

## 70 Days: Government Formation in 2016

*Eoin O'Malley*

Though elections often feature a debate about government formation, that debate is sometimes rendered obsolete when the election results come in. The Irish election did not feature much debate on government formation but what debate did occur was quickly forgotten. The eventual government formed was predicted by very few commentators, except in the final days of the election as it became increasingly clear that the outgoing government would not be returned. The final election result showed the outgoing government roundly defeated, as we saw in Chapter 6. Yet no obvious alternative government emerged. The election produced the most fragmented Dáil in the country's history, making government formation much trickier.

It was 70 days between election day and the formation of the government, which was composed of Fine Gael and a number of independents, with the expressed willingness of Fianna Fáil to support it or abstain on key votes. It was not the country's first minority government, but it is by some way the government with the smallest level of support locked in to a coalition deal. It was the first time there was an

---

This chapter was written using interviews with six protagonists in the formation of government, on the basis of confidentiality.

E. O'Malley (✉)  
Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland

© The Author(s) 2016  
M. Gallagher, M. Marsh (eds.), *How Ireland Voted 2016*,  
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-40889-7\_11