20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030


Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Structures
Since 2011, structures have been established to progress the implementation of the Strategy and monitor progress in this regard. Included in these structures are the Cabinet Committee on the Irish Language and the Gaeltacht chaired by the Taoiseach, the Inter-Departmental Group chaired by the Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and various groups of officials dealing with different sectors, including education.

Legislation
The Gaeltacht Act was enacted in July 2012. The Act provides for a language planning process in areas to be statutorily recognised as Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language Networks. The secondary legislation, associated with the language planning process prescribed in the Act, is being progressed. The Commencement Order for the Gaeltacht Act was signed on 16 April 2013. The Gaeltacht Act 2012 came into operation on this day, insofar as it was not already in operation.

Initial steps are being taken by Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge with a view to commencing the language planning process with organisations and communities in the various areas concerned. Among the main measures being progressed by the Department, in conjunction with Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge, are:

- Regulations which will prescribe the language planning criteria to be used when evaluating language plans prepared for Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language Networks.
- Notices which will define the electoral divisions for the 26 Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas.
- Guidelines which will set out a transparent process to prepare, implement and evaluate the language plans in the areas, towns and networks.
- Development of a system for selecting organisations which will prepare and implement language plans.
- Development of a Diploma in Language Planning by Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge in NUIG for delivery to staff of community organisations and State bodies involved in the language planning process. Delivery of this programme is scheduled to commence in autumn 2013.
- Updating the Comprehensive Linguistic Study of the Use of Irish in the Gaeltacht in order to take account of research data published since the Linguistic Study was undertaken in 2007. The updated data in the Linguistic Study is scheduled to be published in autumn 2013. This is being undertaken by Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge in NUIG and the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) in NUIM.

The Gaeltacht Act also makes amendments to the structure and functions of Údarás na Gaeltachta. Under the Act, the requirement for elections to the board of Údarás na Gaeltachta
was dispensed with and the number of board members was reduced from 20 to 12 members. The new board of Údarás na Gaeltachta was appointed in November 2012.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2013 was enacted in February 2013. The Act provides for an expansion of the role of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission in relation to the translation of legislation (to include both primary and secondary legislation). The Act also provides for the publication and periodic review of An Caighdeán Oifigiúil (the Official Standard for Irish) by the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission.

**Irish Language Training and Proficiency Assessment**

Under a Service Level Agreement between the Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform which was signed in February 2013, the Department has responsibility for the provision of Irish language training courses and proficiency assessment for the civil service. The Department is currently liaising with Government Departments and Offices to ascertain their training needs and to establish baseline data for future requirements.

**Irish Language and Gaeltacht Support Schemes**

The Department funds a range of initiatives under its Irish Language and Gaeltacht Support Schemes:

- The Family Language Support Programme was launched by the Department in April 2012. Under this programme, a number of initiatives are being implemented which are aimed at providing support to families who are raising their children through Irish. These include a support pack for parents and increased provision under the Irish Language Assistants Scheme to assist children in Gaeltacht primary schools with regard to acquisition and enrichment of their Irish language skills;

- Responsibility for the approval system for Irish colleges in the Gaeltacht transferred from the Department of Education and Skills to this Department in 2010. Under the Irish Language Learners Scheme, 23,840 students attended Irish colleges in the Gaeltacht in 2012. This Department has played a central role, along with CONCOS (the federation of Irish colleges), in the coordination of Easter courses in the Gaeltacht for trainee teachers under the new system introduced in Easter 2013.

- The Department provided funding for the development of family language support centres in Indreabhán and An Cheathrú Rua in Co. Galway and plans are being progressed to develop a similar facility in Baile an Fheirtéaraigh in Co. Kerry in 2013.

- The Department provides funding for a range of organisations, both within and outside the Gaeltacht, to support the promotion of the Irish language.

- The Department provides funding for translation, interpretation and legal courses in third-level institutions in Ireland in order to meet recruitment needs arising in Ireland, due to the Official Languages Act 2003, and in the European institutions, due to the recognition of Irish as an official and working language of the European Union. 222 students successfully completed these third-level courses in the period from 2006 to 2012.

- The Department provides funding to Fiontar in Dublin City University to translate Irish language terms for the EU terminology database, IATE (InterActive
Terminology for Europe). Irish is now the 14th biggest language in the EU terminology database with in excess of 50,000 terms translated to date.

- The Department provides funding for Irish language courses in over 30 third-level institutions overseas with in excess of 1,400 students attending such courses in the period from 2011 to 2012. This initiative raises the profile of the Irish language internationally and encourages cultural tourism, particularly to the Gaeltacht.
- The Department provides funding for a range of initiatives which are aimed at making the language more widely accessible to all, including the digitising of material from the Irish Folklore Collection in University College Dublin to make it available online and the development of a fully fledged Text-to-Speech synthesis system for Irish (www.abair.ie) in Trinity College Dublin.

Irish language agencies under the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Foras na Gaeilge

Foras na Gaeilge is an agency of the North South Language Body, one of the six implementation bodies established under the British-Irish Agreement Act 1999. Accordingly, Foras na Gaeilge has a statutory role in relation to the promotion of Irish in all aspects of life throughout the island of Ireland.

Under the Gaeltacht Act 2012, Foras na Gaeilge is responsible for working with communities in Gaeltacht Service Towns, as appropriate, and in Irish Language Networks to prepare and implement language plans in those areas. In order to develop language planning criteria for the Irish Language Networks under the Gaeltacht Act, Irish language community representatives outside the Gaeltacht and Foras na Gaeilge participated in a focus group organised by the Department in 2012.

Among Foras na Gaeilge's main achievements to date in 2013 was the new English-Irish Dictionary which was launched in January 2013. The electronic version of the dictionary (www.focloir.ie) is capable of catering for 85% of the average searches performed by users and material will be added to the online version on a continuous basis until the printed version is published in 2015.

In addition, the approval by the North South Ministerial Council in July 2013 of the new funding arrangements, to replace Foras na Gaeilge's existing core funding model, is an essential milestone in order to ensure significant improvements in the delivery of frontline services in both jurisdictions.

In order to fulfil its statutory obligations, Foras na Gaeilge undertakes a wide range of activities, including:

- The provision of high quality teaching and learning facilities as well as textbooks in order to develop the teaching of Irish and teaching through Irish. Other support schemes are also available, for example, GLEO (Spoken Irish in the Education Sector) and grants for scholarships in the teacher training colleges.
- Young people outside the formal school setting are catered for through Foras na Gaeilge's Youth Scheme and Summer Camps Scheme.
• Support and specialised training is provided for the public sector on an ongoing basis. For example, an accreditation system for translators and editors has been established, as well as resources such as computer-aided translation facilities, a national terminology database (www.focal.ie) and the helpline FREAGRA.
• Under the Irish Language Community Scheme 2011-2013, funding is provided for 19 Irish language development officers employed by committees in various areas throughout the country.
• Schemes and projects are provided to promote the use of the language in the arts, media and multi-media, for example, the Drama Companies Scheme, the Festivals Scheme and the Publishing and Literary Projects Scheme.
• Support is provided for the development of the Irish language in the business sector through the Gníó Means Business awareness campaign and through schemes such as the Bilingual Signage Scheme.
• Support is provided through Clár na Leabhar Gaeilge for the promotion of reading, writing and publishing in the Irish language.
• An Irish language portal website is being developed which will provide a central point of access for Irish language online resources. While this will be developed on an incremental basis, it is envisaged that the initial development will be launched in 2014.

Údarás na Gaeltachta
Údarás na Gaeltachta is the regional development agency for the Gaeltacht. Údarás na Gaeltachta's activities are directed towards the linguistic, social and economic life of the Gaeltacht. It is committed to the development of a sustainable Gaeltacht community and economy so as to encourage Irish as the main community language of the region.

Under the Gaeltacht Act 2012, Údarás na Gaeltachta is charged with the implementation of the Strategy in the Gaeltacht. It is responsible under the Act for working with communities in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas and in Gaeltacht Service Towns, as appropriate, to prepare and implement language plans in those areas. Údarás na Gaeltachta is discussing the language planning process with community organisations in the Gaeltacht who are to implement specific language planning initiatives as part of their 2013 work plans.

