



Survey of Chairpersons

November 2019



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1. Background

In 2011 the Government introduced new arrangements for appointments to State Boards. Under this new arrangement, expressions of interest were to be sought where a vacancy arose on the Board of a State body, with vacancies advertised on the relevant Department's website or by the independent Public Appointments Service (PAS).

On 30th September 2014 the Government announced further substantial reforms to the appointment system building on the model established in 2011. The *Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards* came into operation in November 2014 and included the following developments:

- a. the open advertisement of relevant vacancies on the State Boards portal www.stateboards.ie operated by the Public Appointments Service (PAS);
- b. appointments made on the application of specific and detailed criteria determined by the relevant Minister as necessary for the effective performance of the relevant role(s); and
- c. application processing by way of a transparent assessment system designed and implemented by the independent Public Appointments Service (PAS) to support the relevant Minister in making appointments to State Boards under his/her remit.

The key objectives of the reformed process were:

- To increase **access** and widen the pool from which potential appointees to State Boards are drawn.
- To strengthen State Boards by enhancing the calibre and **quality** of appointments.
- To secure a high degree of **transparency** in the selection of candidates for appointment by the relevant Minister.

The Guidelines have been in operation now for over 4 years and working with our colleagues in Government Departments, PAS has sought to implement and deliver a system to meet these objectives.

We have previously surveyed our registered users and clients to get their feedback and identify improvements to the process.

Since 2014 there have been over 800 appointments made to State Boards since the introduction of the Guidelines. In early 2019 PAS considered it timely to assess the impact of the reformed process on board appointments and performance from the perspective of the Chairs of State Boards. Therefore, in May 2019, PAS circulated a survey to over 130 Chairpersons.

The aim of the survey was to:

- get an insight into how the process is performing in identifying a diverse pool of high calibre appointees;
- get feedback from those who have experience of engaging with the process; and
- provide an opportunity to suggest improvements.

The survey covered a number of questions regarding each Chairpersons experience of the process from the development of the specifications for each role to the assessment and appointment of the candidates.

Chairpersons were asked to complete a short questionnaire which was completely voluntary and confidential. The data was collected anonymously and the results were not attributable to individual participants. The results of the survey are reported in a statistical format. Where additional commentary is provided by participants, responses are anonymous and not attributable to any individual.

2. Results

75

responses were received.

The following is an overview of the questions and responses.



Q1. How many vacancies on your Board have been filled through the PAS State Boards appointment process?

65

responses indicated that at least one vacancy had been filled.



10 Chairpersons indicated that the whole Board had been filled through this process.

Q2. Was a Board Effectiveness Review used to assist in identifying the skills required for the new Board members?

