



An Roinn
Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta

Department of
Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT 2003
LANGUAGE SCHEME
2016 - 2019

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

The Official Languages Act 2003 provides for the preparation by public bodies of a language scheme detailing the services which they will provide:

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

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not currently provided by the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

In accordance with section 14(3) of the Act, language schemes remain in force for a period of 3 years or until such time as a new scheme is confirmed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, whichever is the later.

1.2 Preparation and Content of the Scheme

This is the second language scheme of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The Department is guided by the principle that the provision of Irish language services should be based on a range of factors, including the following:

- the level of demand for such services;
- the importance of a proactive approach to the provision of services in the Irish language; and
- the resources, including human and financial resources, and the capacity of the Department to develop or access the necessary language capability to provide these services.

This scheme complements the principles of Quality Customer Service and our Customer Charter. It has been formulated with the intention of ensuring that all relevant obligations under the Official Languages Act relating to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht are being fully addressed on an incremental basis, through this and future schemes.

The time and effort put in by all concerned in this process is acknowledged and appreciated.

1.3 Commencement date of the Scheme

This Scheme has been confirmed on by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It commences with effect from 12 May 2016 and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years or until a new scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

Chapter 2: Overview of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

2.1 Mission and Objectives

The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht was established in June 2011 and its mission, as reflected in its *Statement of Strategy 2015-2017*, is:

To promote and protect Ireland's heritage and culture; to advance the use of the Irish language; to support the sustainable development of the islands; and to develop cultural tourism.

The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht oversees and has policy responsibility for the conservation, preservation, protection, development and presentation of Ireland's rich heritage, arts and culture. The Department is also responsible for the promotion of the Irish language, the development of the Gaeltacht and the sustainable development of island communities.

2.2 Main Functions

Arts and Culture: To promote and develop Ireland's artistic and creative strengths at home and abroad and to maximise their societal, economic and reputational value for the country.

Heritage: To conserve and manage our unique heritage for the benefit of present and future generations, as a support to economic renewal and sustainable employment and in compliance with legal obligations.

Irish Language, Gaeltacht and the Islands: To support the Irish language, to strengthen its use as the principal community language of the Gaeltacht and to assist the sustainable development of island communities.

North-South Cooperation: To promote North South co-operation, particularly in the context of An Foras Teanga (the Language Body) and Waterways Ireland.

2.3 Customers and Clients

The Department interacts with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including members of the Government, other public representatives and other government departments, offices and agencies. We are also actively involved in supporting North/South cooperation and engaging with key stakeholders on both the EU and international stage.

In addition, we interact with a wide range of parties from outside the public service, including groups and individual members of the public who use our services and have an interest in our activities.

Chapter 3: Details of services currently being provided in English only or bilingually

Details of individual services and schemes operated by the Department across its remit are available on the Department's Website at www.ahg.gov.ie.

All services and schemes operated by the Department's Gaeltacht Division are provided in Irish, but service in English is available if requested.

Details of the Department's units where services are currently available bilingually in Irish and English or in English only are set out below.

In the case of those sections where a service through Irish is not currently available, arrangements will be made to respond to requests for such a service. , Service in Irish may be limited and cannot be guaranteed in the case of matters requiring specialist or technical knowledge.

| Gaeltacht, Islands and Irish Language Services | In English only | In Irish with service in English, if required |
|---|------------------------|--|
| Gaeltacht Policy and Schemes | | √ |
| Irish Language Policy and Schemes | | √ |
| Official Languages Act Unit | | √ |
| Údarás na Gaeltachta Unit | | √ |
| Islands Unit | | √ |
| Placenames Branch | | √ |
| An Foras Teanga Unit | | √ |

Current Provision of Services in areas other than Gaeltacht, Islands and Irish Language Services

| Services (General) | In English only | Bilingually, in Irish and English |
|---|------------------------|--|
| The Offices of the Minister and Ministers of State | | √ |
| Secretary General's Office | | √ |
| Press Office | | √ |
| HR Unit - HR, Press Office, Training and Development | | √ |
| Corporate Governance & Office Services | | √ |
| Accounts, Finance and IT | √ | |
| Arts, Film and Investment | | √ |
| Cultural Policy and Institutions | √ | |
| Culture Ireland, International and Education | | √ |
| 2016 Project Office and Commemorations Unit | | √ |
| National Monuments | | √ |
| Built Heritage and Architectural Policy | | √ |
| Peatland Issues and Land Designation | | √ |
| NPWS - Science and Biodiversity | √ | |
| NPWS - Strategy and Regional Operations | √ | |
| NPWS - Legislation, Licensing and Property Management | √ | |
| Internal Audit | | √ |
| Waterways Ireland and North South Cooperation Unit | | √ |