In order to fulfil its statutory obligations, Údarás na Gaeltachta undertakes a wide range of activities, including:
• Enterprise and employment schemes which support some 7,000 full-time jobs throughout the Gaeltacht. A formal mechanism for cooperation was agreed between Údarás na Gaeltachta and Enterprise Ireland in June 2013 which will further benefit enterprise development in the Gaeltacht.
• Funding is provided for 30 community based organisations in the Gaeltacht.
• A network of 70 pre-schools operates in the Gaeltacht under the aegis of Comhar Naíonráí na Gaeltachta, as well as childcare centres which deliver early learning initiatives through Irish.
• Óige na Gaeltachta operates a network of youth clubs throughout the Gaeltacht catering for 1,800 young people.
• Ealaín na Gaeltachta, which is jointly funded by Údarás na Gaeltachta and by the Arts Council, implements a comprehensive arts programme in the Gaeltacht.
Department of Education and Skills

The Department of Education and Skills has made significant progress in implementing educational actions in the Strategy that relate to curriculum, assessment and teacher education. The implementation of these actions is occurring in tandem with the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, developments in initial teacher education and the reform of the junior cycle.

Curriculum Development

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is developing a new integrated primary language curriculum that will incorporate learning outcomes for Irish and examples of children’s work in order to illustrate the standards to be achieved by learners. A major focus of the Department's implementation of the Strategy relates to the provision of educational resources and materials for teaching through Irish. An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), which is funded by the Department, has greatly improved the range of educational resources and materials for teaching through Irish. The integration of COGG into the NCCA, as announced in November 2012, will enhance COGG’s capacity in this work by enabling the development of curricula by the NCCA and materials in Irish by COGG to take place in a closely coordinated manner. It will also enhance COGG’s capacity to provide advice and conduct research in relation to strategies and supports for teaching through Irish.

The Department intends to clarify its policy on immersion in primary schools. Plans are in place to prescribe the primary curriculum by statutory instrument at the earliest opportunity and to make arrangements that will allow for a period of immersion education in Irish to be implemented in Irish-medium primary schools.

For the first time, standardised tests in Irish were available and used in Irish-medium primary schools in June 2012. There are plans to make similar tests available for use in post-primary Irish-medium schools at the end of second year.

As part of the new junior cycle, a revised curriculum for Irish is under development by the NCCA and will be available in September 2014. In addition, the Minister for Education and Skills has asked the NCCA to provide a specialised short course in Irish at junior cycle for use in Irish-medium schools. The Minister has also asked the NCCA to advise on how the needs of students in Irish-medium schools can be met through any reforms to the syllabus/specification for Irish at senior cycle.

Assessment arrangements have been introduced that place an increased focus on the development of students’ oral Irish competency at post-primary level. 40% of marks in the Leaving Certificate examination for Irish is allocated to the oral examination. The first students to experience these assessment arrangements sat their Leaving Certificate in June 2012. The NCCA is to carry out a review of students’ experiences of the new assessment arrangements before the end of 2013. An increasing number of students are also taking the oral language test in Irish at Junior Certificate level. Assessment of oral competence will be a requirement of the assessment arrangements for Irish as part of the new junior cycle.
The Department intends to carry out research in 2013/2014 concerning the manner in which exemptions from Irish are sought and granted to inform the review of current arrangements in this regard.

**Teacher Education**
Measures have been introduced both at the point of entry to teacher education and during initial teacher education programmes that seek to strengthen the competence of student teachers in Irish as well as their ability to teach it. These include measures to revise the minimum entry requirements for Irish, an increase in the duration of initial teacher education programmes and the reconfiguration of the content of the programmes. The Gaeltacht placement for student teachers will be a core element of all initial teacher education programmes. The duration of the placement has also been extended from three weeks to four weeks to take place over a 2-year period. The Department is planning for the introduction of additional measures related to teacher education that will strengthen provision for Irish-medium education. These include the provision of a mixture of onsite and online options for continuing professional development.

**Support for Irish-medium education**
A range of teacher education measures are in place to support Irish-medium education. The Professional Development Service for Teachers continues to provide support for teachers in Irish-medium primary and post-primary schools. In addition, COGG provides support to providers for the provision of courses specific to the needs of teachers in Irish-medium schools. The post-graduate diploma for teaching through Irish in NUIG continues to ensure that there is a supply of teachers for post-primary Irish-medium schools. Existing teachers in primary and post-primary schools also have opportunities to advance their competence to function in Irish-medium education contexts through participation in relevant post-graduate programmes at master’s level. The Department is collaborating with the Department of Education in Northern Ireland in a north south initiative that provides for the promotion of blended learning activities for teachers in Irish-medium schools, including Gaeltacht schools, and the sharing of examples of best practice and resources in relation to literacy and numeracy.

