



**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

**Official Languages Act 2003
Language Scheme
2021 to 2024**

www.agriculture.gov.ie

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Section 1

Background

The Department's first Language Scheme was introduced in June 2006. This, our third Language Scheme, was prepared under Section 15 of the Official Languages Act, 2003. Section 11 of the Act 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.

It also details 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.

Section 12 of the Act provides for the preparation of guidelines by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and their issue to public bodies to assist in the preparation of draft Schemes. This Scheme has been drawn up in conformity with these guidelines. A notice under section 15 of the Official Languages Act 2003 was received from the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media requesting that the Department carry out a review of its second Scheme and to prepare and submit to him a new draft Scheme.

The second Scheme has now been reviewed as requested and this, our third, Language Scheme has been prepared setting out specific measures to develop and advance the level and quality of service the Department will provide to speakers of Irish.

Preparation of the Scheme

In the preparation of this Scheme, due regard has been given to the Guidelines issued by The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. In addition, there has been consultation with relevant stakeholders. The new Scheme has been informed by our experience with the second Scheme.

The Department 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 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.

The 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 will be fully addressed on an incremental basis, through this and future Schemes.

The Content of the New Scheme

The objectives of this third Scheme are to build on the progress achieved since 2006 by the Department in the provision of quality services to our Irish-speaking customers and to broaden the range of services available bilingually over the lifetime of the Scheme.

The Scheme also includes a commitment to assess, on an ongoing basis, the level of demand for services through Irish and to ensure that the Department continues to meet this demand in a planned, coherent and accessible way.

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 through Irish are facilitated. However, the prevailing public service context must be taken into account and in this regard, the constraints on resources and on public sector recruitment, allied with budgetary constraints, may impact on the level of progress that can be achieved.

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

Commencement Date of Scheme

This Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. It will commence with effect from 01 April 2021 and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years or until a new Scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

Section 2

Overview of the Department

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine was established on March 9 2011. It retains all of the former functions of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and has additional responsibility for sea fisheries, aquaculture, marine research, marine engineering, pier and harbour development (other than those commercial and island harbours which are under the responsibility of the Department of Transport and the Department of Environment, Community, and Local Government respectively) and aquaculture.

The Department retains its former functions of providing advisory services for the formulation of Governmental policies pertaining to the agriculture and food sectors, as well as making representations on behalf of the sectors at EU and global level. The Department is responsible for the disbursement of EU and Exchequer funding, to individual farmers and various bodies and groups, and ensuring that these funds are distributed in line with governing EU and national legislation. The Department has responsibility for the regulation of the agricultural and food industries through national and EU legislation, as well as for monitoring animal and plant welfare. It will also continue to monitor the direction of state bodies under its aegis engaged in research, training, advice, market development/promotion and industrial development. The Department's mission is to:

Serve the Government and the people of Ireland, through effective collaboration, decision making, policy development and implementation, to ensure that Ireland derives long-term benefits from our sector

In October 2019 the Department had a full-time equivalent staff complement of 3,358. A summary of the Divisions of the Department is at Appendix A.

Our Customers

In order to achieve its goals, the Department works in close partnership with other Government Departments, statutory agencies and non-Governmental organisations on a range of cross-cutting issues in relation to both policy and scheme implementation. Our customers are drawn from stakeholders across the agriculture, marine and forestry sectors.

Assessment of extent to which services are already available through Irish

The Department is pleased with the outcome of the implementation of the measures committed to in its second Irish Language Scheme. It notes that significant progress has been made in its capacity to service customers conducting business with it through Irish.

Its commitments to improve the level of service in the Irish language included:

- transacting business in Irish at Department's offices in Gaeltacht areas;
- the provision of information bilingually on schemes operated and services provided by the Department;
- the establishment of a generic email address for correspondence in Irish (aonadnagaeilge@agriculture.gov.ie);
- the provision of bilingual web-based information;
- the provision of services to the media through Irish where required; and
- the implementation of a range of training and development initiatives to enhance the skills level of the staff of the Department with a view to meeting the needs of customers transacting business through Irish.

Section 3

Enhanced measures to promote services in Irish

The objective of this third Scheme is to continue the delivery of our commitment to enhance the level of service. The Department is committed to developing and enhancing the capacity and quality of its services to customers through Irish over the course of its third three-year Scheme. The Department considers that we can build substantially on the progress made in the lifetime of the second Language Scheme.

These will complement a separate range of measures, which the Department implements to comply with the requirements of the Official Languages Act 2003 and particularly the Regulations introduced in October 2008 under the Act. These Regulations provide mainly for the enhancement of the profile of the Irish Language in signage, stationery and recorded oral announcements for which public bodies are responsible.

In formulating these proposals, the Department is mindful that competing priorities may impact on the delivery of public services generally. These may impinge upon the capacity the Department to achieve all of its ambitions in the delivery of services to the public, including those relating to Irish speaking customers.

Reception facilities

The Department recognises that receptionists/switchboard operators are the first points of contact with the public. The Department will continue to ensure that customers seeking to transact business in Irish can do so. Suitable arrangements are in place so that Switchboard and reception staff can put members of the public in touch, at the earliest opportunity, with an officer who can converse in Irish.

