



**Language Scheme 2019-2022
under Section 15 of the Official
Languages Act, 2003**

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 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
- 1.2 The scheme must set out how the public body intends to improve the level of service provision through Irish.
- 1.3 This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It commences on 09.09.2019. 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.
- 1.4 This is the Commission's second language scheme. In drawing up this scheme, we have had due regard to the guidelines issued by the Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht. Ahead of drawing up the scheme, we held a public consultation. We have considered the response we received from Conradh na Gaeilge.

2. Role of the Commission

- 2.1 The Commission for Aviation Regulation regulates certain aspects of the aviation and travel trade sectors in Ireland. It was established in 2001 under the Aviation Regulation Act, 2001. The 2001 Act was subsequently amended by the State Airports Act, 2004 and the Aviation Act, 2006.
- 2.2 The Commission is an independent public body under the auspices of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and is accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Commission is guided in its actions by the legislation governing the areas that it regulates. The principal function of the Commission is to set the maximum level of airport charges at Dublin Airport.
- 2.3 The Commission is responsible, under EU legislation, for discharging Ireland's responsibilities in relation to slot allocation at Irish airports.
- 2.4 The Commission is responsible for licensing the travel trade in Ireland, and grants licences to both tour operators and travel agents. As part of this function, the Commission administers a bonding scheme to reimburse consumers in the event of a travel agent collapse. The Commission also licenses airlines and approves groundhandling services providers under regulations implementing EU legislation.
- 2.5 The Commission has a significant consumer protection role. The Commission is the national enforcement body tasked with the monitoring and regulation of EU legislation covering Air Passenger Rights and the provision of assistance to Passengers with Reduced Mobility (PRM).
- 2.6 The Commission operates from a single office in central Dublin. Therefore it does not operate in Gaeltacht areas.

3. Services provided bilingually and in English only

3.1 Under the 2016-2019 scheme, the Commission has significantly increased the range and accessibility of services it provides bilingually. Further details are set out below.

Main services provided bilingually

3.2 The Commission provides services associated with the Direct Provisions of the 2003 Act bilingually, including publication of its annual report, financial statements, signage, stationary etc.

3.3 Details in relation to the role of the Commission and the Customer Charter are provided bilingually on the Commission's website.

3.4 Application forms for Groundhandling licences are available in both languages on the Commission's website.

3.5 Application forms for Air Carrier licenses are available in both languages on the Commission's website.

3.6 Application forms for amending a Groundhandling licence are available in both languages on the Commission's website.

3.7 Application forms together with guidance material in relation to Travel Trade licensing are not published, in either language, but are available in both languages. This is noted in Irish on the website.

3.8 An Irish option is provided early in the Commission's automated phone system. Any such communication received, as well as any email or other communication, is responded to in Irish.

3.9 Information in relation to air passenger rights on the Commission's main website is in both Irish and English.

Main services provided in English

3.10 Consultation and Decision documents in relation to Airport Charges and monitoring of service quality and the delivery of capital projects at Dublin Airport.

3.11 The coordination of Dublin Airport is carried out through English.

3.12 Time critical information and claim forms in the event of a collapse of a travel agent or tour operator.

3.13 Guidance notes and FAQs in relation to air carrier and groundhandler licensing on the Commission's website.

3.14 The Commission's dedicated website aimed at informing the public of their rights as air passengers, www.flightright.ie, as well as the online complaint system.

4. Enhancing the Provision of Irish Language Services

4.1 The Commission is committed to continuing to enhance the provision of Irish language services, as well as maintaining the progress made under the first scheme.

Consultation

4.2 Ahead of putting together these commitments, the Commission conducted a public consultation through our main website as well as through tuaraisc.ie. We received a detailed response from Conradh na Gaeilge.

4.3 Conradh states that Irish should be available, visible, and accessible, including spoken and written communication and publications on the Commission's website, to encourage the use of Irish in all areas of work of the Commission.