**Gaeltacht Schools**
Plans are in place to carry out a detailed analysis during 2013-2014 of the particular challenges facing Gaeltacht schools, with a view to identifying policy options for Irish-medium instruction in these schools, particularly in the context of the Gaeltacht Act 2012.

**Provision for Irish-medium education outside the Gaeltacht**
At primary level, the need for Irish-medium schools in areas of demographic growth will be decided on the basis of demographic factors, parental demand and applications for patronage from potential patrons. In areas of stable demographic numbers, the Department will facilitate the divesting of existing English-language schools to new patrons, including those who will operate them as Irish-medium schools. At post-primary level, the Department will continue to identify areas where there is a need for Irish-medium schools in accordance with a threshold of demand (i.e. 400 pupils) that is considerably lower than the equivalent for English-medium schools (i.e. 800 pupils). The Department has adopted a proactive policy in relation to the establishment of Irish-medium schools. It has initiated planning for such schools in anticipation
of demand rather than awaiting the emergence of local demands. This has led to the Department designating 4 of the 20 primary schools to be established up to 2015 as Irish-medium schools. Similarly, 3 of the 17 post-primary schools to be established up to 2014 will be Irish-medium schools.

**Higher Education**

Individual higher education institutions, under the aegis of the Higher Education Authority, have the main responsibility for implementing the Strategy in relation to higher-level education. This is in line with the statutory autonomy of the higher education institutions in relation to academic affairs and programme delivery, as well as their statutory responsibility to preserve, promote and cultivate the Irish language.

**Adult Education**

Adult education courses in Irish are provided free of charge to adults through schemes that are funded by the Department and that are available through the Education and Training Boards. Adults may also avail of courses that are certified by Quality and Qualifications Ireland. A number of third-level institutions provide courses in Irish of a lifelong learning nature which are aimed at improving learners’ competence in the language.

**Department of the Taoiseach**

The current Government has re-established the Cabinet Committee on the Irish Language and the Gaeltacht. The committee is chaired by the Taoiseach and is supported by an inter-departmental group of senior officials. It meets regularly to review progress on the implementation of the Strategy.

Annual publications produced by the Department of the Taoiseach are bilingual, such as the programmes for the National Day of Commemoration, the Easter 1916 commemoration and the Daniel O’Connell commemoration.

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

The position of Irish as an official and working language of the European Union is appropriately recognised in the provision of interpretation services, in the EU Presidency website and in promotional activities and materials aimed at EU delegates and participants in Ireland and in Brussels during the Irish Presidency of the EU.

**Department of Public Expenditure and Reform**

While maintaining its overall policy role within the civil service in respect of training and proficiency assessment in the Irish language, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has devolved responsibility for the implementation of Irish language training and Irish language proficiency assessment to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. A service level agreement between the two Departments was signed in February 2013 to give effect to this new policy initiative.

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 2003 will also specify the posts that have an Irish language competency requirement.

**Department of Health**
The Department of Health has prepared an implementation plan on how the Strategy will be implemented in the health sector. However, as the Department is not the statutory provider of health and personal social services, responsibility for the delivery of most of the actions in the plan will fall to the Health Service Executive (HSE) and other State health agencies. In this context, the HSE has committed to a process of developing primary care teams which can provide their services through Irish in the various Gaeltacht areas. The HSE will seek to recruit staff who are fluent in Irish as vacancies arise in the Gaeltacht through the implementation of the HSE recruitment protocol which was adopted in April 2013. In addition, posts in the HSE that require an Irish language competency will be filled in accordance with the protocol.

**Department of Children and Youth Affairs**
The Department of Children and Youth Affairs fully recognises that pre-school and non-formal learning are important dimensions of Irish language revitalisation. Indeed the focus of the early years programmes administered by the Department is on the need to enhance the capacity of children to learn and develop through the provision of quality settings. Accordingly, the Department will continue to fully support the provision of pre-school Irish language education by ensuring that the range of Irish language support services/materials provided by or on behalf of the Department in this area will continue to be made available to such pre-schools.

