

Language Schemes

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1. What is a language scheme?

The purpose of the language schemes is to increase over a period of time the volume and standard of services available in Irish from public bodies. These language schemes remain in force for a three-year period or until a new scheme has been confirmed with the public body by the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.

The schemes provide statutory commitments regarding the arrangements whereby public bodies develop their services through Irish on a phased basis. The Minister is responsible for agreeing schemes with public bodies under section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003.

When the Minister has agreed a scheme, the public body has a duty to implement it. The Minister sends a copy of every agreed scheme to the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga which monitors the implementation of schemes.

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2. How are language schemes agreed?

The public body and the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs jointly agree a language scheme and the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga is not involved in this process.

Statutory guidelines have been developed by the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs to assist public bodies in preparing language schemes and they are available at www.coimisineir.ie/publicbodies.

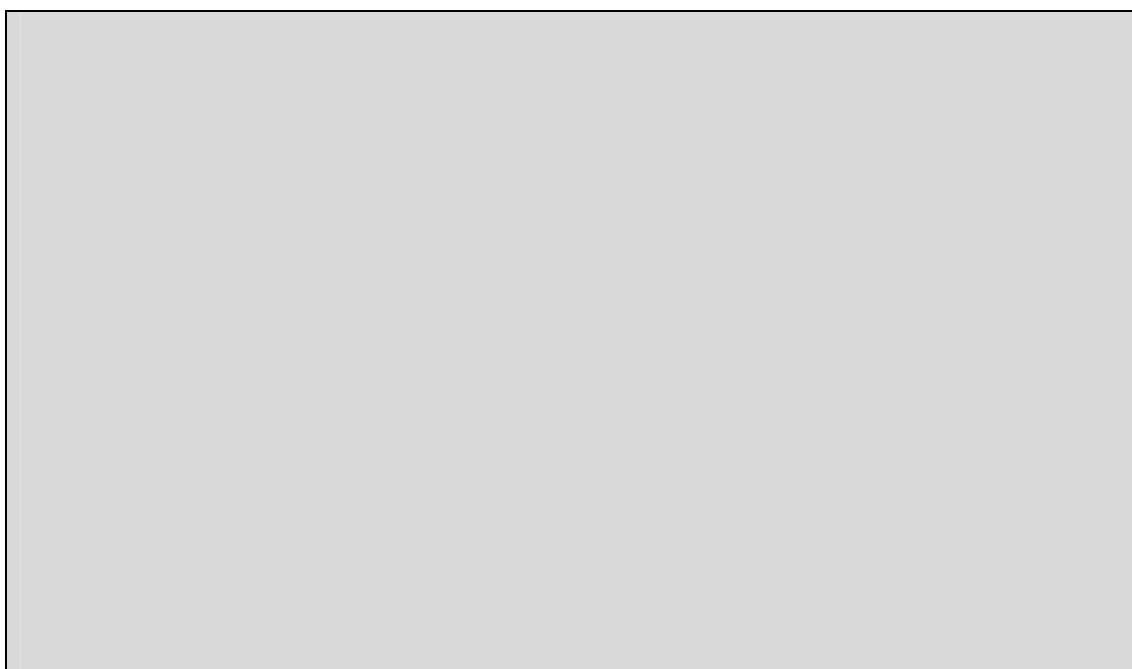
In accordance with the legislation, a public body has a period of 6 months to prepare a draft scheme from the time the Minister directs it to do so. After that, there is usually a negotiation period between the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs and the public body before the scheme is agreed. The scheme does not come into force until it is confirmed by the Minister.

The scheme describes the services which the public body proposes to provide:

- in Irish only
- in English only or
- bilingually.

It is necessary also to specify the steps which the public body intends to take to provide the stated services in Irish or bilingually.

The Minister has the right at any time, and not later than 6 months before the scheme expires, to direct the public body to review its current scheme and to prepare a new draft scheme.



(6) Within the time period specified in the notice that was published, prepare a draft

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3. How many language schemes were agreed by the end of 2009?

There were 100 language schemes confirmed by the end of 2009, which covered a total of 181 public bodies since the legislation was enacted.

At the end of 2009, there were 79 draft schemes which had still to complete the confirmation process. 31 of these related to public bodies from which a first draft language scheme had been requested and 48 related to requests for the preparation of a second draft scheme.

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4. Where can I find information about language schemes?

Copies of the language schemes agreed to date can be found at www.coimisineir.ie/schemes.

Statutory guidelines have been developed by the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs to assist public bodies in preparing language schemes and they are available at www.coimisineir.ie/schemes.

A list of the public bodies which have been asked to prepare draft schemes is also available at www.coimisineir.ie/publicbodies.

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