Our recruitment policy will also seek to ensure that, in so far as is possible, all staff in offices in Gaeltacht areas can transact business in Irish.

Publications

- Section 10 of the Act requires a Statement of Strategy, Annual Report, Audited Accounts or Financial Statements and any document setting out policy proposals to be published by the Department simultaneously in Irish and English.
- In addition to meeting its obligations under Section 10 of the Official Languages Act 2003 to publish certain documents in both official languages

simultaneously, the Department will publish other corporate documents, such as the Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan, the Farmers' Charter of Rights and the Schemes and Services booklet, in both Irish and English.

- Departmental publications on major policy statements or reviews will, in general, be made available bilingually. If the cost of bilingual publication in any individual case is deemed excessive due to the size of the document, the Department may choose to publish the executive summary and recommendations in bilingual format.
- Publications generated by other bodies but available from the Department will be made available in the language in which they have been published by the generating Department or body.
- Other significant leaflets and documents will be made available bilingually as they are published, within budgetary constraints.

Media and Speeches

- The Department publishes 100% of Departmental press releases bilingually.
- Speeches will be made available in the language in which they are delivered.
- Services will be provided to the media through Irish where required.

Public meetings

- The Department conducts the majority of its public meetings in the English language. However, the Department will, when warranted, provide staff proficient in Irish for meetings in Gaeltacht areas or when dealing with Gaeltacht / Irish language issues.
- Where required, the Department will endeavour to ensure that meetings held in the Gaeltacht will be conducted in Irish with simultaneous translation to English provided, as appropriate.
- Meetings organised by the Department that deal with Irish language issues will be held in Irish or bilingually, as appropriate.

Website and Information Technology

- A number of key documents and forms of interest to the public are available in Irish on the website. The Department plans to expand the number of documents available in Irish over the lifetime of the scheme.
- Any review of the Department's website will take into account all obligations under the Official Languages Act.
- The standard disclaimer on email communications will be bilingual.
- Individual staff members will be encouraged to put the non-system generated part of the "out of office" in Irish or bilingually.

Training & Development

- The Department's HR Learning & Development Unit, through the OneLearning facility, offer staff members the opportunity to participate in the Intermediate Level (aligned to Gaelchultúr Level 3/4) and Advanced Level (aligned to Gaelchultúr Level 5/6) in the Irish language. Entry to these courses is subject to a language proficiency assessment provided by Gaelchultúr.
- The Department will support staff who engage in self-directed study to certificate, diploma and degree level through the Refund of Academic Fees Scheme.
- The Department will maintain and develop a dedicated section in its Staff Intranet service ('eZone') for staff to advise staff of the Department's obligations under the Official Languages Act and the Irish Language Scheme and assist them in complying with the provisions of both.

Other Initiatives

- If a tender relates to an Irish Language issue, all related 'Request for Tender' documents will be made available in Irish.
- The Department will seek to optimise the quality of documentation it publishes in the Irish language and to ensure maximum value for money from its expenditure on Irish-language activities.

- Over the period of the Scheme and as the Department enhances its telephony services, we will continue to ensure that recorded messages/instructions are available in the Irish language.
- To facilitate compliance with the Regulations insofar as they relate to signage, the Department will make available to staff Irish translations of a range of useful terms for temporary signs which they may need to display from time to time in their offices.

An Ghaeltacht

The Department has two offices (both of which are Fishery Harbour Centres) located in Gaeltacht areas.

One is located in Ros a Mhíl, Co. Galway and the other in An Daingean, Co. Kerry. These offices represent the most direct interface which the Department has with Irish speakers and as a consequence, their capacity to provide a high level of services through Irish is very important. The Department is satisfied that there are staff deployed in those locations who are functionally bilingual. Through continued application of its recruitment/promotion policy the Department will endeavour to ensure that Irish is the working language in offices located in Gaeltacht areas and the Department undertakes to provide a service through Irish to members of the public in Gaeltacht areas over the lifetime of this Scheme.

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.

Competitions and Recruitment in Offices in Gaeltacht areas

For all posts in offices in Gaeltacht areas the Department is committed to operating the following policy in all external recruitment, and internal promotion, competitions:

- All competitions which involve posts headquartered in an office situated in a Gaeltacht area will place requirements in terms of Irish and English on an equal standing.

- The Department has engaged the services of Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG) of Maynooth University to provide an Irish Language Proficiency Testing service to the Department as and when required. The aim of this testing is to ensure a standard of competency which will enable the applicant to fulfil the duties pertaining to the position in Irish and to deal easily with native or fluent Irish speakers in Gaeltacht areas.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that all future recruits to offices in Gaeltacht areas have competency in the Irish language. However, due to the specialised nature of certain roles, it may not be possible to fill a post in a Gaeltacht area if no suitably qualified Irish language speaker presents. In such circumstance, and for the purpose of ensuring that the Department fulfils its responsibilities, the Department reserves the right to fill such post with a non-Irish speaker.

