



**Department of Defence**

**Scheme 2010 - 2013**

under Section 15 of the

**Official Languages Act, 2003**

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction and Background

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### 1.1 Introduction

This second Scheme, covering the period 2010 – 2013, was prepared by the Department of Defence pursuant to the Official Languages Act, 2003. The Act provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme outlining the services they will provide:-

- ❑ through the medium of Irish
- ❑ through the medium of English
- ❑ through the media of Irish and English

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by the Department through the medium of Irish will be provided in an agreed timeframe.

### 1.2 Preparation of the Language Scheme.

Under section 13 of the Act, the Department engaged in a public consultation process and placed an advertisement in the national newspapers inviting members of the public and interested parties to submit their views on the Scheme. The advertisement was also circulated to staff within the Department and members of the Defence Forces. The views and suggestions put forward informed the preparation of this Scheme. The Department would like to take this opportunity to thank those who participated for their valued contributions.

### 1.3 The Content of the Language Scheme

The Scheme builds on the commitments set out in the Department's first Scheme that came into effect in 2007. It also builds on the principles of Quality Customer Service and the commitments outlined in the Customer Service Action Plan and Customer Charter to ensure that customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish can do so. It 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 way.

### 1.4 Commencement Date of the Scheme

The Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs. The Scheme is commenced with effect from 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2010 and will remain in force for a period of three years from this date or until a new Scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

### 1.5 Overview of the Department of Defence

The Department of Defence was established by the Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924 and the Act assigns to the Department "the administration and business of the raising, training, organisation, maintenance, equipment, management, discipline, regulation and control according to law of the military defence forces".

The primary role of the civil element of the Department is to support the Minister as Head of the Department, in particular by providing policy advice and support on Defence matters. This includes assistance with policy formulation and the implementation of policy as directed by the Minister as well as administrative functions. The Secretary General is the Minister's principal defence policy advisor.

The Defence Acts 1954 to 2007 provide the legislative basis for the Defence Forces (Óglaigh na hÉireann). The legislation provides that Defence Forces Headquarters (DFHQ) is the military element of the Department of Defence. The Defence Forces produce a separate Official Language Scheme and DFHQ is encompassed within that scheme.

### **1.6 Customers and Stakeholders**

The Department provides services to the community mainly through other Government Departments and agencies and, as such, has limited direct contact with the general public. However members of the public do contact the Department for information or with queries that are handled by the appropriate branches within the Department. The Department's Press Office also has an important role in conveying information to the wider public.

### **1.7 Assessment of the extent to which services are already available through Irish**

The Department currently provides a number of services bilingually, for example, the Department's corporate publications – its Statements of Strategy, Annual Reports and Customer Charters – are available in Irish and English.

A number of commitments were made in the first Scheme to improve the level of service in Irish. All these commitments have been delivered. The objective of this Second Scheme is to continue the delivery of these commitments and to further enhance the level of service over the period of the Scheme (2010-2013) by developing a positive culture that encourages the use of Irish within the Department and in dealing with our customers.

## CHAPTER 2

### Provision of General Departmental Services/Activities

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This chapter outlines the ways in which the Department currently provides its services through English only, Irish and English and Irish only.

#### **2.1 Means of communication with the public include the following:-**

- Telephone Services
- Press Releases
- Written Correspondence
- E-mail
- Websites
- Information Leaflets
- Applications Forms

#### **2.2 English only Services**

Reports aimed at specialist groups, those reports which do not contain policy proposals and those which have limited circulation will continue to be issued in English only during the duration of this scheme.

#### **2.3 Irish and English Services**

- A pool of Irish speakers has been established on a voluntary basis to assist Branches in providing services through Irish. In addition, a list of accredited translators is available to support the delivery of services through Irish.

The Department's corporate documents are also available in both English and Irish as follows:-

- Annual Report
- Strategy Statement
- Customer Service Action Plan
- Customer Charter
- Section 15 & 16 Reference Books (under Freedom of Information Acts)

#### **2.4 Irish only Services**

There are no Branches in the Department required to deliver services exclusively in Irish.

## **2.5 The Department's Website**

The Department's Website is [www.defence.ie](http://www.defence.ie). The current policy is to ensure that all corporate documents (outlined above) produced in Irish are also available on the Department's website in Irish.

## **2.6 Speeches and Statements**

Speeches and statements, including those made by the Minister and Minister of State, will continue to be made available in the language(s) in which they are delivered.

## **2.7 Points of contact with the Public**

Reception and switchboard staff are generally the first point of contact with the public. It is the policy of the Department that:-

- Reception/switchboard staff give the name of the Department in Irish;
- Reception/switchboard staff are 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 officer responsible for offering the service required through Irish.

## **2.8 Irish Language Network**

The Irish Language Network within the Department, which was established during the first scheme, will continue to operate and assist with the implementation of the scheme.

## CHAPTER 3

### Enhancement of Services to be provided bilingually

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This chapter outlines the measures that the Department of Defence will undertake to enhance services in Irish. These measures will be implemented over the period that this Scheme remains in force.