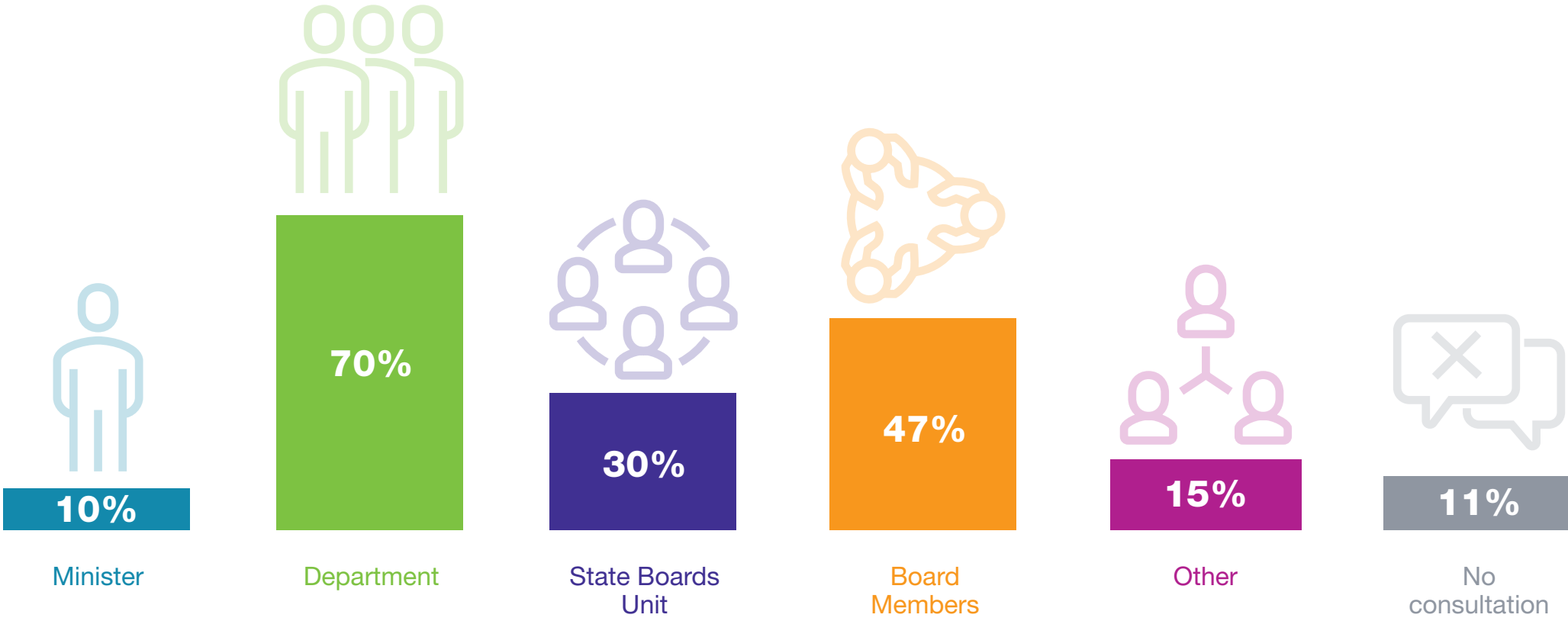


57%



43%

Q3. Who consulted with you in preparing the Person Specification for the vacancies? List all that apply.



Q4. Were you invited to take part in the assessment of applications process?