4.4 Conradh states that there should be language equality, with a choice of language on the homepage, and the full website available in Irish. It notes that the style and quality of language used should not be inferior in the Irish version. It notes that there should be no delay in service provision due to the choice of Irish.

4.5 Conradh suggests that Irish versions of web and email addresses should be created. It suggests that email signatures and 'out-of-office' notices should be bilingual.

4.6 Conradh states that all staff need to be made aware of the Commission's obligations under the 2003 Act, with opportunities to develop competence in Irish made available to them. Senior management should monitor and review implementation of the scheme, while records should be kept and reported.

Identifying New Commitments

4.7 In drawing up the commitments and actions below, we have considered the following:

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

4.8 We have considered the suggestions from Conradh na Gaeilge.

4.9 Our experience to date is that the demand for specific services in Irish lies in interaction with members of the public, rather than industry. To date, communication through Irish has been with members of the public seeking information in relation to air passenger rights. We therefore intend to develop the following areas to continue improving our service delivery through Irish in a way which we believe to be most practically useful.

- A key focus on Flightright.ie, the Commission's dedicated air passenger rights website. This site is currently undergoing adjustments, however it is our intention to make the whole website bilingual as part of this scheme.

- A focus on specific issues of interest to the general public, including the monitoring of service quality and capital projects at Dublin Airport, as well as passenger guidance and FAQs in relation to air carrier and groundhandler licensing.
- A focus on general issues of interest to members of the public, including guidelines on Freedom of Information requests and the code of conduct of Commission staff.

4.10 There are also a number of smaller actions we can take to further encourage those with whom we correspond to do so in Irish should they wish. As suggested by Conradh, this is achieved through ensuring that Irish is visible and accessible.

Actions and Commitments

- 4.11 The Commission will ensure that we maintain the equal footing of the services set out in Section 3 which are currently offered bilingually. We will keep the possibility of language option homepage buttons under review, subject to the pending merger with IAA Safety Regulation Division.
- 4.12 By the end of year one, quarterly reports in relation to quality of service and capital project delivery will be published bilingually.
- 4.13 By the end of year one, all information in relation to flight cancellations and delays on flightright.ie will be published bilingually.
- 4.14 By the end of year one, guidelines in relation to Freedom of Information requests will be published bilingually.
- 4.15 By the end of year one, all publicly available email addresses will respond bilingually when sending automated responses.
- 4.16 By the end of year one, all email signatures of Commission staff will be bilingual.
- 4.17 By the end of year two, passenger guidance and FAQs in relation to air carrier and groundhandler licensing will be available in Irish.
- 4.18 By the end of year two, information in relation to complaint procedures on flightright.ie will be published bilingually.
- 4.19 By the end of year two, information in relation to the rights of Passengers of Reduced Mobility on flightright.ie will be published bilingually, including obligations on the travel trade, air carriers, and airports.
- 4.20 By the end of year two, information in relation to denied boarding and downgrading on flightright.ie will be published bilingually.
- 4.21 By the end of the scheme, any remaining text on flightright.ie will be published bilingually.
- 4.22 By the end of the scheme, flightright.ie will be fully bilingual including graphics, banners etc.

- 4.23 By the end of the scheme, information in relation to the employee code of conduct will be published bilingually.

Staff Capability

- 4.24 The Commission will ensure that a member of staff is competent to provide the services of the Commission through Irish.
- 4.25 New members of staff will be provided with the current Language Scheme, and advised of the Commission's requirements under the Official Languages Act.
- 4.26 Members of staff will be supported in attending Irish language courses in order to improve their Irish language competence if they wish to do so.
- 4.27 Other members of staff with competence in Irish will be encouraged to make use of it.

5. Monitoring and Publication

- 5.1 Following implementation, progress will be reviewed frequently.
- 5.2 The scheme will be published on the Commission's website. We will record each instance where we receive communication through Irish.
- 5.3 For each year of the scheme, our annual report will provide a progress report on implementation as well as a summary of communications or applications received through Irish.
- 5.4 A copy of the scheme will be forwarded to Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga.