



Oifig an Ard-Reachtair Cuntas agus Ciste
Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Official Languages Act 2003

Language scheme 2021 - 2024

1: Introduction and background

Introduction

This scheme was prepared under section 15 of the Official Languages Act 2003 (the Act) by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (the Office).

Section 11 of the Act provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme detailing the services they will provide

- through the medium of Irish
- through the medium of Irish and English and
- through the medium of English

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by the public body through Irish will be so provided within an agreed timeframe. The Act defines service as a service offered or provided (whether directly or indirectly) to the general public or a class of the general public by a public body. Section 15 of the Act provides for the review of existing schemes.

Preparation and content of the scheme

This scheme was drawn up in accordance with guidelines under section 12 of the Act issued by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

The Office published notices under section 13 of the Act inviting interested parties to make submissions in relation to the preparation of the draft scheme. Three submissions were received in relation to this scheme and these have been considered in the drafting of this scheme.

The content of the scheme has been informed by the experience of the Office of previous schemes and is guided by the principle that the provision of Irish language services should be based on:

- the underlying level of demand for specific services in the Irish language,
- the importance of a proactive approach to the provision of such services, and
- the resources, including human and financial resources, and capacity of the body concerned to develop or access the necessary language capability.

This scheme has been formulated with the intention of ensuring that all relevant obligations under the Act by the Office will be fully addressed on an incremental basis, through this and future schemes. The preparation of the scheme was overseen by members of the Office's senior management team and responsibility for its implementation will rest with the Office's communications unit and the senior management team. The Office's governance support and assurance unit will monitor implementation of the scheme over the three year period.

Commencement date of the scheme

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. It commences with effect from 12 April 2021 and shall remain in force for three years or until a new scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

2: Overview of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Main functions

The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) is appointed by the President on the nomination of Dáil Éireann. The C&AG holds office under Article 33 of the Constitution.

The C&AG is responsible for auditing the accounts of public bodies and of funds of public money, undertaking examinations on the management and use of public resources and reporting the results of the work to Dáil Éireann.

In this regard, the C&AG's mission is to provide independent assurance that public funds and resources are used in accordance with the law, managed to good effect and properly accounted for and to contribute to improvement in public administration.

The Office assists the C&AG in his statutory functions and is staffed by civil servants.

The management team of the Office leads and manages the implementation of the systems, processes and behaviours necessary to promote good corporate governance across the organisation so that all staff of the Office work together as a high performing team.

The work of the Office is guided by three Directors of Audit, each having a directorate which carries out audit and reporting work and supported by a number of corporate divisions. One of the Directors is the Secretary of the Office, who is also the Accounting Officer of the Office.

Customers and clients

The Office's main stakeholders are the public bodies which it audits and the Oireachtas. The Office has little direct contact with the general public and this is usually conducted via letter or telephone call.

3: Details of services currently provided in English only, in Irish only or bilingually

The standard working language of the Office is English, reflecting the demands of our diverse workforce and the working language of the majority of bodies we audit. However, the Office provides services bilingually in compliance with its obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003. The following are a list of services provided by the Office and their availability in the relevant language:

Publications

The Office regularly publishes the following documents on its website:

- an annual report on the accounts of the public services (bilingually)
- appropriation accounts of central government departments and offices (bilingually)
- special reports on general matters arising from audits or on 'value for money' examinations (in English only, or bilingually where the body subject to examination conducts its business mainly through Irish)
- corporate reports (bilingually)

In practice, the majority of reports are available bilingually. These are published simultaneously in Irish and English or, in cases where statutory publication deadlines do not allow time for translation, the Irish-language version is published as quickly as possible thereafter. The Office has also engaged a quality reviewer to ensure the quality of documents translated meet a minimum quality standard and that consistency throughout documentation is maintained.

The Office does not publish public information leaflets or brochures.

Website/social media

The Office's [website](#) is available bilingually and is monitored to ensure that the Irish version of material on the website corresponds with the English version. There is a navigational link from each page on the English version to the relevant page in the Irish version.