#### 3.1 Bilingual Services

In accordance with the commitments contained in the first scheme:

- ❑ all new application/information forms and leaflets will continue to be fully bi-lingual (within the same cover, except where it is not feasible because of the size, nature or layout of the material) and any remaining existing forms and leaflets will be made fully bilingual as current stocks expire and new leaflets are printed.
- ❑ Each Branch has and will continue to have access to a pool of Irish speakers who are available to them to provide services in Irish when requested to do so. This will continue to ensure that a bilingual service is available from each Branch.
- ❑ The Department's "Home Page" and "About Us Page" will continue to be available in both English and Irish. The Department will continue, on a phased basis over the lifetime of this Scheme, to build on the amount of Irish language content available on its website [www.defence.ie](http://www.defence.ie) by making the text and graphics of links to the "Home Page" and the "About Us" page available in both Irish and English.
- ❑ The Department will ensure that from the beginning of the Scheme all publications including information leaflets and brochures that are produced in Irish or bilingually, will be made available on the website concurrently in Irish and English.
- ❑ The Department will ensure that where new web sites are being introduced or whenever sites are being upgraded the static content will be bilingual.
- ❑ The Department currently does not provide interactive services to the public. If interactive services are provided in the future, they will be introduced simultaneously in both languages.
- ❑ Existing computer systems are Irish language compliant. Any new computer systems being installed by or on behalf of the Department will also be Irish language compliant.
- ❑ A generic e-mail address for queries in Irish has been established - [Eolas@defence.irlgov.ie](mailto:Eolas@defence.irlgov.ie). Accordingly, queries will continue to be dealt with in accordance with current quality customer service standards.
- ❑ Payroll information, where available electronically, is available in both languages and the paper version (Payslip and Payable Order / Payslip) is fully bilingual.
- ❑ The Department will place the statement "Cuirfear fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i na Gaeilge" on all new stationery.

- ❑ Documents which do not set out public policy proposals, internal policy documents and documents of a technical nature with limited circulation will be published in Irish during the course of the second Scheme, where there is a specific prior demand for their publication in Irish.
- ❑ The Department will issue 20% of press releases per annum in Irish at the same time as the English version. These will also be made available on the Department's website.

### **3.2 Recruitment and Placement**

The process of decentralisation to Newbridge Co. Kildare in 2010 has resulted in a substantial turnover in staff. Many of the Dublin based Irish speakers in the Department have moved to other Departments in advance of the move to the new decentralised location. In order to ensure the continued availability of a pool of Irish speakers the Department will:-

- ❑ Continue to assess the Irish proficiency of new staff coming into the Department;
- ❑ Continue to seek additional volunteers to provide Irish language services.

### **3.3 Training and Development**

The Training and Development Unit are committed to providing training to all staff in accordance with PMDS to enhance the general development of staff within the Department. To enhance our services through Irish we will continue to:-

- ❑ Advertise all Irish language courses available to staff;
- ❑ Assess Irish Language courses on a regular basis to ascertain how effectively they meet the Department's requirements;
- ❑ Include Irish language awareness at Induction and Customer Service training to ensure that staff are aware of the importance of implementing a bi-lingual policy in the Department;
- ❑ Facilitate staff attending Irish Language classes, including during working hours;
- ❑ Include a module on the Official Languages Act in the Induction Programme to increase awareness.

### **3.4 DNET**

The Department will designate an area for the Irish Language on the Department's Intranet site, DNET, to assist staff in the delivery of services through Irish. This area will include:-

- ❑ Names of staff available to deal with queries through the medium of Irish
- ❑ Irish/English Dictionary and English/Irish Dictionary
- ❑ List of accredited translators
- ❑ Commonly used Irish phrases

- ❑ Sample ‘out of office’ messages and voicemail messages
- ❑ Information on Irish language training courses
- ❑ Copies of Official Languages Act and Schemes
- ❑ Online links to recognised Irish language terminology sites [www.focal.ie](http://www.focal.ie) and [www.gaeilge.ie](http://www.gaeilge.ie)

### **3.5 Gaeltacht Placenames**

The Department will use the official version of Gaeltacht placenames as declared in the Placenames (Ceantair Ghaeltachta) Order 2004.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Monitoring and Revision**

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The Management Advisory Committee will review the operation of this Scheme. The Customer Services Officer, Line Managers and Irish Language Network will assist them in this.

The Customer Service Officer will include questions regarding satisfaction with the provision of services through Irish in future customer surveys, and with the assistance of the Irish language Network monitor the demand for services in Irish over the life of the Scheme.

Progress on commitments will be included in the Department's Annual Report.

## CHAPTER 5

### Publicising of Agreed Scheme

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The scheme will be publicised to the General Public by the following means:-

- ❑ Press Release;
- ❑ circulation to the appropriate agencies, public bodies and parties who made submissions to the Department;
- ❑ Department's Website.

The Department will also take every opportunity in its day-to-day interactions with customers to promote and publicise the services it provides through Irish, including:-

- by directly informing customers on a pro-active basis of the option of dealing with the Department 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 on the Department website;
- through footnotes on selected information leaflets and application 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 also been forwarded to Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.

The English version of this document is the original version.