



Oifig an Choimisiúin um Cheapacháin Seirbhíse Poiblí
Office of the Commission for Public Service Appointments

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Official Languages Act, 2003

Language Scheme 2021- 2024

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction and Background

This third Irish language scheme was prepared under section 15 of the Official Languages Act, 2003 (the Act) by the Office of the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA).

Section 11 of the Act provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme detailing the services they will provide

- through the medium of Irish
- through the medium of Irish and English and
- through the medium of English

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by the public body through Irish will be so provided within an agreed timeframe. Section 15 of the Act provides for the review of existing schemes.

1.2 Guidelines for preparation of a scheme

This scheme was drawn up in accordance with Guidelines under Section 12 of the Act prepared by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

The Office published notices under section 13 of the Act inviting interested parties to make submissions in relation to the preparation of the draft scheme and invited staff to comment also. Two responses were received.

The content of the scheme has been informed by the experience of the Office of the previous scheme, as well as views and suggestions put forward by the staff of the Office.

1.3 The Content of the Language Scheme

This scheme aims to consolidate and build on the Office's delivery of services in the Irish language. We aim to provide a high quality, easily accessible and efficient service to our customers. The provision of our services in the Irish language is undertaken in support of that objective.

The Office will continue to implement a system of measuring the level of queries, complaints and requests to ensure that the services provided under the Scheme fully meet customer demand, in a planned and accessible way.

1.4 The Commencement Date of the Scheme

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht Sport and Media. It is commenced with effect from **19 March 2021** and will remain in force for a period of three years from this date or until a new scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to Section 15 of the Act, whichever is the later.

1.5 Overview of the Office of the Commission for Public Service Appointments

The Commission for Public Service Appointments was established in October 2004 in accordance with the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004 as an independent body to regulate recruitment to the Civil Service and to certain other public service organisations, such as An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and the Health Information and Quality Authority.

The Commission sets standards, which it publishes as codes of practice, for recruitment and selection to positions in the organisations under its remit. One of the principal functions of the Commission is to safeguard these standards through regular monitoring and auditing of recruitment and selection activities.

The Commission also grants licences to certain public service bodies to recruit on their own behalf.

The work of the Commission is supported by its Secretariat which is a discrete unit within the overall corporate structure of the Office of the Ombudsman which is currently located at 6 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, D02 W773. Staff of the Secretariat are staff of the overall Office of the Ombudsman which provides corporate support for the Secretariat including finance, human resources, IT and general office administration.

1.6 Stakeholders

The outcome of the work of the Office of the Commission for Public Service Appointments impacts on our stakeholders. The key stakeholders are listed below:

- Civil Service Bodies
- An Garda Síochána
- Local authority positions to which the Local Authorities Act 1926 applies, such as technical and professional posts
- The HSE
- Public bodies where the appointment must be made under the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004
- Candidates competing at appointment processes under the Commission's remit.

Our external customers include members of the general public and suppliers. The Office of the Commission interacts with members of the public in responding to general enquiries, processing cases of alleged breaches of the Codes of Practice, and in responding to requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

1.7 Assessment of the Extent to which Services are Already Available through Irish

The primary objective of the Act is to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish. This has been done through implementing the requirements of the Official Languages Act 2003.

The office conducted a review of the operation of its previous scheme in 2020. The office has fulfilled all its obligations under the Official Languages Act, 2003, and has met all of its commitments contained in that scheme. During the period of operation of the scheme all telephone calls and items of general correspondence that were received through the Irish language were dealt with in Irish. All of the office's publications were published bilingually in the one document.

The objective of this Third Scheme is to continue the delivery of these commitments and to enhance the level of service over the period of the Scheme (2021-2024). In this regard, this office is committed to continuing to ensure that all publications are published bilingually during the lifetime of this scheme. This includes but is not limited to:

- Strategy Statements

- Annual Reports
- Codes of Practice
- Audit Reports
- Customer Charter
- Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

The website is fully bilingual. The Customer Charter commits to fulfilling obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003, and ensuring that all members of the public are facilitated in using the official language of their choice. The Customer Charter also sets out the following specific commitments:

- All website facilities will be bilingual
- All publications will be available in Irish
- All communications in Irish will be responded to in Irish in accordance with section 9(2) of the Official Languages Act 2003

Chapter 2

This chapter briefly describes the functions/activities of the Commission, sets out the official language regime operated by the Secretariat and summarises the language services it provides.

2.1 Functions of the Commission

2.1.1 Establishing Standards for Recruitment and Selection

- establishing standards of probity, merit, equity and fairness, and other principles to be followed in the appointment of persons to positions in the organisations under the Commission's remit

2.1.2 Codes of Practice

- publishing the standards established as codes of practice

2.1.3 Monitoring Standards

- auditing and evaluating recruitment policies and practices to safeguard the standards and to establish whether the Code of Practice is being observed

2.1.4 Licensing

- evaluating applications for recruitment licences
- granting recruitment licences
- revoking recruitment licences where necessary
- issuing instructions and advices to licence holders

2.1.5 Appeals Procedures

- establishing and setting down appropriate appeal procedures
- investigating of complaints under Section 8 of the Code

2.1.6 Providing Information

- reporting to both the Oireachtas and the Government
- providing information to ministers on the operation of recruitment and selection processes.

2.2 Language Regime Operated by the Office

The office's communications with the general public relating to the range of services provided are made available in both Irish and English, including:

- All publications, including Codes of Practice, which have as part of its intended audience the general public, will be available bilingually within the one cover
- The website is bilingual and will continue to be bilingual for the lifetime of this scheme. Should the office introduce any new website during the lifetime of the scheme, it shall also be bilingual.

2.3 Summary of Services/Activities provided by the Office

The working language of the Office is almost exclusively English, reflecting the demands of our customers. The policy of the Office of the Ombudsman, of which the Secretariat is a part, is to provide service in Irish to customers within existing resources, to the greatest extent possible. Such services extend to telephone or face to face communication and straightforward correspondence. Where the skill or resource is not available within the Office of the Ombudsman, the Secretariat calls on external support, specifically in relation to translation services, albeit with attendant costs and delays.

2.4 Corporate Services including Reception and Switchboard

The reception area is normally the first point of contact with the public. This section handles the calls and visitors for the different offices within the overall Office of the Ombudsman as well as for the Commission. The policy of the Office of the Ombudsman is that callers are directed with the minimum of delay to an appropriate member of staff who can deal with their business, whether in Irish or English. The Reception staff have a list on the Office of the Ombudsman intranet of those staff members competent in Irish and to whom such callers may be directed. Members of Reception staff willing to undertake Irish language training have received training appropriate to the reception functions and this is an ongoing commitment. The Office of the Ombudsman provides out of hours bilingual messages on the phones system of the individual offices and in this regard is in compliance with Regulations made under the Official Languages Act.

Chapter 3

3.1 Enhancement of Services

3.1.1 Statutory obligations and commitments

Section 11(1) (b) requires that each public body sets out the measures that it proposes to take to ensure that any services that are not provided through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided.

As a note, many references in this chapter are to the Office of the Ombudsman as a whole rather than to the Commission itself. As previously mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, the Commission, supported by its Secretariat, is a unit within the overall corporate structure of the Office of the Ombudsman, therefore the final say on matters such as staffing and budget for example, rest with them. In drafting this scheme, every effort has been made to bring this scheme in line with the current scheme of the Office of the Ombudsman, while still ensuring commitments given by the Commission itself in previous schemes have been maintained.

The Office is committed to a progressive improvement of the Irish language service offered to our clients and to publicise the availability of such services. This commitment will result in identifiable actions to be taken over the lifetime of this Scheme and in future schemes. These actions are proposed in the context of the following policy, legislative and pragmatic considerations -

- legislative obligations;
- commitment to providing a high quality client service
- adherence to the Ombudsman's Standards of Best Practice for Public Servants (see www.ombudsman.ie)
- the priorities identified in the consultative process;
- demand for Irish language services as identified by the Office;
- the lessons learned from the operation of the previous schemes, and
- the availability of, and access to, resources necessary to support the actions, both within the Office, the public service and within the community at large.

The Scheme will enable delivery of specific improvements across the range of media through which the Office communicates with our clients including publications, electronic and written communication, and face to face/personal contact.

3.2 Communication with the public

3.2.1 Publications

Increasingly, the public use our website for information.

- Publications, including Codes of Practice, leaflets, guides and forms are, and will continue to be published bilingually within one cover;
- Annual Reports and investigation and audit reports will be published bilingually.
- We will continue to issue all Press Releases simultaneously in both languages.
- Speeches will continue to be made available in the language or languages in which they have been given.

3.2.2 Electronic communication

The Official Languages Act 2003 (section 9(3)) requires public bodies to ensure that where they are communicating for the purposes of providing information to the general public or to a class of the general public - in writing or by electronic mail - the communication shall be in the Irish language only or in the Irish and English languages.

- In its previous Scheme, the Commission committed to providing a dedicated email address for correspondence in Irish. However, since that commitment was given, the Office of the Ombudsman has moved to a new IT system which routes incoming emails directly into a case system. Only one email route can be used to do this so unfortunately this means that it will not be technically possible to have two different email addresses for CPSA linking with our case system. Therefore, the Commission intends to keep the info@cpsa.ie email address as that is the address used by the big majority of our contacts. However, it will naturally remain open to anyone to use that address to send a message in Irish, which will be responded to in Irish. A commitment to that effect, welcoming correspondence through Irish to that email address, is advertised clearly on the Commission's website.
- A new Commission website was launched in May 2019. Bilingual language provision was central to the planning and procurement process. Any future versions planned will continue this.
- Existing and new computer systems introduced in 2018 -2019 which require information in relation to members of the public to be inputted, for example names and addresses, are capable of handling Irish Language correspondence.
- Static text and graphics on our websites are, and will continue to be, bilingual.

- Where a document is published on the website (e.g. annual report) for which there is a requirement under the Official Languages Act to have a published version in Irish, the Irish version will be published on the website at the same time as the English version.
- Online services (including complaint forms and application forms for those seeking approval as Approved Agencies) are, and will continue to be, provided in both languages.
- The Office is obliged in accordance with section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, to prepare and publish a scheme concerning the publication of information available concerning its work. An Irish version of the scheme is available on the website.
- Links to the Irish versions of the PSMA Act 2004 and the Freedom of Information Act 2014 can be found on the current website.

3.2.3 Other Communication

Other general communication will be responded to as follows:

- All written correspondence will be responded to in the official language in which it is written in accordance with section 9(2) of the Act.
- Allegations of breaches of the Code of Practice made in Irish will be responded to in Irish and the report issued in Irish

3.3 Personal Contact

The nature of the operations of the office means that the level of interaction with the general public is not extensive. However, where the office does interact with the public it is fully committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Official Languages Act.

Accordingly it is the office of the Ombudsman's policy that at least one staff member with the competence to conduct business through Irish is allocated to deal with customers where Irish is the language of choice, subject to availability of such staff. The office of the Ombudsman is also committed to ensuring that its team will continue to include two members of staff who:

- are able to give the name of the office in Irish and English
- are at least familiar with the basic greetings in Irish and can arrange to respond satisfactorily to the enquiry.

3.3.1 Reception/Telephone Services

The Office will offer a proactive service in Irish as follows:

- Pre-recorded telephone messages - a bilingual message will be provided;
- First response/greeting service - It is the practice in this Office of the Ombudsman to provide reception services, on a rotating basis, with the assistance of more than 20 members of staff. A small number of this group were willing and competent to provide a greeting service in Irish over the course of the previous schemes. Existing and newly recruited staff with reception duties that are willing to provide a first response in English and Irish will be encouraged to do so and will be provided with appropriate training.
- Reception staff will route callers requesting an Irish or bilingual service to staff competent to provide this, to the greatest extent possible. Reception staff will continue to have a list to hand of staff competent in Irish and their details are on the Office's intranet.
- Staff identified as competent and willing to provide a service through Irish will continue to leave a bilingual version of their voice mail answers.

