

20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030:

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

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THE VISION

The objective of Government policy in relation to Irish is to increase on an incremental basis the use and knowledge of Irish as a community language. Specifically, the Government's aim is to ensure that as many citizens as possible are bilingual in both Irish and English. It is an integral component of the Government's Irish language policy that close attention be given to its place in the Gaeltacht, particularly in light of research which indicates that the language's viability as a household and community language in the Gaeltacht is under threat.

The aim of Government policy is also to:

- increase the number of families throughout the country who use Irish as the daily language of communication;*
- provide linguistic support for the Gaeltacht as an Irish-speaking community and to recognise the issues which arise in areas where Irish is the household and community language;*
- ensure that in public discourse and in public services the use of Irish or English will be, as far as practical, a choice for the citizen to make and that over time more and more people throughout the State will choose to do their business in Irish; and*
- ensure that Irish becomes more visible in our society, both as a spoken language by our citizens and also in areas such as signage and literature.*

Irish is part of the culture and heritage of Northern Ireland and the promotion and protection of the language there is also a priority for the Government.

The Government recognises the tremendous advantage to its citizens of fluency in English, the most widely used language in international affairs. The Government commits to ensuring that this advantage is retained through the development of a bilingual society, where as many people as possible can use Irish and English with equal ease and facility. However, the Government also recognises that the focus of policy in the Gaeltacht needs to be on maintaining the linguistic identity of the community in the Gaeltacht as a distinctive language region, rather than one of bilingualism.

While strengthening the position of the language within our education system is a key focus of this Strategy, the transmission of Irish as a living language within the family and between the generations is critically important. Our overall approach is to create a supportive framework and the opportunities in which Irish can be passed on in a natural way within households and communities. This is of special importance in the context of the Gaeltacht.

The future of the language depends on people who make a positive choice to embrace the opportunities that this Strategy will create. This is the challenge for all of us.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY

Following on from the *Government Statement on the Irish Language 2006*, the headline goal has been set of increasing over 20 years:

- the number of people with a knowledge of Irish to 2 million; and
- the number of daily speakers of Irish to 250,000.

The achievement of these ambitious goals has been the overriding consideration in formulating the decisions on areas for action in this Strategy.

The specific objectives involved in the preparation of the Strategy are to:

- increase the number of speakers who speak Irish on a daily basis outside the education system to 250,000;
- increase the number of speakers who speak Irish on a daily basis in the Gaeltacht by 25% in overall terms as its invigoration will be critical to the overall Strategy; and
- increase the number of people that use State services through the Irish language and can access television, radio and print media through the language.

POLICY CONTEXT

Article 8 of the Constitution of Ireland states that:

“The Irish language as the national language is the first official language.”

This *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language* is built on the foundation of the Constitutional status of the language and follows on the *Government Statement on the Irish Language* published in December 2006. That Statement affirmed the Government’s support for the development and preservation of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht and set out 13 policy objectives. The following objectives are relevant to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform:

Objective 2: The Official Languages Act will be fully implemented. The right of the public to use Irish in dealings with the State and with other bodies will be developed and the appropriate arrangements to deliver this will be put in place.

Objective 3: The Irish language community inside and outside the Gaeltacht will be given encouragement and support to transmit Irish to the next generation as a living household language. Towards this end, a wide range of services in Irish will be provided.

Objective 4: The Gaeltacht will be given special support as an Irish-speaking area.

Implementation Plan – Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (D/PER)

1. Measures for Irish in the Public Service

	Aims	Public Body	Action	Timeframe
1.1	<p>Language awareness and language training programmes need to be developed and strengthened so that a higher proportion of public service staff are truly functional in Irish and can deliver services in Irish to customers who seek them. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Public Appointments Service will devise appropriate arrangements to increase the cohort of public servants who are functional bilinguals. These arrangements will be put in place over time, recognising the present constraints on public sector recruitment. They will be supported by the development, within the existing overall national qualifications framework, of an independent, standards-based accreditation system for Irish language competency within the public service. A National Diploma in Bilingualism and Language Practice will be designed and offered, so as to support the delivery of quality services to the public in both Irish and English.</p> <p>The Official Languages Act has adopted the “language scheme” as a core instrument by which bilingual services are to be provided. Future language schemes will specify the posts within an organisation that require an Irish language competency requirement.</p>	<p>DPER DAHG</p>	<p>1. In support of the right of the public to use Irish in dealings with the State, DPER has devolved responsibility for the implementation of Irish Language Training and Irish Language Proficiency Testing to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht while maintaining its overall policy role within the civil service. A Service Level Agreement between the two Departments was signed in 2013 to give effect to this policy initiative.</p> <p>2. In the context of the review of the Official Languages Act, it is proposed to progress the implementation of a range of measures aimed at building capacity and increasing competency in the provision of Irish language services by public bodies in cooperation with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and other relevant stakeholders. Such measures will include: As part of the workforce planning process for the civil service, Departments and Offices will identify posts/areas of work requiring functional bilinguals. This process will be central to ensuring that future recruitment competitions will make provision for appointments to posts requiring an Irish language competency. Future language schemes under the Official Languages Act will also specify the posts that have an Irish language competency requirement.</p>	<p>Q1 2013</p> <p>2013-2014</p>