

Tráchtairacht ar  
Thuarascáil an  
Choiste  
Chomhairligh  
um Sheirbhísí  
Gaeilge

(don tréimhse  
20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023)

Commentary on  
the Report of the  
Irish Language  
Services  
Advisory  
Committee

(for the period  
20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023)

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## Liosta Acrainmneacha

An tAire TCEGSM	An tAire Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
RTCEGSM	An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
RCPSPA	An Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí, Sheachadadh PFN agus Athchóirithe
An Coiste Comhairleach	An Coiste Comhairleach um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge
Tuarascáil an CC	Tuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge
An Plean Náisiúnta	An Plean Náisiúnta um Sheirbhísí Poiblí Gaeilge

## List of Acronyms

Minister for TCAGSM	Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media
DTCAGSM	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media
DPENDR	Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform
The Advisory Committee	Irish Language Services Advisory Committee
AC Report	Report of the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee
The National Plan	The National Plan for Irish Language Public Services

### Don Aire Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán:

faoi 18F(3) d'Acht na dTeangacha  
Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021.

Séamas Ó Concheanainn, An Coimisinéir Teanga  
Nollaig 2024

### To the Minister for the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and the Media:

Under Section 18F(3) of Official  
Languages (Amendment) Act 2021

Séamas Ó Concheanainn, An Coimisinéir Teanga  
December 2024

# 1. ACHOIMRE FHEIDHMEACH

## 1.1 Cúlra

Tá sé mar bhunaidhm ag Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla, 2003 líon agus caighdeán na seirbhísí poiblí a chuireann an Stát ar fáil i nGaeilge a mhéadú agus a fheabhsú. B'fhacthas do phobal na Gaeilge agus do Rialtais éagsúla in imeacht na mblianta, áfach, go raibh ag cliseadh ar Acht 2003 an bhunaidhm sin a fhíorú. Achtaíodh Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021, i Mí na Nollag 2021 le dul i ngleic leis na bearnaí leanúnacha a bhaineann le soláthar seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge sa Stát. Glactar leis i measc na bpáirtithe leasmhara uile gurb iad bacanna is mó atá le sárú i gcónaí easpa foirne ag a bhfuil Gaeilge mhaith, doiléireacht faoi na seirbhísí ba chóir do chomhlachtaí poiblí a chur ar fáil d'fhonn freastal go cóir ar phobal na Gaeilge, agus easpa cur chuige comhordaithe ar bhonn náisiúnta maidir le seirbhísí poiblí ar ardchaighdeán a sholáthar i nGaeilge.

## 1.2 An Tráchtairacht seo

Faoin Acht Teanga leasaithe (2021) is feidhm de mo chuid mar Choimisinéir Teanga tráchtairacht a dhéanamh ar obair an Choiste Chomhairligh. Chuige sin tá dualgas ar an gCoiste Comhairleach tuarscáil a chur faoi mo bhráid maidir le dul chun cinn ar a chuid oibre. Diríonn an tráchtairacht seo ar chéad Tuarscáil an Choiste Chomhairligh maidir lena chuid oibre don tréimhse 20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023

## 1.3 An Coiste Comhairleach

Bhunaigh an tAire Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán (an tAire TCEGSM) an Coiste Comhairleach um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge (An Coiste Comhairleach) i Meitheamh 2022 faoin Acht leasaithe (2021). Tugadh feidhmeanna don Choiste Comhairleach faoin dlí teanga ar mhaithe le dul i ngleic leis na bacanna suntasacha thuasluaite. I measc na bhfeidhmeanna is tábhachtaí a fhorordaítear don Choiste Comhairleach tá forbairt agus feidhmiú Plean Náisiúnta do Sheirbhísí Poiblí a stiúradh, comhairle a chur ar chomhlachtaí poiblí faoi earcú foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge agus seirbhísí poiblí a shonrú ar chóir dualgas reachtúil a leagan ar chomhlachtaí poiblí maidir lena soláthar i nGaeilge. Fágann na cúraimí seo go bhfuil ról ríthábhachtach ag an gCoiste Comhairleach i gceapadh agus i bhfeidhmiú na

pleanála straitéisí sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí in Éirinn trína mbainfear amach bunaidhm na reachtaíochta teanga; is é sin go dtiocfaidh méadú ar líon, agus ardú ar chaighdeán, na seirbhísí poiblí atá ar fáil do phobal na Gaeilge ina rogha teanga.

11 chomhalta atá ar an gCoiste Comhairleach. Tá ionadaíocht ar an gCoiste ó RTCEGSM, RCPSPA, ón tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí, ón Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí, ó Fheidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte, ón nGarda Síochána, ó Fhoras na Gaeilge, ón nGníomhaireacht Bainistíochta Rialtais Áitiúil mar aon le hionadaí do phobal na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht agus ionadaí don phobal na Gaeilge lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht. Tá comhdhéanamh an Choiste le moladh mar go bhfuil ionadaíocht air ó na comhlachtaí poiblí atá lánach i bpleanáil agus i bhfeidhmiú bheartas poiblí na seirbhíse poiblí in Éirinn ar lámh amháin, agus ar an lámh eile comhlachtaí poiblí atá ag soláthar cuid de na seirbhísí poiblí is mó a bhfuil éileamh ag an bpobal orthu. Is cinnte go bhfuil saineolas agus saintaithí ar leith ar an gCoiste Comhairleach maidir le feidhmiú agus cleachtais na Seirbhíse Poiblí. Seasfaidh an saineolas agus an saintaithí sin go mór don Choiste agus a chuid feidhmeanna reachtúla á gcomhlíonadh aige.

## 1.4 An Plean Náisiúnta

Den chéad uair riamh i stair an Stáit tá Plean Náisiúnta do Sheirbhísí Poiblí i nGaeilge curtha i dtoll a chéile. Is é an bhunaidhm atá ag an bPlean mapa bóthair a leagan amach trína dtiocfaidh méadú ar líon na seirbhísí poiblí atá ar fáil i nGaeilge agus trína dtiocfaidh feabhas ar chaighdeán seirbhísí poiblí trí Ghaeilge i gcoitinne. Is cinnte gurb é córas nua na gcaighdeán teanga a leagfaidh amach na seirbhísí poiblí a bheidh dualgas reachtúil ar chomhlachtaí poiblí a sholáthar i nGaeilge, agus an fhoráil 20% d'earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge, na crainn taca ar a dtógfar Plean Náisiúnta forásach agus feidhmiúil.

Tugtar le fios i dTuarscáil an Choiste Chomhairligh gur cuireadh maoiniú breise €1.5m ar fáil trí líne bhuiséid nua (C11 – Tionscnaimh Seirbhíse Poiblí), i gcaitheamh 2023 agus 2024 trí chéile d'fhonn cabhrú le forálacha na reachtaíochta teanga leasaithe a neadú ar fud na hearnála poiblí.

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1.1 Background

The primary aim of the Official Languages Act, 2003 is to increase the availability and improve the standard of public services provided by the State in Irish. However, it became apparent to the Irish language community and various Governments over the years that the 2003 Act was failing to realise that primary aim. The Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 was enacted in December 2021 to address the ongoing shortfall in the provision of public services in Irish in the State. It is accepted among all stakeholders that the greatest obstacles remaining include a shortage of staff proficient in Irish, a lack of clarity regarding the services that public bodies should provide in order to serve the Irish-speaking community on an equal basis with English, and a lack of a nationally coordinated approach to providing high-quality public services in Irish.

## 1.2 This Commentary

Under the amended Language Act (2021), one of my functions as Language Commissioner is to comment on the work of the Advisory Committee. To this end, the Advisory Committee is required to submit a progress report to me. This commentary focuses on the Advisory Committee's first Report on its work for the period 20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023.

## 1.3 The Advisory Committee

The Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (Minister for TCAGSM) established the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee (The Advisory Committee) in June 2022 under the amended Act (2021). The Advisory Committee was prescribed important functions under language law in order to address the significant shortfalls mentioned above. Among the most important functions prescribed for the Advisory Committee is to oversee the development and implementation of a National Plan for Irish Language Public Services, to advise public bodies on the recruitment of staff who are proficient in Irish and to specify public services that public bodies should be obliged to deliver in Irish. These functions give the Advisory Committee a key role in the formulation and implementation of strategic planning in the Public

Service in Ireland, through which the primary aim of the language legislation will be achieved, namely to increase the number, and improve the quality, of public services available to the Irish-speaking community in their language of choice.

The Advisory Committee comprises 11 members. The Committee has representation from DTCAGSM, DPER, the Public Appointments Service, the Department of Social Protection, the Health Service Executive, An Garda Síochána, Foras na Gaeilge, the Local Government Management Agency as well as a representative for the Irish-speaking community in the Gaeltacht and a representative for the Irish-speaking community outside the Gaeltacht. The composition of the Committee is commendable as it includes representation, on the one hand, from public bodies that are central to the formulation and implementation of public service policy in Ireland, and on the other hand, public bodies that deliver some of the most sought after public services in Ireland today. The Advisory Committee undoubtedly has particular expertise and experience of Public Service functions and practices. This expertise and experience will greatly assist the Committee in carrying out its statutory functions.

## 1.4 The National Plan

For the first time in the history of the State, a National Plan for Irish Language Public Services has been developed. The primary aim of the Plan is to set out a roadmap that will increase the number of public services available in Irish and improve the quality of public services through Irish in general. The new system of language standards, setting out the public services that public bodies will be legally obliged to provide in Irish, and the provision for 20% of new entrants to the public service who are proficient in Irish, will undoubtedly be the pillars on which a progressive and functional National Plan will be built.

The Advisory Committee Report states that additional funding of €1.5m has been made available through a new budget line (C11 – Public Service Initiatives), during 2023 and 2024 to help embed the provisions of the amended language legislation across the public sector.

**Príomhphointí Tráchtairachta - An Plean Náisiúnta**

- Cinneadh stuama agus meáite a bhí i gcinneadh an Choiste Chomhairligh cláir thaighde ar luach €315,000 a choimisiúnú ar mhaithe le dúshraith théagartha eolaíoch a leagan faoi fhorbairt an Phlean Náisiúnta.
- Is bunriachtanas a bheidh ann don Phlean Náisiúnta scála, scóip agus éagsúlacht na seirbhíse poiblí in Éirinn a thógáil san áireamh. Léiríonn figiúirí a d'fhoilsigh RCPSPA go raibh 397,121 duine fostaithe sa tseirbhís phoiblí ag deireadh 2023. Tháinig méadú 13,309 ar an meán go bliantúil idir 2018 agus 2023 ar líon na ndaoine a bhí fostaithe sa tseirbhís phoiblí.
- Beidh mionscagadh ar an leibhéal maoinithe breise a theastóidh ag leibhéal earnála na Seirbhíse Poiblí de dhíth sa bPlean Náisiúnta lena chinntiú go mbeidh na hacmhainní cuí ar fáil d'fhonn lánfheidhm a thabhairt don reachtaíocht nua teanga.
- Beidh éifeacht an Phlean Náisiúnta ag brath go mór ar ailíniú idir na seirbhísí poiblí a theastaíonn ó phobal na Gaeilge agus dóthain foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a bheith ar fáil chun na seirbhísí sin a chur ar fáil ar chaighdeán ard. Ionas go dtarlóidh sé sin caithfidh córas na gcaighdeán teanga a leagfaidh síos na seirbhísí poiblí a bheidh dualgas reachtúil ar chomhlachtaí poiblí a sholáthar agus pleanáil don fhórsa saothair atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge sníomh isteach go hiomlán ina chéile. Is é an Plean Náisiúnta an fheithicil a léireoidh mar a tharlóidh sé seo.
- Is bunriachtanas é go mbeidh Pleanáil don Fórsa Saothair Náisiúnta ag a bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge i gcroílár an Phlean Náisiúnta.
- Beidh monatóireacht agus tuairisciú leanúnach riachtanach d'fhonn dul chun cinn ar fheidhmiú an Phlean Náisiúnta a thomhas. Beidh sé riachtanach na hacmhainní cuí a chur ar leathaobh chuige seo.

**1.5 Pleanáil don Fórsa Saothair Náisiúnta ag a bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge**

Tá easpa foirne ag a bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ar cheann de na bacanna is mó i láthair na huaire ar sheirbhísí poiblí ar ardchaighdeán a sholáthar i nGaeilge. Tá an fhoráil a leagann síos go gcaithfidh aird a bheith ag an gCoiste Comhairleach ar an riachtanas go mbeidh inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ag 20% d'earcaigh sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí idir Meitheamh 2022 – Nollaig 2030 ar cheann de na feidhmeanna is tábhachtaí a thugtar don Choiste Comhairleach. Chomh maith leis sin, mar aon le feidhmiú chóras na gcaighdeán teanga, beidh earcú dóthain

foirne ag a bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ar cheann de na bunchlocha is mó sa Phlean Náisiúnta. Ba chóir go leagfadh an Plean Náisiúnta amach an cur chuige córasach agus céimnithe trína dtiocfaidh feabhas ar sheirbhísí poiblí trí Ghaeilge sa Ghaeltacht agus go náisiúnta.

