

Central Statistics Office
Irish Language Scheme
2007-2010

under Section 11 of the
Official Languages Act 2003

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Chapter 1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Preparation of the Language Scheme

This scheme has been prepared by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) under Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003. 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

The scheme has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines under Section 12 of the Act.

The CSO published a notice under Section 13 of the Act, on 15 February 2006, inviting representations in relation to the preparation of the draft scheme from any interested parties. Submissions were received from Irish language organisations and from private individuals. These submissions were taken into account when drafting the scheme.

1.2 The Content of the Language Scheme

This Scheme builds on the principles of Quality Customer Service, and on the commitment in the Office's Customer Charter to ensure that customers (i.e. survey respondents and users of statistics), who wish to conduct their business through Irish can do so. It sets out the extent to which services are currently available through Irish, and identifies areas for future enhancement.

1.3 Commencement Date of Scheme

The scheme has been accepted by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. It commences with effect from 5 November 2007, and will remain in force for a period of three years from this date or until a new scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to Section 15 of the Act, whichever is earlier.

1.4 Overview of the Central Statistics Office

The CSO collects and compiles statistical information relating to the economic and social life of Ireland. We publish more than 300 statistical releases and reports every year. All the information we publish is made available simultaneously on our website (www.cso.ie).

The functions, authority and responsibilities of the CSO are set out in the Statistics Act, 1993. The Act constitutes the Central Statistics Office as an independent office under the aegis of the Taoiseach and mandates the Office to:

- Collect, compile, extract and disseminate statistical information relating to the economic, social and general activities of the State.
- Decide independently on statistical methodology and standards and on the content, timing and methods of disseminating statistics.
- Protect the confidentiality of the information collected and ensure that it is used only for statistical purposes.
- Maintain close and regular contact with the principal users and suppliers of statistics.
- Co-ordinate the statistics compiled by other public authorities to ensure adherence to statistical standards and classifications.
- Realise the statistical potential of the records maintained by public authorities.

In fulfilling its mandate, the CSO adheres to the highest professional standards of impartiality, integrity and independence. Under the Statistics Act, the CSO has sole responsibility for statistical methodology and for the timing and contents of statistical publications. We seek to apply the best statistical standards and methodology and we rigorously protect the confidentiality of the data provided by survey respondents. We fully subscribe to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics adopted by the United Nations.

1.5 Customers and Clients

The work of the CSO impacts on a wide variety of people and, accordingly, the Office has an extensive customer base. There are many and varied uses for our statistics. The community of users includes all sectors of society: government departments and other public bodies, universities and research institutes, the media, businesses, trade unions, other sectoral groups and the general public. There is also an international dimension to our work, providing statistics, which are internationally comparable, particularly at EU level. Our statistics are used by Eurostat, other EU Commission Departments, the European Central Bank, the OECD, the UN, other international organisations, and other national statistical offices.

In monitoring the quality of our service to customers and clients, timeliness is a key criterion. The statistics published by the CSO are time-sensitive. Short-term indicators are widely used in economic policy and can influence trends in financial markets. More generally, timely statistics help both the public and private sectors to make better-informed strategic decisions. The CSO sets targets for the timeliness of its statistical releases and publications and monitors these in a table called the *Timeliness Monitor*. This table is published in the CSO's *Statement of Strategy* and it also forms an important part of the CSO's compliance with the requirements of EU statistical legislation.

1.6 Statistical Programmes of the CSO

The CSO has three main statistical programmes:

- Macro-Economic Statistics
- Demographic and Social Statistics
- Business Statistics

Macro-Economic Statistics

This programme covers National Accounts, Balance of Payments (BOP), External Trade and Environment statistics. Statistical information from this programme is published on our website (www.cso.ie) under the following headings:

- **Economy**
 - Balance of Payments
 - National Accounts
 - External Trade
 - Prices
 - Key Economic Indicators
 - IMF Summary Data – Ireland
- **Environment and Climate**
 - Environment
 - Climate

Demographic and Social Statistics

This programme includes the Census of Population and three major household surveys: the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS); the annual EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC); and the five-yearly Household Budget Survey (HBS).

