



Annual Report 2018

Embargo April 4th 07:00 am

Irish language provisions of the Broadcasting Act; the inability of computer systems to use the *síneadh fada*; and a formal investigation, for the first time, into the use of Twitter for official purposes amongst the matters highlighted in the 2018 Annual Report of An Coimisinéir Teanga.

An investigation by the State's Official Languages Commissioner has found the amount of programming broadcast in Irish by RTÉ to be seriously deficient, at odds with the will of the Oireachtas and in breach of the language provisions of the Broadcasting Act 2009. The investigation found that less than 1% of programmes broadcast on RTÉ television are classified as Irish language programmes, despite a statutory obligation to broadcast a comprehensive range of programmes in the language.

An Coimisinéir Teanga Rónán Ó Domhnaill said...

"This is one of the most significant investigations conducted by my Office since its foundation. This is the first time compliance with the Broadcasting Act, insofar as it relates to Irish language broadcasting, has been formally investigated. The results of the investigation reveal that only 0.7% of programmes broadcast on RTÉ television are classified as Irish language programmes. Or, in other words, approximately 99% of programmes are in English only."

The investigation also found that some of the genres RTÉ is obliged to cover in Irish by the Broadcasting Act were either not catered for at all by RTÉ or only catered for in a very limited fashion. The report finds that while RTÉ has a clear definition of what constitutes 'comprehensive coverage' in the English language that there appears to be a drastically different understanding of what this means in relation to its Irish language coverage.

An Coimisinéir Teanga has recommended that RTÉ provides his Office with an implementation plan setting out the measures to be taken by the national broadcaster to ensure it meets its statutory language obligations.

"It is clear that the amount of Irish-language programming needs to be increased in a systematic and comprehensive manner, in many programme areas, to meet the obligations of the Broadcasting Act,"

said An Coimisinéir Teanga.

The details of this investigation, as well as the other seven investigations carried out by An Coimisinéir Teanga, are outlined in the Annual Report of the Language Commissioner for 2018.

These include investigations into:

- *Galway County Council* regarding the issuing of tweets relating to the Gaeltacht which were issued in English only. This was in breach of its own statutory language scheme. It is also the first time a formal investigation by this Office dealt with the use of Twitter.
- the *Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government* that breached language legislation by not publishing part of the Project Ireland 2040 plan in Irish when it was launched
- *Iarnród Éireann* over its inability to use the *síneadh fada* on its on-board reservations system, as well as breaches of legislation in relation to signage
- *Cork County Council* over its use of Google Translate on its website and
- the *Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine* for advertising jobs in Gaeltacht areas without any Irish language requirement being attached to those positions.

In addition to these investigations Mr Ó Domhnaill stated that the level of cooperation his Office received from the Abbey Theatre was not commensurate with the standard he would expect from the country's national theatre and was a matter of some disappointment. An Coimisinéir Teanga found in an investigation that some of the signage used in the theatre was in contravention of statutory obligations concerning the official languages.

In total the Office received 634 complaints from members of the public last year, a slight decrease (0.63%) from 2017. Most of the complaints related to the lack of Irish on websites, application forms, signage and stationery. The vast majority were resolved through the informal resolution mechanism operated by the Office.

Mr Ó Domhnaill highlighted the fact that almost half the complaints his Office received last year related to areas not covered by the Official Languages Act. He remarked:

"This shows, once again, the urgent need for the Official Languages Act to be revised to ensure it is fit for purpose and meeting the needs of people who wish to avail of services through Irish from the State. At present there is an obvious disconnect between what people seeking services through Irish want and what they receive. This needs to be addressed through a stronger and more effective Language Act as soon as possible."

ENDS

Further information:

Órla de Búrca

Communications Manager

091 504006 / 087-2307182

 @ceartateanga  eolas@coimisineir.ie

www.coimisineir.ie