



**Department of the Taoiseach**

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT 2003  
LANGUAGE SCHEME**

**2016 - 2019**

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# Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

## 1.1 Introduction

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

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

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 Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, whichever is the later.

## 1.2 Preparation and Content of the Scheme

In the preparation of this Scheme, due regard has been given to the Guidelines issued by the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht. In addition, there has been a comprehensive process of consultation with relevant stakeholders.

The Department of the Taoiseach 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 the 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.

This 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 of the Taoiseach will be fully addressed on an incremental basis, through this and future schemes.

This Scheme is predicated on all of the commitments in any previous scheme having been implemented. In the event of commitments in earlier schemes not having been fully implemented to date, this matter has been the subject of discussion with the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga. The time and effort put in by all concerned in this process is acknowledged and appreciated.

## 1.3 Commencement date of the Scheme

This Scheme has been confirmed on **29 February 2016** by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It commences with effect from this date and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years or until a new scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

## Chapter 2: Overview of Department of the Taoiseach

The purpose of the Department is to help the Taoiseach and the Government to develop a sustainable economy and a successful society, to pursue Ireland's interests abroad, to implement the Government's Programme and to build a better future for Ireland and all her citizens.

The Department of the Taoiseach is directly involved in the provision of a range of essential Government services, as well as strategic policy advisory functions.

### 2.1 Mission and Objectives

- To offer objective and evidence-informed advice to Government, respond to developments, and deliver Government objectives while striving to achieve optimal outcomes in the long-term national interest.
- To serve citizens and stakeholders efficiently, equally and with respect, in a system that is open, transparent and accountable.

### 2.2 Main Functions

The Department of the Taoiseach is directly involved in the provision of a range of essential Government services, as well as strategic policy advisory functions.

Our core activities are:

- the executive functions of the Taoiseach and the Government
- the Government Secretariat
- support for the Taoiseach in carrying out his duties as Head of Government, including in relation to the Oireachtas, Constitutional issues, Protocol, the European Council, the North/South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council
- engaging with the formulation and implementation of government policy, mainly through the system of Cabinet Committees, including the Economic Management Council, Senior Officials Groups and the Programme for Government Office
- the Office of the Taoiseach
- the Office of the Tánaiste
- the Office of the Government Chief Whip
- support for the Ministers of State assigned to the Department (with responsibility for European Affairs & Data Protection, Diaspora Affairs and International Financial Services)
- the Government Press Office
- providing briefing and advice for the Taoiseach on the full range of domestic policy issues and on international affairs
- supporting the Taoiseach and Government in the formulation and implementation of Ireland's EU policy, including the coordination of EU policy interests across the whole of Government
- delivering support services through Corporate Affairs Division (HR, Finance, IT and other services)

### **2.3 Key Services**

In addition to the activities listed above, considerable time and effort goes into answering parliamentary questions, preparing material for use in the Oireachtas, processing Freedom of Information requests, answering letters and queries from the public, organising events, preparing speeches and responding to media queries.

Because the primary focus of the Department's work is on dealings with Government and with other Government Departments and Agencies, we do not experience a significant level of demand from the public for service in Irish.

### **2.4 Customers and Clients**

The Department interacts with a broad spectrum of stakeholders including:

- The Taoiseach, Government Chief Whip and Ministers of State, the Government, public representatives and other Government Departments, Offices and Agencies
- The institutions and parties in Northern Ireland, other Governments and international institutions
- A wide range of actors from outside the public service

We also have links with the academic and research community, with business, with the legal and other professions, and with suppliers of goods and services to the Department.

Unlike many Government Departments, we have limited direct contact with the general public and are not primarily involved in the provision of specific public services to the general public. However, members of the public contact the Department for information or with other queries, and the Taoiseach's Private and Constituency Offices deal with most of these enquiries.

The Government Press and Information Services also have a significant role to play in conveying information to the wider public. We also facilitate Saturday Tours of Government Buildings by members of the general public. Further information on our services to the public in Irish and English is given in the next section.