The Office also engages with the public through certain social media (e.g. LinkedIn) and most posts are in English only.

4: Enhancing the provision of Irish language services

The following requirements under the Official Languages Act 2003 are currently and will continue to be carried out by the Office during the period 2021 - 2024.

Information technology

In addition to the development of the bilingual website under the previous scheme as outlined in section three, there is also a dedicated email address for queries in Irish published on the office website. Standard email messages such as disclaimers are bilingual.

Training and development

The Office has made opportunities available for staff to attend appropriately accredited Irish language training courses. The Office has a number of staff who are competent to carry out audits in the Irish language and the Office engages with the civil service training provider, One Learning to provide training to help improve the standard of Irish. Staff members with the competence to conduct business through Irish are allocated to the audits and examinations of public bodies where Irish is the working language.

The language scheme is available to all staff on the Office's intranet system in order to ensure that they are made aware of our commitments under the legislation and of opportunities to develop or improve their competency in Irish.

Switchboard

The Office does not have a reception area accessible by members of the general public. A telephone switch operator handles the telephone calls to the Office and is the most usual first point of contact with the general public. Phone calls are answered bilingually, Irish first. The choice of language of the customer will be established and they will be directed to the appropriate official. If an appropriate Irish speaking official is unavailable, the following options will be offered:

- a return phone call when an appropriate Irish language speaker is available
- continuing to conduct business in English.

The Office provides out of hours bilingual messages on the phone system.

Signage and written communication

All signage placed by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General or on its behalf is bilingual in accordance with the regulation (S.I. No.391/2008) and is solely located on the Office premises.

All written communication (letters and electronic mail) is responded to in the official language in which it is received. Standard email message content (such as disclaimers), official headed paper, compliment slips, business cards and external recruitment advertisements are bilingual.

The Office introduced an Irish Grammar and Spellchecker in Word 2016 – Anois for Irish grammar and spellchecking and regularly reminds staff about resources available such as focloir.ie and tearma.ie.

5: Improving language capability

This section outlines the commitments of the Office to increase the level of service through the Irish language based on a demonstrated level of demand.

Information technology

The Office will further develop its eSignature capabilities to include reference to the Irish language as part of staff standard signature.

Communications on social media will be developed to increase the bilingual number of social media posts on LinkedIn.

Training and development

The Office will take steps to ensure that staff continue to appreciate the spirit of the Act, understand the immediate legal requirements and the commitment to deliver a progressively enhanced service and see the service as an integral part of the commitment to quality client service.

Where staff have no competence in Irish, the Office will offer beginner's courses in conjunction with One Learning. The Office will continue to encourage staff to use their existing competence and will train and support staff so that existing competence can be improved. The appropriate administrative supports provided will be reviewed to in order to ensure that the identified standards/actions can be met. Staff who have passed the civil service Irish language competence test will be encouraged to use and build on their existing skills.

Volunteers will continue to be sought across the Office to participate in providing services in Irish. Staff will continue to be encouraged to attend language-training courses during or outside office hours.

Members of staff, who are willing to provide a bilingual service, will be encouraged to have bilingual voicemail messages.

6: Monitoring and review of scheme

The scheme will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis on progress reports provided by the governance support and assurance unit, twice yearly to the Office's Management Board and Audit Board.

The day to day operation of the scheme, together with ongoing monitoring of the level of demand for audit services in Irish, will be the responsibility of the Office communications unit.

7: Publishing of agreed scheme

The Office will take every opportunity in our day to day interaction with clients to promote and publicise the services we provide in Irish and through the following means:

- the scheme itself and subsequent updates on the delivery of commitments on particular services will be published on the website and reported upon in the Office's annual performance report;
- a press release will be issued to mark the scheme's publication and availability;
- the scheme will be circulated to Irish language organisations and relevant public bodies;
- directly informing clients on a proactive basis of the option of conducting business with us through Irish and
- giving equal prominence to Irish and English language publications.

A copy of the agreed scheme has been forwarded to the Office of an Coimisinéir Teanga.

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