Chapter 4: Enhancing the provision of Irish Language Services

The provisions shaded in grey in the table below are mandatory requirements under the Official Languages Act 2003.

| Means of communication with the public | | Commitment | |
|--|------------------------------------|--|-----------|
| Recorded Oral Announcements | | <p>The following recorded oral announcements will be in Irish or bilingual:</p> <p>(a) Recorded oral announcements provided on the telephone when the offices of the public body are closed;</p> <p>(b) Recorded oral announcements transmitted by a public address system;</p> <p>(c) Recorded oral announcements created and transmitted by means of a computerised messaging system or a computerised telephone answering system.</p> <p>This provision relates to 'recorded' announcements rather than 'live announcements'.</p> <p>Where a Placenames Order is in force, a public body is required to use the Irish language version of the placename specified in that Order in recorded oral announcements made by it or on its behalf.</p> | Mandatory |
| Written Communication | Letters and Electronic Mail | All written communication will be responded to in the official language in which it was received. | Mandatory |
| | Stationery | Headings of stationery, including notepaper, compliment slips, fax cover sheets, file covers and other folders, labels and envelopes are provided in Irish or bilingually. | Mandatory |
| Signage | Signage | All signage placed by Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht or on its behalf must be in Irish or bilingually, in accordance with the regulations (S.I. No.391/2008). | Mandatory |
| Publications | Publications | Documents setting out public policy | Mandatory |

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| | | proposals, audited accounts or financial statements, annual reports and strategy statements will be published simultaneously in Irish and English. | |
| | Circulars/Mailshots | Where a public body communicates in writing or by electronic mail with the general public or a class of the general public for the purpose of furnishing information to the public or the class, the body shall ensure that the communication is in the Irish language or in the English and Irish languages. | Mandatory |
| An Ghaeltacht | Gaeltacht Placenames | The official placenames of Gaeltacht areas will be used by the public body in accordance with the relevant legislation. | Mandatory |

The Department will also undertake the following listed actions under each service.

| Means of communication with the public | | Commitment | Timeline By end Yr 1/ Yr 2 / Yr 3 |
|---|---|--|--|
| Oral / Written Communication | Reception | Reception staff in public offices will be capable of greeting members of the public in Irish and will be encouraged to greet members of the public in Irish, where appropriate In Gaeltacht offices, where Irish is the working language of the office, reception staff will engage with the public in Irish unless otherwise requested. | Currently in place |
| | Public Interaction | The availability of service in Irish will be prominently and clearly advertised in public offices. Staff will be capable of greeting members of the public in Irish and customers will be encouraged to use Irish in their dealings with the Department. | Currently in place |
| | | In Gaeltacht offices, where Irish is the working language of the office, reception staff will interact with the public in Irish unless otherwise requested. | Currently in place |
| | | Subject to resources, National Parks located outside Gaeltacht areas will facilitate requests for tours to be conducted through Irish. | By end Yr 1 |
| | Switchboard | The name of the Department will be given in Irish and English. Staff will be familiar with basic greetings in Irish. | Currently in place |
| | Telephone communications with the public | Individual staff members will be encouraged to provide voicemail messages bilingually. Staff members will be made aware of colleagues who are available to provide a full service in Irish. | By end Yr 1 |
| | Official Invitations | Invitations to official functions hosted by the Minister or Ministers of State will be issued bilingually. | Currently in place |
| Information Leaflets/ Brochures | Public information and standard notifications, including relevant supplementary materials, will be published in both official languages, other than in the case of documents of a technical, scientific or specialist nature. | Currently in place | |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| | Application Forms | While the Department will continue to make application forms available in both languages, having regard to the context, forms related to technical, scientific or specialist details may be available in English only. The Department will also encourage intermediary bodies, which deliver programmes and schemes on behalf of the Department to make relevant application forms available bilingually. | Currently in place |
| | Written Correspondence | The Department will continue to initiate correspondence in Irish with those who are known to prefer it. This also applies to e-mail correspondence. | Currently in place |
| | Public Meetings | As a general policy, public meetings dealing with Irish language issues will be conducted either through Irish or through Irish with simultaneous translation into English provided, as required. In general public meetings in the Gaeltacht will be conducted through Irish. Subject to resources being available, provision will also be made for simultaneous translation to Irish to be made available at other public policy consultations hosted by the Department, if requested. | By end Yr 1 |
| Media | Press Releases | The Department will take steps to ensure that a minimum of 60% of Press Releases will continue to be released simultaneously in both languages, increasing on an incremental basis to 80% over the lifetime of the scheme. | By end Yr 3 |
| | Press Office | The Department's Press Office will facilitate media requests in both Irish and English. | Currently in place |
| | Speeches | Speeches or Statements given by the Minister or Ministers of State will be made available on the Department's website in the language in which they were delivered. Translations will also be provided as appropriate. | Currently in place |
| | Email | Standard and pre-written messages on the Department's e-mail, such as disclaimers, will be made in both Irish and English. | Currently in place |
| Information Technology | Websites | The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's website www.ahg.gov.ie is fully | Currently in place |

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| | | bilingual, with the exception of specialised instruction manuals or documents of a technical, scientific or specialist nature. | |
| | Interactive Services | <p>The Department's website is the first website to provide a functioning Text-to-Speech synthesis system for Irish abair.ie (which was developed by TCD with funding from the Department).</p> <p>Content on other websites operated by the Department is also maintained on a bilingual basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.ireland.ie • www.irishfamine.ie • www.irishgenealogy.ie • www.worldheritageireland.ie | Currently in place |
| Gaeltacht | | | |
| | Meetings | It is standard policy to ensure that public meetings in the Gaeltacht are conducted through Irish with simultaneous translation into English provided, if required. | Currently in place |

Chapter 5: Enhancing the Provision of Irish Language Services in Gaeltacht Areas

Enhancing the provision of Irish language services in Gaeltacht areas and ensuring that Irish becomes the working language in offices located in Gaeltacht areas by a certain date.

Commitments in Gaeltacht Areas

| Description of services in Gaeltacht areas | Commitment | Timeline By end Yr 1/ Yr 2 / Yr 3 |
|---|--|--|
| Schemes and Services | The Department's Gaeltacht Division provides a full service through Irish to members of the public in Gaeltacht areas. | Currently in place |
| Educational Services | Subject to resources, the Department will facilitate requests from the public for the provision of educational or visitor services in Irish (e.g. tours in National Parks that include Gaeltacht areas). | Currently in place |
| <u>Irish as the working language in Gaeltacht offices</u> | | |
| Commitment | | Timeline By end Yr 1/ Yr 2 / Yr 3 |
| Irish will continue to be the working language of the Department's Gaeltacht, Gaeilge and Islands units based in regional offices in Na Forbacha and Gaoth Dobhair. | | Currently in place |

Chapter 6: Improving Language Capability

6.1 Recruitment, Training and Development

Recruitment

The recruitment of staff with the appropriate level of competence in the Irish language in each area of the Department's work will be the primary means of optimising the availability of services through Irish. Our recruitment policy, which is subject to the framework of agreed national recruitment procedures, will have regard to the need to improve Irish language capability on an incremental basis.

In order that the Department has an adequate number of staff with proficiency in the Irish language in compliance with the provisions of the Official Languages Act, the following actions will be pursued over the lifetime of the Scheme:

- As part of its recruitment policy, the Department, in co-operation with the Public Appointments Service, will continue to publicly advertise competitions for staff to work through Irish (especially in the Gaeltacht and/or serving Gaeltacht communities), when suitable people are not available through general entry level competitions.
- Appropriate placement of staff with such proficiency will continue to be implemented throughout the Department, in particular in Gaeltacht offices, or in offices that service Gaeltacht areas.
- Departmental interviews will be held in Irish only, where Irish is a particular requirement for the post in question.

All new staff are provided with an induction pack containing a copy of our agreed Language Scheme in order to ensure that they are made aware of our commitments under the legislation.

The foregoing is, of course, subject to wider Government policy on recruitment and deployment of staff in the public service.