**Príomhphointí Tráchtairachta - Pleanáil don Fórsa Saothair Náisiúnta atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge -**

- Is beart dearfach a rinne an Coiste Comhairleach é fo-ghrúpa dá chuid a bhunú d'fhonn breathnú go sonrach ar cheist na hearcaíochta i gcomhlachtaí poiblí.
- Mar thosaíocht caithfear pleanáil don fhórsa saothair atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a neadú i bpleanáil eagraíochtúil na gcomhlachtaí poiblí. Tá samhail phleanála d'fhórsa saothair na Seirbhíse Poiblí go náisiúnta á feidhmiú ar bhonn leanúnach cheana féin faoi threoir na RCPSPA. Ba chóir go n-úsáidfí an tsamhail phleanála náisiúnta seo chun earcú foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a shníomh isteach i gcroílár an phróisis phleanála don fhórsa saothair i ngach comhlacht poiblí.
- Beidh comhordú, maoirseacht agus tuairisciú leanúnach de dhíth ar leibhéal náisiúnta ar mhaithe le dul chun cinn ar ghnóthú na forála 20% d'earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge ar fud na hearnála poiblí idir 2022 – 2030 a thomhas. Ba chóir breathnú ar ról an Aonaid um Pleanáil Straitéiseach don Fórsa Saothair laistigh den RCPSPA don chúram criticiúil seo nó eintiteas eile dá leithéid. Bheadh an t-eintiteas cuí ag tuairisciú go rialta don Choiste Comhairleach maidir leis an dul chun cinn sonrach a bheidh á dhéanamh chun críoch na forála 20% d'earcaigh ag leibhéal earnála (e.g. Ranna Rialtais, Údarás Áitiúla) agus go náisiúnta.
- Beidh ról an-tábhachtach ag an tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí lena chinntiú go mbeidh na comórtais earcaíochta do dhaoine atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge á réachtáil go tráthrialta d'fhonn freastal ar an éileamh breise a chothóidh an fhoráil earcaíochta 20% d'earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge.
- Is bunriachtanas é freisin go dtógfaidh an phleanáil d'fheidhmiú na forála 20% d'earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge scála, scóip agus éagsúlacht na seirbhíse poiblí san áireamh. Tháinig méadú 13,309 ar an meán in aghaidh na bliana idir 2018 agus 2023 ar líon na ndaoine a fostaíodh sa tseirbhís phoiblí.
- Is cinneadh tábhachtach a rinne RTCEGSM é athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an Tionscnaimh Ardscileanna Gaeilge chun críocha an tsoláthair oiliúna a bheidh de dhíth d'fhonn foireann bhreise ag a bhfuil

**Key Points of Commentary - The National Plan**

- The Advisory Committee's decision to commission a research programme at a cost of €315,000 in order to scientifically underpin the development of the National Plan was a prudent and considered decision.
- The National Plan must, as a fundamental requirement, take into account the scale, scope and diversity of the public service in Ireland. Figures published by DPER show that 397,121 people were employed in the public service at the end of 2023. The number of people employed in the public service increased by an average of 13,309 annually between 2018 and 2023.
- A detailed analysis of the level of additional funding required by the Public Sector will be required in the National Plan to ensure that appropriate resources are available to fully implement the new language legislation.
- The effectiveness of the National Plan will depend largely on alignment between the public services sought by the Irish-speaking community and the availability of sufficient staff who are proficient in Irish to provide those services to a high standard. To facilitate this, the new language standards setting out the public services that public bodies will be legally obliged to deliver in Irish, and planning for an increased workforce competent in Irish must be fully integrated. The National Plan is the vehicle that will set out how this will be achieved.
- Planning for a National Irish Language-Proficient Workforce must be a cornerstone of the National Plan for Public Services in Irish.
- Ongoing monitoring and reporting will be necessary to measure progress on the implementation of the National Plan. The necessary resources must be set aside to ensure this.

**1.5 Planning for a National Irish Language-Proficient Workforce**

A shortage of staff with Irish language proficiency is currently one of the greatest obstacles to providing high-quality public services in Irish. The provision stipulating that the Advisory Committee must have regard to the requirement that 20% of new entrants in the Public Service between June 2022 and December 2030 be proficient in Irish is one of the most important functions prescribed for the Advisory Committee. In addition, as well as implementing the language standards system, recruiting sufficient staff proficient in

Irish will be one of the main cornerstones of the National Plan. The National Plan should set out the systematic and phased approach by which public services through Irish will be improved in the Gaeltacht and nationally.

**Key Points of Commentary - Planning for a National Irish Language-Proficient Workforce -**

- The Advisory Committee has taken the positive step of establishing a sub-group to specifically look at the issue of recruitment of staff proficient in Irish to public bodies.
- As a priority, planning for an Irish language-proficient workforce must be embedded in the organisational planning of public bodies. A national Public Service workforce-planning model is already being implemented on an ongoing basis under the guidance of the DPER. This national planning model should be used to embed the recruitment of Irish language-proficient staff in the workforce planning process in every public body.
- Ongoing coordination, oversight and reporting will be required at a national level in order to measure progress on achieving the provision that 20% of new entrants are proficient in Irish across the public sector between 2022 and 2030. The role of the Strategic Workforce Planning Unit within DPER or a similar entity should be considered for this key requirement. The appropriate entity would regularly report to the Advisory Committee on the specific progress being made towards the attainment of the 20% provision for new entrants at the sectoral level (e.g. Government Departments, Local Authorities) and nationally.
- The Public Appointments Service will play a crucial role in ensuring that the recruitment competitions for people who are proficient in Irish are run regularly in order to meet the additional demand that the 20% recruitment provision for Irish language-proficient new entrants will generate.
- It is also a fundamental requirement that planning for the implementation of the 20% provision for new Irish language-proficient entrants takes into account the scale, scope and diversity of the public service. The number of people employed in the public service increased by an average of 13,309 annually between 2018 and 2023.
- DTCAGSM's decision to review the Advanced Irish Language Skills Initiative for the purposes of the educational provision that will be required to provide additional staff proficient in Irish was an important decision. It will be essential, however, in relation to

inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge a oiliúint. Beidh sé riachtanach, áfach, i dtaca le cibé tionscnamh nó straitéis a fheidhmeoidh RTCEGSM agus a mholfaidh an Coiste Comhairleach d'fhonn freastal ar an riachtanas le go mbeidh dóthain foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge ar fáil don tseirbhís phoiblí, go n-aithneofar scála na hidirbheartaíochta a bheidh de dhíth go náisiúnta.

- De bharr scála agus ilghnéitheacht na seirbhíse poiblí beidh riachtanas ann do bheart náisiúnta de chuid earnáil na hOllscolaíochta chun dóthain céimithe atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a sholáthar i ndisciplíní éagsúla chun a chinntiú go n-éireoidh leis an bhforáil 20% d'earcáithe atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge faoi dheireadh 2030.
- Tá deis ag an gCoiste Comhairleach ról ceannais a ghlacadh trí fhorbairt an Phlean Náisiúnta i ndáil le conair a leagan amach leis na páirtithe leasmhara (An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais, Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta, an ÚAO, RTCEGSM agus Institiúidí Tríú Leibhéal), trína bhforbrófar acmhainneacht earnáil na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge chun dóthain foirne ag a bhfuil Gaeilge mhaith a sholáthar, chun críocha na forála earcaíochta 20% agus d'fhonn cur le líon na foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge sa tseirbhís phoiblí trí chéile.
- Is bunriachtanas pleanála agus feidhmithe straitéise a bheidh ann, ar mhaithe le fórsa saothair atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a chothú, go mbainfear chuile leas as na forálacha reachtúla atá in Acht an Údarais um Ard-Oideachas, 2022 i dtaca le straitéis nua don Ollscolaíocht Ghaeilge a fhorbairt go náisiúnta.
- Má tá soláthar acmhainne daonna atá inniúil go cuí sa Ghaeilge le bheith ar fáil go fadtéarmach d'fhonn freastal ar an bhforáil 20% d'earcáithe ag a bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge sa tseirbhís phoiblí, caithfidh an phleanáil tosú ag leibhéal na réamhscolaíochta, agus leanúint ar aghaidh go leibhéal na bunscolaíochta agus na hiar-bhunscolaíochta lán-Ghaeilge.

## 1.6 Caighdeán Teanga

Déantar sainiú in Achtanna na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (2003, 2021) ar sheirbhísí ar leith atá dualgas reachtúil ar Chomhlachtaí Poiblí a sheachadadh i nGaeilge, mar shampla an dualgas atá ar chomhlachtaí poiblí cumarsáid i scríbhinn i nGaeilge a fhreagairt i nGaeilge, comharthaí a chur in airde i nGaeilge agus sciar dá bhfógraíocht bhliantúil a dhéanamh i nGaeilge. Bhí soláthar go leor seirbhísí poiblí eile i nGaeilge, e.g. seirbhísí teileafóin nó seirbhísí teicneolaíochta ar líne, ag brath ar ghealltanais a thabharfadh comhlachtaí poiblí faoi chóras na Scéimeanna Teanga a tugadh isteach faoi Acht 2003. Ba é aidhm

chóras na Scéimeanna Teanga cur go mór le líon na seirbhísí poiblí a bheadh ar fáil i nGaeilge, trí fhorlónadh a dhéanamh ar na seirbhísí a bhí forordaithe i bhforálacha díreacha an Achta féin. Theip ar chóras na Scéimeanna Teanga in imeacht na mblianta cur le líon nó caighdeán na seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge ar bhonn córasach. I measc na laigí ba shuntasáí a bhain le córas na scéimeanna teanga, bhí cúlú ar ghealltanais ó scéim go scéim, doiléireacht maidir le sonraíocht na seirbhíse a bhí le soláthar agus easpa soiléire maidir leis na hacmhainní foirne a bhí sé de dhualgas ar chomhlacht poiblí a chur ar fáil leis an tseirbhís a sholáthar go héifeachtach i nGaeilge.

Tugtar cúram tábhachtach don Choiste Comhairleach faoi alt 18C. (1)(i) den Acht Teanga leasaithe (2021) sa mhéid gur féidir leis seirbhísí poiblí ba chóir do chomhlachtaí poiblí a sholáthar i nGaeilge a shonrú. Is féidir leis an gCoiste Comhairleach ansin a mholadh don Aire RTCEGSM gur chóir caighdeán teanga a fhorordú ina leith le go mbeidh dualgas reachtúil ar na comhlachtaí poiblí ábhartha na seirbhísí riachtanacha a sholáthar i nGaeilge. Ní hamháin go leagfaidh córas nua na gcaighdeán teanga amach na seirbhísí a bheidh dualgas ar chomhlachtaí poiblí a chur ar fáil ach cuimseoidh siad freisin an leibhéal inniúlachta teanga a bheidh riachtanach d'fhoireann na gcomhlachtaí poiblí a bheidh ag soláthar na seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge don phobal.

### Príomhphointí Tráchtairachta - Caighdeán Teanga

- Beidh ról ceannaireachta ag an gCoiste Comhairleach agus leas cuí á bhaint as an bhfeidhm atá aige faoi alt 18C. (1)(i) den Acht Teanga leasaithe (2021) i ndáil le seirbhísí poiblí ba chóir a sholáthar i nGaeilge a shonrú agus a mholadh don Aire TCEGSM caighdeán teanga a fhorordú ina leith. Ach a bhforordófar caighdeán teanga leagfar dualgas reachtúil ar an gcomhlacht poiblí ábhartha an tseirbhís shonrach sin a sholáthar trí mheán na Gaeilge.
- Aithníodh an riachtanas um Scéimeanna Teanga a dhaingniú i gcás breis agus 140 comhlacht poiblí mar go bhfuil na comhlachtaí poiblí sin ag cur seirbhísí poiblí ar fáil a bhfuil éileamh mór orthu ón bpobal. Is féidir catagóiriú a dhéanamh ar fhormhór an 140 comhlacht poiblí a bhfuil an tAire TCEGSM tar éis Scéimeanna Teanga a dhaingniú leo go dtí seo faoi na ceanteidil seo a leanas:
  - Ranna agus Oifigí Rialtais
  - Údarais Áitiúla
  - Institiúidí Oideachais
  - Comhlachtaí Poiblí Móra eile

whatever initiative or strategy DTCAGSM implements and which the Advisory Committee recommends in order to meet the need for a sufficient cohort of Irish-speaking staff in the public service, that the scale of the national intervention required be recognised.

