

Template for submissions

Communication under section 9 of the Act (Letters, emails & mail shots)

Current obligations under the Act:

- To respond to communication in the language in which it was received;
- To issue information in writing or electronically in Irish or bilingually.

1. In your opinion, are these obligations adequate, are they excessive or do they need to be amended?

The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and its Offices receives a small amount of correspondence (letters, emails) in Irish every year and responds to these in Irish as is required under the Act. These obligations are adequate and we accept that this service is needed.

Certain electronic bulletins are published during the year which are published in both Irish and English. There is a monetary and labour cost involved.

Certain Information(e.g. e-zines) is published in both Irish and English on a weekly basis and receives barely any hits. This would point towards the fact that the demand for the service is minimal and therefore that the obligations are excessive and would benefit from amendment given the cost (both human and monetary) implications.

Publications under section 10 of the Act

Current obligations under the Act:

- To publish certain documents simultaneously in Irish and in English (e.g. annual reports, audited accounts, public policy proposals, strategy statements etc.)

2. In your opinion, are these obligations adequate, are they excessive or do they need to be amended?

The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and its Offices publish a number of Reports every year in both Irish and English. This involves a monetary and labour cost. As the level of demand for Irish language services/documents from this Department is very low these obligations would benefit from amendment.

Signage, stationery & recorded oral announcements under Regulations of the Act (S.I. No. 391 of 2008)

Current obligations under the Act:

- To comply with the Regulations in regard to the use of Irish and English on signs, stationery and in recorded oral announcements.

3. In your opinion, are these obligations adequate, are they excessive or do they need to be amended?

The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and its Offices receive thousands of personal callers each year and only a few of those request services through Irish. The obligation that all signage should be compliant by 2012 would involve considerable expense as there are still numerous signs around the various buildings that would need to be replaced to comply with the requirements of the Act. Having regard to the limited demand for the use of Irish by persons visiting the Department and its Offices, these obligations appear to be excessive and would benefit from amendment.

Language Schemes under the Act

The language schemes form the core of the Language Act. The language schemes set out the system through which public bodies develop their services in Irish over a period of time. It is through the language schemes that the use of Irish is dealt with on websites, leaflets, brochures, forms, through telephone services, through other interpersonal services, through online services etc.

4.(a) In your opinion, is the system of language schemes satisfactory, excessive or does it need to be amended?

A number of Offices of the Department have incurred significant expenditure on the establishment and maintenance of a full Irish language version of their website, however, traffic to the Irish side of the website is negligible. There is an on-going labour and monetary cost involved in the maintenance of these websites as every time a change is made to the website, leaflets or forms, it has to be translated so as to keep the Irish website up to date. In the case of one of the Offices of the Department statistics show that while their website receives 100,000 unique visitors monthly, the Irish side only receives a handful (26 hits in December 2011). Many of those hits were by staff updating the Irish version and checking the updates were in order. This would lead to the conclusion that the amount of money and labour for the return is excessive and needs to be amended as the level of demand for Irish language services from this Department is very low.

4.(b) Would you recommend an alternative system which would be more efficient and more effective?

An alternative system maybe to only have a requirement that the Home page be translated on a website and not all the detailed pages underneath.

It is also suggested that a one-stop shop could be set up for all public bodies to use for translations.

Services from public bodies in the Gaeltacht

In order for the State to support the status and use of Irish in the Gaeltacht, it is vital that Gaeltacht communities can carry out their official business with the State through Irish.

5.(a) Are you satisfied with the services being provided by public bodies in Irish in the Gaeltacht?

This Department is not in a position to comment on the level of services being provided by public bodies in Irish in the Gaeltacht.

5.(b) Would you recommend any amendments that would enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of public bodies in this area?

This Department is not in a position to comment on the level of services being provided by public bodies in Irish in the Gaeltacht.

Other provisions of the Act

Other provisions of the Act ratify rights with regard to the use of Irish in the Oireachtas, in the courts and in the State's placenames system.

6. In your opinion, are these provisions adequate, are they excessive or do they need to be amended?

This Department is not in a position to comment on the use of Irish in the Oireachtas, in the courts and in the State's placenames system.

Public bodies under the Act

The Act requires public bodies, which are listed under the Act, to provide services through Irish. The full list of public bodies featured under the Act can be found at www.ahg.gov.ie.

The following public bodies are listed under the Act – Government Departments and offices, local authorities, universities, other third-level institutions, vocational education committees, An Garda Síochána, the Courts Service, the Revenue Commissioners, the Health Service Executive, other State agencies, boards & companies.

7. In your opinion, is this list of public bodies under the Act appropriate or is an amendment necessary in this area?

This Department is not in a position to comment on the appropriateness of the list of public bodies under the Act.

The Office of An CoimisinéirTeanga

The Office of An CoimisinéirTeanga was established under the Act. The main role of the Office is to monitor the implementation of the Act.

8. In your opinion, are the powers and functions of that Office adequate or excessive and do they need to be amended?

Perhaps given the programme of rationalisation of State agencies, the role of An CoimisinéirTeanga might be appropriate for amalgamation with other State bodies, e.g. Ombudsman/Information Commissioner.

In general

9. Are there other amendments to the Act that you would recommend in order to ensure that the legislation is suitable and appropriate to its function?

Having regard to the extremely limited demand for the use of Irish by persons contacting the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and its Offices and the severe financial constraints facing the Government, we would advocate that the mandatory elements of the Act should be suspended until the Government finances have recovered significantly to justify the additional costs. The level of demand for the Irish language services from any public body should be taken into consideration in the context of any review of the Act.

10. What services through Irish do you personally require from public bodies or what services do you think should be given priority?

Looking at this from the perspective of a public body providing a service in Irish, we believe that, subject to demand, priority should be given to responding to correspondence.

11. What do you think are the obstacles or difficulties associated with providing the same standard of services in Irish by public bodies?

The obstacles with providing services in Irish are primarily related to the lack of availability of staff with adequate language skills that are of an appropriate standard to allow for transacting business. The high cost and application of scarce resources required to ensure compliance with the current provisions of the Act should be taken into consideration in any review of the Act. This is particularly acute given the very limited demand for the service.

12. What amendments would you recommend to the Act in order to develop State services through Irish in an efficient and cost-effective manner?

The requirement to publish everything in both Irish and English could be eased. From statistics we know the Irish websites have very few hits. It can be assumed that the Irish versions of hard-copy publications fall into this category also. At a minimum, any further enhancements of the requirements of the Act should be deferred for several years.

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