



**Department of Public Expenditure and Reform**

**Language Scheme**

**2015 – 2018**

**under Section 11 of the**

**Official Languages Act 2003**

## **Chapter 1: Background**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This is the first Language Scheme prepared by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform under section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003 (“the Act”).

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

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

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

### **1.2 Approach to Development of Scheme**

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was established in July 2011. The Headquarters and Ministerial Offices of the Department are in Government Buildings, Upper Merrion Street, Dublin 2. The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform is Mr. Brendan Howlin TD and the Minister of State for Public Service Reform and the Office of Public Works is Mr. Simon Harris TD.

The Department has a dual function; to control public expenditure and bring our budgets back to a sustainable path and to ensure the necessary reforms in how Government and the public sector work. The functions of the Department are set out in the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act 2011.

This Scheme has been developed to set out a standard approach across the Department to fulfilling obligations in relation to the Irish language, taking into account what is practical and achievable over the coming three years. The scheme builds on the existing levels of services within the Department and on the principles of Quality Customer Service. Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the scheme will rest with the senior management of the Department.

In terms of the specific approach to the development of this scheme, a notice was published in May 2014 under section 13 of the Official Languages Act 2003 inviting representations from interested parties. The Scheme has been informed by the views received from staff during the Departmental consultation period. The Department would like to thank all those who took the time to engage with this important process.

The scheme also includes a commitment to assess on an ongoing basis the level of demand for services through Irish and to ensure that the Department continues to meet this demand in a planned, coherent and accessible way. The Department will continue to gauge the level of demand for its services in the Irish language by carrying out regular audits to determine the level of queries/requests for services through Irish in a given period.

### **1.3 Commencement date of Scheme**

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and has effect from 21 **October 2015**. It will remain in force for a period of 3 years from this date or until a new Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to section 15 of the Official Languages Act, whichever is the later.

## **Chapter 2: Overview of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform**

### **2.1 Mission and Goals**

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was established in July 2011 and its mission, as reflected in its *Statement of Strategy 2011 – 2014*, is:

*To serve the country, its people and the Government by delivering well-managed and well-targeted public spending, delivered through modernised, effective and accountable public services.*

The Department has a central role in implementing Government policy and in advising and supporting the Government in managing public expenditure at more sustainable levels in support of economic performance and social progress of the State and the overall management and development of the public service.

### **2.2 Departmental Organisational Structure**

The Department, many of whose activities are carried out on a co-operative basis by two or more sections, comprises the Management Board, the Office of the Minister and the following Divisions:

- Office of the Government Chief Information Office & eGovernment
- Expenditure Policy Evaluation and Management
- Government Reform Unit
- Labour Market and Enterprise Policy
- Reform and Delivery Office & Chief Operations Officer
- Remuneration, Industrial Relations and Pensions
- Expenditure Management, EU Policy & Audit
- Office of Government Procurement
- National Shared Services Office

In addition to the above Sections, the Department has a Human Resources Manager and also incorporates the Office of the Chief Medical Officer. An up-to-date management chart

and further information in relation to the Department's functional areas can be found on the Department's website: [www.per.gov.ie](http://www.per.gov.ie)

### **2.3 Departmental Customers**

The Department's principal customers are the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, the Minister of State, the Government and the Oireachtas, through whom it serves the public at large and their elected representatives, as well as other Government Departments, serving and retired staff in the public service. In formulating its advice, the Department must also have regard to the views of a wide range of interests, including the social partners, business and sectoral representatives, research forums and institutions and EU and international bodies, as well as the views and expectations of society at large. We are committed to maintaining and improving delivery of a high standard of service to our customers in the current challenging environment.

The quality customer service standards adopted by the Department in relation to the delivery of services to our customers will also apply to those services that the Department has committed to deliver in the Irish language under this scheme.

### **Chapter 3: Commitments to Service of Delivery in Irish**

The Department of Public Service and Reform under its Customer Service Action Plan and Customer Charter is committed to making every effort to accommodate its customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish.

The Department's central role, as stated in Chapter 2, is the implementation of Government policy and in advising and supporting the Government in managing public expenditure and the overall management and development of the public service. The Department, given the nature of its functions and work, does not have a high level of direct contact with, or provide schemes and services directly to individual members of the general public.

Services are provided by the Department primarily through English, with limited services being provided bilingually.

Speeches or statements, including those in the Oireachtas, by Ministers or speeches by senior officials will be made available in the language(s) in which they are delivered.

