

Óglaigh na hÉireann - Scheme 2014-2017
Under Section 15 of the Official Languages Act 2003

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Chapter 1 - Background

1.1 Introduction

Óglaigh na hÉireann's first Language Scheme 2006-2009, prepared in accordance with Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003 came into effect on 01 September 2006. Óglaigh na hÉireann's second Language Scheme 2010-2013 came into effect on 22 December 2010. This is the third scheme prepared by Óglaigh na hÉireann under the Official Languages Act 2003.

Óglaigh na hÉireann published notices in the electronic and print media on the 29th and 30th August 2013 under Section 13 of the Official Languages Act 2003 inviting observations on the draft scheme from any external party. Submissions were received from organisations outside of Óglaigh na hÉireann and these were taken into account in the preparation of the third scheme. Members of Óglaigh na hÉireann were also consulted and their recommendations were reflected in the scheme.

1.2 Review of the Operation of the Second Scheme 2010-2013

The implementation of the second Irish Language Scheme posed further challenges for Óglaigh na hÉireann, in particular, building a culture of implementation of Irish language obligations within the Organisation. Implementation was set against a background of a shrinking financial envelope, a reorganisation of the Permanent and Reserve Defence Forces, and further barrack closures (which resulted in Óglaigh na hÉireann having no installation in a Gaeltacht area). Óglaigh na hÉireann published an Irish language policy in 2004 and a comprehensive first Irish Language Scheme in 2006 under the 2003 Act. The 2006 scheme laid the foundation for and ensured that the second scheme (2010-2013) was a continuation of the implementation of obligations listed in the first scheme and building on those obligations. This was done through further developing the following services:

- Improvements to Óglaigh na hÉireann's website www.mileata.ie
www.military.ie
- An increase in the number of Army Forms available bilingually.
- The completion of the introduction of the bilingual Identification Card.
- The standardisation of bilingual signage in all military installations.

- The standardisation of all bilingual stationary.
- The broadening of access to Irish language courses.

Óglaigh na hÉireann also worked closely with officials from the office of An Coimisinéir Teanga to ensure that issues of non-compliance were brought to staff's attention and addressed, with a view to avoid recurrence.

1.3 Objective of the Third Scheme

The objective of this third scheme is to build on the progress made in providing services to the public through the medium of Irish and bilingually, taking into account of what is realistic over the next three years within means and capabilities. Following a concentrated effort to identify and provide services bilingually over the course of the first two schemes, thus ensuring compliance with the terms and spirit of the Official Languages Act 2003, the focus of the third scheme is on increasing Irish language awareness and encouraging Irish language use within Óglaigh na hÉireann. It is envisaged that this focus will ultimately improve the provision of bilingual services to the public.

1.4. Commencement Date

This scheme has been approved by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The scheme will commence with effect from **21 April 2014** and shall 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 Act, whichever is later.

Chapter 2 - Overview of Óglaigh na hÉireann

2.1 Mission

The mission of Óglaigh na hÉireann is:

‘to provide for the military defence of the State, contribute to national and international peace and security and fulfil all other roles assigned by Government’¹

2.2 Roles

The roles assigned by Government are:

- To defend the State against armed aggression; this being a contingency, preparations for its implementation will depend on an ongoing Government assessment of threats.
- To aid the Civil Power (meaning in practice to assist, when requested, An Garda Síochána, who have primary responsibility for law and order, including the protection of the internal security of the State).
- To participate in multinational peace support, crisis management and humanitarian relief operations in support of the United Nations and under UN mandate, including regional security missions authorised by the UN.
- To provide a fishery protection service in accordance with the State’s obligations as a member of the European Union.
- To carry out such other duties as may be assigned from time to time e.g. search and rescue, air ambulance service, ministerial air transport service, assistance on the occasion of natural or other disasters, assistance in connection with the maintenance of essential services, assistance in combating oil pollution at sea.

2.3 Óglaigh na hÉireann - Functions

The Permanent Defence Force (PDF) consists of the Army, the Air Corps and the Naval Service. The Reserve Defence Forces consists of the Army Reserve and the Naval Service Reserve

¹ Strategy Statement 2011-2014: Department of Defence and Defence Forces

2.3.1. Army

The Army provides the land component of the State's defence capabilities. The Army currently provides the deployable military capabilities for overseas peace support, crisis management and humanitarian operations augmented by personnel from the Air Corps and Naval Service. On a day-to-day basis the Army provides a broad range of operational outputs. These include activities in support of An Garda Síochána such as providing cash escorts, prisoner escorts, explosive ordnance disposal and prison security. The Army also undertake tasks in support of the civil authorities such as the provision of assistance in severe weather crises and are an integral part of the State's response to many contingencies.

2.3.2. Air Corps

As the air component of the Óglaigh na hÉireann, the Air Corps provides air support capabilities to the other components in carrying out their roles. On a day-to-day basis the Air Corps undertakes army support, fishery protection patrols, provides a ministerial air transport Service and operates an air ambulance service. The Air Corps routinely undertake tasks such as providing air cover for cash in transit operations and providing pilots and technical support for the Garda Air Support Unit. In addition, the Air Corps undertakes approved operations in support of the civil authorities.

2.3.3. Naval Service

The Naval Service provides the maritime component of the State's defence capabilities. It is the State's principal sea-going agency and is tasked with a broad range of roles. On a day to day basis, routine patrols are multi-tasked to encompass security, safety and surveillance, port security, fishery protection, drug interdiction, pollution control and search and rescue. The Fisheries Monitoring Centre at the Naval Base is the designated national centre with responsibility for monitoring all fishing activity within the Irish exclusive fishery limits and all Irish fishing vessels operating around the world. The Naval Service is also a partner at the National Maritime College and the Maritime Energy Research Campus and Commercial Cluster (MERC) at Cork. In addition, Naval Service vessels have, on occasion, undertaken supply and reconnaissance missions in support of overseas peace support operations and participated in foreign visits in support of Irish trade and diplomacy.

2.3.4. Reserve Defence Force

The Reserve Defence Force (RDF) consists of the First Line Reserve, the Army Reserve and the Naval Service Reserve. The RDF contributes to Ireland's defence capability by providing a capacity to augment the PDF in the event of a major crisis. The Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve undertake training in preparation to assist the Permanent Defence Force when required.

2.4. Customers

Given the nature of the activities we are engaged in Óglaigh na hÉireann does not provide services to external 'customers' in the classic sense. For example, there are no public offices, public counters or call-centres where the individual citizen can request services on demand. Indeed, services are typically provided to the community collectively rather than to citizens as individuals².

2.5. Summary of Existing Bilingual Services

Óglaigh na hÉireann is fully compliant with Part III of the Official Languages Act 2003, publishing language schemes for the periods 2006-2009, and 2010-2013. The services provided under the schemes are:

- All major reports and strategy statements, in concert with the Department of Defence, are published in Irish and English.
- Óglaigh na hÉireann's forms (AFs) pertaining to personal or individual applications are available in bilingual format and under one cover.
- The Óglaigh na hÉireann website is fully available in bilingual form.
- All advertisements for careers in Óglaigh na hÉireann are published bilingually.
- Press releases are issued bilingually.
- Designated competent Irish speakers are available in each Branch to deal with any internal or external requests made through the medium of Irish.
- Selected personnel are funded to undergo Irish Language diploma courses in recognised third level colleges.
- All signage is being incrementally changed from English only to a bilingual format. Furthermore, a bilingual format is now used on all stationary and e-mail disclaimers.

² Department of Defence and Defence Forces Customer Service Action Plan 2013-2015

- Irish language awareness lectures are provided on all career courses
- The personal ID Card has been upgraded and is in a bilingual format.
- The English –Irish Military dictionary was upgraded and issued in 2006.
- An Irish language page is available on the Óglaigh na hÉireann Intranet. This page contains contact details of members of An Chomhairle Gaeilge, Irish language lessons and the English-Irish language military dictionary.

The public normally contact Óglaigh na hÉireann on military matters through its Press Office and its Recruitment and Competitions Office. Óglaigh na hÉireann is dedicated to providing services through Irish and encouraging the use of Irish both within the organisation and in dealing with our external customers.

2.6 Irish Language Policy

The Irish language is the first official language of the State under Article 8 of the Constitution and is highly regarded within Óglaigh na hÉireann. In respect of Óglaigh na hÉireann, the Government 20 Year Strategy in respect of the Irish language 2010-2030 states, ‘the maintenance and development of the Irish language is important both because of the symbolic importance of the Forces in our national life and the services they provide to the community’. In the Government Statement on the Irish language in 2006 the following objective was included, ‘The use of the Irish language by Óglaigh na hÉireann will be continued and developed’. Under the Strategic Management Initiative and particularly in the context of the Quality Customer Service, Óglaigh na hÉireann has a role to play in promoting the bilingual policy of the Government and ensuring that that its representatives are capable of providing a high standard of services through the medium of Irish. In relation to obligations under the Act, Óglaigh na hÉireann and the Department of Defence publish separate schemes. As it is the policy of Óglaigh na hÉireann and the Department of Defence to provide services of high standard in Irish or bi-lingually, co-operation in this regard will be enhanced.

2.6.1. Internal Administrative Instruction

In November 2004 Óglaigh na hÉireann published Administrative Instruction A8 Chapter 5, Official Languages Policy. The aim of the Instruction is to ensure that the organisation fulfils its obligations under the terms of the Official Languages Act 2003

and that it abides by the principals of the Quality Customer Service (Official Languages equality) as set out by the Government under the Strategic Management Initiative.

2.6.2. An Chomhairle Gaeilge

An Chomhairle Gaeilge was established under Para 202 of Administrative Instruction A8 Chapter 5. It is responsible for all matters pertaining to the Irish language and Irish culture and must advise the Chief of Staff accordingly. An Chomhairle Gaeilge is comprised of representatives from Defence Forces Headquarters, each Brigade, Defence Forces Training Centre, the Air Corps and the Naval Service. The Officer holding the appointment of Senior Irish Language Officer within Óglaigh na hÉireann acts as Chairman.

Chapter 3 - Review of the Irish Language Services and Improvements Planned for 2014-2017

Óglaigh na hÉireann will continue to adhere to all commitments made in previous schemes.

It is the policy of Óglaigh na hÉireann to provide a high level of services to its customers in Irish or bilingually. Generally Óglaigh na hÉireann does not provide services directly to the public. Therefore, the emphasis in this third scheme will be on improving services to its internal customers. This will ensure that the organisation is in a better position to provide bilingual services to members of the public, in the language of the customer's choosing, should the need arise. This chapter sets out the plans and activities that the organisation will provide over the next three years to build on the progress made during the life of the previous schemes.

3.1. Points of Contact with the Public

In line with the practice of Quality Customer Service (QCS) we will continue to ensure that switchboard operators in each military post will:

- Give the location of the post in Irish and in English.
- Be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.
- Be in a position to put the customer in contact immediately with the office responsible for the service to be delivered through the medium of Irish.

The practice of placing an organisational chart in all units of Óglaigh na hÉireann, containing the name and contact number of personnel who are competent to provide services through Irish will be continued. [From the commencement of the new scheme].

3.1.1 Summary of Units in Direct Communication with the Public

The following units will continue to have at least one member of staff capable of dealing effectively with external customers through the medium of Irish:

- The Strategic Planning Branch.
- Public Relations Branch.
- Recruitment and Competitions Office.
- Freedom of Information Section.

- Corps Directorates.
- Brigade Manpower Offices.
- Brigade Press Offices.
- Naval Service.
- Air Corps.

Where a member of staff in any of these offices, Branches or Services is unavailable to provide a service in Irish, ‘An Chomhairle Gaeilge, Óglaigh na hÉireann’ may be contacted to provide the requisite level of service.

3.2 Means of Dissemination of Information to the Public

Óglaigh na hÉireann communicate with the public principally through:

- Publication of documents as a direct consequence of obligations arising under enacted legislation (Annual Reports, Customer Services Action Plan etc.).
- Recruitment campaigns (TV, radio and press).
- Press Releases.
- Written correspondence.
- Brochures and information leaflets.
- Web site.
- Open days.
- Attendance at local events.

3.3 Delivery of Services

Óglaigh na hÉireann will continue to deliver the following services in Irish only or bilingually:

3.3.1 Application Forms

Forms that relate to personal or individual applications whether for internal or external customers will continue to be provided in bilingual form under single cover over several schemes. During the lifetime of the third scheme the following forms will be made available bilingually:

- a. Forms AF 642 (Application for Continuance in Service after 21 years) and AF 235 (Recommendation for the promotion to the rank of Corporal or Leading Seaman). **[To be completed before the end of year one].**

- b. Forms AF 34 (Service Medal Application form and AF 525A (Notification to be sent to Next-of-Kin on hospital admission). **[To be completed before the end of year two]**.

3.3.2. Notices

Óglaigh na hÉireann will continue to ensure that advertisements published in the media and all commonly used posters and leaflets will be published in Irish and in English. **[From the commencement of the new scheme]**.

3.3.3 Press releases

The practice of issuing every press release in both official languages established in the first scheme will continue. By the end of this scheme, Irish and English press releases will be issued simultaneously; Irish only press releases will be issued to the Irish language media.

3.3.4. Recruitment

All information pertaining to Cadetship, Apprenticeship, General Service recruitment, and Direct Entry competitions will continue to be published online in bilingual format.

Applicants will be invited to apply in Irish or English and will be given the opportunity to conduct an interview through Irish only should they choose to do so. **[From the commencement of the new scheme]**.

3.3.5. Computer services, website and interactive services

The Óglaigh na hÉireann website (www.mileata.ie) (www.military.ie) is bilingual. Commitments made during the second scheme will be continued during the lifetime of this scheme. The website will be developed as follows:

- a. The home page will only offer the choice of accessing the Irish or English version of the site.
- b. Where users are invited to provide information online (including competition application forms) they will be facilitated to do so in Irish or in English.
- c. A generic e-mail address (eolas@defenceforces.ie) will be made available for all correspondence through the medium of Irish.

- d. Personnel will be encouraged to use a bilingual ‘out of office’ message.

[From the commencement of the new scheme].

3.3.6. Stationery and signage

The translation of stationery address groups and signage in every unit and every location will be continued during the lifetime of the third scheme.

3.4. Improving Óglaigh na hÉireann’s Irish language capability.

The focus of this third scheme is on improving Irish language capabilities and stimulating demand for Irish language services within the organisation. The following initiatives will be undertaken during the lifetime of the scheme:

3.4.1. Training and development

An Chomhairle Gaeilge will continue to develop an annual strategy to provide Irish language training and education to personnel interested in the language and to those who are responsible for delivering services through Irish as required. In support of this policy and within the lifetime of this scheme, Comhairle na Gaeilge will continue to offer places on the Annual Irish Language Training Camp in Dún Ui Mhaolíosá, Galway to members of the Department of Defence.

3.4.2. An Chéad Chathlán Coisithe

Óglaigh na hÉireann will continue to support and preserve An Chéad Chathlán Coisithe as an Irish speaking unit.

3.4.3. Irish Language survey.

To assist in the strategic development of the Irish language, Óglaigh na hÉireann will conduct a survey of all personnel to ascertain:

- a. The number of bilingual speakers.
- b. The number of bilingual speakers competent in the writing of the Irish language.
- c. The number of fluent Irish speakers.
- d. The number of personnel with third level academic qualifications in the Irish language.
- e. The effectiveness of Óglaigh na hÉireann’s Irish language policy to date.

3.4.4. Irish language network

Óglaigh na hÉireann will develop an Irish language network to promote the use of the Irish language amongst its members.

3.4.5. Irish language intranet page

Óglaigh na hÉireann will develop an Irish language intranet page which will provide Irish language services to all personnel, including:

- The Irish- English military dictionary.
- Translations of all Units and locations.
- Contact details of An Chomhairle Gaeilge.
- Irish language lessons.
- Notifications of Irish language events.
- Forum to discuss Irish language issues.
- Samples of bilingual Irish language ‘out of office’ messages.

3.4.6. Irish language seminar

Óglaigh na hÉireann will organise an annual Irish language seminar to showcase services and developments in the Irish language to personnel of Óglaigh na hÉireann.

3.4.7. Initiatives

Óglaigh na hÉireann will create an environment that promotes Irish language usage amongst its personnel through:

- Social events.
- The provision of signage in offices inviting personnel to conduct their business through the medium of Irish.
- Issuance of badges denoting Irish language proficiency (An ‘g’).
- All Officers and NCOs will be encouraged to commence and terminate speeches and addresses in the Irish language.

Chapter 4 - Supervision and Review.

4.1. An Chomhairle Gaeilge will continually review the workings of the scheme and assess its effectiveness on an annual basis. A report on the results of these assessments will be submitted to the Chief of Staff.

4.2. Each Formation, Service and Branch will be required to reflect the commitments of this and previous Irish Language Schemes in their annual training/business plans. The day-to-day monitoring function will be carried out primarily by commanders at all levels.

4.3. An Chomhairle Gaeilge will supervise the implementation of the obligations listed in the Scheme as follows:

- Annual Assessment of the progress of the scheme.
- Monitoring of the results of the personnel who attend courses of education.
- Examination of any complaint or any recommendation made by members of the public on the subject of the provision of services in Irish by Óglaigh na hÉireann.
- Assessment of the visibility of the Irish language within the organisation.
- Review the demand for services in Irish from the public and members of Óglaigh na hÉireann.

Chapter 5 - Publicising and promoting the approved scheme.

5.1. This scheme will be made available to members of Óglaigh na hÉireann and the general public in the following way:

- The scheme will be circulated to appropriate agencies and public bodies.
- It will be prominently displayed on Óglaigh na hÉireann's website.
- It will be referred to in the combined Strategy Statement of the Department of Defence and Óglaigh na hÉireann.

5.2. Óglaigh na hÉireann will make every effort to publicise the availability of services through Irish by:

- Placing notices in public offices and on the website informing customers that services through Irish are available.
- Placing notices in publications and advertisements informing customers of services through Irish and welcoming those who wish to avail of such services.

5.3. A copy of this scheme has been sent to the office of An Coimisinéir Teanga and to all who made submissions to Óglaigh na hÉireann during the drafting of the scheme.

5.4. The Irish version of this document is the original version.