

LANGUAGE SCHEME

UNDER SECTION 15 OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT 2003

OCTOBER 2014



An Roinn Airgeadais
Department of Finance

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Department of Finance's first language scheme commenced in February 2006. This second scheme, covering the period 2014 – 2017, has been prepared by the Department pursuant to the Official Languages Act 2003 and the Official Languages Act 2003 (Section 9) Regulations 2008. Section 11 of the Act 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 Review of the 2006 Scheme

Under Section 10 of the Official Languages Act 2003, the Department is required to publish the following documents in both Irish and English:

- Annual Report
- Audited Account or financial statement
- Statement of Strategy
- Documents setting out public policy proposals
- Documents of major public importance.

The Department currently publishes the following documents in both Irish and English:

- Annual Report
- Annual Appropriation Accounts
- Budget (summary of Budget Measures)
- Finance Accounts
- Language Scheme
- Medium Term Economic Strategy
- Statement of Strategy
- White Paper on Estimates of Receipts and Expenditure.

In addition to statutory requirements, the 2006 Scheme set out the following programme for the Department:

Commitment	Outcome
20% of press releases to be made available in Irish	✓
Increase the number of documents from 17 to 20 (20%) by the end of the 2006 Scheme	✓
Maintain navigable function in both official languages on websites	✓
Provide greetings in both official languages at switchboard	✓
Identify staff willing to deal with telephone queries in Irish and indicate those in the internal phone book	✓
Staff leaving messages in the language of their choice	✓
Facilitate staff attending Irish classes in and outside office hours	✓
Language awareness courses to be provided through induction and customer service training courses	✓
Advice on Irish language classes and support via post-entry education refund of scheme	✓
Make forms from the Office of the Paymaster General available in both official languages	✓

A survey carried out within the Department revealed that in 2013, 15 members of staff dealt with written correspondence in Irish and 2 dealt with telephone calls in Irish. While most dealt with only a few items (11 staff dealt with 3 or fewer items), 1 member of staff dealt with more than 9 instances of written correspondence. In addition, 3 items of Ministerial correspondence were received and answered in Irish during 2013.

1.3 Preparation of the 2014 Scheme

The 2014 Scheme has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines under Section 12 of the Act issued by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Its aim is to complement 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 will be fully addressed on an incremental basis, through this and future schemes.

This Scheme is predicated on all of the commitments in any previous scheme having been implemented

In 2013, and subsequently in 2014 on the Department's website, the Department published a notice inviting representations in relation to the draft scheme from any interested parties.

6 submissions were received, (3) representing individuals and (3) Irish language organisation interests, including one sent directly to the Secretary General in 2013. These submissions are available on the Department's website www.finance.gov.ie and were taken into account in drawing up the 2014 Scheme.

Members of the Department's staff were also consulted during the development of the 2014 Scheme and their views and suggestions have informed its preparation. More importantly, the commitments in the 2014 Scheme have been made in the context of what is practical and achievable and provides as wide a base as possible to the Department's customers over the coming 3 years.

1.4 The context of the language scheme

The 2014 Scheme differs from the 2006 Scheme as a result of the creation of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in July 2011 and the transfer of a number of functions from the Minister for Finance to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The Department of Finance, as now constituted, has a narrower, more technical and less public facing range of functions and this has informed the development of the 2014 Scheme.

The aim of the 2014 Scheme is to accommodate those customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish to do so. The new scheme includes a commitment to assess, on an on-going basis, the level of demand for services through Irish through annual internal and external customer surveys and to ensure that the Department meets this demand in a planned, coherent and accessible way.

1.5 Commencement date of the scheme

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and is commenced with effect from **27 October 2014**. It will remain in place for a period of 3 years or until a new scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to Section 15 of the Official Languages Act, whichever is the later.

Chapter 2. Overview of the Department of Finance

2.1 Mission

The Department's mission is to manage Government finances and play a central role in the achievement of the Government's economic and social goals having regard to the Programme for Government.

In this way we will play a leadership role in the improvement of the standards of living of our citizens.

