



Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta
an Duine agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Official Languages Act 2003 Language Scheme 2018 – 2021

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

The Official Languages Act 2003 provides for the preparation by public bodies of a language 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 currently provided by the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

In accordance with Section 14(3) of the Act, language schemes remain in force for a period of 3 years or until such time as a new scheme is confirmed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, whichever is the later.

1.2 Preparation and Content of the Scheme

In the preparation of this scheme, due regard has been given to the Guidelines issues by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. In addition, there has been a comprehensive process of consultation with relevant stakeholders, whose views and suggestions have informed the scheme.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission 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 the 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 Official Languages Act by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission will be fully addressed on an incremental basis, through this and future schemes.



1.3 Commencement date of the Scheme

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It commences with effect from 01 May 2018 and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years or until a new scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.



Chapter 2: Overview of the Irish Human Rights and Equality

Commission

2.1 Mission and Objectives

About the Commission

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (the Commission) is Ireland's national human rights and equality institution. Our purpose is to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland and to build a culture of respect for human rights, equality and cultural understanding in the State.

The Commission was established on 01 November 2014, as an independent public body with a mandate under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 (IHREC Act, 2014). The IHREC Act 2014 gives the Commission a range of statutory powers for the protection and promotion of human rights and equality.

The IHREC Act, 2014 specifies that the Commission shall consist of not more than 15 and not less than 12 members, one of whom shall be the Chief Commissioner of the Commission. Commission members are appointed by Head of State, President Michael D. Higgins, following a resolution by both Houses of the Oireachtas and the members independently determine the Commission's policy and activity.

The structural independence of the Commission, in accordance with the Paris Principles, has been recognised in its "A" accreditation as an NHRI with the United Nations.

Vision

An inclusive Ireland where human rights and equality are respected, protected and fulfilled for everyone, everywhere.

Mission

To build a fair and inclusive society that protects and promotes human rights and equality in Ireland.



2.2 Main Functions

Section 10(1) of the IHREC Act 2014 sets out the overall functions of the Commission as:

- to protect and promote human rights and equality,
- to encourage the development of a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding in the State,
- to promote understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights and equality in the State,
- to encourage good practice in intercultural relations, to promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity in the State and respect for the freedom and dignity of each person, and
- to work towards the elimination of human rights abuses, discrimination and prohibited conduct.

Section 10(2) of the Act sets out a wide range of specific functions and powers through which the Commission can address its overall mandate.

2.3 Key Services

- Your Rights Service

2.4 Customers and Clients

The Commission through its free Your Rights service provides the public with information on rights and remedies made available under equality and human rights law in Ireland. This includes information on work-related discrimination, discrimination in relation to goods and services, discrimination in relation to education and human rights protections under Irish law.



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

Provision of Services			
Name of Service	In English Only	In Irish Only	Bilingually
Telephone Line			X
Your Rights Service	X		
Front of House Function	X		
Legal Assistance	X		
Corporate Services			X
Website (www.ihrec.ie)			Most of the content is currently in English. Certain content is also available in Irish.
Acknowledgement and response to correspondence			X
Public Consultations	X		
Delivering workshops or training	X		
Outreach to Stakeholders	X		
Policy Documents	X		
Strategy Statement			X
Annual Reports			X
Press Releases	X		



Chapter 4: Enhancing the Provision of Irish Language Services

Means of Communication with the Public		Commitment	
Recorded Oral Announcements		<p>The following recorded oral announcements will be in Irish or bilingual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Recorded oral announcements provided on the telephone when the offices of the public body are closed; (b) Recorded oral announcements transmitted by a public address system; (c) Recorded oral announcements created and transmitted by means of a computerised messaging system or a computerised telephone answering system. <p>This provision relates to ‘recorded’ announcements rather than ‘live announcements’.</p> <p>Where a Placenames Order is in force, a public body is required to use the Irish language version of the placename specified in that Order in recorded oral announcements made by it or on its behalf.</p>	Mandatory
Written Communication	Letters and Electronic Mail	All written communication will be responded to in the official language in which it was received.	Mandatory
	Stationery	Headings of stationery, including notepaper,	Mandatory



		compliment slips, fax cover sheets, file covers and other folders, labels and envelopes are provided in Irish or bilingually.	
Signage	Signage	All signage placed by the Commission or on its behalf must be in Irish or bilingually, in accordance with the regulations (S.I. No. 391/2008).	Mandatory
Publications	Publications	Documents setting out public policy proposals, audited accounts or financial statements, annual reports and strategy statements will be published simultaneously in Irish and English.	Mandatory
	Circulars/ Mailshots	Where a public body communicates in writing or by electronic mail with the general public or a class of the general public for the purpose of furnishing information to the public or the class, the body shall ensure that the communication is in the Irish language or in the English and Irish languages.	Mandatory
An Ghaeltacht	Gaeltacht Placenames	The official placenames of Gaeltacht areas will be used by the public body in accordance with the legislation.	Mandatory

The Commission will also undertake the following lists of actions under each service.

Means of Communication with the Public		Commitment	Timeline by end Yr.1/ Yr.2/ Yr.3
Oral/Written Communication	Front of House	An up to date list of staff members who can provide a service through Irish will be made available to reception staff.	By End Year 1
		If a member of the public wishes to speak with someone in Irish, reception staff will contact the appropriate person.	Ongoing
		Staff members will be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.	By End Year 1
	Switchboard	Staff will be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish and will transfer the call to a staff member who can speak Irish.	By End Year 1
	Telephone Communications with the public	The out-of-hours message on each of our telephone lines is in Irish and English.	Ongoing
The menus on each of our telephone lines are bilingual.		Ongoing	
Live Announcements	The Commission do not use live announcements however, if this becomes a service in the future we will ensure that we are in compliance with legislation.	As Required	
Information Leaflets/ Brochures	The most commonly used information booklets will be available in both Irish and English.	By End Year 2	



	Application Forms	All application forms will be made available in English and Irish.	By End Year 2
	Other	Public consultations will be advertised in Irish and in English.	By End Year 1
Media	Press Releases	We will issue 5% of press releases bilingually and simultaneously in the first year of the scheme and will build upon this yearly.	5% Year 1 10% Year 2 20% Year 3
	Media Spokespersons	We will upskill a member of staff to liaise with the Irish Language media when required.	By End Year 2
	Speeches	Speeches will be made available in the language or languages in which they have been given.	By End Year 1
	Other	On Twitter, 5% of twitter messages will be tweeted bilingually, in Irish and in English in the first year of the scheme, rising to 10% in the third year of the scheme. 20% of our Newsletter will be provided in Irish.	5% Year 1 10% Year 3 By End Year 1
Information Technology	Email	The email disclaimer and contact details will be bilingual on all email signatures.	Ongoing
		The Commission reply in Irish to any emails received in Irish as per the Official Languages Act.	Ongoing



		An email address is in place to deal with any 'Your Rights' queries in the Irish language – cearta@ihrec.ie	Ongoing
	Websites	Static information will be made available bilingually on the IHREC website across the core landing pages. A procedure will be put in place to ensure that this static information is monitored and maintained to ensure consistency with the English content and links.	By End Year 1 By End Year 1
	Computer Systems	Any new computer systems installed will be capable of handling the Irish language.	Ongoing
	Interactive Services	The Commission do not currently have any interactive services. Any new interactive services will be introduced in both languages where appropriate.	As Required
	Gaeltacht	Meetings	Meetings held in the Gaeltacht will be held bilingually and all documentation will be provided bilingually and simultaneously.



Chapter 5: Improving Language Capability

5.1 Recruitment

The recruitment of staff with the appropriate level of competence in the Irish language in each area of work of the Commission will be the primary means of optimizing the availability of services through Irish. Our recruitment policy, which is subject to the framework of agreed national recruitment procedures, will have regard to the need to improve Irish language capability on an incremental basis.

5.2 Training and Development

The Commission, is committed to making available opportunities for staff to attend appropriately accredited Irish language training courses, as resources permit. All staff will be advised of facilities/opportunities to improve their competency in Irish.

		Commitment	Timeline by end Yr.1/ Yr.2/ Yr.3
Improving Irish Language Capability	Recruitment	The Commission will encourage the employment of new staff who have a proficiency in Irish.	By End Year 2
		Job vacancies within the Commission will be advertised in Irish and English. Full information for applicants will be made available in both languages.	Ongoing
		The Commission will provide new staff members with a copy of the Language Scheme as part of their induction pack	From Commencement of the Scheme



Training	Analysis will be carried out to identify training needs and requirements for staff members and Irish language training and development opportunities will be provided to staff. An effort will be made to incorporate these training needs into the Commission's internal training and development plan.	By End Year 3
Participation in language promotion activities	Staff will be encouraged to participate in cultural language activities. Information on activities will be circulated and made available to staff.	By End Year 2
Provision of resources	Staff will be made aware of language resources such as teaglann.ie, téarma.ie and foclóir.ie.	By End Year 1

5.3 Irish Language Capability

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



Chapter 6: Monitoring and Review

The implementation of the scheme will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by Corporate Services and the Senior Management team.

A formal system for monitoring request for services through Irish will be available and recorded in our Annual Report.



Chapter 7: Publicising of Agreed Scheme

This scheme will be publicised both internally and externally, through a press release initially. A bilingual version of the scheme will be made available on our website and circulated to all staff and appropriate agencies. Other means to publicise the scheme may also be used.

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;
- prominently listing these services on our website;
- signifying on selected guidelines, leaflets and application forms that these documents are also available in Irish, unless presented bilingually;
- giving equal prominence to Irish and English language materials.

A copy of the agreed scheme will be forwarded to the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.