## Chapter 3: Details of services currently being provided in English only or bilingually

Details of services currently being provided in English only or bilingually in Irish and English; **including services in Gaeltacht areas.**

Current Provision of Services		
Services (General)	In English only	Bilingually, in English and Irish
Publications	Reports with limited circulation and aimed at specialist groups, which do not set out public policy proposals, are published in English only unless we are aware that there is a specific prior demand, and having regard to capacity issues.	The following are published bilingually: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Reports</li> <li>• Strategy Statements</li> <li>• Documents setting out public policy proposals</li> <li>• Audited accounts</li> <li>• The Guide to Government Buildings</li> <li>• The Cabinet Handbook</li> <li>• Commemorative booklets</li> <li>• Menus and invitations</li> <li>• The Official Languages Scheme</li> </ul>
	Speeches are published in the language in which they are given.	However, significant speeches in English are made available in Irish also. In 2014, 20% of speeches were published in Irish on our websites.
		Notices are published in 'Iris Oifigiúil' either in both Irish and English, or in Irish. Also, Warrants of Appointment (of judges, army officers, etc.) and Instruments of Assignment (of Ministers to Departments) are in Irish.
Information to the Public	28% of our press releases were issued in English only in 2014	The remainder (72%) were issued bilingually.
		The static content and graphics on our current websites <a href="http://taoiseach.gov.ie">taoiseach.gov.ie</a> and <a href="http://MerrionStreet.ie">MerrionStreet.ie</a> are available in both languages. This will apply to any new websites introduced during the course of this Scheme. On <a href="http://taoiseach.gov.ie">taoiseach.gov.ie</a> the home

		page ('splash screen') offers visitors a choice of Irish or English (with Irish on the left) before they are brought into the site. Irish language domain names have been registered for our sites and give direct access to the Irish language section of the sites. Audio and video clips are made available in the language(s) in which they were delivered.
		Brochures and information leaflets for the general public are made available in both languages
		We do not use an automated telephone answering service on the Department's main number. Our reception/switchboard staff give the name of the Department in Irish and English. These staff are familiar with the basic greetings in Irish, and can put members of the public in touch without delay with whatever officer is responsible for providing a service in Irish.
Correspondence with the Public		In accordance with the terms of the Official Languages Act, where a person communicates with us in writing or by electronic mail in an official language, we reply in the same language.
Recorded oral announcements		The announcements in our lifts are given in both languages.
Saturday Tours of Government Buildings		Tours are available in Irish on request.
<b>Services in Gaeltacht Areas</b>	<b>In English only</b>	<b>Bilingually, in English and Irish</b>
We do not provide services specifically to Gaeltacht areas.		

## Chapter 4: Enhancing the provision of Irish Language Services

The provisions shaded in grey in the table below are mandatory requirements under the Official Languages Act 2003.

Means of communication with the public		Commitment	
Recorded Oral Announcements		<p>The following recorded oral announcements will be in Irish or bilingual:</p> <p>(a) Recorded oral announcements provided on the telephone when the offices of the public body are closed;</p> <p>(b) Recorded oral announcements transmitted by a public address system;</p> <p>(c) Recorded oral announcements created and transmitted by means of a computerised messaging system or a computerised telephone answering system.</p> <p>This provision relates to 'recorded' announcements rather than 'live announcements'.</p> <p>Where a Placenames Order is in force, a public body is required to use the Irish language version of the placename specified in that Order in recorded oral announcements made by it or on its behalf.</p>	Mandatory
Written Communication	Letters and Electronic Mail	All written communication will be responded to in the official language in which it was received.	Mandatory
	Stationery	Headings of stationery, including notepaper, compliment slips, fax cover sheets, file covers and other folders, labels and envelopes are provided in Irish or bilingually.	Mandatory
Signage	Signage	All signage placed by the Department of the Taoiseach or on its behalf must be in Irish or bilingually, in accordance with the regulations (S.I. No.391/2008).	Mandatory
Publications	Publications	Documents setting out public policy proposals, audited accounts or financial	Mandatory

		statements, annual reports and strategy statements will be published simultaneously in Irish and English.	
	<b>Circulars/Mailshots</b>	Where a public body communicates in writing or by electronic mail with the general public or a class of the general public for the purpose of furnishing information to the public or the class, the body shall ensure that the communication is in the Irish language or in the English and Irish languages.	<b>Mandatory</b>
<b>An Ghaeltacht</b>	<b>Gaeltacht Placenames</b>	The official placenames of Gaeltacht areas will be used by the public body in accordance with the relevant legislation.	<b>Mandatory</b>

The Department of the Taoiseach will also undertake the following lists of actions under each service.