2.2 Customers of the Department

The Department provides services to:

- The Minister for Finance
- The Government
- Dáil Éireann
- Other Government departments
- Wider public service
- EU institutions
- International bodies
- Members of the public
- External organisations and institutions.

2.3 Summary of Services Provided by the Department

A summary of the organisation and work of the Department is as follows:

- 2.3.1 Banking and Financial Services Division** has a diverse range of responsibilities which includes implementing a national credit and lending policy framework, addressing financial difficulties arising from the property crisis and representing Irish interests in the European Union in relation to financial services issues while respecting the goal of effective supervision. The Division manages the State's interest in the banking sector and engages with NAMA to ensure it operates within its statutory framework while achieving its policy objectives. It also works closely with the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA), including the National Pensions Reserve Fund (NPRF), NewERA and the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA).
- 2.3.2 Fiscal Policy Division** deals with taxation and overall budgetary policy. Key aspects of the budgetary area include coordinating the budgetary process in accordance with the EU Semester, monitoring Exchequer returns, forecasting tax receipts and analysing the impact of policy options on Government finances. In relation to taxation, the Division is responsible for policy analysis and advice, as well as drafting and preparing legislation, including the Finance Bill. Responsibility for the HR function of the Department presently sits with Fiscal Division.
- 2.3.3 Economic Policy Division** has responsibility for economic analysis and forecasting including macroeconomic projections, economic risk assessment, inflation forecasting, long-term forecasting, the development of economic analysis underpinning fiscal policy and sectoral economic analysis.



- 2.3.4 EU and International Division** deals with EU/Euro area policy formation, strategy and co-ordination and promoting Irish interests relevant to the delivery of Government policy and the Department of Finance's Mission Statement at EU and International level. The Division supports the Minister for Finance at Ecofin and Eurogroup and services the Economic and Financial Committee and the Economic Policy Committee. It is involved in EU Governance, EU Semester and EU Budgetary matters. The Division also has responsibility for the management of Ireland's relationship with and shareholding in International Financial Institutions including the EIB, World Bank and IMF.
- 2.3.5 Risk, Communications, Legal and International Financial Services Division** is responsible for advising on financial stability issues and developing the risk management framework in the Department. The Division is responsible for corporate communications for the Department, including operation of the press office and the management of the Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information processes. The legal advisor and compliance officer for the Department are part of the Division. The Division also has responsibility for developing strategy with regard to International Financial Services.
- 2.3.6 Finance and Operations Office** has responsibility for the Accountants Branch/Paymaster General's Office which includes the Exchequer account, Departmental fund accounts, banking services for Departments/Offices, civil/public service and office holder pension payroll, vote accounts (Finance, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and certain associated bodies) and payrolls. There is also responsibility for the co-ordination and monitoring of internal projects. The Corporate Office provides regular reports and status updates to the Department as well as the lead role in the Department's change management strategy. In particular, the Corporate Office is responsible for improving the level of management information and knowledge sharing, both internally and externally, which will deliver on the Department's transformation programme. Management of accommodation and facilities within the Department is a further responsibility of the CFOO.
- 2.3.7 Human Resources** provides HR services to the Department in line with a prioritised plan of actions for the years 2013 – 2014.

Chapter 3. Summary of Irish language services and improvements planned for 2014 - 2017

3.1 Commitment

The Department of Finance is committed to providing quality services in Irish. This chapter sets out the measures which the Department will undertake over the next three years to improve the level of services in Irish. The focus of the improvements under the scheme is the production of output in Irish that is of interest to the wider Irish speaking public and increasing interest in the Irish language within the Department. However, we must take account of the prevailing public service context and in this regard, the current constraints on resources and on public sector recruitment allied with the state of the public finances could have a negative impact on the level of progress that we can achieve.

The table below compares the 2006 and 2014 schemes:

Commitment	2006 Scheme	2014 Scheme
Press releases to be made available in Irish	20%	25%
Certain Budget documents to be released in Irish	-	10%
Increase the number of documents in Irish on the website (incl. Budget documents)	20%	25%
Maintain navigable function in both official languages on websites	✓	100%
Provide greetings in both official languages at switchboard	✓	100%
Identify staff willing to deal with telephone queries in Irish and indicate those in the internal phone book	✓	100%
Staff leaving out-of-office email and telephone messages in the language of their choice	✓	100%
Invitations to events hosted by Minister/Minister of State printed bilingually	-	100%
Facilitate staff attending Irish classes in and outside office hours	✓	✓
Language awareness courses to be provided through induction and customer service training courses	✓	✓
Advice on Irish language translation service	-	✓
Advice on Irish language classes and support via post-entry education refund of scheme	✓	N/A (Done)
Make forms from the Office of the Paymaster General available in both official languages	✓	N/A (Done)

3.2 Services that the Department provides bilingually

Generally the Department does not provide services directly to the public. Therefore, arrangements will be continued to ensure that where Divisions do not have a member of staff proficient in Irish, or where such a person is not available, a designated member of staff from another Division will provide a service in Irish where required. These arrangements will continue during the course of this scheme.

3.3 Means of communicating with the Public/Information to the Public

In conjunction with this new Irish Language Scheme, the Department's Quality Customer Service document reflects the principles of Quality Customer Service and, in this way, ensures that persons who wish to conduct their business through Irish can be facilitated to the greatest extent possible.

3.3.1 Correspondence

All correspondence (letters, emails, phone calls,) received in Irish will continue to be logged to allow for monitoring of demand and will be responded to in Irish.

3.3.2 Department website and computer systems

- (i) Previously the Department operated a larger number of websites due to its wider role but the Department now only runs one website. It will be enhanced and developed to have at least 25% of documents made available in Irish during the duration of the present scheme.
- (ii) In addition to the provision of static content in Irish, the Department will continue to build on the Irish language content on its website. The Department will ensure that all publications that are produced in Irish or bilingually will be available on the Irish version of the website.
- (iii) The Department will work towards making static content at any other websites that it may develop in the future available in Irish.
- (iv) The Department will work to ensure that all ICT developments adhere to statutory Irish language obligations

3.3.3 Speeches

Speeches or statements, given by the Minister in the Oireachtas or elsewhere, as well as made by senior officials, which are published will continue to be made available in the language in which they are delivered.

3.3.4 Correspondence

In addition to fulfilling the legal obligation to reply in Irish to correspondence received in Irish, the Department facilitate correspondence in Irish with those who are known to prefer correspondence in Irish. Standard messages on the Department's e-mail system, such as disclaimers of responsibility, will be both in Irish and English. Staff will be encouraged to provide automatic out of office messages in Irish and English.

3.3.5 Official invitations

The Department will ensure that invitations to official functions hosted by the Minister or Minister for State are printed bilingually.

3.3.6 Publications

The Department produces a range of publications from various policy areas. The Department undertakes to provide bilingual versions of core publications (major policy statements, strategies etc.) preferably within the same cover (either hard copy or electronic publications). However where the length of any bilingual publication would reduce its effectiveness or involve excessive additional cost, separate Irish and English language versions will be provided. In this regard, each will contain a statement that a version is available in the other language. It is not the intention to publish bilingually all technical documents or those having a small circulation.

3.3.7 Oral announcements/telephone communications with the public

In line with the principles of quality customer service, the Department will continue to ensure that the switchboard operators and receptionists, who are the first point of contact with the public, will

- Give the name of the Department in Irish and English
- Are familiar with basic greetings in Irish
- Put members of the public in contact without delay with whatever offices or officer is responsible for offering services required through Irish.

3.3.8 Press releases

Over the period of this scheme the Department will increase the number of Irish language press releases to 25% of total press releases. Where possible press releases in Irish will issue simultaneously with the English language version but where this is not possible (e.g. a press release of a technical nature), Irish language versions will be provided on the website within 24 hours. All such press releases will be released to the Irish language media in particular. Where necessary, this will be accomplished by using external qualified translators.

