



Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta  
an Duine agus Comhionannas  
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

# Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Official Languages Act 2003 - Language Scheme

*2021 - 2024*

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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 Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media 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 Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. In addition, there has been a comprehensive process of consultation with relevant stakeholders.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is guided by the principle that the provision of Irish language services should be based on:

- The 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 has been formulated with the intention of ensuring that all relevant obligations under the Official Languages Act by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission 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 by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. It commences with effect from 24 May 2021 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 the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

### 2.1 Mission and Objectives

#### About the Commission

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (the Commission) is Ireland's national human rights and equality institution. Our purpose is to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland and to build a culture of respect for human rights, equality and cultural understanding in the State.

The Commission was established on 01 November 2014, as an independent public body with a mandate under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 (IHREC Act, 2014). The IHREC Act, 2014 gives the Commission a range of statutory powers for the protection and promotion of human rights and equality.

The IHREC Act, 2014 specifies that the Commission shall consist of not more than 15 and not less than 12 members, one of whom shall be the Chief Commissioner of the Commission. Commission members are appointed by Head of State, President Michael D. Higgins, following a resolution by both Houses of the Oireachtas and the members independently determine the Commission's policy and activity.

The structural independence of the Commission, in accordance with the Paris Principles, has been recognised in its "A" accreditation as an NHRI with the United Nations.

#### Vision

An inclusive Ireland where human rights and equality are respected, protected and fulfilled for everyone, everywhere.

#### Mission

To build a fair and inclusive society that protects and promotes human rights and equality in Ireland.



## 2.2 Main Functions

Section 10(1) of the IHREC Act 2014 sets out the overall functions of the Commission as:

- to protect and promote human rights and equality,
- to encourage the development of a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding in the State,
- to promote understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights and equality in the State,
- to encourage good practice in intercultural relations, to promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity in the State and respect for the freedom and dignity of each person, and
- to work towards the elimination of human rights abuses, discrimination and prohibited conduct.

Section 10(2) of the Act sets out a wide range of specific functions and powers through which the Commission can address its overall mandate.

## 2.3 Key Services

- Your Rights Service

## 2.4 Customers and Clients

The Commission through its free Your Rights service provides the public with information on rights and remedies made available under equality and human rights law in Ireland. This includes information on work-related discrimination, discrimination in relation to goods and services, discrimination in relation to education and human rights protections under Irish law.



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

Provision of Services			
Name of Service	In English Only	In Irish Only	Bilingually
Telephone Line			X
Your Rights Service	X		
Front of House Function	X		
Legal Assistance	X		
Corporate Services			X
Website ( <a href="http://www.ihrec.ie">www.ihrec.ie</a> )			Static content is currently available in Irish.
Acknowledgement and response to correspondence			X
Public Consultations	X		Limited Number of Public Consultations are in Irish and English.
Delivering workshops or training	X		
Outreach to Stakeholders	X		
Policy Documents	X		
Strategy Statement			X
Annual Reports			X



### Provision of Services

Name of Service	In English Only	In Irish Only	Bilingually
Press Releases	X		20% of press releases are issued bilingually.

### Service Provision in Gaeltacht Areas

Name of Service	In English Only	In Irish Only	Bilingually
The Commission do not provide services specifically to Gaeltacht areas.			



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

The following provisions are mandatory requirements under the Official Language 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Recorded oral announcements provided on the telephone when the offices of the public body are closed;</li> <li>(b) Recorded oral announcements transmitted by a public address system;</li> <li>(c) Recorded oral announcements created and transmitted by means of a computerised messaging system or a computerised telephone answering system.</li> </ul> <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>	<b>Mandatory</b>
Written Communication	<b>Letters and Electronic Mail</b>	All written communication will be responded to in the official language in which it was received.	<b>Mandatory</b>



	<b>Stationery</b>	Headings of stationery, including notepaper, compliment slips, fax cover sheets, file covers and other folders, labels and envelopes are provided in Irish or bilingually.	<b>Mandatory</b>
<b>Signage</b>	<b>Signage</b>	All signage placed by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission or on its behalf must be in Irish or bilingually, in accordance with the regulations (S.I. No. 391/2008).	<b>Mandatory</b>
<b>Publications</b>	<b>Publications</b>	Documents setting out public policy proposals, audited accounts or financial statements, annual reports and strategy statements will be published simultaneously in Irish and English.	<b>Mandatory</b>
	<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 legislation.	<b>Mandatory</b>



The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission will also undertake the following lists of actions under each service:

Means of Communication with the Public		Commitment	Timeline by end Yr.1/ Yr.2/ Yr.3
Oral/Written Communication	<b>Reception / Front of House</b>	<p>An up to date list of staff members who can provide a service through Irish will be made available to reception staff.</p> <p>If a member of the public wishes to speak with someone in Irish, reception staff will contact the appropriate person.</p> <p>Staff members will be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>Ongoing</b></p>
	<b>Switchboard</b>	Staff will be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish and will transfer the call to a staff member who can speak Irish.	<b>Ongoing</b>
	<b>Telephone Communications with the public</b>	<p>Staff Members operating on the phone lines are offered training in the Irish language to ensure they can greet callers in Irish.</p> <p>Staff members will answer the phone in Irish and English.</p>	<p><b>By End Year 1</b></p> <p><b>By End Year 3</b></p>
	<b>Recorded Oral Announcements</b>	<p>The out-of-hours message on each of our telephone lines is in Irish and English.</p> <p>The menus on each of the Commission's telephone lines are bilingual.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>Ongoing</b></p>



Means of Communication with the Public	Commitment	Timeline by end Yr.1/ Yr.2/ Yr.3
	<p><b>Live Announcements</b></p> <p>The Commission do not use live announcements however, if this becomes a service in the future we will ensure that we are in compliance with legislation.</p>	<p><b>As Required</b></p>
	<p><b>Correspondence</b></p> <p>We will make clear to customers and other stakeholders that the Commission welcomes correspondence in Irish via the contact page on the IHREC website.</p>	<p><b>By End Year 1</b></p>
	<p><b>Information Leaflets/ Brochures</b></p> <p>The most commonly used information booklets and posters are available in both Irish and English.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p>
	<p><b>Application Forms</b></p> <p>All application forms will be made available in English and Irish.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p>
	<p><b>Other</b></p> <p>Public consultations will be advertised in Irish and in English.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p>
<b>Media</b>	<p><b>Press Releases</b></p> <p>We currently issue 20% of press releases bilingually and simultaneously and will continue to do so.</p> <p>We will commit to build upon the above and issue 22.5% of press releases bilingually and simultaneously by Year 2 of this scheme and 25% by Year 3.</p>	<p><b>20% - Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>22.5% - Year 2</b></p> <p><b>25% - Year 3</b></p>
	<p><b>Newsletters</b></p> <p>20% of our Newsletter is currently provided for in Irish.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p>



Means of Communication with the Public	Commitment	Timeline by end Yr.1/ Yr.2/ Yr.3
	<p>We will continue to include Irish articles in our Newsletter and increase the overall content to 25% in Year 2 of this scheme and to 30% in Year 3.</p>	<p><b>25% - Year 2</b> <b>30% - Year 3</b></p>
	<p><b>Media Spokespersons</b> A member of staff is available to liaise with the Irish Language media when required.</p>	<p><b>In place</b></p>
	<p><b>Speeches</b> Speeches will be made available in the language or languages in which they have been given.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p>
	<p><b>Advertising</b> Static outdoor advertising on behalf of the Commission will be bilingual.</p>	<p><b>By End Year 3</b></p>
	<p><b>Social Media</b> On Twitter, 10% of messages are tweeted bilingually, in Irish and English. This will rise to 12.5% in the second year of the scheme and to 15% in the third year of the scheme.  On Instagram 5% of posts will be made bilingually, in Irish and English. This will rise to 7.5% in Year 2 and 10% in Year 3 of this scheme.</p>	<p><b>10% - Ongoing</b> <b>12.5% - Year 2</b> <b>15% - Year 3</b>  <b>5% - Year 1</b> <b>7.5% - Year 2</b> <b>10% - Year 3</b></p>
<p><b>Information Technology</b></p>	<p><b>Email</b> The email disclaimer and contact details are bilingual on all email signatures.  By end of Year 1, grade and team name will also be bilingual on all email signatures.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b>  <b>By End Year 1</b></p>



