

Press Release: Embargo 1.00 a.m. Thursday, 17 April 2014

Subject: Annual Report 2013

An Coimisinéir Teanga, Rónán Ó Domhnaill, published the Annual Report 2013 of the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga today, Thursday, 17 April 2014. This is the tenth annual report published by the Office. In those ten years over six thousand complaints have been raised with the Office in relation to language rights. Approximately 23% of those complaints related to Government Departments and Offices and 32% related to local authorities while the rest concerned a wide variety of state organisations.

Publishing the Annual Report for 2013 An Coimisinéir Teanga, Rónán Ó Domhnaill said:

“Clearly the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga has achieved a great deal in the last ten years with regard to protecting the language rights of Irish speakers. In that context I welcome the decision of the Government to reverse the plan to merge the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga with the Office of the Ombudsman; this decision safeguards the independence of the Office.

I am delighted to announce that the post of Director, Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga, at Principal Officer grade in the Civil Service, will be advertised shortly. This appointment will greatly enhance our ability to implement the aims of the Office in the coming years.”

Rónán Ó Domhnaill also recognised the achievements of the Report’s author and first Coimisinéir Teanga, Seán Ó Cuirreáin, in creating a space for the Irish language in public discourse and protecting language rights.

Complaints and investigations

In 2013, the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga dealt with 775 cases of difficulties or problems accessing state services through Irish. Most cases were resolved by means of informal negotiations with the relevant state bodies or by providing advice to the complainant.

A total of 13 formal investigations were carried out in 2013 and findings of breaches of individual elements of language legislation were made against certain public bodies. Two of the investigations concerned the Department of Education and Skills and the issue of education through Irish in the Gaeltacht.

Language schemes

98 language schemes (statutory language plans) covering a total of 184 public bodies were confirmed by the end of 2013; however, 72 of those 98 schemes had expired by the end of that year. In the case of local authorities 94% of language schemes had expired.

(ENDS)

Information note:

Rónán Ó Domhnaill was appointed on 12 March 2014 as An Coimisinéir Teanga by the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins. The Government decided recently to reverse the plan to merge the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga with the Office of the Ombudsman. The Heads of the Official Languages (Amendment) Bill 2014 were forwarded to the Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht on 4 April 2014.

The Annual Report is published primarily in electronic format and is available at www.coimisineir.ie. Hard copies are also available from the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga, An Spidéal, Co. na Gaillimhe.

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