In addition, the Press Office will incorporate Irish versions of tweets by putting the heading of the press release into the twitter feed when a press release is being set out in Irish.

3.3.9 Meetings

The Department conducts most of its meetings in English (including a small number of public meetings). It is the policy of the Department that, when warranted, staff proficient in Irish will continue to be provided when meeting Irish language organisations where sufficient notice is given.

3.3.10 Office of the Paymaster General

The Paymaster General provides a pension payment service to some 31,000 pensioners comprised of former civil servants, public servants (mainly former VEC and Institute of Technology employees) and former Constitutional, Ministerial, Judicial Office holders and their surviving spouses and children.

All general letters and notifications are issued bilingually under one cover. In situations where it is not possible to issue both versions under one cover, separate documents are provided. For all other documentation issued, the Paymaster General consults with pensioners to ascertain which version of the documentation they would prefer to receive.

As part of the expansion of the online PMG payee payslip portal, it is intended to include (via the portal) general information notifications to payees. All such notifications will be made available in both Irish and English.

It is not viable or practical to provide all hard copy documents issued from that office in both languages.

3.3.11 Budgetary documentation

During the course of this scheme, the Department will examine the feasibility of having more Budgetary documentation available in Irish – in particular documents of wider public interest.

3.4. Improving the Department's language capacity

3.4.1 Placement

Subject to the conditions governing staff placement, the following measures will be put in place during the course of this scheme to ensure that an adequate number of staff with proficiency in the Irish language are recruited and retained within the Department in order to comply with the provisions of the Act:

- Appropriate placement of staff with proficiency in Irish will continue to be implemented throughout the Department and, staff with a working knowledge of Irish will be appropriately placed across the various Divisions to support the commitments set out in this Scheme.
- Departmental interviews through Irish or English will continue to be available to staff, subject to advance notice by interviewees of their language choice.
- In terms of future recruitment for the Press Office, attention will be given to proficiency in Irish.

3.4.2 Training & Development

In its commitment to provide appropriate training and development for all staff, the Department will continue to assess the Irish language skills of new recruits to the Department prior to their arrival and, where possible, assign them to sections where their Irish language skills might best be used. In addition, the Department will:

- Continue to seek volunteers to provide Irish language services across the Department where the requirement to provide services through the medium of Irish may arise. Such staff are identified by an asterisk on internal telephone lists and the organisation chart.
- Continue to assess all courses on a regular basis, including Irish language courses, to ascertain how effectively they meet the Department's needs.
- Continue to include language awareness as part of Induction training courses to ensure that staff understand their bilingual obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003.
- Facilitate staff in attending Irish language classes on customer service needs, particularly staff from sections that interface most with external customers.

- Continue to offer advice, and in certain circumstances financial assistance, to staff in relation to the range of Irish language classes available.
- Subject to demand and the business needs of the Department, training to be available on an ongoing basis to all reception staff /telephonists and Service Officers to increase their knowledge of Irish.

3.4.3 Language Resources

The Department will continue to provide all staff with access to information and language resources, e.g. dictionaries, both in hard copy, where requested, and in electronic format, advice on written Irish and lists of common phrases etc. The Department will provide all staff with details of where to get short translations. Staff will also be made aware of, and encouraged to use, online resources such as spellcheckers, www.focal.ie and www.foclóir.ie and other relevant links (www.loqanim.ie, www.qaeilge.ie, www.freagra.net).

3.4.4 Translation Services

The Department will appoint a service provider to provide capacity for the translation of official documents and ensure that all staff are aware of the details of this arrangement.

3.4.5 Designated Posts

Having regard to Government policy for enhanced provision of services in Irish, the Department will, by the end of year one of the scheme, identify posts for which Irish language competency is an essential requirement. Every effort will be undertaken to fill these positions by the end of this scheme having regard to recruitment, promotion and training policies, as appropriate. This will enable this Department to plan and prioritise the incremental improvement of services in Irish in a more strategic manner.

