



**Roinn Cumarsáide, Gníomhaithe
ar son na hAeráide & Comhshaoil**
Department of Communications,
Climate Action & Environment

Official Languages Act 2003 Language Scheme

2018 - 2021

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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 Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, whichever is the later.

1.2 Preparation and Content of the Scheme

In the preparation of this scheme, due regard has been given to the Guidelines issued by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. In addition, there has been a comprehensive process of consultation with relevant stakeholders.

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment is guided by the principle that the provision of Irish language services should be based on:

- the underlying level of demand for specific services in the Irish language,
- the importance of a proactive approach to the provision of such services, and
- the resources, including human and financial resources, and the capacity of the body concerned to develop or access the necessary language capability.

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 by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment will be fully addressed on an incremental basis, through this and future schemes.

The objective of this scheme is to continue to build on the progress achieved in the provision of quality services to our Irish-speaking customers, following the introduction in 2006 of the first language scheme in the Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources, and furthered in the subsequent language scheme agreed for the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources for the period 2014-2017.

It is the Department's intention that the range of services available in Irish be broadened over the lifetime of the scheme. To ensure the demand for such services is met in a planned, coherent and accessible way, the levels of demand will be assessed on an ongoing basis, with regular and timed audits measuring the number of queries and requests for services through Irish.

The new scheme also builds on the principles of Quality Customer Service and will continue to ensure that persons who wish to conduct their business in Irish are facilitated. However, account will have to be taken of the prevailing public service context, and how former constraints on resources and on public sector recruitment may have an impact on the progress that can realistically be expected.

The scheme was finalised following widespread consultation with all staff of the Department and also following consultation with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and the Offices of An Coimisinéir Teanga. In the event of commitments in earlier schemes not having been fully implemented to date, this matter has been the subject of discussion with the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.

Responsibility for monitoring implementation of the scheme will rest with senior management within the Department. The Department appreciates the time and effort put in by all concerned in this process.

1.3 Commencement date of the Scheme

This Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It commences with effect from 28 May 2018 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 Communications, Climate Action and Environment

2.1 Mission and Objectives

Our mission is to support economic and social progress and help the country reach its full potential by:

- facilitating the development of communications and energy infrastructure and markets;
- leading the national transition to a sustainable, low-carbon, resource-efficient economy;
- protecting and improving our high-quality natural environment; ensuring the sustainable and productive use of our natural resources;
- and promoting the development of the public and private broadcasting sectors.

Our principal responsibilities in the fields of communications, broadcasting, postal services, climate action and energy, environment, and natural resources can be summarised as follows:

Communications

To contribute to the ongoing growth and development of Irish economy and society by continuing to develop a stable, innovative and secure digital communications and services infrastructure.

Broadcasting

To promote, support and protect a diverse and plural media sector, including the provision of high quality public service broadcasting, and a broadcasting sector underpinned by a proportionate and effective regulatory regime.

Postal

To ensure Irish customers, both business and residential, enjoy competitively priced, high quality postal services on a par with the highest quality standards in key comparator EU economies.

Climate Action and Energy

To enable the State, within EU and global frameworks, to pursue and achieve transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy, underpinned by a secure and competitive energy supply, in the period to 2050.

Environment

To promote the protection of our natural environment, the health and well-being of our citizens and the transition to a resource-efficient circular economy in support of ecologically sustainable development, growth and jobs.

Natural Resources

To exploit and manage our inland fisheries, mineral, hydrocarbon and other geological resources in a sustainable and productive manner.

2.2 Main Functions

The Department's functional areas comprise five sectoral areas and one corporate support area. These are:

- Communications
- Energy
- Natural Resources and Waste
- Broadcasting and Governance
- Environment and Climate Action
- Corporate Services

Each functional area is divided into a number of business units or sections, each of which is headed by a Head of Function. The Department has five Assistant Secretaries who, with the Secretary General, are members of the Management Committee.

2.3 Key Services

The functions which we discharge in respect of these areas of responsibility embrace policy development and review, sectoral development, regulation, public resource management and corporate governance. We also provide clear, accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date information on our policies, schemes and services.