<b>Means of communication with the public</b>		<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Timeline By end Yr 1/ Yr 2 / Yr 3</b>
<b>Oral /Written Communication</b>	<b>Reception</b>	If a member of the public wishes to speak to someone in Irish, our reception staff will contact the appropriate person. A notice giving contact details for staff with Irish is displayed at Reception.	Ongoing
	<b>Face to Face/Counter Service</b>	Our only face to face/counter service is provided at reception. A notice is displayed at reception giving the contact names and extensions of staff available to deal with queries through Irish.	Ongoing
	<b>Switchboard</b>	Our reception/switchboard staff give the name of the Department in Irish and English. These staff are familiar with the basic greetings in Irish, and can put members of the public in touch without delay with a member of staff with Irish. We will seek to maintain the high standard of service currently provided by our switchboard, by requesting the service provider to ensure that staff assigned to the switchboard continue to have a good level of fluency in Irish.	Ongoing

	<b>Telephone communications with the public</b>	Our reception/switchboard staff give the name of the Department in Irish and English. These staff are familiar with the basic greetings in Irish, and can put members of the public in touch without delay with a member of staff with Irish.	Ongoing
	<b>Recorded Oral Announcements</b>	The announcements in our lifts are given in both languages. These are the only recorded oral announcements we use.	Ongoing
	<b>Live announcements</b>	We do not use live announcements.	Ongoing
	<b>Information Leaflets/ Brochures</b>	Brochures and information leaflets for the general public are made available in both languages, and this will continue to be the case.	Ongoing
	<b>Application Forms</b>	Any application forms are available bilingually.	Ongoing
	<b>Information Leaflets/ Brochures</b>	See 'Publications' in Chapter 3.	Ongoing
<b>Media</b>	<b>Press Releases</b>	We are committed to maintaining a figure of at least 30% of press releases in Irish each year, and to ensuring that press releases in Irish, when not published simultaneously, are published to the website within a few hours of the English version being published. In 2014 72% of our press releases were published bilingually.	Ongoing
	<b>Media Spokespersons</b>	A member of staff will be designated as an Irish Language Media Spokesperson. This person will liaise with Irish Language Media.	
	<b>Speeches</b>	Speeches are published in the language in which they are given. However, a certain number of speeches in English are made available in Irish also. In 2014, 20% of speeches were published in Irish on our website. (As speeches tend to be longer and to involve more complex language than press releases, we have found that it takes a little longer to publish translations of speeches onto the website.)	Ongoing

<b>Information Technology</b>	<b>Email</b>	As required by the Official Languages Act, we reply in Irish to any emails we receive in Irish. Our out-of-office messages are automatically bi-lingual. A dedicated email box ( <a href="mailto:gaeilge@taoiseach.gov.ie">gaeilge@taoiseach.gov.ie</a> ) is available for Irish-language queries.	<b>Ongoing</b>
	<b>Websites</b>	The static content and graphics on our websites (taoiseach.gov.ie and MerrionStreet.ie) are available in both languages. This will apply to any new websites introduced during the course of this Scheme. Irish language domain names, giving direct access to the Irish language section of the sites, will be registered for any new sites.	<b>Ongoing</b>
	<b>Computer Systems</b>	Should we develop publicly accessible computer systems, we will ensure that they are fully capable of handling the Irish language, and the capability will be retained in any future upgrade of such systems.	
	<b>Interactive Services</b>	At present we do not provide on-line interactive services for the public. If they are provided in the future, they will be made available in both languages.	
<b>Gaeltacht</b>	<b>Meetings</b>	As mentioned earlier, this Department is not primarily involved in providing services directly to the public, either in Gaeltacht or in non-Gaeltacht areas. However, should this arise we would ensure that such contact would be conducted through Irish.	

## Chapter 5: Enhancing the Provision of Irish Language Services in Gaeltacht Areas

Enhancing the provision of Irish language services in Gaeltacht areas and ensuring that Irish becomes the working language in offices located in Gaeltacht areas by a certain date.

### Commitments in Gaeltacht Areas

Description of services in Gaeltacht areas	Commitment	Timeline By end Yr 1/ Yr 2 / Yr 3
<p>We do not provide services specifically to Gaeltacht areas. We do not have any offices located in the Gaeltacht areas.</p>	<p>As mentioned earlier, this Department is not primarily involved in providing services directly to the public, either in Gaeltacht or in non-Gaeltacht areas. However, while we do not normally have direct contact with the Gaeltacht community, should this arise we would ensure that such contact would be conducted through Irish.</p> <p>In any situation where use of Gaeltacht placenames arises (e.g. publications or internal databases), the names of these areas to be used for official purposes will be as declared by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in the relevant Placenames Orders.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

## Chapter 6: Improving Language Capability

### 6.1 Recruitment

The recruitment of staff with the appropriate level of competence in the Irish language in each area of work of the Department of the Taoiseach will be the primary means of optimising the availability of services through Irish. Our recruitment policy, which is subject to the framework of agreed national recruitment procedures, will have regard to the need to improve Irish language capability on an incremental basis.

All new staff will be provided with an induction pack containing a copy of our agreed Scheme in order to ensure that they are made aware of our commitments under the legislation.

### 6.2 Training and Development

The Department of the Taoiseach is committed to making available opportunities for staff to attend appropriately accredited Irish language training courses, as resources permit. All staff will be advised of facilities/opportunities to improve their competency in Irish.

		Commitment	Timeline By end Yr 1/ Yr 2 / Yr 3
Improving Irish Language Capability	Recruitment	<p>As part of its recruitment policy the Department, in co-operation with the Public Appointments Service, will continue to seek that, as far as possible, staff recruited have proficiency in Irish</p> <p>Subject to the other constraints governing staff placement, the Department will seek to ensure that at least one staff member in each Division has proficiency in Irish. Where this is not possible, due to a shortage of such staff, formal arrangements will be put in place to ensure that other staff who are proficient in Irish can deal with queries. These arrangements will be reviewed in the light of evolving demand.</p>	Ongoing
	Training	Our Training Unit will continue to monitor demand for Irish language services across all sections of the Department, and to provide	Ongoing

		appropriate training in Irish as required.  Awareness training will be organised to coincide with the launch of our new Language Scheme.	
	<b>Participation in language promotion activities /Provision of resources</b>	Our Oifigeach Gaeilge publicises Irish language classes and events, and monitors staff requirements with regard to Irish language resources – e.g. translation arrangements.	Ongoing

### 6.3 Designated Irish Language Posts

The posts listed below have been designated as having an Irish language competency requirement. It is the intention that holders of these posts will have achieved specified accredited standards in the Irish language, commensurate with the responsibilities of the post. When designating these posts, particular consideration has been given to posts located in Gaeltacht areas and to posts located outside Gaeltacht areas but whose customer base consists largely of Gaeltacht and/or Irish language speaking communities.

Title of Post	Location	Gaeltacht/Irish speaking community served	Indication of standard of Irish required (choose from basic, intermediate or advanced)
Irish Language Media Officer	Government Press Office	None specifically. The post will serve the general public.	Intermediate/Advanced
Irish Language Resource Officer	Taoiseach's Private Office	None specifically. The post will serve the general public.	Intermediate/Advanced

## **Chapter 7: Monitoring and Review**

The implementation of the Scheme will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by the Irish Language Network, which will consist of key officers from areas such as Corporate Affairs, the Press Office, the Taoiseach's Private Office, etc. The contact person for the Scheme will be Sinéad Nic Coitir. Phone: 01-6194261; email: [gaeilge@taoiseach.ie](mailto:gaeilge@taoiseach.ie)

A formal system for monitoring requests for services through Irish will be available and recorded in our Annual Report.

## Chapter 8: 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 and appropriate agencies. Other means to publicise the Scheme may also be used.

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 through the following means:

- directly informing customers on a proactive basis of the option of conducting business with us through Irish, for example, by the display of notices at reception areas indicating the Irish language services that are available;
- prominently listing these services on our website;
- signifying on selected guidelines, leaflets and application forms that these documents are also available in Irish, unless presented bilingually;
- giving equal prominence to Irish and English language materials.

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

The English language version of this Scheme is the official version.

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