Training and Development

The Department is committed to making available opportunities for staff to attend accredited Irish language training courses, where appropriate, particularly staff whose duties include delivering services in Gaeltacht areas. All staff are advised of facilities/opportunities to improve their competency in Irish.

Where possible courses for staff working through Irish will be delivered through Irish.

| | Commitment | Timeline By end Yr 1/ Yr 2 / Yr 3 | |
|--|--|--|----------------|
| Improving Irish Language Capability | Recruitment | The Department will identify those posts where proficiency in Irish is a core requirement. Appropriate placement of staff with proficiency will continue to be implemented throughout the Department. In particular, all staff appointed to the Irish Language and Gaeltacht units will be required to demonstrate proficiency in Irish. Recruitment or promotion competitions for posts identified as requiring proficiency in Irish will be conducted entirely through Irish. | Ongoing |
| | <u>Training</u> | The Department's Training and Development Strategy reflects the ongoing commitment to provide appropriate training and development for all staff to meet the evolving needs of our customers and develop the full potential of staff during their careers in this Department. In the lifespan of the previous Irish Language Scheme the Department facilitated over 90 attendees to Irish language courses of varying standards – this is equivalent to 15% of the Department's staff. To encourage as many staff as possible to attend, classes were held at different locations as well as through online modules. Building on the current success, and in response to demand, further options for language classes will continue to be offered. | Ongoing |
| | <u>Participation in language promotion activities /Provision of resources</u> | The Department is committed to promoting cultural initiatives which support and encourage the use of the Irish language. The Department will continue to support the activities organised for <i>Seachtain na Gaeilge</i> . The Department will also explore opportunities to encourage the development of Irish language skills amongst staff through informal | Ongoing |

6.2 Designated Irish Language Posts

The posts listed below have been designated as having an Irish language competency requirement. It is the intention that holders of these posts will have achieved specified accredited standards in the Irish language, commensurate with the responsibilities of the post. When designating these posts, particular consideration has been given to posts located in Gaeltacht areas and to posts located outside Gaeltacht areas but whose customer base consists largely of Gaeltacht and/or Irish language speaking communities.

| Title of Post | Location | Gaeltacht/Irish speaking community served | Indication of standard of Irish required (choose from basic, intermediate or advanced) |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| All Posts | Rannán na Gaeilge, Na Forbacha | Yes | Advanced |
| All Posts | Rannán na Gaeltachta, Na Forbacha agus Na Doire Beaga | Yes | Advanced |
| All Posts | Rannán na nOileán, Na Forbacha | Yes | Advanced |
| All Posts | An Brainse Logainmneacha, Dún Aimhirgín | Yes | Advanced |
| All Posts | Oifig an Aire Stáit | Yes | Advanced |
| Press Officer & Deputy Press Officer | Kildare St | Yes | Advanced |
| Educational Guide | Glenveagh National Park | Yes | Intermediate |

Chapter 7: Monitoring and Review

Each section of the Department will be required to reflect the (Scheme) commitments in its Annual Business Plan.

The implementation of the scheme will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by the Corporate Governance Unit within the Department. The contact person for the scheme will be Mícheál Ó Conaire, Press Officer.

The Department will monitor requests for services through Irish received through its website and telephone systems.

Within the context of its responsibilities in relation to coordinating the implementation of the Department's Scéim Teanga and Customer Service Action Plan, Corporate Governance Unit will provide reports once a year to the Management Board in relation to the level of demand for services in Irish experienced by the Department, the response to this demand, and the development of the Department's capability to deliver such services. The Management Board will keep the operation of the Language Scheme under review through these annual reports.

Chapter 8: Publicising of Agreed Scheme

This scheme will be publicised both internally and externally, through a press release initially. The scheme will be made available on our website, and circulated to all staff and appropriate agencies, in both languages. Other means to publicise the scheme may also be used from time to time.

In addition, we will take the opportunity in our day to day interaction with customers to promote and publicise the services we provide in Irish through the following means:

- directly informing customers on a proactive basis of the option of conducting business with us through Irish, for example, by the display of notices at reception areas indicating the Irish language services that are available and encouraging customers to use Irish in their dealings with the Department;
- prominently listing these services on our website;
- signifying on selected guidelines, leaflets and application forms that these documents are also available in Irish, unless presented bilingually;
- giving equal prominence to Irish and English language materials.

A copy of the agreed scheme will be forwarded to the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.