2.4 Customers and Clients

The Department's customer base reflects the wide range of sectors and activities which fall within our remit.

Among our customers we count specifically the Minister and Minister of State, other members of the Oireachtas, local public representatives, individual members of the public, the public bodies under our aegis, representative bodies engaged in the sectors for which we are responsible, individuals and companies with whom we have a direct business relationship, other government departments and public bodies, the European Union, international organisations, the media, and voluntary groups whose interests and concerns bring them into contact with the Department.

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

Please indicate which language your services are provided through, including services in Gaeltacht areas.

| Provision of Services (Please tick the relevant box) | | | |
|--|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Name of Service | In English Only | In Irish Only | Bilingually |
| Corporate Publications (Statement of Strategy, Annual Report, Customer Service Action Plan, Customer Service Charter, Customer Comment Card) | | | ✓ |
| Major policy statements or reviews in the communications, broadcasting, postal, energy, climate action, environment and natural resources sectors. | | | ✓ |
| Press advertisements | | | ✓ |
| Press releases | | | ✓ |
| Requests for Tender (where tender does not relate to an Irish language issue) | ✓ | | |
| Freedom of Information requests | | | ✓ |
| Written correspondence (email, post) | | | ✓ |
| Interpersonal communication | | | ✓ |
| Guidelines, information leaflets and application forms relating to individual schemes, programmes and processes | | | ✓ |
| Website – static, non-technical content | | | ✓ |

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|---|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| <p>Statutory Instruments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Instruments with a technical scope (internal market in natural gas, electricity, etc.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Statutory Instrument ○ Information about the requirements created by such instruments as communicated to the public by way of notices in the media. • Statutory Instruments with a general scope (payment in lieu of fines regulations, licence fee regulations etc.) | <p>✓</p> | | <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> |
| <p>Other Publications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents of a Technical Nature • Expenditure Review Reports, Progress Reports under the National Development Plan, Action Plans and Progress Reports under Programmes for Government, Consultants' Reports. • Documents intended for an audience outside the State. • Documents intended primarily for internal use e.g. HR policies, training and development plans. <p>Any other publication not listed above will be considered for bilingual publication on a case-by-case basis, with due regard to public interest and nature, size and layout of the material.</p> | <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> | | |

Note: When publishing in hard copy format, the Department will make every effort to ensure that bilingual publications are produced under a single cover rather than as separate publications. However, where the length of any bilingual publication would reduce its effectiveness, separate Irish language and English language versions will be provided. Each will then contain a statement that a version is available in the other language. This commitment does not apply to web publications or to Statutory Instruments which will be published separately.

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 |

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| | 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 the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment 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 proposals, audited accounts or financial statements, annual reports and strategy statements will be published simultaneously in Irish and English. | Mandatory |
| | 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 Gaeltacht | Gaeltacht Placenames | The official placenames of Gaeltacht areas will be used by the public body in accordance with the legislation. | Mandatory |

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment will also undertake the following list of actions under each service.

| Means of communication with the public | | Commitment | Timeline By end Yr 1/2/3 |
|---|--|--|---|
| Oral / Written Communication | <u>Reception</u> | Reception staff will be provided with a list of Departmental staff members in each section or unit who can provide a service through Irish. | |
| | <u>Switchboard</u> | The switchboard operator will answer the phone by referring to the name of the Department in Irish and English. Switchboard staff will be provided with a list of Departmental staff members in each section or unit who can provide a service through Irish. | |
| | <u>Telephone communications with the public</u> | In the provision of interpersonal services through Irish, whether by phone or in person, the Department has assigned immediate responsibility to the Irish Language Officer. As and where the subject matter requires it, the Irish Language Officer may be assisted in this role by those staff proficient in Irish and based in the relevant policy area. | |
| | <u>Recorded Oral Announcements</u> | The main non-system generated pre-recorded announcements (i.e. the pre-recorded announcements in place when the Department's offices are closed or when the switchboard operator is busy) | |