In addition, regular statistics are produced on population and migration, vital statistics, the labour market, consumer prices and producer prices. The programme has expanded in recent years by using the QNHS as a source for a wide range of social statistics; and by drawing on a wide range of sources, particularly administrative data, to produce additional and more integrated analyses of social conditions.

The Census of Population, which takes place every five years, is the CSO's largest "point of contact" with the general public. The most recent Census took place on 23 April 2006. In the Census, every household is contacted directly by the CSO and must complete a Census form giving details for every person present in the household on Census night. The Census form and very detailed public information relating to the Census is made available in both official languages – Irish and English. Further information is given in Chapter 3.

Statistical information from the Demographic and Social Statistics programme is published on our website under the following headings:

- **People and Society**
 - Population
 - Births, Deaths and Marriages
 - Health and Social Conditions
 - Education
 - Crime and Justice
 - Information Society

Business Statistics

The object of this programme is to provide relevant timely information on the structure and performance of Irish business sectors – i.e. services, industry and agriculture. In recent years, the importance of the services sector has grown and the range of statistics published reflects this. More comprehensive quarterly and structural statistics on earnings are also being compiled.

Statistical information from this programme is published on our website under the following headings:

- **Labour Market and Earnings**

- Labour Market

- Earnings

- **Business Sectors**

- Agriculture and Fishing

- Industry

- Construction

- Information Technology

- Services

- Tourism and Travel

- Transport

1.7 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. We recognise this in the commitments to customer service set out in our Customer Charter. We aim to provide a service through Irish to customers where such a service is requested. All our paper-based survey forms are available in Irish including the Census of Population. All CSO corporate publications e.g. Statement of Strategy, Annual Progress Report, Customer Charter and the Customer Service Action Plan are available in English and Irish. Our website also provides information in the Irish language, this includes detailed information in respect of Census 2006, the CSO's most important point of contact with the general public.

Where possible, staff members give interviews to the Irish language media.

Chapter 2 Provision of the Office's Services/Activities

This chapter sets out the official language regime operated by the Office in relation to the general provision of services.

There is an ever- increasing demand for statistics. The CSO is committed to satisfying this demand in a manner that gives value for money, provides good customer service and safeguards the confidentiality of statistical data. Our focus is on producing high quality statistics through ensuring that our statistical outputs are relevant, reliable and timely. We publish our statistics in accordance with pre-published calendars which conform to best international practice and standards.

The Office's principal means of communication with the general public are:

- Statistical Releases and Publications – The CSO publishes over 300 releases and publications each year. These include major publications such as the Statistical Yearbook and Measuring Ireland's Progress. In addition, there are numerous monthly, quarterly and annual releases. In total, the CSO publishes over 80 different titles.
- CSO website –www.cso.ie– All our releases and publications are made available free on the website, at the same time as the information is published on paper. The website also includes the Databank Direct service, in which users can select and download statistical tables. In addition, the website contains a wide range of corporate information.
- Information Section – This section is the first point of contact for many inquiries to the CSO.

- Press Releases – For some releases and publications, the CSO also issues a press release, setting out the major features of the results.
- Press Conferences – For high-profile statistics, such as the national income estimates and the quarterly national household survey, the CSO convenes press conferences at which senior officials give more detailed briefing on the results to the media and interested commentators.
- Other public information leaflets and brochures describing specific CSO surveys and statistical activities.

At present, documents published in Irish and English, or in English only, include:

- **English and Irish**
 - Statement of Strategy
 - Annual Report
 - Customer Charter
 - Customer Service Action Plan
 - All Statistical Survey Forms
 - Comment Cards
 - CSO Guide to Publications
 - Census 2006 public information on www.cso.ie
- **English Only**
 - Statistical Yearbook
 - Press Releases
 - Statistical Releases and Publications

We are committed to maintaining this level of service throughout the period covered by this scheme.

A number of planned enhancements to the above services are included in Chapter 3.

First Point of Contact with the Public

We are aware of the importance of switchboard operators and reception staff as our first point of contact with the public. Currently we greet our customers in the English language only but during the timespan of this scheme we will commit to training our Reception and Telephone staff so as to ensure that by the end of the current scheme that standard Quality Customer Service (QCS) practice applies in this area, see section 3.3.2 for details.

Chapter 3 Enhancement of Services to be Provided through Irish

Section 11(1)(b) requires that each public body sets out the measures that it proposes to take to ensure that any services that are not provided through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided. The Office is committed to a progressive improvement of the Irish language service offered to our customers. This commitment will result in identifiable actions to be taken over the lifetime of this scheme and in future schemes. At the end of the three year period of this scheme we will ensure that the following measures are in place.

3.1 Oifigeach Gaeilge

An Oifigeach Gaeilge will be appointed and the person's name and telephone number will be widely publicised. The Oifigeach Gaeilge will co-ordinate compliance with the Official Languages Act and the implementation of the scheme in the CSO. S/he will liaise with Heads of Divisions to monitor the extent of the demand for services through Irish and will draft a report for inclusion in the Annual Report.

3.2 Information Leaflets and Press Releases

The CSO will ensure that by the end of the Scheme 10% of press releases and all its public information leaflets and brochures, describing specific CSO surveys and statistical activities, are made available in the Irish language. The Principal Statistics leaflet will be made available in Irish, as will the Census 2006 volume on the Irish language.

3.3 Contact with the CSO

3.3.1 Correspondence and e-mail

As already required in Section 9(2) of the Official Languages Act, all correspondence received in the Irish language will receive a response in Irish. This will be without any additional delay to the customer and will be in line with our Customer Charter commitments. Standard email services, such as disclaimer notices, will be in both languages. Emails received in Irish will receive a response in Irish.

3.3.2 Telephone and Reception

Currently we greet our customers in the English language only but during the timespan of this scheme we will commit to training our Reception and Telephone staff so as to ensure that by the end of the current scheme that standard Quality Customer Service (QCS) practice applies in this area, which is that:

- Reception/switchboard staff are able to give the name of the Office in Irish.
- They are at least familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.
- Suitable arrangements are in place so that they can put members of the public in touch, without delay, with the area or Officer responsible for offering the service required through Irish, where available.

3.4 Survey forms

All survey forms issued by the CSO will be available in separate Irish and English versions. Field staff will have forms in both languages when they are calling to both homes and business respondents. Respondents will be made aware of the availability of survey forms in Irish by the Field Staff.

The CSO also collects information using electronic methods, including computer-assisted personal interviewing in some household surveys, e-forms return of business data via a secure connection, and customised questionnaires for individual companies. The development of Irish-language functionality for these IT-based collection channels is not included in the current scheme. The implications for IT systems are addressed below in Section 3.8.

3.5 Census of Population

The Census 2006 volume on Irish will be made available at time of publication in the Irish language. In addition, the on-line system for producing tabular results from Census 2006 will be bilingual.

While Census 2011 is outside the timeframe of the current scheme we will ensure that proficiency in Irish is one of the selection criteria used for the appointment of enumerators in Gaeltacht areas. In addition, we will require all Enumerators to offer a choice of the English or Irish versions of the Census form to householders.

3.6 Field Staff

In general, field staff who call to individual households and business premises will not be able to provide a direct service through Irish. We will, however, put arrangements in place to ensure that a service, through Irish, is made available to all respondents if they request it.

3.7 Signage

All signage, both internal and external, will be in compliance with the provisions of the regulations under Section 9 (1) of the Official Languages Act. The Customer Charter will also be displayed prominently in both languages.

3.8 Website and IT Systems

The CSO will use its website as a vehicle to provide a service through Irish. The complete static content of our website will be available bi-lingually by the end of the Scheme. All major corporate publications as set out in Chapter 2 will be made available on our website in both Irish and English.

The Databank Direct service provides online access to thousands of data series. This is the CSO's main electronic publication system for statistical data series and tables. It enables users to extract customised tables in a number of formats. Census tables are made available using a similar system.

This Databank Direct service is currently being upgraded as part of a major IT project. The CSO plans to make this service available in both Irish and English, rather than in English only, on a phased basis from 2008. In addition, the online system for producing tabular results from Census 2006 will be bi-lingual (i.e. in Irish and English).

No other new computer systems are currently being planned for the duration of this scheme. Over the course of the scheme, the CSO will incorporate into its IT governance procedures the necessary steps to evaluate the Irish language functionality needed by existing and new IT systems. This will include an evaluation of existing systems and the preparation of plans to meet any needs identified in them. (See also reference to Business Register system in next section).

3.9 Gaeltacht Placenames

The official placenames of Gaeltacht areas (as declared by the Placenames (Ceantair Ghaeltachta) Order 2004) will be used by the Office for official purposes. In addition, the CSO will review the placenames used in publications and releases to ensure that they also reflect the Order. This will mainly involve statistics relating to small areas. In the local area results to be published from Census 2006, the relevant Gaeltacht placenames will be used.

The provisions relating to Gaeltacht placenames are also relevant to the CSO Business Register, which lists over 220,000 business addresses and is used by CSO survey sections. The Business Register computer system has many interdependencies with other departments, IT and administrative systems. The adaptation of the register to incorporate Gaeltacht placenames and to identify Irish-language preference will be a complex large-scale IT project. During the course of 2007 and 2008, the CSO will evaluate the full extent of IT system re-design needed to provide the relevant Irish language functionality and the system will be made compatible in conjunction with the next suitable planned maintenance or upgrade work.

It will not be possible to give any firm undertaking of when this additional functionality will be introduced until the CSO has fully examined the extent of the work involved and the potential financial implications.

3.10 Training and Development

- Our telephonists and reception staff will be offered training to enable them to greet phone and personal callers bilingually.
- Training Development Unit will seek volunteers to provide Irish language services across the Office, these staff members will receive training to ensure that they can provide the service required. They will then be identified by an asterisk on the phone lists as being available to provide a service in Irish.
- Training Development Unit will offer opportunities for Language Training to our permanent field staff conducting household surveys.
- Support will be provided for Irish language courses e.g. Gaeleagras courses.
- The refund of fees scheme will be used as a mechanism for encouraging Irish language training and to develop the number of staff who can provide a service through Irish. Under this scheme, staff will be encouraged to attend refresher courses and conversation classes.
- Irish language awareness and the Offices's responsibilities under the Official Languages Act will be explained to new staff as part of our Induction Course and also as part of our Customer Service Training Course.
- The CSO's support for Club na Gaeilge (see 3.12 below) complements our Irish language training activities.

3.11 Coiste Forbartha na Gaeilge

Coiste Forbartha na Gaeilge was established under the CSO Partnership Committee to develop awareness and use of the Irish language within the Office. The Coiste will continue to receive support in the development of its goals.

3.12 Club na Gaeilge

Club na Gaeilge is a social group who meet weekly to converse in Irish, they also organise social outings for people who enjoy speaking Irish together. The Office will continue to provide funding for this group which provides a social forum for Irish speakers.

3.13 Seachtain na Gaeilge

The Office will support activities organised during Seachtain na Gaeilge and will promote the event within the Office.

3.14 Spellchecker Software

Spell checker software and electronic dictionaries will be made available to all staff.

3.15 Translation Services

We envisage that translation services will be extensively used throughout the Office as every section will be required to produce all survey forms in both Irish and English. A list of translation service providers will be made available to Managers.

3.16 Recruitment

All advertisements placed in the national newspapers and on the CSO website for the purpose of recruiting new staff will be in Irish and in English.

Chapter 4 Monitoring and Revision

The Senior Management Committee of the CSO, chaired by the Director General, will keep the operation of the scheme under review. The Oifigeach Gaeilge, reporting to the Customer Services Officer, will monitor the implementation of the scheme. The day to day operation of the Scheme together with ongoing monitoring of the level of demand in the various sections will be the responsibility of the line managers.

Each Head of Division will be required to monitor and report on the demand for services requested in Irish. Progress on the implementation of the scheme will be included in our Annual Report.

Chapter 5 Publicising of Agreed Scheme

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

- The Scheme itself and subsequent updates will be published on the CSO website and reported upon in the Annual Reports.
- Press Release.
- Circulation to appropriate agencies and public bodies.

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