The functions of the City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) will continue to be discharged under existing arrangements. However, additional support structures will be provided for Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge in respect of those CCCs which serve Gaeltacht areas and in respect of Irish language pre-school services generally. Specifically, consideration will be given to providing new structural arrangements to ensure that quality childcare services are provided through the medium of Irish in an effective and efficient manner and in accordance with best practice in this area.

The Department will also ensure that any emerging mentoring/support services to the pre-school/crèche sector will take due account of the need for such services to be available through Irish, insofar as the Gaeltacht and other pre-school/crèche services operating outside the Gaeltacht are concerned.

In relation to youth services, childcare services, pre-school services, after-school services and networks for Irish-speaking parents and children, the Department has committed, insofar as the remit of the programmes under its aegis permits, to supporting the implementation and development of the community-led approach as communities develop their language plans under the Gaeltacht Act 2012.
Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
The Good Friday Agreement provided that the British Government would work with the relevant British and Irish broadcasting authorities to make TG4 more widely available in Northern Ireland. Following the switchover to digital television in 2012, TG4’s coverage has reached 94% in Northern Ireland.

The allocation of licence fee money to the Broadcasting Funding Scheme, of which TG4 is one of the main beneficiaries, has been increased from 5% to 7%.

In addition to complying with its statutory obligations under the Broadcasting Act 2009 in respect of the provision of services in Irish, RTÉ will in its Irish language policy and in its Irish language scheme under the Official Languages Act 2003, both of which are currently being developed, set out a number of proposals/commitments to both normalise and improve the provision and the use of the Irish language.

Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government published finalised statutory Local Area Plan (LAP) Guidelines for Planning Authorities in June 2013 which will, inter alia, encourage planning authorities preparing LAPs covering Gaeltacht areas to ensure the protection of the linguistic and cultural heritage of these areas.

In the context of the review of the 2007 Planning Guidelines on Development Plans, the Department will consider the scope for enhancing the existing extensive guidance therein relating to Gaeltacht areas.

Priority demands in the shared services arena (i.e. under the Local Government Efficiency Review) remain the primary focus, with further consideration to be given to the aim of developing new shared services, with appropriate and specialised expertise for all Gaeltacht areas in the planning arena, through liaison among the bodies concerned.

The Action Programme for Effective Local Government – Putting People First, published in October 2012, includes proposals to strengthen the planning system and the Department will have due regard to the implications for all planning areas, including in Gaeltacht areas.

Údarás na Gaeltachta is a statutory consultee for development planning under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
A formal mechanism for cooperation was agreed in June 2013 between Údarás na Gaeltachta and Enterprise Ireland which will benefit enterprise development in the Gaeltacht. Discussions regarding enhanced cooperation between Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Industrial Development Authority are continuing under the auspices of a working group comprising officials from the relevant Departments and the development agencies.
**Department of Justice and Equality**
The Department of Justice and Equality has made very significant progress in recent years in translating court rules into Irish. These include the District Court Rules 1997 and the Circuit Court Rules 2001.

The Irish language version of the third and final major collection of court rules, the Rules of the Superior Courts 1986, will be published in 2013. The Department will continue to publish official Irish versions of amendments to those Rules, in addition to amendments to the District Court Rules 1997 and the Circuit Court Rules 2001.

The Irish language scheme of An Garda Síochána under the Official Languages Act 2003 recognises the right of citizens to conduct their business in Irish with An Garda Síochána. The scheme also contains a number of commitments in relation to the provision of services in Irish, including a commitment to have a full Garda service in Irish in all Garda stations in the Gaeltacht. Progress has been made in implementing these various commitments and this work is ongoing.

**Department of Defence**
It is the policy of the Defence Forces to provide a high level of services to its customers in Irish or bilingually. The Irish language scheme of the Defence Forces under the Official Languages Act 2003 contains a number of commitments in relation to the provision of services in Irish. Progress has been made in implementing these various commitments and this work is ongoing.

**Monitoring of implementation of the Strategy**
Since the Strategy is to be implemented by a number of key stakeholders over a period of twenty years, it is important that its implementation is monitored on an ongoing basis. As the Department with overarching responsibility for the Strategy, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht continuously monitors the implementation of the Strategy in cooperation with the key stakeholders referred to therein.

Progress reports on the implementation of the Strategy are provided to the Cabinet Committee on the Irish Language and the Gaeltacht which maintains oversight of progress and reports to Government, as necessary. Further progress reports on the implementation of the Strategy will be published periodically.