3.4.6 Seachtain na Gaeilge

The Department is committed to promoting cultural initiatives which support and encourage the use of the Irish language. In particular, the Department will support activities organised during Seachtain na Gaeilge over the period of this Scheme. It will seek advice from Irish language bodies in this respect.

3.4.7 Internal Communication

The Department will continue to use the internal Intranet to provide Irish language related information.

3.4.8 Communication with external users

The Department will consult with external customers of the Department on an annual basis to determine the views of customers on the language services provided.

Chapter 4. Monitoring and revision

4.1 Monitoring

Senior Management within the Department will keep the effective operation of the Scheme under review. Each section of the Department will be required to reflect the commitments of this Irish Language Scheme in its Business Plan for the section. The day-to-day monitoring function will be carried out primarily by line managers in each of the sections who are responsible for the implementation of the Scheme within their own areas. Specific sections have been allocated responsibility for achieving implementation of the agreed scheme - HR (as training unit for aspects of the scheme), Communications (for the website and publications), Press Office (for press releases) and IT (for IT related work).

From the commencement of this Scheme every Division will be required to report details of compliance to the MAC via their Management Pack as set out in the Appendix.

Details of progress will be published annually in the Department's Annual Review along with:

- policies or initiatives that have promoted the use of Irish
- materials published in whole or in part in Irish
- incidence and nature of any complaints and suggestions relating to the provision of services in Irish
- progress against each of the commitments set out in the Scheme
- level of demand for services through Irish

4.2 Revision

The Department will continue to consider any additional measures that are necessary to improve the level of service provided by it in the light of demand and arising from the annual assessment of progress.

Chapter 5. Publicising the Scheme

5.1 Official Languages Act

Staff have been informed of their responsibilities in respect of the Official Languages Act 2003 and detailed guidance and instructions have been made available to those who may need to implement Irish language measures.

5.2 Language Scheme

Staff will continue to be made aware of their responsibilities under the Scheme through a variety of means:

- Office Notices
- Information on the Department's intranet
- Inclusion of information on the Department's Irish language commitments in the Department's induction training.

The contents of this Scheme, along with its commitments and provisions, will be made available to the general public by means of:

- Press release launching the scheme
- Prominence on the Department's website
- Short leaflet setting out services available in Irish to be made available at reception desks and on the Department's website.

In addition to these measures, the Department will continue to take every opportunity in its day-to-day interactions with customers to promote and publicise the services it provides through Irish, including by:

- Directly informing customers of the option of dealing with the Department through Irish by the display of notices at reception areas and by listing these on the Department's website,
- Including notes in publications and advertisements that the Department provides services through Irish and welcomes customers who wish to deal with it through Irish, according to the commitments in the scheme.

A copy of the Scheme has also been forwarded to *Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla* and to those who made submissions to the Department in relation to the development of the Scheme.

The English language version of this scheme is the official version.

Appendix – Monitoring

The Department will monitor and report on its commitments under this Scheme to the MAC.

Irish Language Report Card

Commitment	Metric	Responsible	Frequency
Press releases to be made available in Irish and cost	25%	Press Office	Quarterly
Certain Budget documents to be released in Irish and cost	10%	Press Office	Annually
Increase the number of documents in Irish on the website (incl. Budget documents) and cost	25%	Communications	Annually
Maintain navigable function in both official languages on websites and cost	100%	Communications	Annually
Provide greetings in both official languages at switchboard	100%	Facilities Management	Quarterly
Identify staff willing to deal with telephone queries in Irish and indicate those in the internal phone book	100%	HR	Annually
Staff leaving out-of-office email messages in the language of their choice	100%	HR	Annually
Invitations to events hosted by Minister/Minister of State printed bilingually and cost	100%	Ministers' Offices	Annually
Facilitate staff attending Irish classes in and outside office hours and cost	As required	HR	Annually
Language awareness courses to be provided through induction and customer service training courses	As required	HR	Annually
Number of policy documents available in Irish and cost	As reported	All Divisions	Quarterly
Number of correspondence items received in Irish and cost	As received	All Divisions	Quarterly
Advice on Irish language translation service	✓	Compliance	Annually