Having regard to the nature of the Department's work which is largely policy based and does not involve provision of services to the general public, most of the documentation produced by the Department is in English only. This includes documents of a specialist or technical nature produced by the Department not designed for the general public including, requests for tender documentation, large and detailed application forms, circulars and internal instruction manuals.

The Department has produced a Customer Service Action Plan (CSAP) and Customer Charter for the period 2013-2015 onwards. The new charter reflects the principles of Quality Customer Service and thus ensures that people who wish to conduct their business in Irish are facilitated.

#### **3.2 Staff Placement**

In addition to designated Irish language posts listed in Chapter 5, to ensure the continued availability of a pool of Irish speakers the Department will:-

- Continue to assess the Irish proficiency of new staff coming into the Department;
- Continue to seek additional volunteers to provide Irish language services.

### **3.3 Training and Development**

The Training and Development Unit is committed to providing training to all staff in accordance with the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) to enhance the general development of staff within the Department. To enhance our services through Irish we will continue to:-

- Advertise all Irish language courses available to staff;
- Ensure that staff are aware that Irish language courses can form part of their learning and development plan under PMDS;
- Assess Irish language courses on a regular basis to ascertain how effectively they meet the Department's requirements;
- Facilitate staff attending Irish language classes, including during working hours;
- Include a module on the Official Languages Act in the Induction Programme to increase awareness.

### **3.4 Intranet site**

The Department will ensure that the designated area for the Irish language on the Department's Intranet site continues to assist staff in the delivery of services through Irish.

This area includes:-

- List of accredited translators
- Names of staff available to deal with queries through the medium of Irish
- Sample 'out of office' messages and voicemail messages
- Copies of Official Languages Act and Schemes
- Online links to recognised Irish language terminology sites [www.tearma.ie](http://www.tearma.ie) and [www.focloir.ie](http://www.focloir.ie)

### **3.5 Gaeltacht Placenames**

The Department will use the official version of Gaeltacht placenames as declared in the Gaeltacht Placenames Orders, in accordance with the legislation.

## **Chapter 4: Enhancement of Services to be provided bilingually**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is a policy Department. As such, its main customers are the Minister and the Minister of State, the Government and the Oireachtas, other Government Departments, serving and retired staff in the public service, the EU and other international bodies as well as the social partners, business and sectoral representatives, research forums and institutions, and the general public. In addition, as a central Department, many of our outputs can be delivered only in conjunction or in co-operation with other Departments, Offices and public bodies.

Given the nature of the Department's functions and work, many of its Divisions deal directly with other Departments, EU Commission, the Oireachtas, financial institutions and its own staff. They have little or no day to day dealings directly with members of the general public.

### **4.2 Human Resources Aspects/Measures to Strengthen Knowledge of and Competency in Irish in the Department**

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has currently just over 900 staff members. The Department's main office is at Government Buildings, Upper Merrion Street, Dublin 2.

The Department is committed to building on existing levels of knowledge and competency in relation to Irish language skills currently available within the Department. In order to ascertain the level of expertise in Irish among staff a survey has been carried out of staff asking them to rate their ability to write, read and speak Irish and to indicate if they were satisfied their existing level of knowledge and skills would enable them to be included in a contact list for the Department (i.e. would they be able and willing to accept callers referred from the Department's switchboard operators or reception). While a large response to the survey was received, it clearly indicated that the existing level of competence to deal with administrative and technical issues through Irish is rather limited.

The Department will continue to seek additional volunteers to provide Irish language services across the Department as Irish language capability develops. With the agreement

of staff they will be identified in an appropriate way on telephone lists and organisation charts.

### **4.3 Enhancement of Services Provided Bilingually**

Based on customer surveys, a staff inventory of demand for Irish language services from customers and website hits where Irish and English versions of documents are available on the web indicated the demand for services in Irish by the Department's customers is very low.

With a view to improving both the level and standard of its services provided bilingually to the public, the Department will implement the following general and specific measures by the end of this Scheme unless otherwise stated.