3.3.2 Press/Publicity

- All Press Releases are and will continue to be made available simultaneously in both languages.
- A spokesperson for the organisation will be available to the media to provide an Irish service, if advance notice is provided.

3.4 Developing Staff Competence

3.4.1 Resources

The successful delivery of existing and enhanced services in Irish is dependent crucially on the ability and willingness of Office of the Ombudsman staff to provide this. Currently 9 members of staff have volunteered to provide an Irish language service to the extent that their competence allows. A list of these staff members is on the Office of the Ombudsman's intranet and will be kept up to date. Others have expressed an interest in improving their skills in the language so that they can provide a bilingual greeting and other basic services and this is being supported by our training unit. In relation to recruitment, the Office of the Ombudsman will continue to actively pursue filling

vacancies from the various panels of applicants with competency in Irish. At least 2 current staff members were appointed in this way. We aim to facilitate these individuals in using their valued language skills and to reduce reliance on external resources where possible.

3.4.2 Commitment

The Office of the Ombudsman will continue to ensure that staff appreciate the thrust of the Act, understand the immediate legal requirements and the commitment to deliver a progressively enhanced service and see the service as an integral part of the commitment to quality client service. The Office will encourage staff to use their existing competence in Irish; we will train and support staff so that existing competence can be improved and we will provide the appropriate administrative supports required to ensure that the identified standards/actions can be met.

- Induction courses- the requirements of the Act and the Scheme will continue to be explained with a presentation to all new staff on induction.
- Language Awareness Training - Training policy within the organisation will continue to promote an informed and positive attitude towards the right of the client to a service in Irish. Staff will be encouraged to and supported in using and improving on their existing skills in Irish. Staff competence will be developed through language training courses to be provided externally or internally as appropriate. Staff will continue to be encouraged to attend language training courses during or outside office hours.
- Volunteers will be sought across the organisation to participate in providing the service in Irish on an ongoing basis.
- Training needs will be identified in the course of the Performance Management Development System and the Training Officer will incorporate those needs into individual and generic training programmes as appropriate in the light of the priorities and resources authorised by the Management Committee of the Office of the Ombudsman.
- Irish language templates of frequently used letters/documents are available and will be updated as the need arises to encourage staff to participate in providing service in Irish.
- New case management systems being developed will easily identify customers who communicate with us in Irish so that all staff are aware of this.

- Intranet resources include a list of useful phrases e.g. response to customers, terminology etc.
- Staff are directed to sources and services that support the provision of Irish language services, including relevant websites and the list of translators approved by Foras na Gaeilge. Translation services for the Office of the Ombudsman are generally done by the successful applicant in a tender competition.
- Irish contributions to the Office of the Ombudsman's in-house magazine/newsletter are encouraged and appear regularly.
- Staff will continue to meet for the weekly coffee break to use Irish in an informal setting and to encourage each other to extend their competence. This is a popular activity and has been running for several years.

3.5 Assessing Demand

In order to accurately assess the demand for services in Irish, the Office will continue to record enquiries, complaints and requests made in Irish.

Chapter 4

4.1 Monitoring and Revision

The Office will keep the operation of the scheme under review by way of annual progress reports to the Management Team of the Office of the Ombudsman and to the Commission

The day to day operation of the scheme together with ongoing monitoring of the level of demand in the various areas is the responsibility of the Secretariat.

Chapter 5

5.1 Publicising of Agreed Scheme

The provisions of the scheme will be brought to the attention of the public by means of the following:

- The scheme itself and subsequent updates on the delivery of commitments on particular services will be reported upon in the Annual Reports which are published on the website.
- A press release will be issued to mark the scheme's publication and availability
- The scheme will be circulated to Irish Language organisations, Citizens' Information Centres and relevant public bodies.
- The Office will continue to have notices on the website and in publications, drawing attention to the availability of services in Irish

A copy of this scheme has been forwarded to the office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.