Designated Irish Language Posts

Title of Post	Location	Irish speaking community served	Standard of Irish required
Executive Officer (currently vacant)	Corporate Affairs Division, (Irish Language Unit)	Located in Portlaoise	Functional Irish bilingual
Agricultural Inspector	Agricultural Environment Structures	Covering Cork/Kerry	Functional Irish bilingual
Agricultural Inspector	Agricultural Environment Structures	Covering Donegal	Functional Irish bilingual
Assistant Agricultural Inspector	Agricultural Environment Structures	Covering Mayo and Galway	Functional Irish bilingual
Clerical Officer	Management Engineering Division	An Daingean Fishery Harbour Centre (Dingle)	Functional Irish bilingual
Clerical Officer	Management Engineering Division	Ros an Mhíl Fishery Harbour Centre	Functional Irish bilingual

Section 4

Monitoring and Review

The implementation of the Scheme will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

- Information summarising the provisions of this Scheme will be distributed to staff and made available to the public online through the Department's website.
- Implementation of this Scheme will be an integral part of the Department's business planning processes.
- The Management Board will be kept informed of any issues arising from the implementation of the Scheme.
- The Irish Language Unit will continue to facilitate and drive implementation of the Act, the Regulations and the Scheme and to assess the effectiveness of the measures being taken.

Section 5

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.

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.

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

Appendix A - Organisation and Structure

Divisions of the Department

The Management structure of the Department under the Secretary General comprises of Assistant Secretaries, the Chief Veterinary Officer, the Chief Inspector, Chief Information Officer (IMT) and Head of Laboratories.

The structure is given below including reporting Divisions:

Assistant Secretary – Seafood and Marine

- Aquaculture & Foreshore Management
- Marine Engineering
- Sea Fisheries Administration
- Marine Agencies & Programmes
- Marine Programmes
- Sea-Fisheries Policy & Development
-

Chief Inspector

- Crop Policy, Production and Safety
- Crops Evaluation and Certification
- Plant Health and Horticulture
- Pesticides Control
- Pesticide Registration
- Feedstuffs, Fertilisers, Grain and Poultry
- Livestock Breeding, Production and Trade
- Nitrates, Biodiversity & Engineering
- Research Food and Codex
- Climate Change and Bioenergy Policy

Chief Veterinary Officer

- Ruminant Animal Health, ERAD Division, Premises Registration and Animal Identification
- Surveillance, Animal By-Products and TSEs (SAT) Division
- Trade and Veterinary Certification Division
- Veterinary Public Health Policy, Pigs and Poultry Health
- Animal Identification and Movement Division
- Milk & Meat Hygiene, and Animal By-Products Division

- Animal Health and Welfare Division
- Import Controls (Operations)
- National Disease Control Centre, Border Inspection Posts Policy, Veterinary Internal Audit
- Business Systems Co-ordination & Development
- Antimicrobial Resistance, Veterinary Medicines, Animal Welfare & Ruminant Trade Division
- Veterinary Public Health Food Safety Operations
- Veterinary Area Management Teams (North and South)
- ERAD/Veterinary Medicines Division

Chief Information Officer - IMT

- IMT- Animal, Customer, Financials & Fisheries Systems
- IMT Co-Ordination & PMO
- IMT- Infrastructure
- IMT- Direct Farm Payments Systems (IACS)

Assistant Secretary – Strategic Communications Division

- Human Resources Division
- Corporate Affairs Division
- Management Services, Accommodation, and Health & Safety Division
- Legal Services Division
- Data Management Division
- Communications Division
- Investigations Division

Assistant Secretary - Rural Development

- Forest Service Division
- Forest Service Inspectorate Division
- Forest Sector Development Division
- Organics, Market Supports & Locally Led Division
- Agri-Environment & On Farm Investment Division
- Agricultural Environment & Structures Division

Assistant Secretary - Agri-Food Strategy

- Food Industry Development Division
- Meat and Milk Policy Division
- Economics and Planning Division D
- Dairy Controls Division

Assistant Secretary - International Trade and Rural Development

- EU Division
- Brexit Division
- International Trade Division
- CAP Rural Development Division

Head of Laboratories

- Animal Health Laboratories
- Bacteriology and Parasitology Division
- Pathology Division
- Regional Veterinary Laboratory Division
- Virology Division
- Food Safety and Plant Science Laboratories
- Food Chemistry Division
- Food Microbiology Division
- Plant Science Division

Assistant Secretary - Direct Payments

- Basic Payment Scheme
- Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme,
- Knowledge Transfer
- Beef Data and Genomics Programme
- Beef Finisher Payment
- Beef Environmental and Efficiency Programme Suckler
- Beef Emergency Aid Measure
- Sheep Welfare Scheme
- for the Land Parcel Identification System rebuild project.
- CAP Entitlements & Financial Controls
- Direct Payments, Integrated Controls Division

Assistant Secretary – Governance

- Finance Division & Central Procurement Unit
- Accounts Division
- Internal Audit Unit
- Agricultural Appeals Office
- Horse & Greyhound Racing, and Teagasc