

**Press Release**

**An Coimisinéir Teanga – Annual Report 2023**

The positive effects of the new language legislation (Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021) are evident from the significant increase in Irish language advertising by public bodies on various media (e.g. television, radio, social media). This follows a national awareness campaign conducted by the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga on the new legislation.

39% of the 634 complaints received by Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga in 2023 concerned commitments made by public bodies in their statutory Language Schemes.

An Coimisinéir Teanga, Séamas Ó Concheanainn commented:

*“This very high level of complaints reflects the need for the introduction of the new Language Standards which will replace the Language Schemes system.”*

It is the function of the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media to give effect to the new language standards system under the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021.

The total number of complaints received by the Office increased by 6% in 2023, representing 634 complaints compared to 600 in 2022. The number and nature of complaints received reflect the large gaps at present in public services through Irish.  Amongst the more significant gaps is a shortage of staff with sufficient competence in Irish to deliver core public services, e.g. a high standard of telephone and counter service provision through Irish. There is also a conspicuous disparity between the provision of online interactive services to the public in English and the fragmented and sparse provision available in Irish.  Formal investigations into Galway County Council and An Post also highlighted those significant gaps in online services through Irish at present

The number of cases where the Office has advised public bodies regarding their statutory language obligations has increased by 140 % over the past two years.  Monitoring of 18 State Departments during 2023 showed a high degree of compliance regarding recorded oral announcements used on Departmental telephone systems.

The provision of State public service delivery in the Irish language requires reconceptualisation. Sufficient staff with competency in the Irish language is required to build trust and confidence in public services for the Irish-speaking community.  Public service campuses/hubs are necessary in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, in Gaeltacht Service Towns within and outside the Gaeltacht, within Irish Language Networks, and in Irish language Centres in urban contexts.  This approach would undoubtedly help overcome some of the significant challenges faced by the Irish language community in accessing high-quality public services in the Irish language daily.

Séamas Ó Concheanainn also commented:

*“The National Plan for the provision of public services through the medium of the Irish language, which will be published later this year, is of particular importance. The plan must provide a clear and specific pathway toward enhancing the quantity and quality of Irish-medium public services. A realistic, progressive, and phased approach to attaining the target of 20% of recruits with Irish to the public service by 2030 is crucial to tackling the significant gaps in public services through Irish.”*

Séamas Ó Concheanainn, An Coimisinéir Teanga

Ends

**Notes for editor:**

* A spokesperson will be made available for an interview on request
* Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga will provide further comment to queries on request

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