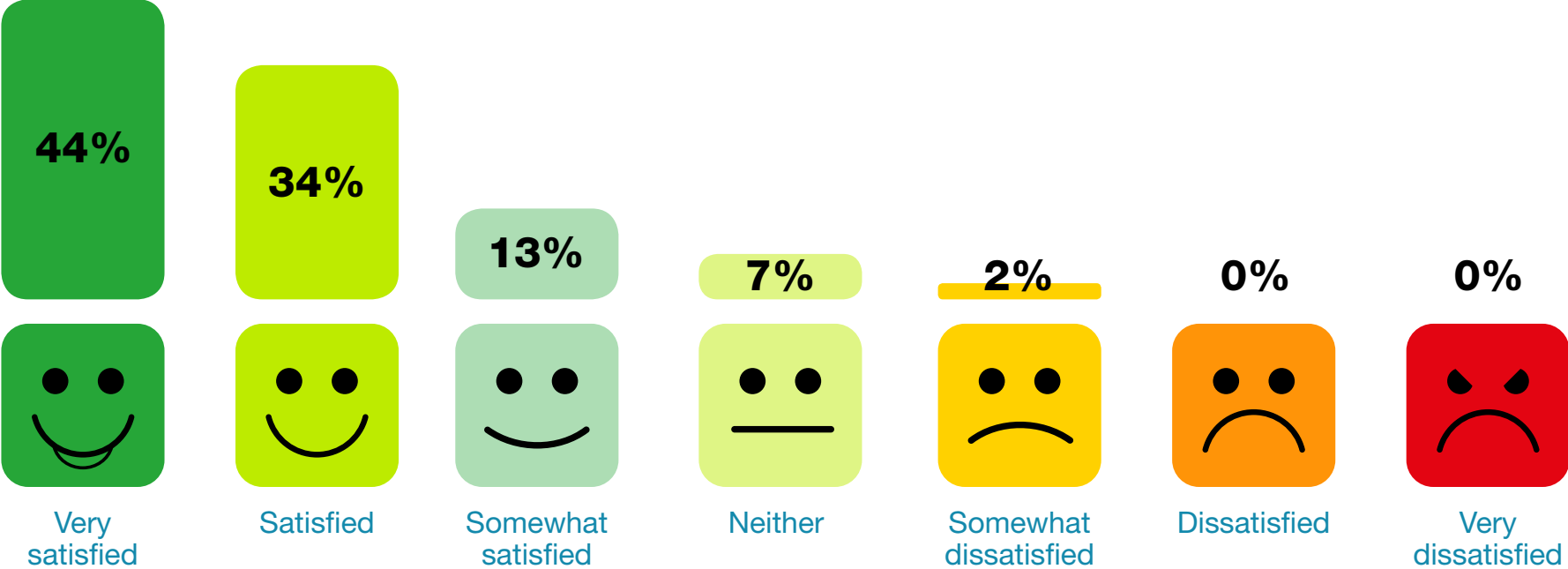


78%

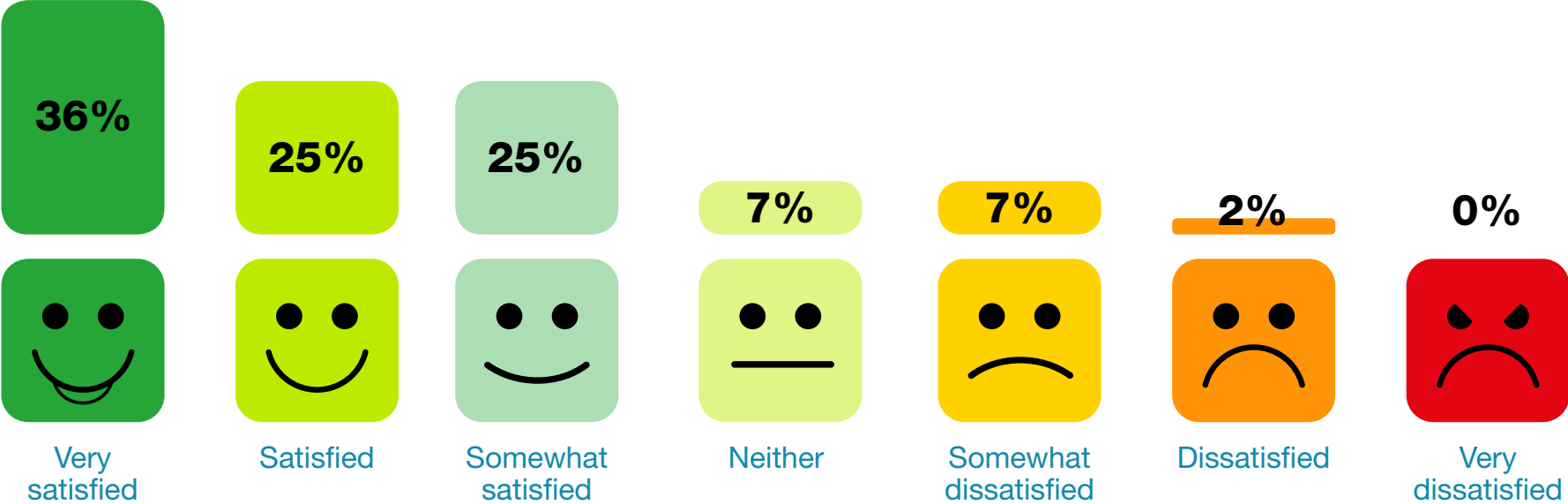


22%

Q5. If 'Yes', how satisfied were you with the number of applications received?



Q6. If 'Yes', how satisfied were you with the calibre of applications received?



Q7. If you were not satisfied with the number/calibre of applications, please comment.



13 of 30

responses received
not satisfied

Some areas of concern were:

- Applicants did not demonstrate evidence of or did not possess the relevant qualifications/experience
- Person Specification did not reflect the needs of the Board
- Applications not tailored to the requirements of the Board – Too general
- Gender mix good but insufficient ethnic diversity

Q8. Were you satisfied with the assessment process? If not, please comment.



10 of **54**

responses received
not satisfied

A sample of comments received were:

- Too many interviewed and sent forward to the Minister for consideration
- Some verification of applicants c.v's is warranted.
- Involvement of the Chair was limited

Q9. Do you think that the new appointees have had an impact on the performance of your Board? Please comment.



- 6 responded that it was too early to say
- The majority responded indicating that, following a learning curve, the new appointees were contributing well, challenging consensus and had a welcome breadth of appropriate knowledge
- The quality of Board appointees has certainly improved relative to the previous process
- Yes very positive impact
- We were able to access high calibre, well qualified appointees

Q10. Do you feel there is sufficient diversity on your Board?



76%



24%

Q11. Do you have any suggestions how to attract more diverse candidates for State Boards positions



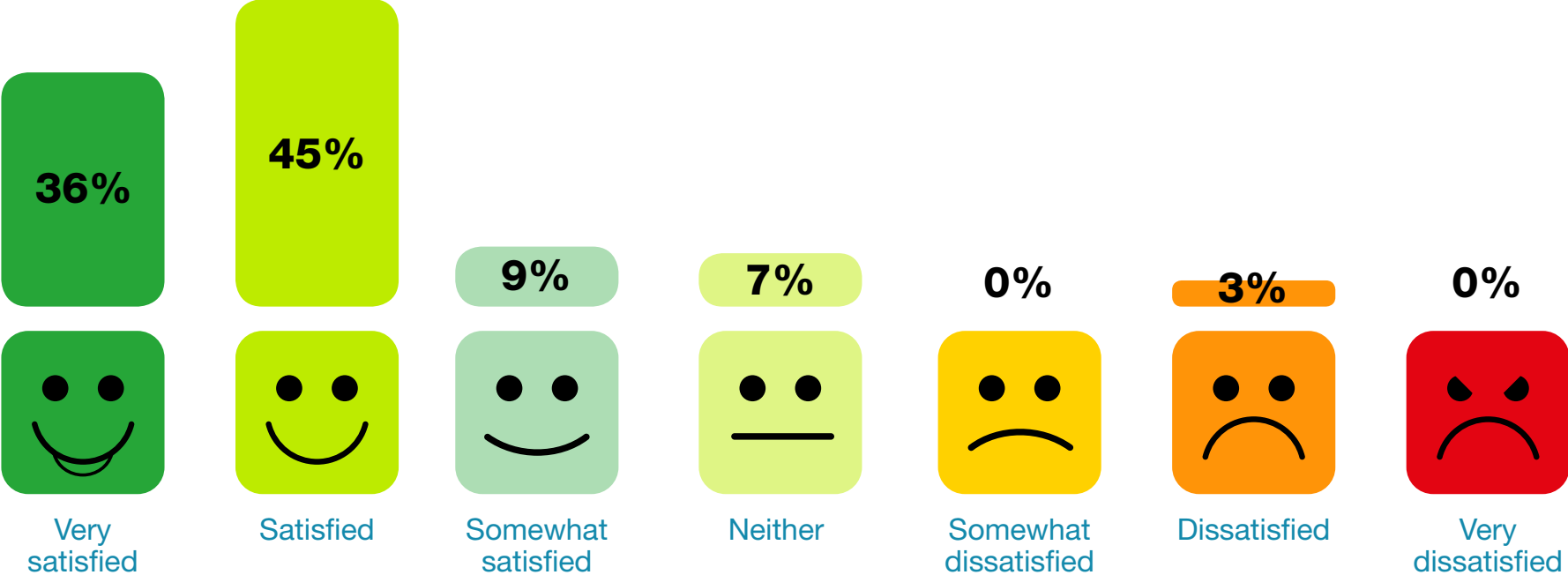
57

responses received

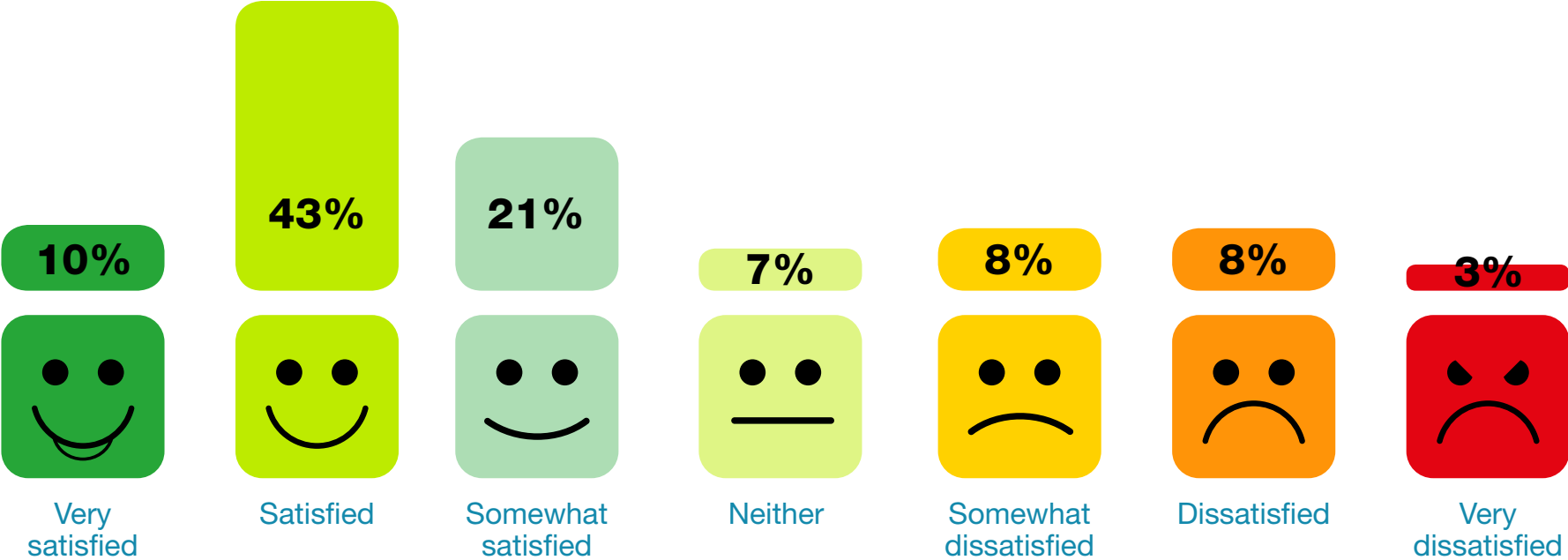
The following were the main suggestions:

- Appropriate remuneration needs to be considered
- A search process/wider promotion should be used.
- Clearer specifications regarding the role and responsibilities of Board members

Q12. Overall how satisfied are you with the PAS support of the State Boards process?



Q13. How satisfied are you with the length of time of the State Boards process?



Q14. From your knowledge/experience of the State Boards appointments process, would you be willing to apply for membership of another State Board?



89%



11%

Q15. What factors would influence your decision to apply for another State Board appointment?



The main factors identified:

- An interest in the area/company
- Relevance of qualifications/experience to the role
- Increase in remuneration
- Time commitment
- Ability to contribute effectively to the Board
- Confidence in the relevant Minister
- Giving something back
- Effectiveness of the Board

Q16. Are you aware of potential Board members who chose not to apply for positions?



56%



44%

Q17. If 'Yes', can you indicate why?



The reasons given were:

- Time commitment
- Remuneration
- Lengthy and uncertain process
- Geography - Location of meetings – Dublin centric
- Concerns regarding the appointments process
- Believe the decision is political
- Public scrutiny; having to appear before Dáil Committees
- Political interference

Q18. Do you have any additional comments/feedback that you would like to add?



50

responses received

The following are a sample of the comments:

- Requirements are too specific leading to good candidates being excluded
- System works well and staff are superb
- Lack of awareness of PAS process and how it works
- System gives credence to appointments – lack of political interference
- Assess the age of applicants to gauge diversity
- Things have improved but need to motivate people to apply
- System will improve over time but good people may still not apply
- More transparency regarding the Ministers decision
- Set a time limit for Ministers to make appointments
- Diversity is still an issue
- Blending Search process and advertising
- Location of Board v applicants
- Balance between specialist knowledge which would benefit the particular state board and general governance knowledge is important
- Chairperson should be involved in all stages of the process
- Very impressed by PAS and by the calibre of applicant we received as a result of PAS advertising.

3. Conclusion

The PAS process is working well and good quality candidates are being appointed. However, the process is lengthy and perceived to be cumbersome. Delays in appointments being made is a factor in deterring applicants. Time commitment, remuneration and the level of responsibility are major concerns for potential candidates when considering appointment opportunities.

Chairpersons would appreciate more opportunity to contribute in respect of the development of the requirements of the role(s) by the relevant Department.

PAS would like to thank everyone who responded so openly and honestly to this survey.

We will continue to review our processes and work with the relevant State Boards Liaison Officer in each Department to ensure that suggestions made in this survey are actioned appropriately where possible.