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| | | are in bilingual format. | |
| | <u>Live announcements</u> | The Department conducts the majority of its public events and meetings in the English language only. However, where warranted, the Department will provide staff proficient in Irish to provide such announcements. | |
| | <u>Information Leaflets/ Brochures</u> | All guidelines, information leaflets and brochures generated by the Department in relation to its schemes, programmes or processes, and which are referred to in the Department's Freedom of Information Sections 15 and 16 Manuals, will be made available in bilingual format. | |
| | <u>Application Forms</u> | All application forms, whether in electronic or hardcopy format, generated by the Department in relation to its schemes, programmes or processes and which are referred to in the Department's Freedom of Information Sections 15 and 16 Manuals will be made available in bilingual format. | |
| Media | <u>Press Releases</u> | Departmental press releases, other than speeches which have been issued as or are attached to press releases, will be made available bilingually on the Department's website. | |
| | <u>Media Spokespersons</u> | The Department conducts the majority of its communications with the media in English only. However, where warranted, the | |

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|--------------------------------------|------------------------|---|--------------------|
| | | <p>Department will provide staff proficient in Irish to issue statements and make announcements in that language.</p> | |
| | <p><u>Speeches</u></p> | <p>Speeches will be made available in the language in which they are delivered.</p> | |
| <p>Information Technology</p> | <p><u>Email</u></p> | <p>The standard disclaimer on email communications will be bilingual.</p> <p>Individual staff members will be encouraged to put the non-system generated part of the “out of office” e-mail message in both languages.</p> | |
| | <p><u>Websites</u></p> | <p>The Department has developed parallel English/Irish sites in relation to the general material relating to the Department and its services.</p> <p>Within the lifetime of this scheme, the Department will ensure that not less than 70% of all general, static content on the website is available in both languages.</p> <p>Please note: certain material (e.g. speeches, publications generated by other Departments/bodies and any material which the Department does not propose to publish bilingually) will be available in English only on the website.</p> <p>Website publication will, in general, not be simultaneous Irish/English publications, unless otherwise required under the Act or the scheme.</p> | <p>Yr 3</p> |

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| Gaeltacht | <u>Meetings</u> | <p>The Department conducts the majority of its public meetings outside of the Gaeltacht, and in the English language only.</p> <p>However, in the event that the Department holds public meetings in a Gaeltacht area, or dealing with Gaeltacht/Irish language issues, it will provide staff proficient in Irish to conduct these meetings.</p> | |
| | <u>Placenames</u> | <p>The Department has put in place the necessary arrangements to ensure that official Placenames of Gaeltacht areas as declared by the Minister in the (Ceantair Ghaeltachta) Placenames Order 2005 will continue to be used as the default for corporate purposes, including, where appropriate, legislative corporate and statistical purposes.</p> | |

Chapter 5: Improving Language Capability

5.1 Recruitment

The recruitment of staff with the appropriate level of competence in the Irish language in each area of work of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment 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.

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

5.2 Training and Development

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, is committed to making available opportunities for staff to attend appropriately accredited Irish language training courses, as resources permit. All staff will be advised of facilities/opportunities to improve their competency in Irish.

| | | Commitment | Timeline |
|--|---------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| | | | By end Yr 1/2/3 |
| Improving Irish Language Capability | <u>Recruitment</u> | <p>The Department is re-examining the workforce plan out to 2019, and will assess what further needs exist with regard to the language, and incorporate these into our recruitment and succession plans.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify any further needs and recruit. | Yr 1 |

| | | | |
|--|-----------------|---|-----------------------------|
| | | 2. Monitor requirements into the future. | Ongoing |
| | <u>Training</u> | <p>A forthcoming update of the Department's L&D policy will include consideration of requirements for improving Irish language capability.</p> <p>This will include how to support current officers with Irish proficiency, assisting officers who wish to improve proficiency, and identifying courses most appropriate to meeting the Department's Irish language needs.</p> <p>The L&D Unit and Irish Language Officer will continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actively promote modules in Irish available at OneLearning, the new Civil Service Learning and Development Centre; - Promote the refund of fees scheme as an additional mechanism for encouraging Irish language training; - Provide advice to staff on the range of high-quality Irish language classes available outside office hours (e.g. third-level Irish courses; classes with Gael-Linn, Gaelchultúr etc.); - Include language awareness as part of both Induction and | <p>End Yr 1</p> <p>Yr 1</p> |

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| | | <p>Customer Service training courses so as to ensure that staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understand why the Department has an Irish language service policy ▪ understand the context and background to the policy ▪ are fully informed about how the policy will affect their work; <p>- Continue to seek additional volunteers to provide Irish language services across the Department, as Irish language capability develops.</p> | |
| | <p><u>Participation in language promotion activities /Provision of resources</u></p> | <p>To complement the promotion of Irish as an aspect of professional and career development, the Irish Language Officer and Learning &Development Unit will also encourage on a regular basis the use of Irish in more informal and/or social settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schedule and run a weekly language exchange in Adelaide Road, with proposed topics for discussion. - Highlight local events and activities involving the social use of Irish. - Encourage engagement with digital media and resources in Irish e.g. online magazines, blogs, websites, | <p>Yr 1</p> |

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|--|---------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| | | <p>dictionaries, apps.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide links and access to simple online learning resources e.g. flashcards, podcasts, etc. - Schedule and run a book club for adult learners. - Schedule Lunch & Learn sessions on topics related to the Irish language. - Put in place arrangements for the appropriate participation in wider Irish-language focused events (e.g. Seachtain na Gaeilge, BainimÚsáidAs) within the Department. | <p>Yr 2</p> <p>Yr 2</p> |
| | <p>Other</p> | <p>In order to expand the Department's capacity to provide in-house translation for smaller translation tasks, the Strategic Development and Communications Unit will invest in Computer-Assisted-Translation software (e.g. SDL Trados) for use by the designated Irish Language Officer.</p> <p>Training in the use of this software will be provided to the Irish Language Officer to ensure the maximum use of machine translation (MT) in this service.</p> <p>The Irish Language Officer will regularly liaise with the Translation Unit of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the</p> | <p>Yr 1</p> <p>Yr 1</p> |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|------|
| | | <p>Gaeltacht (DCHG) with a view to aligning the translation practices and MT resources of this Department with those of the DCHG.</p> | |
| | | <p>A formal procurement competition will be held for the provision of translation services to the Department.</p> <p>The result of this will then be communicated to all divisions within the Department, to ensure full and timely compliance with all our statutory requirements under both the Official Languages Act, 2003 and the Department's Language Scheme.</p> | Yr 1 |
| | | <p>The contract for translation services will include the condition that the Department will retain full copyright in the translations, and all associated translation memories.</p> <p>These data sources will then be provided to the European Language Resource Coordination (ELRC) Network on a regular basis for integration into the language resource repository of the CEF eTranslation platform, in order to improve the quality, coverage and performance of automated translation into and out of Irish at both a national and European level.</p> | Yr 1 |

5.3 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) |
|--|--|--|---|
| Irish Language Officer | Adelaide Road | All citizens wishing to conduct their business with the Department through Irish; members of the Irish language media; internal staff queries. | Advanced. |
| Private Secretary to the Minister of State | Minister of State's Office | Citizens wishing to conduct their business regarding all matters under the Minister's remit through Irish. | Intermediate. |
| Staff Member | Strategic Development and Communications Unit / Press office | All citizens wishing to conduct their business with the Department through Irish; members of the Irish language media; internal staff queries. | Basic. |

Chapter 6: Monitoring and Review

The implementation of the scheme will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by the Strategic Development and Communications Unit. The contact person for the scheme will be the designated Irish Language Officer, based in the Strategic Development and Communications Unit.

The day-to-day monitoring and implementation function will be carried out by Heads of Function in respect of the Divisions for which they are responsible. The Irish Language Officer will also monitor on a regular basis supply and demand for Irish language services across all areas of the Department.

The Irish Language Officer will report on progress to the Partnership Committee and to the Management Board every six months. Progress on the Department's scheme will be included in the Department's Annual Reports.

Chapter 7: Publicising of Agreed Scheme

This scheme will be publicised both internally and externally, through a press release initially. A bilingual version of the scheme will be made available on our website and circulated to all staff and appropriate agencies. Other means to publicise the scheme may also be used.

In addition, we will take every 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;
- 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.