#### **General Measures**

##### **Points of contact with the Public**

Receptionists/switchboard staff are the first points of contact with the public. The policy of the Department is to ensure that standard Quality Customer Service (QCS) practice applies in this area, so that at the commencement of the scheme:

- Reception/switchboard staff are trained to give the name of the Department in Irish;
- Reception/switchboard staff are familiar with basic greetings in Irish;
- Suitable arrangements will be put in place so they can put members of the public in touch, without delay, with the officer responsible for offering the service required through Irish.
- Staff who are willing to deal with telephone queries in Irish will be identified by a 'G' on phone lists provided to receptionists and switchboard operators. Calls received in Irish will be transferred by the switchboard operators or receptionist to an Irish speaker in the relevant division.
- Pre-recorded oral telephone announcements introduced will be provided in Irish and English in accordance with the Regulations.
- Individual staff members are free to leave telephone voice mail announcements in the language(s) of their choice.

## **Publications**

The Department will comply with Section 10 of the Act which requires a Statement of Strategy, Annual Report, Audited Accounts or Financial Statements and any document setting out public policy proposals to be published by the Department simultaneously in Irish and English.

- Publications generated by other bodies but available from the Department will be made available in the language in which they have been published by the generating Department/body.
- Requests for Tender will be made available in English only unless the tender itself relates to an Irish language issue.

## **Press Office**

Currently press releases are issued in English. During the lifetime of the scheme the Department will issue 10% of our press releases bilingually and simultaneously. In addition this Department will issue a further 10% of our press releases bilingually but not necessarily simultaneously. Press releases in the Irish language will be circulated to the Irish language media. Links to Irish press releases will be included on our Twitter feed also.

The Press Office will, by the end of this scheme, ensure that:-

- all letters, phone calls and other enquires/requests for information that are received in Irish will be logged, in order to monitor the level of demand for services in Irish.
- We will continue with existing Departmental policy that such correspondence will be responded to promptly in Irish, in compliance with Section 9(2) of the Official Languages Act.

## **Speeches and Statements**

Speeches and statements, including those made by the Minister and Minister of State, will continue to be made available in the language(s) in which they are delivered.

## **Websites**

The Department will continue to work progressively towards:

- The Department will continue to improve its website over the course of the lifetime of the Scheme making at least 25% of the static content available in Irish. The Department's "Home Page" and "About Us Page" will continue to be available in both English and Irish and additional pages will be made available in Irish over the timeframe of the scheme .
- Publications that are produced in Irish or bilingually will be made available on the Department's website.
- Ensuring that at least 25% of the static content on all new websites developed by it or on its behalf is made available bilingually, except where such websites are of a technical nature not aimed at the general public.
- New software and computer systems developed by the Department or on its behalf, which require information in relation to members of the public to be inputted, for example names and addresses, will be Irish compliant.
- [eolas@per.ie](mailto:eolas@per.ie) is the generic e-mail address for queries in Irish, and enquiries to this e-mail address will continue to be dealt with in Irish in accordance with current quality customer service standards.

## **Bilingual Services**

- Generally the Department does not provide services directly to the public. Therefore, arrangements will be continued to ensure that where Divisions do not have a member of staff proficient in Irish, or where such a person is not available, a designated member of staff from another Division will provide a service in Irish where required. These arrangements will continue during the course of this scheme.
- The statement “Cuirfear fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge” will be included on all new Departmental stationery.

## **Chapter 5: Designated Irish Language Posts**

Having regard to Government policy for enhanced provision of services in Irish, the Department will, by the end of year one of the scheme, identify posts for which Irish language competency is an essential requirement. Every effort will be undertaken to fill these positions by the end of this scheme having regard to recruitment, promotion and training policies, as appropriate. This will enable this Department to plan and prioritise the incremental improvement of services in Irish in a more strategic manner.

## **Chapter 6: Monitoring and Revision**

The Senior Management Group within this Department will keep the effective operation of the scheme under review.

The day to day monitoring function will be carried out primarily by line managers in each of the line Divisions who are responsible for the implementation of the scheme within their own areas and reporting on a regular basis to their Assistant Secretary.

## **Chapter 7: Publicising the Scheme**

The contents of this scheme will be publicised to the general public by:

- publication on the Department's website
- circulation to appropriate agencies and public bodies.

In addition, we will take every opportunity in our day to day interaction with customers to promote and publicise the services we provide in Irish through the following means:

- directly informing customers on a proactive basis of the option of conducting business with us through Irish, for example, by the display of notices at reception areas indicating the Irish language services that are available;
- signifying on selected guidelines, leaflets that these documents are also available in Irish, unless presented bilingually;
- giving equal prominence to Irish and English language materials.

The English language version of this scheme is the official version.

A copy of the scheme will also be forwarded to Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga.