

Changes to Legislation: as of 1 June 2026, this Act is up to date with all changes known to be in force.



Number 13 of 1931

LEGITIMACY ACT 1931

REVISED

Updated to 28 May 2019

This Revised Act is an administrative consolidation of the *Legitimacy Act 1931*. It is prepared by the Law Reform Commission in accordance with its function under the *Law Reform Commission Act 1975 (3/1975)* to keep the law under review and to undertake revision and consolidation of statute law.

All Acts up to and including *Greyhound Racing Act 2019 (15/2019)*, enacted 28 May 2019, and all statutory instruments up to and including *European Communities (Sheep Identification) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 (S.I. No. 243 of 2019)*, made 28 May 2019, were considered in the preparation of this Revised Act.

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ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

Section

1. Legitimation by subsequent marriage of parents.
2. Declarations of legitimacy of legitimated persons.
3. Rights of legitimated persons, etc., to take interest in property.
4. Succession on intestacy of legitimated persons and their issue.
5. Application to illegitimate persons dying before marriage of parents.
6. Personal rights and obligations of legitimated persons.
7. Death duties.
8. Provisions as to persons legitimated by extraneous law.
9. Right of illegitimate child and mother of illegitimate child to succeed on intestacy of the other.
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SCHEDULE.

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS OF LEGITIMATED PERSONS

ACT REFERRED TO

No. 10 of 1924



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AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAW RELATING TO CHILDREN BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK. [19th May, 1931.]

BE IT ENACTED BY THE OIREACTHAS OF SAORSTÁT EIREANN AS FOLLOWS:—

Legitimation by subsequent marriage of parents.

1.—(1) Subject to the provisions of this section where the parents of an illegitimate person marry or have married one another, whether before or after the commencement of this Act, the marriage shall, if the father of the illegitimate person was or is at the date of the marriage domiciled in Saorstát Eireann, render that person, if living, legitimate from the commencement of this Act, or from the date of the marriage, whichever is the later.

(2) F1[...]

(3) F2[...]

(4) F3[...]

Declarations of legitimacy of legitimated persons.

2.—(1) A person claiming that he is or that any of his parents or remoter ancestors is or was a legitimated person may, whether he is or is not domiciled in Saorstát Eireann and whether he is or is not a natural-born British subject within the meaning of the Legitimacy Declaration Act (Ireland), 1868, institute proceedings under that Act, and that Act shall apply accordingly.

F4[(1A) A person claiming that a child of his is or was a legitimated person may, whether the child is or is not domiciled in the State and whether the child is or is not a natural-born British subject within the meaning of the Legitimacy Declaration Act (Ireland), 1868, institute proceedings under that Act praying for a decree that the child is the legitimate child of his parents, and that Act shall apply accordingly.

(1B) Proceedings instituted by virtue of this section shall be heard in chambers.]

(2) The Circuit Court shall have and may exercise jurisdiction in proceedings instituted by virtue of this section under the Legitimacy Declaration Act (Ireland), 1868, and section 25 and the provisions to [section 48 of the Courts of Justice Act, 1924](#) (No. 10 of 1924), shall apply in respect of all such proceedings.

(3) The jurisdiction conferred by this section on the Circuit Court shall be exercised by the Judge of that Court for the time being assigned to the Circuit in which the person instituting the proceedings is residing or, where such person does not reside in Saorstát Eireann, to the Circuit which includes the City of Dublin.

Rights of legitimated persons, etc., to take interest in property.

3.—(1) Subject to the provisions of this Act, a legitimated person and his spouse, children or more remote issue shall be entitled to take any interest:—

- (a) in the estate of an intestate dying after the date of legitimation;
- (b) under any disposition coming into operation after the date of legitimation;
- (c) by descent under an estate in tail created after the date of legitimation;

in like manner as if the legitimated person had been born legitimate.

(2) Where the right to any property, real or personal, depends on the relative seniority of the children of any person, and those children include one or more legitimated persons, the legitimated person or persons shall rank as if he or they had been born on the day when he or they became legitimated by virtue of this Act, and if more than one such legitimated person became legitimated at the same time, they shall rank as between themselves in order of seniority.

(3) Where property real or personal or any interest therein is limited in such a way that, if this Act had not been passed, it would (subject or not to any preceding limitations or charges) have devolved (as nearly as the law permits) along with a dignity or title of honour, then nothing in this Act shall operate to sever the property or any interest therein from such dignity or title of honour, but the same shall go and devolve (without prejudice to the preceding limitations or charges aforesaid) in like manner as if this Act had not been passed. This sub-section applies, whether or not there is any express reference to the dignity or title of honour, and notwithstanding that in some events the property or some interest therein may become severed therefrom.

(4) This section applies only if and so far as a contrary intention is not expressed in the disposition, and shall have effect subject to the terms of the disposition and to the provisions therein contained.

Succession on intestacy of legitimated persons and their issue.

4.—Where a legitimated person or a child or remoter issue of a legitimated person dies intestate in respect of all or any of his real or personal property, the same persons shall be entitled to take the same interests therein as they would have been entitled to take if the legitimated person had been born legitimate.

Application to illegitimate persons dying before marriage of parents.

5.—Where an illegitimate person dies after the commencement of this Act and before the marriage of his parents leaving any spouse, children or remoter issue living at the date of such marriage, then, if that person would, if living at the time of the marriage of his parents, have become a legitimated person, the provisions of this Act with respect to the taking of interests in property by, or in succession to, the spouse, children and remoter issue of a legitimated person (including those relating to the rate of death duties) shall apply as if such person as aforesaid had been a legitimated person, and the date of the marriage of his parents had been the date of legitimation.

Personal rights and obligations of legitimated persons.

6.—A legitimated person shall have the same rights and shall be under the same obligations in respect of the maintenance and support of himself or of any other person as if he had been born legitimate, and subject to the provisions of this Act, the provisions of any Act relating to claims for damages, compensation, allowance, benefit or otherwise by or in respect of a legitimate child shall apply in like manner in the case of a legitimated person.

Death duties.

7.—Where a legitimated person or any relative of a legitimated person takes any interest in real or personal property, any succession, legacy or other duty which becomes leviable after the date of legitimation shall be payable at the same rate as if the legitimated person had been born legitimate.

Provisions as to persons legitimated by extraneous law.

8.—(1) Where the parents of an illegitimate person marry or have married one another, whether before or after the commencement of this Act, and the father of the illegitimate person was or is at the time of the marriage domiciled in a country other than Saorstát Eireann by the law of which the illegitimate person became legitimated by virtue of such subsequent marriage, that person, if living, shall in Saorstát Eireann be recognised as having been so legitimated from the commencement of this Act or from the date of the marriage, whichever last happens, notwithstanding that his father was not at the time of the birth of such person domiciled in a country in which legitimation by subsequent marriage was permitted by law.

(2) All the provisions of this Act relating to legitimated persons and to the taking of interests in property by or in succession to a legitimated person and the spouse, children and remoter issue of a legitimated person (including those relating to the rate of death duties) shall apply in the case of a person recognised as having been legitimated under this section, or who would, had he survived the marriage of his parents, have been so recognised; and accordingly, this Act shall have effect as if reference therein to a legitimated person included a person so recognised as having been legitimated.

Right of illegitimate child and mother of illegitimate child to succeed on intestacy of the other.

9.—F5[...]

Saving.

10.—(1) Nothing in this Act shall affect the succession to any dignity or title of honour or render any person capable of succeeding to or transmitting a right to succeed to any such dignity or title.

(2) Nothing in this Act shall affect the operation or construction of any disposition coming into operation before the commencement of this Act, or affect any rights under the intestacy of a person dying before the commencement of this Act.

Interpretation.

11.—For the purposes of this Act, unless the context otherwise requires:—

the expression “legitimated person” means a person legitimated by this Act;

the expression “date of legitimation” means the date of the marriage leading to the legitimation, or where the marriage occurred before the commencement of this Act, the commencement of this Act;

the expression “disposition” means an assurance of any interest in property by any instrument whether *inter vivos* or by will.

Short title.

12.—(1) This Act may be cited as the Legitimacy Act, 1931.

(2) This Act shall come into operation on the first day of July, 1931.

SCH. 1

[1931.]

Legitimacy Act 1931

[No. 13.]

SCHEDULE.

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS OF LEGITIMATED PERSONS.

F6[...]



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About this Revised Act

This Revised Act presents the text of the Act as it has been amended since enactment, and preserves the format in which it was passed.

Related legislation

Births and Deaths Registration Acts 1863 to 1996: this Act is one of a group of Acts previously included in this collective citation, to be construed together as one (*Registration of Births Act 1996* (36/1996), s. 7(2)). The provisions of this Act included in the collective citation (s. 1(4) and the schedule) were repealed (5.12.2005) by *Civil Registration Act 2004* (3/2004), s. 4 and sch. 2, S.I. No. 764 of 2005, subject to transitional provisions in s. 5.

Annotations

This Revised Act is not annotated and only shows textual amendments. An annotated version of this revision is also available which shows textual and non-textual amendments and their sources. It also shows editorial notes including statutory instruments made pursuant to the Act and previous affecting provisions.

Material not updated in this revision

Where other legislation is amended by this Act, those amendments may have been superseded by other amendments in other legislation, or the amended legislation may have been repealed or revoked. This information is not represented in this revision but will be reflected in a revision of the amended legislation if one is available.

A list of legislative changes to any Act, and to statutory instruments from 1972, may be found linked from the page of the Act or statutory instrument at www.irishstatutebook.ie.