisation lies with the National Executive, which may, from time to time, ratify a policy manifesto or refer same to a National Assembly. Any such manifesto shall be subject to Article 6.1 of this constitution.

8.2 Official policy of the Organisation is that which has been approved by the National Executive or National Conference or (if referred to it by the National Executive) the National Assembly.

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<sup>8</sup> Passed by a quorate session at the 31st YFG National Conference. This amendment changes the composition of the YFG National Steering Committee and limits the size of it to between five and eight members in line with recent National Conferences.

- 8.3 The National Executive may establish Policy committees, provided that sufficient interest exists among members, membership of which shall be open to all members of the organisation. The National Executive shall determine the scope, nature, duration and terms of reference of such committees.
- 8.4 The National Executive must hold a policy think-in for members to contribute to Young Fine Gael policy formation. Any policy proposals are subject to Article 8.2 of this constitution.
- 8.5 The W.T. Cosgrave Excellence in Policy Award shall be presented to the best contribution to policy by a branch or individual member that year. The winner shall be decided by the National Executive and the award shall be presented each year at Summer School.

## **9. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (An Tionól Náisiúnta)**

- 9.1 The National Assembly shall consist of a delegation from each affiliated Young Fine Gael branch. These delegations shall consist of the Branch Chairperson, or where unable to attend, the Branch Vice-Chairperson, and two other delegates chosen by the branch to attend.
- 9.2 The National Assembly shall meet at least once a year to be held at the Organisation's Annual Summer School or shall be held at the request of the President or where sixty per-cent of the National Executive or more agree that a National Assembly be held. Should two-thirds of affiliated Young Fine Gael branches petition the National Youth Officer, a National Assembly must then held within six weeks of the petition reaching the required level of support.
- 9.3 The National Executive shall inform all members of the Organisation of the National Assembly twenty-one days in advance.
- 9.4 These meetings of the National Assembly must be presided over by the President or the Vice-President in his absence. All members of the National Executive shall attend meetings of the National Assembly.
- 9.5 Each member attending the National Assembly must be provided with a list of dates of National Executive meetings since the last National Assembly meeting or Young Fine Gael National Conference, whichever being the latter or the two to have taken place and attendance records at these meetings must be presented by the Young Fine Gael National Secretary to the National Assembly.
- 9.6 The functions of the National Assembly shall be to allow members the opportunity to raise issues with and ask questions of members of the National Executive. The Organisation's three representatives on the Fine Gael Executive Council shall provide a report to the membership on their activities as members of that body at the National Assembly. Branches may submit written questions or issues to be addressed up to a week in advance of National Assembly, however questions or issues which have not been previously submitted may still be raised on the floor of the National Assembly.
- 9.7 The National Assembly may dismiss any member of the National Executive by a vote of 75% or more, provided that a motion of dismissal has been sent to the National Youth Officer by at least five Branches and a Regional Council of the Organisation at least 14 days before the meeting. It then must be included in the agenda for the meeting.

## **10. REGIONAL COUNCIL (An Chomhairle Réigiúnach)**



- 10.1 The National Executive shall establish Regional Councils.
- 10.2 The National Executive shall determine the geographical scope, nature, duration and terms of reference of each Regional Council.
- 10.3 The President, in consultation with the National Executive, shall appoint at least one member of the National Executive to each established Regional Council. These appointed member(s) shall have full voting rights
- 10.4 The tasks of the Regional Council shall be:
  - (a) To develop and co-ordinate the organisation in that region.
  - (b) To provide an opportunity to discuss mutual needs between branches.
  - (c) To co-ordinate regional campaigns in conjunction with the National Executive of the organisation.
  - (d) To foster and promote close cooperation with units of units and organs of the Fine Gael Party.
  - (e) To discuss resolutions proposed by the council to the branches.
- 10.5 No member shall be eligible to serve on two Regional Councils at the same time.
- 10.6 Each Regional Council will have a Regional Inclusion Officer who will coordinate with the Branch Inclusion Officers in their region and work with the National Youth Officer and Members of the National Executive.

## **11. FINE GAEL CONSTITUENCY YOUTH OFFICERS (Oifigigh Óg Dháilcheantar Fhine Gael)**

- 11.1 There shall be a Constituency Youth Officer for each Dáil Constituency or where a Dáil Constituency consists of two or more counties, there may be a Constituency Youth Officer for each county.
- 11.2 The role of the Constituency Youth Officer shall be:
  - To promote the development of the Organisation and the recruitment of youth members within the constituency.
  - To represent the Organisation at all meetings of Fine Gael Constituency Executive & Constituency Officer Board.
  - To foster the full participation of the Organisation in Constituency Activities especially at times of elections.

The National Executive shall request a report from each Constituency Youth Officer on their work once in each calendar year. Any Constituency Youth Officer who fails to submit such a report within three months of it being requested shall be deemed to have vacated the position, with a replacement to be selected in accordance with the processes outlined in this Article.<sup>9</sup>

- 11.3 The Constituency Youth Officer shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Fine Gael Constituency Executive. In the election, all members of the Organisation shall have one vote and only members of the Organisation may vote.
- 11.4 If, between Annual General Meetings of the Fine Gael Constituency Executive the position of Constituency Youth Officer is vacant, then the Regional Organiser shall convene a special meeting of the Organisation in the constituency to elect on a replacement Constituency Youth Officer to serve until the next Annual General Meeting of the Constituency Executive. A week's written notice of such a meeting must be given to all members of the Organisation within the constituency,

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<sup>9</sup> Passed by a quorate session at the 31st YFG National Conference. This amendment requires Constituency Youth Officers to submit a report to the National Executive once each year. Failure to submit such a report within three months will result in the Constituency Youth Officer being deemed to have resigned their position

Constituency Executive, the Regional Council, the National Youth Officer, and the National Executive.

- 11.5 Where no Branch of the Organisation exists in a constituency and where no Constituency Youth Officer has been approved, the President, in consultation with the National Executive shall appoint a Constituency Youth Officer for that constituency.

## **12. ALTERATION AND INTERPRETATION**

- 12.1 Any provision of this Constitution may be amended, whether by way of variation, addition or repeal, only by a two-thirds majority of a quorate session of the National Conference.
- 12.2 This Constitution and Rules, as amended, shall be communicated by the President to all Units of the Organisation within thirty five days of the close of each National Conference.
- 12.3 In this Constitution, where the context so admits and unless the contrary intention appears words singular shall include the plural and words in the plural shall include the singular. Words denoting the female gender shall include the male gender and vice versa.
- 12.4 In the event of a conflict over the interpretation of this Constitution or the validity of organisational procedures, the first body of appeal shall be the National Executive, and the final body of appeal shall be the Executive Council of Fine Gael.
- 12.5 The Constitution shall come into effect immediately on being approved by the National Conference. The Constitution of Young Fine Gael in force immediately prior to the coming into operation of this Constitution shall, of that date, cease to have any effect.
- 12.6 This Constitution shall be subject to the overriding provisions of the Constitution of Fine Gael and in the case of any conflict, the provision of that Constitution shall prevail. In the event that no provision exists in this Constitution for a particular situation, but provision does exist in the Fine Gael Constitution, then the provision of that Constitution shall apply.
- 12.7 The National Executive and the National Assembly shall ensure that all provisions of the Young Fine Gael Constitution and the Constitution of Fine Gael are upheld.