

**Office of the Secretary General to the President**  
**Revised Scheme 2013 – 2015**  
**under Section 15 of the Official Languages Act 2003**

**Scéim Oifig Ard Rúnaí an Uachtaráin**  
**2013 – 2015**  
**faoi Alt 15 d’Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003**

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction & Background**

The original scheme was prepared under section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003 (“the Act”) by the Office of the Secretary General to the President and thereafter referred to as the ‘Office’. This revision is prepared under section 15 of the Act.

Section 11 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 English, and
- through the medium of Irish and English;

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

## **1.1 The Content of the Language Scheme**

The scheme builds on the extent to which services are currently available through Irish as a starting base. A number of commitments were given in the Office's first scheme to improve the level of Irish. The Office has sought to fully implement all of these commitments and has been working with the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga to address the implementation issues that have arisen during the first scheme. The objective of the second scheme is to continue the delivery of these commitments and build on the progress achieved over the period of the last scheme.

The Office will continue to monitor the level of demand for its services in the Irish language.

## **1.2 Commencement date of Scheme**

The scheme has been confirmed by the Minister of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It shall commence on 28 January 2013 and shall remain in force for a period of three years from this date or until a new scheme has been confirmed pursuant to Section 15 of the Act, whichever is the earlier.

## **1.3 Assessment of 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. Whereas the primary focus of the Office is not in public service delivery, the Office provides services through Irish or bilingually where required.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Provision of Services and Actions to be taken**

#### **during the current Scheme**

This Chapter sets down the official language regime operated by this Office in relation to the general provision of services by it.

#### **2.1 Means of Communication with the Public / Information to the public**

The Office's communications with the general public are as follows:

##### **Brochures & information leaflets**

- The Office provides all brochures and information leaflets bilingually and will continue to do so within the same cover unless this is not feasible due to the size, nature or layout of the material.
- Where these are provided in separate language versions, equal prominence will be given to both versions at all public locations. Customers will proactively be made aware of the availability of a separate Irish version by way of a footnote on the English version, advising that the document is available in the Irish language.

##### **Speeches and Statements**

- Speeches and statements will continue to be made available in the language(s) in which they are delivered.
- The President usually includes some Irish in his speeches.

## **Website**

- The website is currently being redesigned. On completion, the new website will have dual functionality in both official languages. All static content on the new website will be bilingual. In addition, from the commencement of this scheme, every publication, brochure and information leaflet being hosted on the website will be made available in both official languages on the website at the same time.

## **Receptionist/Oral Announcements**

- Receptionist / switchboard operator is the first point of contact with the public. In accordance with Standard Quality Customer Service practice:
  - reception / switchboard staff will give the name of the Office in Irish and English
  - staff are, at a minimum, familiar with the basic greetings in Irish, and arrangements are, and will continue to be, in place so that members of the public are put in contact with the relevant office or officer responsible for offering the required service through Irish where available.

This level of service will continue to be provided during the course of the second scheme.

## **Press Releases**

- Press releases will continue to be issued in both official languages.

## **President's Engagements**

- The President's public engagements will continue to be published bilingually.

## **Correspondence**

- All correspondence that is received in Irish will be answered in Irish.
- The official Irish language version of Gaeltacht place names will be used in all relevant communications.

## **Computer Systems**

- All existing computer systems that involve the processing of personnel data such as name and address are capable of handling the Irish language and any future computer systems will also have this capability.

## **Interactive Services**

- The Office does not currently have any interactive services. Any new online interactive services developed over the course of this Scheme will be made available simultaneously in Irish and English.

## **Tour of Formal Rooms**

- The official Tours of the Formal Rooms continue to take place each Saturday. In line with the commitments contained in the first scheme, the Office raised the matter of providing bilingual tours of the Áras with the Office of Public Works. The Office of Public Works has confirmed that they can provide such bilingual tours, subject to receiving reasonable notice requesting same.

**Chapter 3****List of Business Units within the  
Office of the Secretary General to the President**

Following a reorganisation, the number of Business Units in the Office was reduced to three, all of which have dealings with the public. They are:

- Corporate Services
- Protocol/Event
- Media

In accordance with the commitment in the first scheme, the Office will continue to ensure that at least one member of staff in each of these business units is competent to deal effectively with members of the public through the medium of Irish.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Enhancement of Services to be provided bilingually**

#### **4.1 Background**

The Office is committed to providing services through Irish in all its Business Units.

The primary deliverable will be the progressive development of a one-to-one customer service in Irish.

#### **4.2 Recruitment & Placement**

In so far as it is possible, the Office endeavours to recruit and retain staff who have a proficiency in Irish.

#### **4.3 Training & Development**

There is an ongoing commitment to provide appropriate training and development for all staff, in both official languages, to improve customer service and to develop the full potential of staff during their careers in this Office.

Management and Training Officer: -

- Seeks volunteers from within staff to provide Irish language services throughout the Office on an ongoing basis and where necessary and appropriate to do so.
- Assesses course content, including Irish language courses and courses delivered through Irish, on a regular basis to ascertain how effectively they meet the goals and objectives of the Office;

- Includes language awareness as part of Induction training courses so as to ensure that staff:
  - understand why the Office implements a bilingual policy;
  - understand the context and background to the policy; and
  - are fully informed about how the policy will affect their work.

#### **4.4 Improving the Office's Irish language capability:**

The following actions are carried out in order to ensure that both the level and standard of services to the public are improved throughout the duration of the scheme:

- The Office facilitates staff attending Irish language classes during office hours as far as possible;
- Advice is given to staff in relation to the range of high-quality Irish language classes available outside of office hours (e.g. third-level Diploma in Irish; Gaelchultúr ,Gael-Linn, etc);

**Chapter 5****Monitoring & Revision**

The Senior Management Group within the Office will continue to keep the effective operation of the scheme under review.

- The day-to-day monitoring function will continue to be carried out primarily by line managers in each of the Business Units, with responsibility for the implementation of the scheme within their own function areas and reporting on a regular basis to Senior Management.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Publicising of Agreed Scheme**

The contents of this scheme along with the commitments and provisions of the scheme will be communicated as appropriate to the general public through:

- Press Release
- the website.
- Circulation to appropriate agencies

In addition the Office will take every opportunity in its day-to-day interactions with customers to promote and publicise the services it provides through Irish, which may be done by:

- Directly informing customers on a pro-active basis of the option of dealing with the Office through Irish, for example, by the display of notices at reception areas indicating the Irish language services that are available and also by prominently listing these in the Office website.
- Incorporating footnotes on selected guidelines, leaflets, and applications forms explaining that these documents are also available in Irish (in cases where bilingual printed material is not produced under a single cover).

A copy of this scheme has been forwarded to Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.

