A New German-Irish Council?

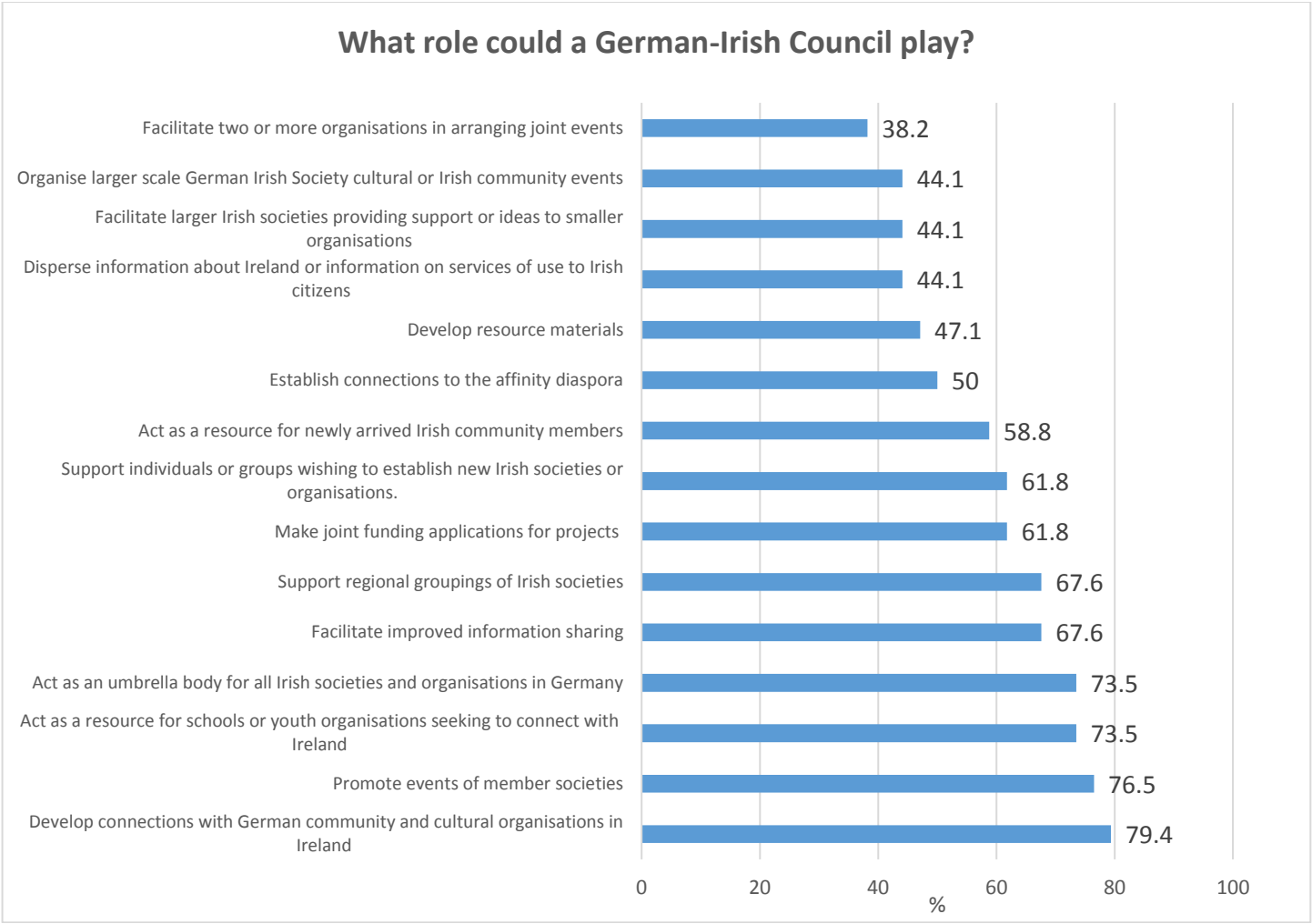
The most recent meeting of German-Irish societies and Irish community organisations on 13 October 2018 decided to further explore the possibility of establishing a German-Irish Council. The idea was generally received positively but it was felt that further work needed to be done on the potential role and mandate of the Council before final decisions could be made.

A working group has been established to look at the issue in more detail and the Embassy prepared a questionnaire to canvas for views, which was sent to all the German-Irish societies and Irish community organisations in Germany. The questionnaire was online for two weeks and yielded a response from 34 individuals.

The general feeling amongst the respondents was that a German-Irish Council would be a worthwhile undertaking and all of the respondents seemed to support the idea. In terms of the role of the Council an emphasis was put on linking Ireland and Germany, both by fostering deeper connections with the German community and cultural organisations in Ireland and acting as a resource/first point of contact for people/organisations interested in connecting to Ireland. Similarly, most respondents saw it as important that the Council act as a support network for Irish Community organisations to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information, the promotion of events and the preparation of joint funding applications, as well as providing support to the establishment of new Irish Community organisations and newly arrived diaspora.

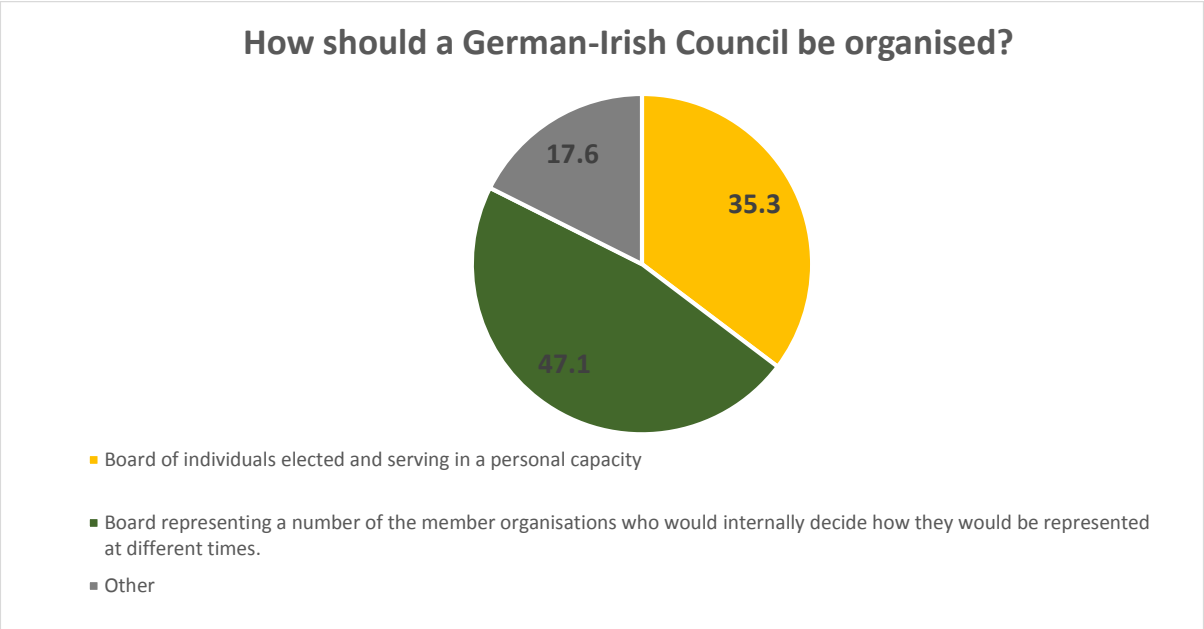
The administrative work of the Council was seen as mainly consisting of maintaining a membership database and e-mail circulation list, facilitating contact between organisations, and providing a database of performers and speakers of interest. There was no clear consensus, however, on who would carry out this work. Similarly, the objective of the Council's online presence was seen as directing interested individuals to the right organisations and acting as multiplier for the online presence of individual organisations. Most respondents felt that the best way to accomplish this would be through an individually built and maintained website. However, again, there was no consensus as to how this should be managed.

In terms of the board the general idea was that the member organisations should be represented on it and that it should reflect an informal thematic structure; there were mixed views on whether the board should have regional representation. The board should be elected every two years, but there should be a possibility of re-election of sitting members. There was a general scepticism among some of the respondents in terms of the workability of the Council and quite a few called for a (part-time) paid position to manage it as well as a set budget for the work of the Council (but the source of this funding was not identified).

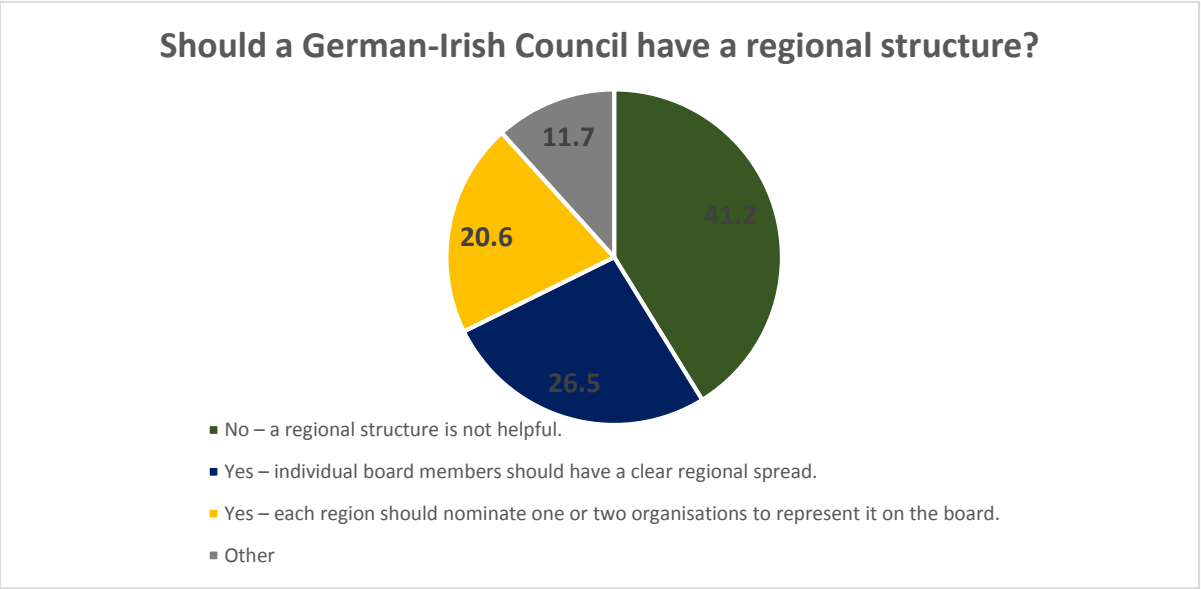


Further feedback included: offering help and funding for school exchanges and acting as a general point of contact for e.g. festival organisers, people interested in Ireland etc.

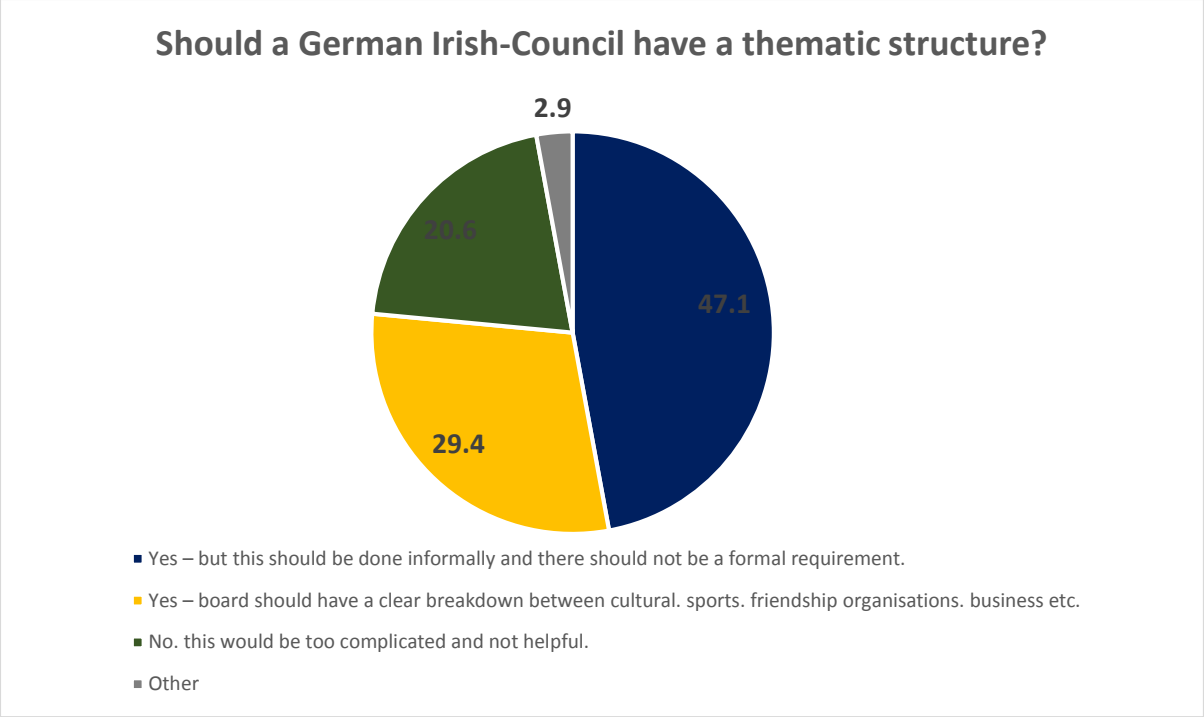
Structure and organisation of the German – Irish Council



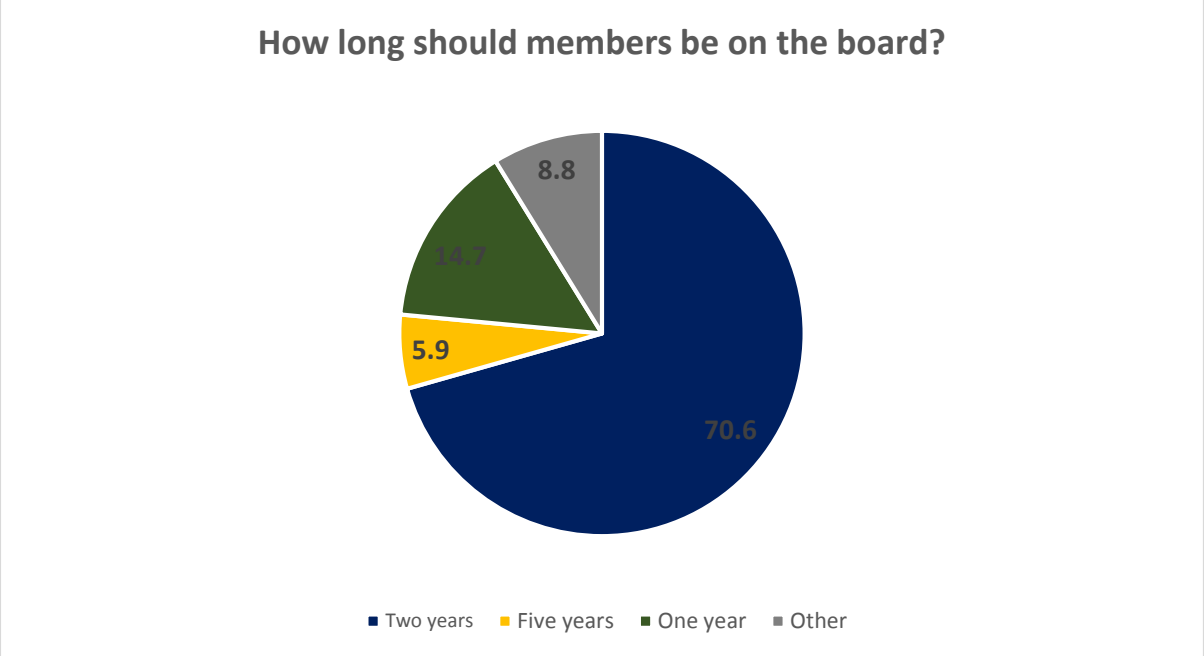
Most of the comments in the "Other" section called for a mixture of both.



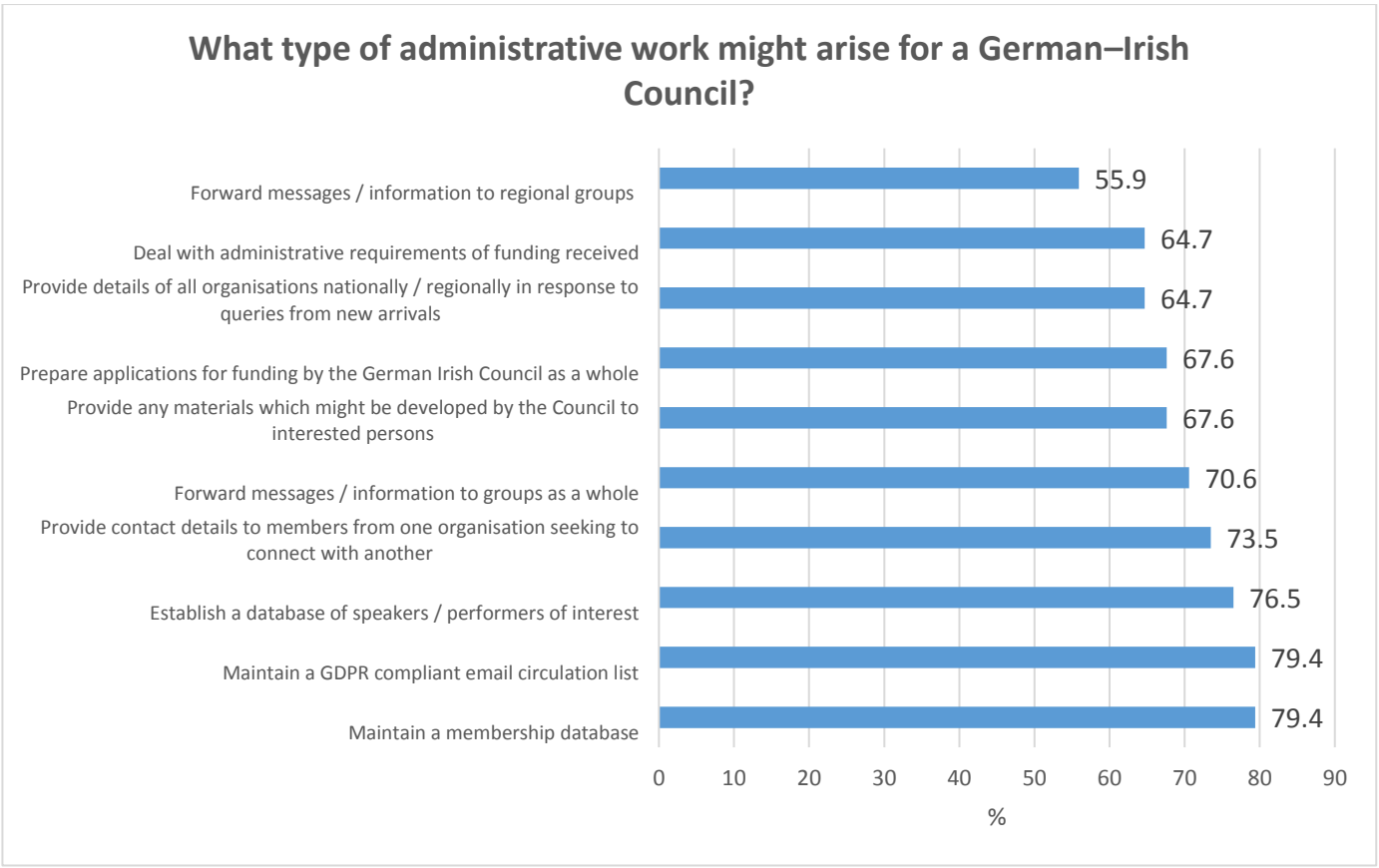
An important point made in the "Other" section was that not only should the cities, but also the rural areas, be represented.

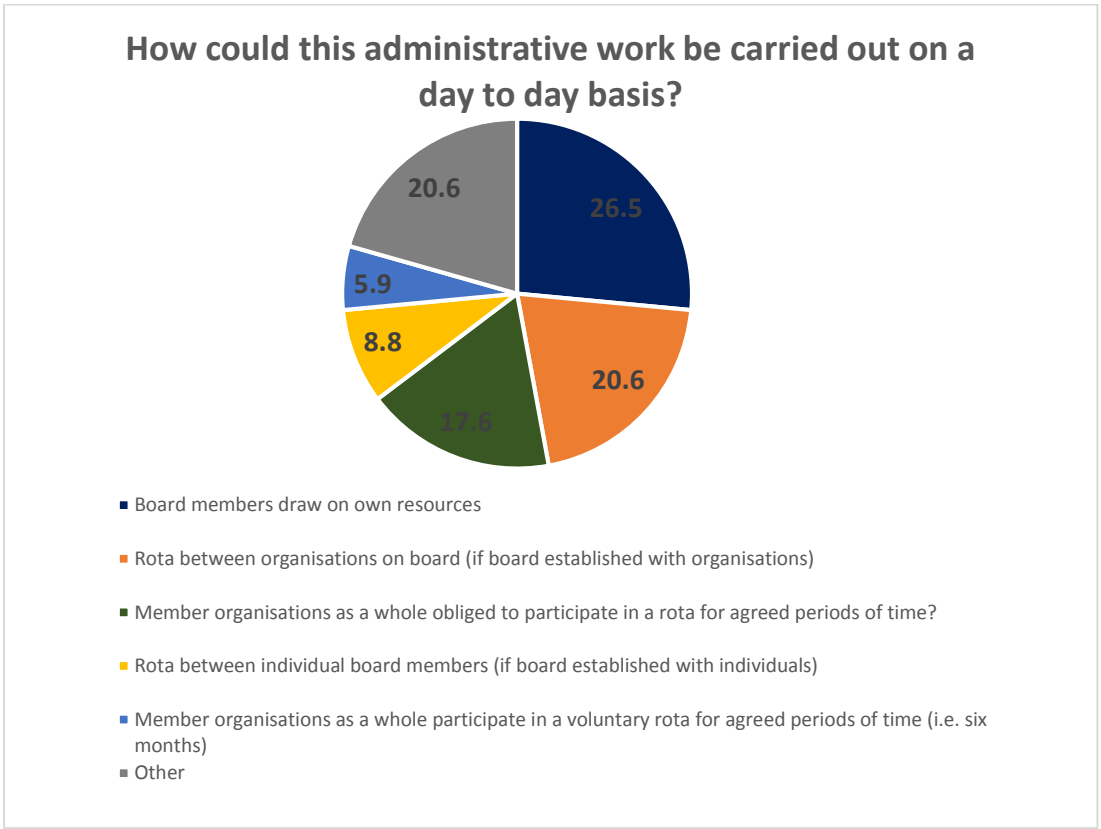


One important comment that was made, mentioned that a “one size fits all” organisation and structure would not work and that the Council should aim to stay as flexible as possible.



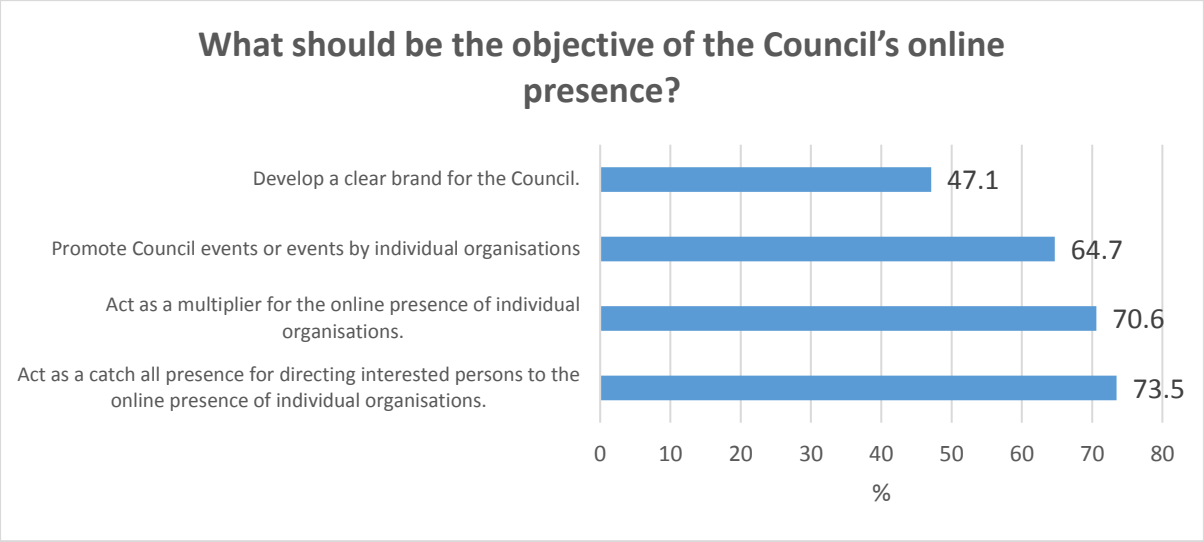
A possibility of re-election or extension of the term was mentioned in nearly all the comments. Another possibility mentioned was a mixture of old and new members after a certain time in order to ensure continuity and input.

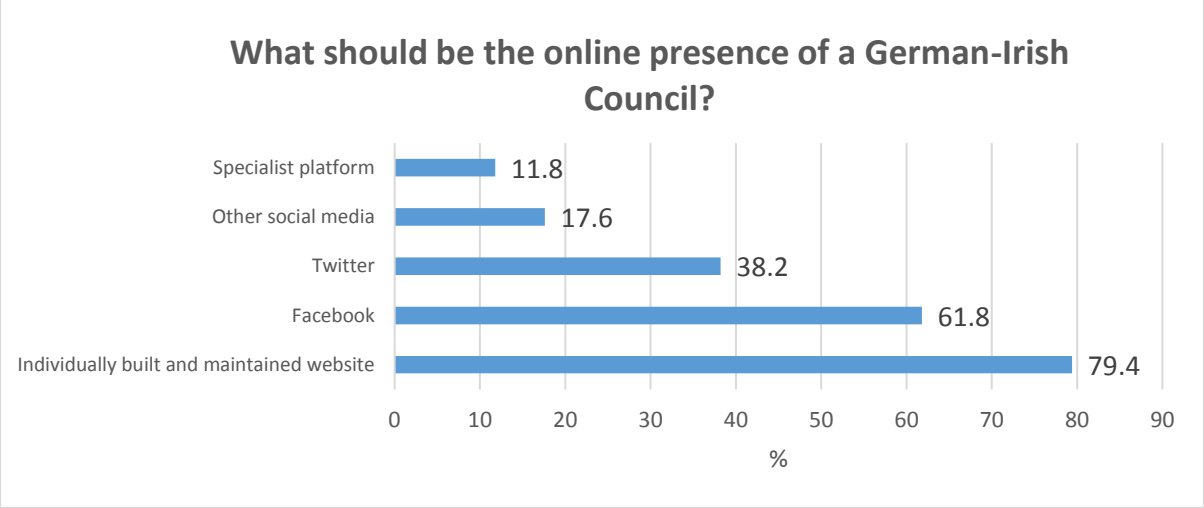




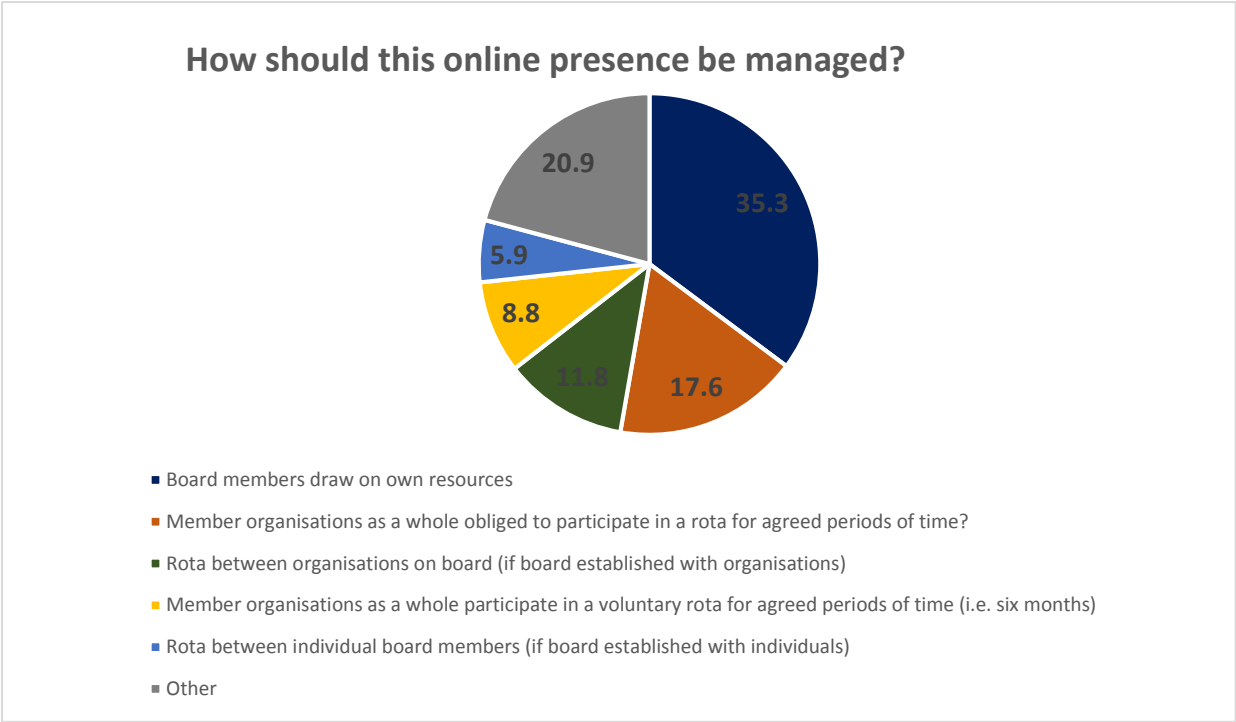
While one commentator was convinced that the administrative work could be kept at a minimum if a potential portal was set up correctly, most of the other comments called for a (at the very least part-time) funded administrator/managing director.

Communications / Online presence





The other social media channel that was mentioned in a few of the comments was Instagram.



Just as above, a lot of the comments here focussed on a paid administrator/managing director.