Means of Communication with the Public	Commitment	Timeline by end Yr.1/ Yr.2/ Yr.3
	<p>Email signatures will be updated to include a line explaining that Irish can be used with that staff member.</p> <p>By End Year 1 we will recommend to staff that all email correspondence should be opened and closed in Irish where possible (i.e. A Chara / A Chairde / Le Meas etc.) even if the rest of the email is in English.</p> <p>Out of Office or Automatic Reply messages will be bilingual on all mailboxes.</p> <p>The Commission reply in Irish to any emails received in Irish as per the Official Languages Act.</p> <p>An email address is in place to deal with any 'Your Rights' queries in the Irish language – <a href="mailto:cearta@ihrec.ie">cearta@ihrec.ie</a></p>	<p><b>By End Year 1</b></p> <p><b>By End Year 1</b></p> <p><b>By End Year 1</b></p> <p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>Ongoing</b></p>
<p><b>Website</b></p>	<p>Static information will be made available bilingually on the IHREC website across the core landing pages.</p> <p>A commitment will be put in place to translate the new Your Rights section of the website. The</p>	<p><b>In Place &amp; Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>Year 2</b></p>



Means of Communication with the Public		Commitment	Timeline by end Yr.1/ Yr.2/ Yr.3
		<p>Your Rights pages are a front-facing, interactive information section that represents a significant proportion of our static pages.</p> <p>A procedure will be put in place to ensure that this information is monitored and maintained to ensure consistency with the English content and links.</p> <p>A choice of languages is available on the first page of the website.</p> <p>The option to choose between languages will be made available on the static pages of the website to allow people to switch between Irish and English versions.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>In Place</b></p> <p><b>Ongoing</b></p>
	<b>Computer Systems</b>	Any new computer systems installed will be capable of handling the Irish language.	<b>Ongoing</b>
	<b>Interactive Services</b>	The Commission do not currently have any interactive services. Any new interactive services will be introduced in both languages where appropriate.	<b>As Required</b>
	<b>Gaeltacht</b>		
	<b>Meetings</b>	Meetings held in the Gaeltacht will be held bilingually and all documentation will be provided bilingually and simultaneously.	<b>As Required</b>
	<b>Placenames</b>	The official placenames of Gaeltacht areas will be used by the Commission in accordance with the legislation.	<b>Ongoing</b>

## 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.

Commitment in Gaeltacht Areas		
Description of Services in Gaeltacht Areas	Commitment	Timeline by end Yr.1/ Yr.2/ Yr.3
We do not provide services specifically to Gaeltacht areas.	The Commission will ensure that any contact to those in Gaeltacht areas is conducted through Irish.	<b>Ongoing</b>
	Where the use of Gaeltacht placenames arises, the names of these areas to be used for official purposes will be used by the Commission in accordance with the legislation.	<b>Ongoing</b>

Irish as the Working Language in Gaeltacht Offices	
Commitment	Timeline by end Yr.1/ Yr.2/ Yr.3
The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission do not have any offices based in Gaeltacht areas.	



## 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 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission will be the primary means of optimizing 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 they are made aware of our commitments under the legislation.

### 6.2 Training and Development

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission 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	The Commission will encourage the employment of new staff who have a proficiency in Irish.	Ongoing
		Job vacancies within the Commission will be advertised in Irish and English. Full information for applicants will be made available in both languages.	Ongoing



	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Timeline by end Yr.1/ Yr.2/ Yr.3</b>
	<p>The Commission will seek to employ two officers from the Irish Language Stream to cover the Front of House and Your Rights Services. If vacancies arise in other areas consideration will be given to recruit through the Irish Language Stream as required.</p> <p>The Commission will provide new staff members with a copy of the Language Scheme as part of their induction pack</p>	<p><b>By End Year 2 – Your Rights Service</b></p> <p><b>By End Year 3 – Front of House Function</b></p> <p><b>Ongoing</b></p>
<b>Training</b>	Irish language training and development opportunities are provided to staff.	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>Participation in language promotion activities</b>	<p>Staff will be encouraged to participate in cultural language activities. Information on activities will be circulated and made available to staff.</p> <p>By Year 2, particular effort will be made to promote Seachtain na Gaeilge. Informal workshops, information seminars and training will be provided to staff to encourage the use of Irish.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>By Year 2</b></p>
<b>Provision of resources</b>	Staff will be made aware of language resources such as teanglann.ie, téarma.ie and foclóir.ie.	<b>Ongoing</b>

### 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 (Basic, Intermediate or Advanced)
Front of House / Receptionist	16 – 22 Green Street, Dublin 7	None specifically. The post will serve the general public.	Basic / Intermediate
Your Right's Officer	16 – 22 Green Street, Dublin 7	None specifically. The post will serve the general public.	Intermediate / Advanced

## Chapter 7: Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this scheme will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by Senior Management, along with key officers from areas such as Corporate Services and Strategic Engagement as appropriate.

The contact person for the scheme will be Fern Sheridan, Email: [info@ihrec.ie](mailto:info@ihrec.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.