

Did you know that Irish is the first official Language of the Irish State? Did you know that you had the right to conduct your business in Irish with government bodies. The aim of the Official Languages Act is to increase the number of services available through Irish and the use of Irish in the public sector. Are you ready to fulfil that aim?

My name is Seán

It's a simple Irish name or so you would think.

The computer system does not recognise the accent

My name isn't Sean, but Seán.

Sean means old and I'm not that old!

I shouldn't be put in that position

Having your name spelled correctly on official documents is a fairly basic right

But that's not all.

I also have the right to use Irish in court, when paying my road tax, to register with an educational institute, and to pay for my passport.

I should be able to do all of that without hassle difficulty or stress

The term Gaeltacht is used to describe areas in Ireland where the Irish language is, or was until recently the primary language spoken by the majority of the community

Irish is a living, modern language. The communities are diverse and dynamic and native Irish speakers, learners and beginners live in Gaeltacht areas across the country.

A pop-up Gaeltacht is a night out for Irish speakers here in Dublin but of course it has spread throughout the world. There are more Irish speakers in Dublin than anywhere else in the world. The aim of the pop-up Gaeltacht is to bring them together to kind of put up a 'bat-signal' for them in places where they wouldn't normally gather. It's to show that there are Irish speakers in Dublin. It puts the language to the front and centre so we are seen and heard. So yes Irish speakers are here in Dublin. We're told time and time again that young, urban Irish speakers don't exist but this proves that isn't the case, that we are here. 'Beatha teanga í a labhairt'. There are hundreds of people here tonight speaking it and it's great to see.

In fact there are 1.76 million Irish speakers in the state. 74,000 of whom speak Irish outside of the educational system every day who are in regular contact with the State. But how many of them successfully conduct their business with the state in Irish? If a bilingual service is available it should be visible and readily apparent that a bilingual service is available.

The service must be continuously available and the service provided should be of equal standard in both languages.

This customer is given the option to conduct their business in English or Irish and therefore more demand is created for bilingual services.

Through planning and a recruitment policy people who are competent in both languages can be employed where an organisation has the most contact with the public

Are you ready to take action? Can we the citizens of the State strengthen the presence and use of Irish in the public sector and improve awareness of the language. It's our language. Let's not let it die or be forgotten.

With strong Irish legislation and enough Irish speaking staff in public bodies the State would ensure that this language community is satisfactorily catered for.

Don't forget however that public bodies can seek advice from the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga and that the public can also lodge complaints with us.

An Coimisinéir Teanga, An Spidéal, Gaillimh. Fón 091 504 006 www.coimisineir.ie
@ceartateanga_eolas@coimisineir.ie