- Due to the scale and diversity of the public service, there will also be a need for a national initiative by the University sector to produce sufficient numbers of Irish language-proficient graduates in a variety of disciplines to ensure that the target of 20% of new entrants with competency in Irish by the end of 2030 is met.
- The Advisory Committee has an opportunity to take a lead role through the development of the National Plan by setting out a pathway with stakeholders (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, HEA, DPER and Third Level Institutions), through which the capacity of the Irish-medium University sector will be developed to provide sufficient numbers of Irish language-proficient staff for the purposes of the 20% recruitment provision, and with a view to increasing the number of Irish language-proficient staff in the public service as a whole.
- In order to foster a workforce that is proficient in the Irish language, the full potential of the statutory provisions contained in the Higher Education Authority Act 2022 in relation to developing a new strategy for Irish-medium University Education nationally, must be fully realised.
- If a sufficient supply of Irish language-proficient human resources is to be available in the long term to meet the 20% provision for Irish language-proficient new entrants in the public service, planning must begin at pre-school levels, and continue to Irish-medium primary and post-primary education levels.

## 1.6 Language Standards

The Official Languages Acts (2003, 2021) prescribe specific services that Public Bodies are legally obliged to deliver in Irish, for example the duty of public bodies to respond to written communication in Irish in the same official language, to erect signs in Irish and to undertake a proportion of their annual advertising in Irish. The provision of many other public services in Irish, e.g. telephone services or online services, was dependent on commitments made by public bodies under the Language Schemes System introduced under the 2003 Act. The aim of the Language Schemes system was to

significantly increase the number of public services available in Irish, by supplementing the services prescribed in the direct provisions of the Act. The Language Schemes system failed over the years to increase the number and quality of public services in Irish on a systematic basis. Among the most significant weaknesses associated with the language scheme system were the scaling back of commitments from scheme to scheme, ambiguity regarding the service to be provided and a lack of clarity regarding the staffing resources that a public body was obliged to provide to deliver the service effectively in Irish.

The Advisory Committee is prescribed an important role under section 18C. (1)(i) of the amended Language Act (2021) insofar as that it can specify public services that public bodies should provide in Irish. The Advisory Committee can then recommend to the Minister for TCAGSM that language standards should be prescribed so that there is a statutory obligation on the relevant public bodies to provide the required services in Irish. The new system of language standards will not only set out the services that public bodies will be required to provide in Irish, but they will also include the level of Irish language proficiency required of the staff providing the service.

### Key Points of Commentary - Language Standards

- The Advisory Committee has a leading role through its function under section 18C. (1)(i) of the amended Language Act (2021) specifying public services that should be provided in Irish, and recommending to the Minister for TCAGSM that a language standard be prescribed in respect thereof. Once language standards are prescribed, a statutory obligation will be placed on the relevant public body to provide that specific service through the medium of Irish.
- The need to confirm Language Schemes was identified in the case of over 140 public bodies as these public bodies provide public services that are in high public demand. The majority of the 140 public bodies with which the Minister for TCAGSM has confirmed Language Schemes to date can be categorised under the following headings:
  - Government Departments and Agencies
  - Local Authorities
  - Educational Institutions
  - Other Large Public Bodies

- Is bunriachtanas a bheidh ann go dtabharfaidh an chéad sraith de na caighdeáin teanga na catagóirí thuasluaite uile de chomhlachtaí poiblí isteach faoina scóip. Is bunriachtanas é freisin go rachaidh na caighdeáin teanga tosaigh i ngleic leis na bearnaí ollmhóra atá i seirbhísí poiblí atá ar fáil i nGaeilge faoi láthair, mar shampla easpa seirbhísí teileafóin, easpa seirbhísí deisce cabhrach agus fáiltithe agus easpa seirbhísí teicneolaíochta idirghníomhacha ar líne, láithreáin ghréasáin ina measc.
- Ní hamháin go leagfaidh córas nua na gcaighdeán teanga amach na seirbhísí a bheidh dualgas ar chomhlachtaí poiblí a chur ar fáil, ach cuimseoidh siad freisin an leibhéal inniúlachta teanga a bheidh riachtanach d'fhoireann na gcomhlachtaí poiblí a bheidh ag soláthar na seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge don phobal. Tá feidhmeanna tábhachtacha ag an gCoiste Comhairleach freisin i leith an riachtanais seo. Faoi fho-alt 18C. (1)(b)(iii) d'Acht na dTeangacha leasaithe (2021) is féidir leis an gCoiste Comhairleach moltaí a dhéanamh maidir leis an leibhéal inniúlachta teanga faoi Chomhchreat Tagartha na hEorpa um Theangacha a bheidh de dhíth ar fhoireann comhlachtaí poiblí d'fhonn seirbhísí i nGaeilge a chur ar fáil. Agus leibhéal inniúlachta teanga á socrú beidh sé riachtanach an cumas teanga a bheidh de dhíth ar fhoireann na gcomhlachtaí poiblí a chuireann seirbhísí ar fáil i gceantar Gaeltachta a mheas go cúramach lena n-áirítear an t-áiteamh gur chóir leibhéal C1 ar a laghad a bheith ag baill foirne a bhíonn ag déileáil le cainteoirí dúchais. Maidir le comhlachtaí poiblí a bheadh ag cur seirbhísí ar fáil lasmuigh de cheantar Gaeltachta, beidh inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ar leibhéal B2 ar a laghad de dhíth ar na baill foirne a bheidh ag déileáil leis an bpobal.
- Ach a bhreithnítear straitéisí rialtais ar nós 'Cónascadh Rialtais 2030: Straitéis Dhigiteach agus TFC do Sheirbhís Phoiblí na hÉireann' a d'fhoilsigh RCPSA in 2022 feictear go mbeidh oiread agus 90% de sheirbhísí poiblí ar leith á seachadadh ar líne faoin mbliain 2030. Luaitear sa straitéis chéanna go bhfuiltear ag súil go mbeidh 80% de shaoránaigh na tíre ag úsáid an ardáin MyGovID faoin mbliain 2030 d'fhonn teacht ar sheirbhísí poiblí áirithe. Má tá seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge le bheith i dtiúin le riachtanais chomhaimseartha an phobail teanga ba chóir do na caighdeáin teanga tosaigh forordú a dhéanamh i ndáil leis na seirbhísí idirghníomhacha ar líne atá ag na comhlachtaí poiblí uile a bhfuil Scéimeanna Teanga acu i láthair na huaire. Tá sé seo ar cheann de na riachtanais is bunúsaí do chóras na gcaighdeán teanga tosaigh.

### 1.7 Bonneagar Náisiúnta do Sholáthar Seirbhísí Poiblí i nGaeilge

Is chun leasa phobal na Gaeilge é go mbeadh sinéirgíocht idir beartais phoiblí an stáit do chur chun cinn na Gaeilge agus feidhmiú cearta teanga faoi scáth Achtanna na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (2003, 2021). Tá tagairtí sonracha d'fheabhsú seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge i bpríomhbhearta straitéise an stáit, eadhon an Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010 – 2030 agus Plean Gníomhaíochta an Rialtais don Ghaeilge. Déantar tagairt shonrach freisin i Straitéis Athnuachana na Státseirbhíse 2030 - 'Ár mBuanna a Fhorbairt' don deis atá ann an líon foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge atá ag obair sa Státseirbhís a mhéadú de thoradh na reachtaíochta teanga nua. Tá cur síos i Réamhrá Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh ar an tábhacht go mbeadh an Plean Náisiúnta, a leagfaidh amach an mapa bóthair trína dtiocfaidh feabhas ar sheirbhísí poiblí trí Ghaeilge, ag tógáil ar bheartais poiblí thuasluaite an Stáit agus ar bheartais eile lena n-áirítear an tOideachas LánGhaeilge.

Is bearta suntasacha de chreat reachtúil an stáit do chur chun cinn na Gaeilge iad Acht na Gaeltachta 2012, a chuir an próiseas pleanála teanga ar bhonn reachtúil, agus Achtanna na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (2003 & 2021) a láidríonn cearta teanga an phobail. Is cinnte go bhfuil deiseanna, nach bhfacthas a léithéid cheana, ann chun sineirgíocht a chothú idir na bearta thuasluaite d'fhonn teacht aníos le réitigh shamhlaíochta nua trína mbeidh freastal i bhfad níos fearr á dhéanamh ag an stát ar phobal na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht agus go náisiúnta.

#### Príomhphointí Tráchtairachta - Bonneagar Náisiúnta do Sholáthar Seirbhísí Poiblí i nGaeilge

- Tá bonneagar náisiúnta pleanála teanga á fhorbairt ag an Stát le blianta beaga anuas sna limistéir phleanála teanga, i líonraí teanga agus i mbailte seirbhíse Gaeltachta. Ba chóir leas a bhaint as an mbonneagar náisiúnta pleanála teanga chun molchampsais seirbhísí poiblí a fhorbairt a chuirfidh raon leathan seirbhísí poiblí ar fáil i nGaeilge. Ach leas a bhaint as an mbonneagar náisiúnta pleanála teanga, rachfaí i ngleic le go leor de na dúshláin a bhfuil eispéireas ag an bpobal teanga orthu faoi láthair, is é sin go mbíonn bac agus moill ar theacht ar sheirbhísí ar ardcaighdeán i nGaeilge.
- Chruthódh na molchampsais dlús foirne a bheadh ag seachadadh na seirbhísí poiblí agus dlús éilimh ón bpobal teanga. Luíodh an forás seo isteach go huile agus go hiomlán leis na forálacha nua (alt 18E) atá san

- It is a fundamental requirement that the initial provision of language standards bring all of the above-mentioned categories of public bodies within its scope. It is also essential that the initial language standards address the significant gaps in public services currently available in Irish, for example, the shortfall in telephone services, helpdesk and reception services and the shortfall in interactive online technology services in Irish, including websites.
- The new system of language standards will not only set out the services that public bodies will be required to provide, but they will also include the level of language proficiency required of the staff of public bodies providing public services in Irish. The Advisory Committee also has important functions in relation to this requirement. Under subsection 18C. (1)(b)(iii) of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, the Advisory Committee may make recommendations regarding the required level of Irish language proficiency under the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (TSE) for public body staff for the provision of services in Irish. When setting language proficiency levels, it will be necessary to carefully consider the language proficiency required of staff of public bodies providing services in a Gaeltacht area, including the requirement that staff dealing with native speakers should have at least a level C1 proficiency. For public bodies providing services outside of Gaeltacht area, staff members dealing with the public will need to have at least a level B2 proficiency in Irish.
- The Government Strategy 'Connecting Government 2030: A Digital and ICT Strategy for Ireland's Public Service' published by DPER in 2022 projects that as much as 90% of certain public services will be delivered online by the year 2030. The same strategy states that it is expected that 80% of the country's citizens will be using the MyGovID platform by 2030 to access certain public services. If public services in Irish are to meet the current needs of the Irish language community, initial language standards should be prescribed that oblige all public bodies that currently have Language Schemes to deliver online interactive services in Irish as a priority. This is one of the most basic requirements in prescribing initial language standards.

### 1.7 National Infrastructure for the Provision of Public Services in Irish

Synergy between state public policies for the promotion of the Irish language and the implementation of language rights under the Official Languages Acts (2003, 2021) benefits the Irish-speaking community. There are specific references in key State strategic measures, namely the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030 and the Government's Action Plan for the Irish Language, to improving public services in Irish. The Civil Service Renewal Strategy 2030 - 'Building on our Strengths' also makes specific reference to the opportunity for increasing the number of Irish-speaking staff working in the Civil Service as a result of the new language legislation. The Introduction to the Advisory Committee's Report (20 June 2022 - 31 December 2023) explains the importance of the National Plan, which will set out the roadmap for improving public services through Irish, building on the State's aforementioned policies, including Irish-medium Education policy.

Acht na Gaeltachta 2012 placed the language planning process on a statutory basis, and the Official Languages Acts (2003 & 2021) which strengthen the language rights of the Irish-speaking community, are significant measures within the State's statutory framework for fostering the Irish language. There are unprecedented opportunities to foster synergy between the above-mentioned measures to propose imaginative solutions through which the state will better serve the Irish-speaking community in the Gaeltacht and nationally.

#### Key Points of Commentary - a National Infrastructure for Public Services in Irish

- The State has developed a national language-planning infrastructure in recent years in language planning areas within the Gaeltacht, language networks and Gaeltacht service towns. The national language-planning infrastructure could be used to develop public service campus hubs that will provide a wide range of public services in Irish. By harnessing the national language planning infrastructure, many of the challenges that the language community currently experiences would be addressed, namely the obstacles and delays in accessing high-quality services in Irish.
- The campus hubs would create a critical mass of staff delivering public services consolidate and increase demand for public services in Irish from the language

Acht leasaithe freisin go mbeidh an Ghaeilge ina teanga oibre in oifigí na gcomhlachtaí poiblí sa Ghaeltacht ó dháta a fhorordóidh Aire na Gaeltachta.

Tá deiseanna suntasacha ann go dtógfadh na molchamps ar an mbonneagar oideachais tríú leibhéal, teicneolaíochta (e.g. gteiceana), sealbhaithe agus buanaithe teanga atá forbartha ag an Stát sa Ghaeltacht cheana féin.

- Tá moladh ag dul don Choiste Comhairleach as an gcinneadh ‘grúpa oibre teicniúil’ a bhunú chun scagadh a dhéanamh ar an riachtanas go mbeidh na córais teicneolaíochta a bheidh á n-úsáid ag comhlachtaí poiblí oiriúnach chun seirbhísí poiblí a sheachadadh ar chomhchaighdeán i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla.
- Ba chóir leas a bhaint as scóip an Phlean Dhigitigh don Ghaeilge 2023-2027 le breathnú go sonrath ar na deiseanna móra atá ann buntáiste a bhaint as an nua-theicneolaíocht d’fhonn seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge a fheabhsú.
- Díol suntais is ea an fógra a rinneadh le gairid agus an Plean Náisiúnta um Seirbhísí Poiblí Gaeilge á sheoladh go raibh sé beartaithe ag Údarás na Gaeltachta “uirlis úrnu” don Ghaeilge a bheidh bunaithe ar an intleacht shaorga (AI) a fhorbairt. Mar aon le hacmhainní nua intleachta saorga i nGaeilge a fhorbairt a d’eascódh rochtain ar sheirbhísí faisnéise poiblí i nGaeilge ba chóir breathnú ar na deiseanna freisin a chothóidh Intleacht Shaorga i gcomhthéacs na molchamps ilseirbhísí thuasluaite. Is féidir na molchamps ilseirbhíse a shamhlú ina gcumasc den nuatheicneolaíocht, lena n-áirítear an Intleacht

Shaorga, agus den acmhainn dhaonna atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a bheadh ag soláthar mais chriticiúil seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge, beart a chruthódh, faoi seach, dlús éilimh ón bpobal ar na seirbhísí.

- Tá go leor de na seirbhísí poiblí trína mbíonn caidreamh ag saoránaigh leis an Stáit ó lá go lá ag bogadh ar líne. Is díol suntais na cuspóirí a luaigh an Rialtas freisin maidir le seachadadh seirbhísí poiblí sna blianta beaga amach romhainn sa straitéis: ‘Cónascadh Rialtais 2030: Straitéis Dhigiteach agus TFC do Sheirbhís Phoiblí na hÉireann’. Gan ach sampla praiticiúil amháin a roghnú, luaitear sa straitéis go bhfuiltear ag súil go mbeidh 80% de shaoránaigh ag úsáid leithéid an ardáin MyGovID faoi 2030. Tairseach é MyGovID trína bhfuil bunseirbhísí ar fáil, cuir i gcás iarratas a dhéanamh ar cheadúnas tiomána, ar phas, ar chárta seirbhíse sóisialta, ar sheirbhísí tithíochta agus araile. Ach má scrúdaítear leibhéal an tsoláthair i nGaeilge ar an tairseach náisiúnta seo i láthair na huairé tá éagothromaíocht ollmhór idir caighdeán agus cuimsitheacht na seirbhísí poiblí atá ar fáil i mBéarla i gcomparáid leis an tseirbhís thearc agus bhearnach i nGaeilge. Beidh sé ina bhunriachtanas go bhfaighidh na caighdeáin teanga tosaigh greim ar na comhlachtaí poiblí atá ag úsáid córais idirghníomhacha ar líne chun seirbhísí poiblí bunúsacha a sholáthar don phobal. Caithfear riachtanais na teanga agus dearadh na seirbhíse i nGaeilge a thabhairt isteach i bpróisis phleanála na dtionscadal forbartha teicneolaíochta ón tús seachas an réiteach don tseirbhís i nGaeilge a bheith ina réiteach post-factum i ndiaidh an gníomh a dhéanamh i mBéarla ar dtús.

community. This development would also compliment the new provisions (section 18E) in the amended Act providing that Irish will be the working language in the offices of public bodies in the Gaeltacht from a date to be prescribed by the Minister for the Gaeltacht. There are significant opportunities for the campus hubs to build on the third-level education, technology (e.g. gteic), language acquisition and sustainment infrastructure that the State has already developed in the Gaeltacht.

- The Advisory Committee is to be commended for its decision to establish a ‘technical working group’ to examine the requirement that ICT systems used by public bodies are suitable to deliver public services of an equal standard in Irish and English.
- The scope of the Digital Plan for the Irish Language 2023-2027 should be utilised to examine the significant opportunities that exist to take advantage of new technology to improve public services in Irish.
- Of note is the recent announcement made at the launch of the National Plan for Irish Language Public Services that Údarás na Gaeltachta plans to develop new AI resources in the Irish language. As well as developing new artificial intelligence resources in Irish that would facilitate access to public information services in Irish, consideration should also be given to the opportunities that Artificial Intelligence will create in the context of the aforementioned multi-service hub campuses. Multi-service hub campuses can be viewed as a combination of new technology, including Artificial Intelligence, and Irish language human resources that

would provide a critical mass of public services in Irish, a measure that would, in turn, create a greater demand from the public for the services.

- Many of the public services through which citizens interact with the State on a day-to-day basis are moving online. Of note also are the Government objectives stated in the strategy regarding the delivery of public services in the coming years: ‘Connecting Government 2030: A Digital and ICT Strategy for Ireland’s Public Service’. To mention just one practical example, the strategy states that it is expected that 80% of citizens will be using a platform such as MyGovID by 2030. MyGovID is a portal through which basic services are available, such as applying for a driver’s license, passport, social service card, housing services, etc. However, an examination of the current level of provision in Irish on this national portal shows a substantial imbalance between, on the one hand, the quality and comprehensiveness of public services available in English and, on the other, the scarce and incomplete service available in Irish. It will be essential that the initial language standards encompass public bodies that are using interactive online systems to provide essential public services similar to the above-mentioned. Language needs and Irish language service design and provision must be incorporated into the planning processes of ICT projects from the outset rather than the service in Irish being a post-factum action after the delivery of the service in English..

## 2. RÉAMHRÁ

Faoi alt 18F(3) d’Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021 is é ceann de na feidhmeanna nua atá agam mar Choimisinéir Teanga tráchtairacht a dhéanamh ar Thuarascálacha an Choiste Chomhairligh um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge. Forordaítear in alt 18F(3) freisin go leagaim an tráchtairacht faoi bhráid an Aire Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán (An tAire TCEGSM).

Is mar seo a leanas a shainítear dualgas tráchtairachta seo an Choimisinéara Teanga in alt 18F(3):

‘Déanfaidh an Coimisinéir, laistigh de 6 mhí ón tuarascáil dá dtagraítear i bhfo-alt (1) a fháil, tráchtairacht ar an tuarascáil a ullmhú agus a chur faoi bhráid an Aire.’

Leanann an fheidhm tráchtairachta thuasluaite atá orm mar Choimisinéir Teanga ón dualgas atá ar an gCoiste Comhairleach ar an gcéad dul síos faoi alt 18F(1) d’Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021 thíosluaite tuarascálacha ar a chuid oibre a chur ar fáil don Choimisinéir Teanga.

Tuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh

‘Déanfaidh an Coiste Comhairleach, tráth nach déanaí ná an 30 Meitheamh gach bliain, tuarascáil ar dhul chun cinn a sholáthar don Aire agus don Choimisinéir maidir lena chuid oibre le linn na bliana roimhe sin nó, i gcás na chéad tuarascála ar dhul chun cinn uaidh, maidir lena chuid oibre ón lá bunaithe suas go dtí an 31 Nollaig an bhliain ina dhiaidh sin agus an lá sin san áireamh.’

Díríonn an chéad thráchtairacht seo ar chéad Tuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh don tréimhse 20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023 mar a leagtar síos in alt 18F(1).

### 2.1 An Coiste Comhairleach um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge

An tAire TCEGSM, Catherine Martin, a bhunaigh an Coiste Comhairleach um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge an 20 Meitheamh 2022 faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021. Cuimsítear na feidhmeanna reachtúla a leagtar ar an gCoiste Comhairleach faoi ailt 18C agus 18F d’Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021. Nuair a bhreithnítear na feidhmeanna agus na cúraimí a leagtar ar an gCoiste Comhairleach níl aon cheist ann ach go

mbeidh ról cinniúnach ag an gCoiste i dtreorú agus i bhfeasú na pleanála straitéisí sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí in Éirinn, rud a chuirfidh go mór le líon agus le caighdeán na seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge atá ar fáil do phobal na Gaeltachta agus na Gaeilge go náisiúnta.

I measc na bpríomchúraimí a leagtar ar an gCoiste Comhairleach tá cúram a dhéanamh do Phlean Náisiúnta a ullmhú d’fhonn líon na seirbhísí poiblí atá ar fáil i nGaeilge a mhéadú ar bhonn córasach agus céimithe. Seo é an chéad uair i stair an Stáit seo a bhfuil Plean Náisiúnta reachtúil á sholáthar i dtaca le seirbhísí poiblí a sholáthar i nGaeilge. Feidhm ríthábhachtach eile atá ag an gCoiste Comhairleach, faoi alt 18C(3)(b) de Acht Teanga leasaithe (2021), is ea aird a bheith aige ar mhéadú an lín foirne de chuid comhlachtaí poiblí atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge ionas go mbeidh 20% ar a laghad den fhoireann a earcaíonn comhlachtaí poiblí tráth nach déanaí ná an 31 Nollaig 2030 inniúil sa Ghaeilge. Thosaigh an tréimhse atá ábhartha d’amlíne na hearcaíochta foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge an Meitheamh 2022, tráth a bunaíodh an Coiste Comhairleach.

Cúram tábhachtach eile a thugtar don Choiste Comhairleach faoin reachtaíocht teanga is ea seirbhísí poiblí ba chóir do chomhlachtaí poiblí a sholáthar i nGaeilge a shonrú. Is féidir leis an gCoiste Comhairleach ansin a mholadh don Aire RTCEGSM gur chóir caighdeán teanga a fhorordú ina leith ionas go mbeidh dualgas reachtúil ar na comhlachtaí poiblí ábhartha na seirbhísí forordaithe a sholáthar i nGaeilge. Ní hamháin go leagfaidh córas nua na gcaighdeán teanga amach na seirbhísí a bheidh dualgas ar chomhlachtaí poiblí a chur ar fáil ach cuimseoidh siad freisin an leibhéal inniúlachta teanga a bheidh riachtanach d’fhoireann na gcomhlachtaí poiblí a bheidh ag soláthar na seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge don phobal.

Tiocfaidh córas na gcaighdeán teanga in áit chóras na scéimeanna teanga, córas a bhí thar a bheith lochtach ó thaobh an bhunaidhm a bhí aige faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 a bhaint amach, arbh é sin seirbhísí breise dá leithéidí seirbhísí ó bhéal as Gaeilge, nár leagadh amach go sonrach i bhforálacha an Achta, a chur ar fáil. Is de thoradh na laigí a bhain le córas na scéimeanna teanga iad na bearnaí móra reatha atá i seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge, e.g. easpa seirbhísí teileafóin, easpa seirbhísí deisce cabhrach agus fáiltithe agus easpa

## 2. FOREWORD

Under section 18F(3) of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, one of my new functions as Coimisinéir Teanga is to comment on the Reports of the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee. Section 18F(3) also prescribes that I submit the commentary to the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (Minister for DCAGSM).

An Coimisinéir Teanga’s obligation is defined in section 18F(3) as follows:

‘The Commissioner shall, within 6 months of receiving the report referred to in subsection (1), prepare and submit to the Minister a commentary on the report.’

The above-mentioned function of An Coimisinéir Teanga arises from the obligation of the Advisory Committee, first and foremost, under section 18F(1) of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, to provide reports on its work to An Coimisinéir Teanga.

Report of Advisory Committee

‘The Advisory Committee shall, not later than 30 June of each year, provide a progress report to the Minister and to the Commissioner with regard to its work during the preceding year or, in the case of its first progress report, its work from the establishment day up to and including 31 December of the following year.’

This initial commentary focuses on the first Report of the Advisory Committee for the period 20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023 as set out in section 18F(1).

### 2.1 Irish Language Services Advisory Committee

The Irish Language Services Advisory Committee was established by the Minister for TCAGSM, Catherine Martin, on 20 June 2022 under the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. The statutory functions assigned to the Advisory Committee are covered under sections 18C and 18F of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. When considering the functions and responsibilities assigned to the Advisory Committee, the Committee will undoubtedly play a crucial role in guiding

and informing strategic planning in the Public Service in Ireland, with respect to the number and quality of public services in Irish available to the Gaeltacht and Irish-speaking community nationally.

One of the key responsibilities assigned to the Advisory Committee is to prepare a National Plan to increase the number of public services available in Irish on a systematic and phased basis. This is the first time in the history of this State that a statutory National Plan is being provided for the provision of public services in Irish. Another critical function of the Advisory Committee, under section 18C(3)(b) of the amended Language Act (2021), is to have regard to increasing the number of Irish language-proficient staff of public bodies so that at least 20% of staff recruited by public bodies no later than 31 December 2030 will be proficient in Irish. The period relevant to the timeline for the recruitment of Irish-speaking staff began with the establishment of the Advisory Committee on June 20 2022.

Another important responsibility assigned to the Advisory Committee under the language legislation is to specify public services that public bodies should provide in Irish. The Advisory Committee can then recommend to the Minister for TCAGSM that language standards be prescribed for the recommended services, thus placing a statutory obligation on the relevant public bodies to provide those services. The new system of language standards will not only set out the services that public bodies will be required to provide, but they will also include the level of language proficiency required of the staff of public bodies providing public services in Irish.

The language standards system will replace the language schemes system, a system that was deeply flawed in terms of achieving its original purpose under the Official Languages Act 2003, namely to provide additional services such as oral language services in Irish, which were not specifically prescribed in the direct provisions of the Act. Some of the current major gaps in public services in Irish are a result of the weaknesses in the language schemes system, e.g. shortfall in telephone services, help desk and reception services and shortfall in interactive online technology services, including websites. It is a fundamental requirement that the online component of

seirbhísí teicneolaíochta idirghníomhacha ar líne, láithreáin ghréasáin ina measc. Is bunriachtanas é go mbeidh an ghné den tseirbhís phoiblí i nGaeilge a bhíonn ar líne agus an ghné chumarsáide ó bhéal idir pobal na Gaeilge agus ball foirne an chomhlachta phoiblí, go mbeidh na gnéithe sin ar fáil ar ardchaighdeán gan bhac, gan mhoill agus gan dua i nGaeilge, mar atá ar fáil i seirbhísí poiblí i mBéarla i gcoitinne.

### Comhdhéanamh an Choiste

11 chomhalta atá ar an gCoiste Comhairleach faoi Chathaoirleacht an Dra Aodhán Mac Cormaic, Rúnaí Cúnta, An Ghaeilge agus an Ghaeltacht, sa RTCEGSM. Tá ionadaíocht ar an gCoiste ón Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí, Sheachadadh PFN agus Athchóirithe (RCPSA), ón tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí, ón Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí, ó Fheidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte, ón nGarda Síochána, ó Fhoras na Gaeilge, ón nGníomhaireacht Bainistíochta Rialtais Áitiúil mar aon le hionadaí do phobal na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht agus ionadaí don phobal na Gaeilge lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht. Tá comhdhéanamh an Choiste le moladh mar go bhfuil meascán maith comhlachtaí poiblí ann, comhlachtaí atá lánach i bpleanáil agus i bhfeidhmiú bheartas poiblí na seirbhíse poiblí in Éirinn ar lámh amháin agus ar an lámh eile comhlachtaí poiblí atá ag soláthar cuid de na seirbhísí poiblí is mó a bhfuil éileamh ag an bpobal orthu. Tá tábhacht ar leith ag baint le ballraíocht RTCEGSM ar an gCoiste follasach i gcomhthéacs ról na Roinne sin mar phríomhfheithicil an stáit d'fhorbairt agus d'fheidhmiú polasaí Rialtais i dtaca le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht agus go náisiúnta.

### 2.2 Scóip na Tráchtairachta

Clúdaíonn an tráchtairacht seo an chéad Thuarascáil de chuid an Choiste Chomhairligh (Tuarascáil an CC) don tréimhse 20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023. Déantar an tráchtairacht seo i gcomhthéacs feidhmeanna reachtúla an Choiste Chomhairligh mar a leagtar amach in alt 18C d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021 iad. Cé go bhfuil an Plean Náisiúnta um Sheirbhísí Poiblí

Gaeilge féin i gcló faoin am a bhfuil an tráchtairacht seo á déanamh, ní thagann tráchtairacht shonrach ar ábhar an Phlean Náisiúnta féin faoi scóip na tráchtairachta seo de réir na n-amlínte reachtúla atá leagtha síos faoi alt 18F(1) d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021. Mar sin féin, cuimsítear bearta an Choiste Chomhairligh i gcomhthéacs a fheidhmeanna reachtúla i ndáil le hullmhú an Phlean Náisiúnta faoi scóip na tráchtairachta seo.

### An Modh Tráchtairachta

Déantar coimriú ar phríomhbhearta an Choiste Chomhairligh chun críocha a fheidhmeanna reachtúla mar a chuirtear i láthair i ngach caibidil de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh iad. Déantar tráchtairacht léirmheasa ansin ar na príomhbhearta sin. Leagtar béim ar leith sa tráchtairacht léirmheasa ar na bearta is suntasaí a bhfuil soláthar dóibh san Acht Teanga leasaithe (2021) ar mhaithe le bunaidhm na reachtaíochta teanga a fhíorú, eadhon líon na seirbhísí poiblí atá ar fáil i nGaeilge a mhéadú agus caighdeán seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge i gcoitinne a fheabhsú. Tá an obair ullmhúcháin atá idir lámha ag an gCoiste Comhairleach d'fhorbairt an Phlean Náisiúnta, chun críocha na forála 20% d'earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge faoi 2030 agus forbairt chóras na gcaighdeán teanga ar na bearta is tábhachtaí a thagann faoi chúram an Choiste Chomhairligh. Ar mhaithe le leanúnachas idir Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh agus an Tráchtairacht seo, luaim teideal na gcaibidlí ábhartha ó Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh a bhfuil tráchtairacht á ndéanamh orthu sna caibidlí faoi seach sa tráchtairacht seo.

Mar a luaitear i ráiteas an Chathaoirigh i dTuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh dhírigh an Thuarascáil don tréimhse 20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023 ar:

'ullmhú an chéad Phlean Náisiúnta um Sheirbhísí Poiblí Gaeilge dá bhforáiltear faoi Alt 18C. d'Achtanna na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003-2021 a bhí obair an Choiste dírithe go príomhúil don tréimhse a chlúdaítear faoin tuarascáil seo agus léiríodh dúthracht na gcomhaltaí don obair seo i ngach aon chruinniú a bhí eadrainn ó bunaíodh an Coiste.'

the public service in Irish and the oral communication aspect of the Irish language service will be available to a high standard without hindrance or delay, as is currently the case with public services in English in general.

### Composition of the Committee

The Advisory Committee consists of 11 members and is chaired by Dr. Aodhán Mac Cormaic, Assistant Secretary, Gaeltacht and Irish language, in the DTCAGSM. The Committee has representation from the DPER, the Public Appointments Service, the Department of Social Protection, the Health Service Executive, An Garda Síochána, Foras na Gaeilge, the Local Government Management Agency as well as a representative for the Irish-speaking community in the Gaeltacht and a representative for the Irish-speaking community outside the Gaeltacht. The composition of the Committee is commendable as it includes both representation, from public bodies that are central to the planning and implementation of public service policy in Ireland and public bodies that are providing some of the most in-demand public services. DTCAGSM membership of the Committee is of particular importance in the context of that Department's role as the State's main vehicle for the development and implementation of Government policy regarding the promotion of the Irish language in the Gaeltacht and nationally.

### 2.2 Scope of Commentary

This commentary covers the first Report of the Advisory Committee (AC Report) for the period 20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023. This commentary is provided in the context of the statutory functions of the Advisory Committee as set out in section 18C of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. Although the National Plan for Irish Language Public Services itself has been published at the time of this commentary, specific commentary on the content of the National Plan itself does not fall within the scope of this commentary in accordance with the statutory timelines that are

prescribed for this commentary under section 18F(1) of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. However, the activities of the Advisory Committee in the context of its statutory functions in relation to the preparation of the National Plan are included within the scope of this commentary.

### Method for Commentary

The key activities undertaken by the Advisory Committee with regard to its statutory functions and as presented in each chapter of the Advisory Committee's Report are summarised. Commentary is then given on these key actions. Particular emphasis is placed in the commentary on the most significant statutory provisions in the amended Language Act (2021) in order to realise the primary aim of the language legislation, namely to increase the number of public services available in Irish and to improve the quality of public services in Irish in general. The preparatory work being undertaken by the Advisory Committee for the development of the National Plan, for the purposes of the provision of 20% of recruits who are proficient in Irish by 2030 and the development of the language standards system are among the most important measures that come under the remit of the Advisory Committee. For the sake of continuity between the Advisory Committee Report and this Commentary, I cite the titles of the relevant chapters from the Advisory Committee's Report that are being commented on in the respective chapters in this commentary.

As stated in the Chairperson's statement in the Advisory Committee Report, the Report for the period 20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023 focused on:

'The preparation of the first National Irish Language Public Services Plan provided for under Section 18C. of the Official Languages Acts 2003-2021 was the primary focus of the Committee's work for the period covered by this report and the commitment of the members to this work has been demonstrated in every meeting convened since the Committee was established.'

### 3. GNÓTHAÍ REÁCHTÁLA AN CHOISTE CHOMHAIRLIGH

#### Forléargas ar Ghnóthaí Reachtála an Choiste Chomhairligh

Déantar cur síos go príomha i gCaibidil 4 agus 5 de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh ar ghnóthaí reachtála an Choiste don tréimhse 20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023.

Tuairiscítear i gCaibidil 5 gurb é/í an tAire TCEGSM a chuireann rúnaíocht ar fáil don Choiste mar a fhorordaítear san Acht Teanga leasaithe (2021):

‘I gcomhréir le hAlt 18A(3), is é nó í an tAire Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán atá freagrach as rúnaíocht a chur fáil don Choiste agus is é/í a chinneadh níosann imeachta an Choiste.’

[Ich 17, Tuarascáil ar dhul chun cinn an Choiste Chomhairligh um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge – 20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023]

Tá soláthar in Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasu), 2021 freisin go gcuirfí seirbhísí ateangaireachta ar fáil le linn cruinnithe Coiste ar iarratas ó chomhalta den Choiste Comhairleach. Tá conarthaí ateangaireachta aontaithe ag RTCEGSM chun na críche seo.

Tugtar le fios gur reachtáladh 11 chruinniú den Choiste idir Mí Iúil 2022 agus Mí na Samhna 2023. Is in Oifigí Fhoras na Gaeilge, 63-66 Sráid Amiens, Baile Átha Cliath 1 a thionóltar cruinnithe an Choiste de ghnáth. Foilsítear cláir agus miontuairiscí na gcrúinnithe uile a bhíonn ag an gCoiste ar shuíomh gréasáin RTCEGSM. Luaitear i gCaibidil 5 den Thuarascáil freisin gur aontaíodh Téarmaí Tagartha agus Níosanna Imeachta an Choiste ag a chéad chruinniú an 25 Iúil 2022. Déantar cur síos freisin in Aguisín C den Thuarascáil ar níosanna imeachta cruinnithe an Choiste.

An tAire TCEGSM a shocraíonn níosanna imeachta an Choiste. Cuirtear in iúl i gCaibidil 5 den Thuarascáil freisin gur aontaíodh feidhmeanna breise chun ról an Choiste a chomhlánú. Luaitear na feidhmeanna breise sin thíosluaite in Aguisín B de Thuarascáil an Choiste:

- ‘a chinntiú, chomh fada agus ab fhéidir leo, go nglacann na heagraíochtaí/limistéir ar a bhfuil siad ag déanamh ionadaíochta orthu páirt iomlán i gcur i bhfeidhm an Achta leasaithe, mar aon le heagraíochtaí a thagann faoi scáth na n-eagraíochtaí sin chomh maith;

- eolas a roinnt agus a mhalartú idir na páirtithe chun críche aidhmeanna an Choiste a bhaint amach;
- tacú le gníomhaíochtaí agus tionscnaimh bhreise a aithint chun cur i bhfeidhm fhoriomlán an Achta a thabhairt chun tosaigh, de réir mar is cuí;
- comhairle a thabhairt agus moltaí a dhéanamh maidir le tionscnaimh/polasaithe nua a d’fheadfaí a chur sa tsiúl mar thaca do chur i bhfeidhm an Achta, de réir mar is cuí.’  
[Ich 40, Aguisín B, Tuarascáil ar dhul chun cinn an Choiste Chomhairligh um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge – 20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023]

Tá na feidhmeanna breise thuasluaite arna ghlacadh don Choiste Comhairleach le moladh ar mhaithe le rannpháirtíocht a threisiú ó na páirtithe leasmhara a mbeifear ag brath orthu d’fhonn lánfeidhm a thabhairt don reachtaíocht nua teanga ar fud na Seirbhíse Poiblí.

#### Aoichainteoirí

Déantar cur síos i mír 4.2 ar aoichainteoirí a láithrigh den Choiste ar ábhar a bhain (go dlúth) le feidhmeanna an Choiste. I measc na n-ábhar a cuimsíodh sna seisiúin leis na haoichainteoirí bhí ardú feasachta ar dheiseanna fostaíochta le Gaeilge, feidhmiú chóras na gCaighdeán Teanga sa Bhreatain Bheag, córas TEG agus an Creat Comhchoiteann Tagartha Eorpach le haghaidh Teangacha, Cóitseáil Teanga san Ionad Oibre agus tuairimí Chumann na nOifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge (COFG) maidir le forbairt an Phlean Náisiúnta agus feidhmiú na reachtaíochta teanga nua. Téamaí tráthúla iad seo thuasluaite uile a bhfuil sé tábhachtach aird a bheith orthu ar bhonn leanúnach.

#### Cruinnithe leis an bhFoireann Taighde

Déantar cur síos i gCaibidil 6 de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh ar chruinnithe a reachtáladh leis an bhfoireann taighde a bhí ag plé le hullmhú an Phlean Náisiúnta. Tuairiscítear gur chuir an fhoireann taighde plean oibre don chlár taighde faoi bhráid an Choiste Chomhairligh an 30/6/2023 agus go ndearna an fhoireann taighde cur i láthar ar dhul chun cinn an taighde arís an 27/10/2023. Tugtar le fios freisin gur reachtáladh cruinnithe rialta idir rúnaíocht an Choiste Chomhairligh agus an fhoireann taighde agus le Coiste Stiúrtha an Chláir Thaighde freisin an 20/6/2023.

### 3. ADVISORY COMMITTEE OPERATIONAL AFFAIRS

#### Overview of the Advisory Committee’s Operational Affairs

Chapters 4 and 5 of the Advisory Committee Report primarily describe the Committee’s operational affairs for the period 20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023.

Chapter 5 reports that the Minister for TCAGSM provides the secretariat for the Committee as prescribed in the amended Language Act (2021):

‘In accordance with Section 18A(3), the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media is responsible for providing the secretariat for the Committee and shall determine the procedures of the Committee.’

[page 17, Progress Report of the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee – 20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023]

The Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 also provides for the provision of interpretation services during Committee meetings at the request of a member of the Advisory Committee. DTCAGSM has agreed interpreting contracts for this purpose.

The report states that 11 meetings of the Committee were held between July 2022 and November 2023. Committee meetings are normally held in the offices of Foras na Gaeilge, 63-66 Amiens Street, Dublin 1. The agendas and minutes of all meetings of the Committee are published on the DTCAGSM website. Chapter 5 of the Report also states that the Terms of Reference and Procedures of the Committee were agreed at its first meeting on 25 July 2022. The Committee’s meeting procedures are also described in Appendix C of the Report.

Committee’s procedures are determined by the Minister for TCAGSM. Chapter 5 of the Report also indicates that additional functions were agreed to augment the role of the Committee. These additional functions are set out in Appendix B of the Committee’s Report:

- ‘ensure, insofar as possible, that the organisations/ areas they represent participate fully in the implementation of the amended Act, as well as organisations that fall under the auspices of those organisations;

- to share and exchange information between the members for the purpose of achieving the aims of the Committee;
- support the identification of additional activities and initiatives to advance the overall implementation of the Act, as appropriate;
- to advise and make recommendations regarding new initiatives/policies that could be implemented to support the implementation of the Act, as appropriate.’  
[page 40, Appendix B, Progress Report of the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee – 20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023]

The above-mentioned additional functions adopted by the Advisory Committee are to be commended in order to strengthen stakeholder participation who will be relied upon in order to fully implement the new language legislation throughout the Public Service.

#### Guest Speakers

Section 4.2 describes guest speakers who presented to the Committee on topics (closely) related to the Committee’s functions. Topics covered in guest speakers sessions included raising awareness of employment opportunities with Irish, the implementation of the Language Standards system in Wales, the TEG system and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, Language Coaching in the Workplace and the views of the Association of Irish Language Development Officers (COFG) regarding the development of the National Plan and the implementation of the new language legislation. All of the above are apt subject areas that need consideration on an ongoing basis.

#### Meetings with the Research Team

Chapter 6 of the Advisory Committee Report details meetings held with the research team involved in the preparation of the National Plan. It reports that the research team submitted a working plan for the research program to the Advisory Committee on 30/6/2023 and that the research team presented on progress with the research again on 27/10/2023. It is also stated that regular meetings were held between the Advisory Committee secretariat and the research team and with the Research Programme Steering Committee on 20/6/2023.

## 4. AN PLEAN NÁISIÚNTA AGUS CÓRAS NUA NA gCAIGHDEÁN TEANGA

Déantar cur síos go príomha i mbrollach Chaibidil 6 [An Plean Náisiúnta um Sheirbhísí Poiblí Gaeilge – Tuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh] de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh ar an gcur chuige a leag an Coiste amach i ndáil leis an bPlean Náisiúnta a ullmhú.

Is mar seo a leanas a shainítear an dualgas atá ar an gCoiste Comhairleach in Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021 maidir le hullmhú an Phlean Náisiúnta:

18C. (1) Déanfaidh an Coiste Comhairleach—

(a) a luaithe is féidir ach tráth nach déanaí ná 2 bhliain tar éis an lae bunaithe, Plean Náisiúnta (dá ngairtear an ‘Plean Náisiúnta’ san Acht seo), maidir le soláthar seirbhísí poiblí trí mheán na Gaeilge ar feadh tréimhse a bheidh sonraithe sa Phlean Náisiúnta (is tréimhse nach faide ná 6 bliana), a ullmhú agus a chur faoi bhráid an Aire lena cheadú d’fhonn na nithe seo a leanas a dhéanamh.

Luann an Coiste Comhairleach i mbrollach Chaibidil 6 na Tuarascála go bhfuil sé i gceist aige:

‘treochlár a chur ar fáil do chomhlachtaí poiblí trínar féidir leo cur go céimíúil le líon agus caighdeán na seirbhísí poiblí a chuireann siad ar fáil don phobal i nGaeilge ar bhealach comhordaithe agus caighdeánach, mar aon lena líon foirne inniúil i nGaeilge a mhéadú chun soláthar roinnt de na seirbhísí sin a éascú. Tá an méid seo ag teacht le sprioc earcaíochta an Aichta go mbeidh 20% de na hearcaigh chuig an earnáil phoiblí inniúil i nGaeilge faoi dheireadh’  
[lch 18, Tuarascáil ar dhul chun cinn an Choiste Chomhairligh um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge – 20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023]

### 4.1 Córas Nua na gCaighdeán Teanga

Ionas go rachfar i ngleic leis na bearnaí móra reatha sna seirbhísí poiblí a chuireann an Stát ar fáil i nGaeilge faoi láthair tá dhá chrann taca a chaithfidh a bheidh ina mbonn don Phlean Náisiúnta um Sheirbhísí Poiblí i nGaeilge, is iad sin córas nua na gcaighdeán teanga agus an soláthar do 20% d’earcaigh a bheidh inniúil sa Ghaeilge faoin mbliain 2030. Dírim go sonrach ar fheidhmiú na forála 20% d’earcaigh atá inniúil sa

Ghaeilge i gCaibidil 5. [Foireann Ardoilte atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a Earcú agus a Oiliúint]

Tá sé le léiriú ón tagairt a dhéantar san alt thuas i gCaibidil 5 de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh do:

‘treochlár a chur ar fáil do chomhlachtaí poiblí’,

go n-aithníonn an Coiste Comhairleach an riachtanas atá ann go leagfar síos conair shoiléir do chomhlachtaí poiblí trína mbainfear amach bunchuspóir na reachtaíochta teanga, is é sin go dtiocfaidh méadú ar líon, agus feabhas ar chaighdeán, na seirbhísí poiblí atá ar fáil i nGaeilge ar bhealach ‘comhordaithe agus caighdeánach’.

Lasmuigh de na seirbhísí a bhfuil cur síos sonrach orthu in Achtanna na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (2003, 2021), agus a bhfuil dualgas reachtúil ar Chomhlachtaí Poiblí dá réir iad a sheachadadh i nGaeilge, is é córas nua na gcaighdeán teanga an phríomhfheithicil eile atá sa reachtaíocht teanga a leagann dualgas reachtúil ar chomhlachtaí poiblí seirbhísí breise a sholáthar do phobal na Gaeilge. Tugtar fheidhm thábhachtach don Choiste Comhairleach san Acht Teanga leasaithe (2021) chun na críche seo:

#### Faoi alt 18C. (1)(i) is feidhm de chuid an Choiste Chomhairligh é:

‘seirbhísí a shainaithint is seirbhísí a sholáthraíonn comhlacht poiblí nó aicme comhlachtaí poiblí agus nach soláthraítear trí mheán na Gaeilge agus ar i ndáil leo atá an Coiste Comhairleach den tuairim gur chóir caighdeán teanga a fhorordú faoi alt 19A(2)’

Dá réir sin is féidir leis an gCoiste Comhairleach seirbhísí nach bhfuil comhlachtaí poiblí a sholáthar i nGaeilge faoi láthair a shonrú agus a mholadh don Aire TCEGSM caighdeán teanga a fhorordú ina leith. Beidh beart cinnreachta de dhíth leis an aird chúí a thabhairt d’fheidhm seo an Choiste Chomhairligh i gcomhthéacs ról criticiúil na gCaighdeán Teanga i bhfíorú bhunchuspóir Achtanna na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (2003, 2021), eadhon méadú ar líon agus feabhsú ar chaighdeán na seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge.

Aithnítear an ról ceannaireachta atá ag an gCoiste Comhairleach freisin i bPlean Gníomhaíochta na Straitéise 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge don tréimhse 2018-2022

## 4. THE NATIONAL PLAN AND NEW LANGUAGE STANDARDS SYSTEM

The approach set out by the Committee in relation to the preparation of the National Plan is described primarily in the introduction to Chapter 6 [The National Plan for Irish Language Public Services – Report of the Advisory Committee] of the Advisory Committee Report.

The duties of the Advisory Committee in relation to the preparation of the National Plan are defined as follows in the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021:

18C. (1) The Advisory Committee shall—

(a) as soon as may be but not later than 2 years after the establishment day prepare and submit to the Minister for approval a National Plan for the provision of public services through the medium of the Irish language (in this Act referred to as the ‘National Plan’) for a period specified in the National Plan (being not more than 6 years) in order to -

The Advisory Committee states in the preface to Chapter 6 of the Report that it intends:

‘to provide a roadmap for public bodies through which they can gradually increase the number and quality of public services they provide to the public in Irish in a coordinated and standardised manner, as well as increasing their number of Irish-speaking staff to facilitate the provision of some of those services. This is in line with the Act’s recruitment target that 20% of new entrants to the public sector will eventually be proficient in Irish.’  
[page 18, Progress Report of the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee – 20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023]

### 4.1 The New System of Language Standards

In order to address the current major gaps in public services provided in Irish by the State, there are two pillars that must form the basis of the National Plan for Public Services in Irish, namely the new system of language standards and the provision for 20% of new recruits to be proficient in Irish by the year 2030. I focus specifically, in Chapter 5, on the implementation of the 20% provision for new entrants to be proficient in Irish. [Recruiting and Training Highly Skilled Staff Proficient in Irish]

It is evident from the reference made in the above paragraph in Chapter 5 of the Advisory Committee Report:

‘to provide a roadmap for public bodies’,

that the Advisory Committee recognises the need to set out a clear path for public bodies through which the fundamental objective of the language legislation will be achieved, namely increasing the number, and quality, of public services available in Irish, in a ‘coordinated and standardised’ manner.

Apart from the services specifically prescribed in the Official Languages Acts (2003, 2021), and which Public Bodies are legally obliged to deliver in Irish, the new system of language standards is the primary mechanism in the new language legislation that places a statutory obligation on public bodies to provide additional services to the Irish-speaking community. The Advisory Committee is given an important function in the amended Language Act (2021) for this purpose:

#### Under section 18C. (1)(i) it is a function of the Advisory Committee to:

‘identify services provided by a public body or class of public bodies that are not provided through the medium of the Irish language and in relation to which the Advisory Committee is of the view that a language standard should be prescribed under section 19A(2)’

Accordingly, the Advisory Committee can identify services not currently provided by public bodies in Irish and recommend to the Minister for TCAGSM to prescribe a language standard for them. Leadership will be required in giving due consideration to this function of the Advisory Committee regarding the critical role of the Language Standards in realising the fundamental objective of the Official Languages Acts (2003, 2021), namely increasing the number, and improving the quality, of public services in Irish.

The Advisory Committee’s leadership role is also recognised in the Action Plan under the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language for the period 2018-2022 with regard to identifying new public services and submitting recommendations to the Minister for the Gaeltacht for

maidir le seirbhísí poiblí nua a shonrú agus moltaí a chur faoi bhráid Aire na Gaeltachta ar mhaithe le caighdeán teanga a fhorordú ina leith, mar seo a leanas:

‘Tá próiseas leagtha síos faoi Alt 19 d’Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú) 2021 maidir le foilsíú na gcaighdeán teanga a bheifear ag tabhairt isteach faoin Acht. Leagtar síos san alt sin go gcaithfidh an tAire TCEGSM dul i gcomhairle le grúpaí éagsúla, an Coiste Comhairleach atá le bunú san áireamh, maidir le comhairle a fháil uathu ar na dréachtcaighdeán.’  
[lch 83, Plean Gníomhaíochta 2018-2022 - Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030]

Tá an soláthar do chóras nua na gcaighdeán teanga a chuirfear in ionad chóras na scéimeanna teanga i measc na bhforálacha is tábhachtaí in Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021, ar mhaithe le cearta teanga phobal na Gaeilge a neartú. I measc na laigí ba shuntasáí a bhain le córas na scéimeanna teanga, bhí cúlú ar ghealltanais ó scéim go scéim, doiléireacht maidir le sonraíocht na seirbhíse a bhí le soláthar agus easpa soiléire maidir leis na hacmhainní foirne a bhí sé de dhualgas ar chomhlacht poiblí a chur ar fáil ina leith.

Is bunriachtanas atá ann go ndéanfaidh córas nua na gcaighdeán teanga cur síos beacht ar na croisheirbhísí poiblí a theastaíonn ó phobal na Gaeilge ar bhonn leanúnach agus a bheidh dualgas ar chomhlachtaí poiblí a sholáthar ar ardcaighdeán. Tá ról ríthábhachtach ag an gCoiste Comhairleach mar sin sa bpróiseas trína gcinnteofar go dtabharfar caighdeán teanga i bhfeidhm a rachaidh i ngleic leis na bearnaí ollmhóra atá i seirbhísí poiblí an lae inniu i nGaeilge de thoradh laigí sheanchóras na Scéimeanna Teanga. Léiríonn líon agus patrún na ngearán a fhaigheann m’Oifig ar bhonn rialta go bhfuil bearnaí ollmhóra i láthair na huairé i mbunseirbhísí a riarann an caidreamh laethúil a bhíonn ag an bpobal leis an Stát. Mar shampla, tá easnaimh mhór i seirbhísí faisnéise teileafóin, i seirbhísí deisce cabhrach agus i gcórais teicneolaíochta agus idirghníomhacha ar líne. Is bunriachtanas é go gcuimseoidh na caighdeán teanga nua an ghné chumarsáide labhartha a tharlaíonn idir an pobal agus ball foirne an chomhlachta phoiblí agus an ghné den tseirbhís a chuirfear ar fáil ar líne nuair a éilítear seirbhís phoiblí i nGaeilge. Is bunriachtanas é go mbeidh na córais teicneolaíochta nua, lena n-áirítear seirbhísí

idirghníomhacha ar líne, a bheidh Ranna Rialtais, Údarás Áitiúla agus áisíneachtaí móra Stáit a fhorbairt d’fhonn seirbhísí poiblí a sholáthar i nGaeilge ar fáil ag an am céanna agus a chuirfear ar fáil i mBéarla iad. Léiríonn an aidhm straitéiseach atá ag an Rialtas go mbeidh oiread agus 90% de sheirbhísí poiblí ar leith á seachadadh ar líne faoin mbliain 2030<sup>1</sup> an géarghá atá leis seo.

### Scéimeanna Teanga vis-à-vis Córas Nua na gCaighdeán Teanga

De réir an eolais reatha atá ar fáil ó RTCEGSM, tá an tAire TCEGSM tar éis breis agus 140 Scéim Teanga a dhaingniú le comhlachtaí poiblí. Leagtar síos sna Scéimeanna Teanga seirbhísí poiblí breise lasmuigh d’fhorálacha díreacha na nAchtanna Teanga (2003, 2021) atá dualgas ar chomhlachtaí poiblí a sholáthar.

Aithníodh an riachtanas Scéimeanna Teanga a dhaingniú i gcás an lín sa bhreis ar 140 comhlacht poiblí mar go bhfuil siad ag cur seirbhísí poiblí ar fáil a bhfuil éileamh mór orthu ón bpobal. Is féidir catagóirí a dhéanamh ar fhorghór an lín sa bhreis agus 140 comhlacht poiblí a bhfuil an tAire TCEGSM tar éis Scéimeanna Teanga a dhaingniú leo faoi na ceannteidil seo a leanas:

- Ranna agus Oifigí Rialtais
- Údarás Áitiúla
- Institiúidí Oideachais
- Comhlachtaí Poiblí Móra eile

Is bunriachtanas a bheidh ann go dtabharfaidh an chéad sraith de na caighdeán teanga na catagóirí thuasluaite de chomhlachtaí poiblí isteach faoina scóip. Is bunriachtanas é freisin go rachaidh na caighdeán teanga tosaigh i ngleic leis na bearnaí ollmhóra atá i seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge faoi láthair, mar shampla easpa seirbhísí teileafóin, easpa seirbhísí deisce cabhrach agus fáiltithe agus easpa seirbhísí teicneolaíochta idirghníomhacha ar líne, láithreáin ghréasáin ina measc.

Ach a bhreithnítear straitéisí rialtais ar nós ‘Cónascadh Rialtais 2030: Straitéis Dhigiteach agus TFC do Sheirbhísí Phoiblí na hÉireann’ a d’fhoilsigh RCPSPA in 2022, feictear go mbeidh oiread agus 90% de sheirbhísí poiblí ar leith á seachadadh ar líne faoin mbliain 2030. Luaitear sa straitéis chéanna go bhfuiltear ag súil go mbeidh 80% de shaoránaigh na tíre ag úsáid an ardáin MyGovID faoin mbliain 2030 d’fhonn teacht ar sheirbhísí poiblí áirithe. Má tá seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge le bheith i dtiúin le

1. (lch 9, Cónascadh Rialtais 2030: Straitéis Dhigiteach agus TFC do Sheirbhísí Phoiblí na hÉireann)

the purpose of prescribing language standards in relation to them, as follows:

‘A process has been set out under Section 19 of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 regarding the publication of the language standards that will be introduced under the Act. That section stipulates that the Minister for TCAGSM must consult with various groups, including the Advisory Committee to be established, to obtain their advice on the draft standards.

[page 83, Action Plan 2018-2022 under the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030]

The provision for a new system of language standards that will replace the system of language schemes is among the most important provisions in the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, to strengthen the language rights of the Irish-speaking community. Among the most significant weaknesses associated with the language scheme system were the scaling back of commitments from scheme to scheme, ambiguity regarding the specification of the service to be provided and a lack of clarity regarding the staff resources that a public body was obliged to provide in Irish.

It is a key requirement that the new system of language standards accurately captures the core public services that the Irish-speaking community requires and that public bodies will be obliged to provide to a high standard in Irish. The Advisory Committee therefore has an important role in the process of ensuring that language standards are put in place to address the substantial gaps in current public services in Irish as a result of the shortfalls of the Language Schemes. The number and pattern of complaints received by my Office on a regular basis highlight that substantial gaps that currently exist in basic public services in Irish that facilitate the public’s daily interactions with the State. For example, there are major shortcomings in telephone information services, help desk services and online services. It is necessary that the new system of language standards encompass the requirement for effective oral communication in Irish from public body staff providing services, in tandem with the effective delivery of the online aspect of the public service in Irish. It is essential that the new technological systems, including interactive online services, which Government Departments, Local

1.(page 9, Connecting Government 2030: A Digital and ICT Strategy for Ireland’s Public Service)

Authorities and major State agencies will develop in order to provide public services, will be available simultaneously in the Irish and English languages. The Government’s strategic aim to deliver as much as 90% of certain public services online by 2030<sup>1</sup> highlights the urgency of this requirement.

### Language Schemes vis-à-vis the New System of Language Standards

Current information available from the DTCAGSM indicated that the Minister for TCAGSM has confirmed over 140 Language Schemes with public bodies. The Language Schemes set out public services that public bodies are obliged to provide in addition to the direct provisions of the Official Languages Act 2003.

The need to confirm Language Schemes was identified in the case of over 140 public bodies who provide public services that are in high public demand. The majority of the 140 plus public bodies with which the Minister for TCAGSM has confirmed Language Schemes to date can be categorised as follows:

- Government Departments and Agencies
- Local Authorities
- Educational Institutions
- Other Large Public Bodies

It will be a fundamental requirement that the first provision of language standards bring all of the above-mentioned categories of public bodies within its scope. It is also essential that the initial language standards address the abovementioned substantial shortfalls in public services currently available in Irish, for example, the shortfall in telephone services, the shortfall in helpdesk and reception services and the shortfall in online services, including websites.

Government strategies such as ‘Connecting Government 2030: A Digital and ICT Strategy for Ireland’s Public Service’ published by DPER in 2022 project that as much as 90% of certain public services will be delivered online by the year 2030. The same strategy states that it is expected that 80% of the country’s citizens will be using the MyGovID platform by 2030 to access certain public services. If public services in Irish are to meet the current needs of society, initial language standards should be prescribed in relation to the online interactive services provided by all public bodies that currently have

riachtanais chomhaimseartha na sochaí ba chóir do na caighdeáin teanga tosaigh forordú a dhéanamh i ndáil leis na seirbhísí idirghníomhacha ar líne atá ag na comhlachtaí poiblí uile a bhfuil Scéimeanna Teanga acu i láthair na huair. Tá sé seo ar cheann de na riachtanais is bunúsaí do chóras na gcaighdeán teanga tosaigh.

Is cuid chriticiúil lárnach den chonair, nó ‘treochlár’ mar a thagairíonn an Coiste Comhairle dó ina Thuarascáil, a chuirfear ar fáil do chomhlachtaí poiblí é córas na gcaighdeán teanga, córas a leagfaidh amach na seirbhísí poiblí a bhfuil géarghá lena gcur ar fáil i nGaeilge.

#### 4.2 Clár Taighde Coimisiúnaithe d’Ullmhú an Phlean Náisiúnta

Déantar mionchur síos i gCaibidil 6 de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh freisin ar an gClár Taighde Coimisiúnaithe a chinn an Coiste Comhairleach a bhunú leis an bPlean Náisiúnta a réiteach. Tá feidhm ag an gCoiste Comhairleach faoi fho-alt 18C. (1)(c) d’Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla cláir thaighde a choimisiúnú ar mhaithe lena chuid feidhmeanna a chomhlíonadh.

Is mar seo a leanas a shainítear an chumhacht sin san Acht leasaithe (2021):

##### 18C. (1) Déanfaidh an Coiste Comhairleach—

(c) cibé taighde a sheoladh, nó a choimisiúnú go seolfar cibé taighde, is cúí leis an gCoiste Comhairleach d’fhonn a fheidhmeanna a chomhlíonadh faoi mhíreanna (a) agus (b):

Mar aon le hullmhú an Phlean náisiúnta is cinnte go bhféadfaí an-úsáid a bhaint as fo-alt 18C. (1)(c) freisin, mar shampla, le tabhairt faoi thaighde chun na seirbhísí poiblí a mbeidh éileamh ard ag pobal na Gaeilge orthu ar bhonn leanúnach a shainiú ionas go mbeadh an Coiste Comhairleach ansin in ann a mholadh d’Aire na Gaeltachta caighdeán teanga nua a fhorordú ina leith. Is cinnte go bhféidhfaí an-leas a bhaint as fo-alt 18C. (1)(c) freisin d’fhonn cur leis an bhfeasacht ar an dul chun cinn a bheidh á dhéanamh ar an bhforáil 20% d’earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge.

Ba chóir breathnú ar an bPlean Náisiúnta, ar an bhforáil 20% d’earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge agus ar chóras nua na gcaighdeán teanga mar bhunchlocha an phróisis trína bhfeabhsófar líon agus caighdeán na seirbhísí poiblí atá ar fáil i nGaeilge. Is bunriachtanas é freisin scála, scóip agus éagsúlacht na seirbhíse poiblí in Éirinn a choinneáil i gcuimhne le linn na pleanála agus na forbartha a bheidh

idir lámha i dtaca leis na bunchlocha seo. Forordaítear breis agus 500 comhlacht poiblí faoi Achtanna na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (2003, 2021). Léiríonn figiúirí a d’fhoilsigh RCPSPA go raibh 397,121 duine fostaithe sa tseirbhís phoiblí ag deireadh 2023. Áiríonn na figiúirí sin an státseirbhís agus earnálacha an leighis, an oideachais, na cosanta, an dlí, na n-údarás áitiúil agus áisíneachtaí stáit neamhthráchtála (NCSA).

Cinneadh stuama agus riachtanach a bhí i gcinneadh an Choiste Chomhairligh cláir thaighde ar luach €315,000 a choimisiúnú le hOllscoil na Gaillimhe ar mhaithe le dúshraith théagartha eolaíoch a leagan faoin bPlean Náisiúnta. Luadh go mbeadh an Plean Náisiúnta le cur faoi bhráid an Aire TCEGSM faoin 19 Meitheamh 2024 ar a dheireanaí.

Maidir le téarmaí tagartha an Chláir Thaighde, luaitear ar leathanach 19 de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh gur socraíodh go gcuimseofaí na ceithre chuspóir seo a leanas:

1. *‘na bearnaí atá i soláthar seirbhísí poiblí trí mheán na Gaeilge mar atá faoi láthair a aithint agus straitéisí a mholadh chun dul i ngleic leo sin;*
2. *na seirbhísí poiblí a sholáthraítear i Limistéir Pleanála Teanga Ghaeltachta (LPT) a aithint agus straitéisí a mholadh chun a chinntiú gurb í an Ghaeilge teanga oibre na n-oifigí sin atá lonnaithe in LPT, agus go bhfuil na seirbhísí sin á soláthar trí mheán na Gaeilge;*
3. *staid reatha maidir le leibhéal inniúlachta Gaeilge na hearnála poiblí a aithint;*
4. *moltaí a dhéanamh maidir le hearcaíocht díobh siúd a bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge acu.*  
[lch 19, Tuarascáil ar dhul chun cinn an Choiste Chomhairligh um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge – 20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023]

Is cuspóirí meáite agus riachtanacha iad seo thuasluaite a mhol an Coiste Comhairleach le háireamh sa gClár Taighde coimisiúnaithe ar mhaithe le bearnaí sa soláthar reatha a shonrú mar aon le leibhéal inniúlachta teanga an fhórsa saothair poiblí a iniúchadh.

Dírítear i dTábla A thíos ar bhearta a bheidh riachtanach a chur san áireamh i gcomhthéacs na gcuspóirí a leagtar síos in ullmhú an Phlean Náisiúnta.

Ó thaobh na modheolaíochta a leagadh síos don Chlár Taighde a ndearna an Coiste Comhairleach coimisiúnú air, moladh cur chuige a dhíreodh ar sciar de na comhlachtaí poiblí is mó a mbíonn an pobal ag tarraingt ar a gcuid

Language Schemes confirmed. This is one of the most basic requirements for the provision of initial language standards.

Therefore, a critical and central part of the pathway or ‘roadmap’ as the Advisory Committee refers to it in its Report, that needs to be provided to public bodies, is the system of language standards that will set out the public services that need to be provided in Irish as a matter of urgency.

#### 4.2 Commissioned Research Programme for the Preparation of the National Plan

Chapter 6 of the Advisory Committee’s Report also details the Commissioned Research Programme that the Advisory Committee decided to establish to underpin the development of the National Plan. The Advisory Committee is prescribed the very important function under subsection 18C. (1)(c) of the Official Languages Act of commissioning as it sees fit research programmes to support it in carrying out its functions.

The relevant functions under the amended Act (2021) are defined as follows:

##### 18C. (1) The Advisory Committee shall—

(c) conduct, or commission the conduct of, such research as the Advisory Committee deems appropriate in order to carry out its functions under paragraphs (a) and (b):

In addition to the preparation of the National Plan, subsection 18C. (1)(c), for example, could certainly be utilised to undertake research to identify the public services for which there is a high demand from the Irish-speaking community so that the Advisory Committee could recommend to the Minister for the Gaeltacht that new language standards be prescribed in respect of them. Subsection 18C. (1)(c) could also certainly be used to great effect to support the Advisory Committee’s function to report on the progress being made on the provision for 20% of new recruits who are proficient in Irish.

The National Plan, the provision for 20% of new entrants who are proficient in Irish and the new system of language standards should be seen as the cornerstones of the process by which the number and quality of public services available in Irish will be improved. It is also essential to keep in mind the scale, scope and diversity

of the public service in Ireland as these cornerstones are laid. Over 500 public bodies are prescribed under the Official Languages Acts (2003, 2021). Figures published by DPER show that 397,121 people were employed in the public service at the end of 2023. These figures include the civil service and health, education, defence, justice, local authorities and non-commercial state agencies (NCSA).

The Advisory Committee’s decision to commission a research programme at a cost of €315,000 to scientifically underpin the development of the National Plan was a prudent and considered decision. The amended Language Act states that the National Plan would be submitted to the Minister for TCAGSM by June 20 2024 at the latest.

Regarding the terms of reference of the Research Programme, page 19 of the Advisory Committee’s Report states a decision was made to include the following four objectives:

1. *‘identify the gaps in the current provision of public services through the medium of Irish and recommend strategies to address them;*
2. *identify the public services provided in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas (LPAs) and recommend strategies to ensure that Irish is the working language of those offices located in LPAs, and that those services are provided through the medium of Irish;*
3. *identify the current state of Irish language proficiency in the public sector;*
4. *make recommendations regarding the recruitment of staff proficient in Irish.*  
[page 19, Progress Report of the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee – 20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023]

These are considered and necessary objectives that the Advisory Committee recommended for inclusion in the commissioned Research Programme in order to identify gaps in the current provision of public services in Irish as well as to examine levels of language proficiency within the public sector workforce.

Table A below points to measures that I consider necessary to be taken into account in the context of the objectives set out in the preparation of the National Plan.

In terms of the methodology set out for the Research Programme commissioned by the Advisory Committee, an

Tábla A

Cuspóir	Aidhm (mar a chuirtear i láthair i dTuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh) <sup>2</sup>	Nóta Léirmheasa na Tráchtairachta seo
Cuspóir 1	Bearnaí i seirbhísí poiblí reatha a shonrú agus moltaí a dhéanamh le dul i ngleic leo	Caighdeán Teanga théagartha a thabhairt i bhfeidhm a rachaidh i ngleic leis na bearnaí follasacha atá i seirbhísí poiblí faoi láthair i nGaeilge de thoradh laigí sheanchóras na Scéimeanna Teanga. Tá feidhm an choiste Chomhairligh faoi alt 18C. (1)(i) thar a bheith tábhachtach freisin d'fhonn seirbhísí a shonrú ar chóir caighdeán teanga nua a mholadh don Aire a fhorordú ina leith.
Cuspóir 2	Na seirbhísí poiblí a sholáthraítear i Limistéir Phleanála Teanga Ghaeltachta (LPT) a shonrú agus straitéisí a mholadh chun a chinntiú gurb í an Ghaeilge teanga oibre na nOifigí sin	Cuspóir tábhachtach é seo leis na seirbhísí poiblí reatha atá á soláthar sa Ghaeltacht a shonrú. Bheadh sainiú na mbearnaí sa leibhéal soláthair reatha ina bhunriachtanas. Riachtanas eile is ea tomhais ar leibhéal éilimh ar sheirbhísí ar leith agus moltaí maidir le modhanna seachadta na seirbhísí sin go praiticiúil/éineach in ionchaibh agus ar líne tábhachtach freisin. Dlús seirbhísí, dlús foirne lena seachadadh agus dlús éilimh ón bpobal teanga ag oibriú as lámha a chéile.
Cuspóir 3	Oifigí atá lonnaithe in LPT, agus ina bhfuil na seirbhísí sin á soláthar trí mheán na Gaeilge	Iniúchadh tábhachtach é seo i gcomhthéacs na forála trína mbeidh Aire na Gaeltachta ag forordú dátaí (alt 18E den Acht leasaithe 2021) faoina mbeidh seirbhísí atá comhlachtaí poiblí a chur ar fáil sa Ghaeltacht ar fáil i nGaeilge ina n-iomláine.
Cuspóir 4	Leibhéal inniúlachta sa Ghaeilge ar fud na hearnála poiblí a shonrú; moltaí a dhéanamh maidir le hearcaíocht	Tá iniúchadh ar acmhainn foirne reatha na gcomhlachtaí poiblí reatha criticiúil agus pleanáil chórasach don fhórsa saothair de dhíth d'fhonn dóthain foirne ag a bhfuil Gaeilge mhaith a chinntiú.

seirbhísí poiblí agus leagadh béim ar leith ar chomhlachtaí poiblí a bhí ag soláthar seirbhísí poiblí sa Ghaeltacht. Luadh go n-úsáidfid meascán de thaighde cáilíochtúil, cainníochtúil, taighde deisce agus grúpaí fócais le tabhairt faoin tiomsú d'fhorbairt an Phlean Náisiúnta.

### Scála na Seirbhíse Poiblí

Mar gheall ar scála an bhirt náisiúnta a bheidh de dhíth chun seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge a fheabhsú, creidim gur den riachtanas é sruthanna taighde éagsúla a choimisiúnú amach anseo freisin d'fhonn bonn eolais a chur faoi ghnóthú chlochmhílte criticiúla earcaíochta (an fhoráil 20% d'earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge) agus faoi fhorbairt seirbhísí poiblí (caighdeán teanga nua) ar mhaithe leis na forálacha reachtúla sin a bhaint amach le linn shaolré an Phlean Náisiúnta. Mar shampla, is dóigh liom go mbeidh sé riachtanach go sonróaí ar bhonn córasach na seirbhísí poiblí is mó a bhfuil éileamh orthu i measc phobal na Gaeilge agus go leagfaí amach cur chuige soiléir trína ndéanfaí na seirbhísí sin a sheachadadh éineach in

ionchaibh agus ar líne sa Ghaeltacht agus go náisiúnta. Is maith ann an chumhacht atá ag an gCoiste Comhairleach mar sin tabhairt faoi chlár taighde i gcomhar le soláthóirí ábhartha mar is gá.

### Maoiniú do Sheirbhísí Poiblí i nGaeilge

Tugtar le fios i dTuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh gur cuireadh maoiniú breise €1.5m ar fáil trí líne bhuiséid nua (C11 – Tionscnaimh Seirbhíse Poiblí), i gcaitheamh 2023 agus 2024 trí chéile d'fhonn cabhrú le forálacha na reachtaíochta teanga leasaithe a neadú ar fud na hearnála poiblí. Beidh mionscagadh ar an leibhéal maoinithe bhreise a theastóidh ag leibhéal na seirbhíse poiblí de dhíth sa bPlean Náisiúnta lena chinntiú go mbeidh na hacmhainní cuí ar fáil d'fhonn lánfheidhm a thabhairt don reachtaíocht nua teanga.

Table A

Objective	Objective (as presented in the Advisory Committee's Report) <sup>2</sup>	Observations for this Commentary
Objective 1	Identify gaps in current public services and make recommendations to address them	Implement robust Language Standards that will address the obvious gaps that currently exist in public services in Irish because of the shortfalls in Language Schemes. The function of the Advisory Committee under section 18C. (1)(i) is also extremely important in order to specify services for which a new language standard could be recommended to the Minister for prescription.
Objective 2	Specify the public services provided in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas (GLPAs) and recommend strategies to ensure that Irish is the working language of these Offices.	This is an important objective to specify the current public services being provided in the Gaeltacht. Defining the gaps in the current level of provision is a fundamental requirement. Measuring demand levels for specific services and recommendations regarding modes of delivery for those services in person and online are also critical. A critical mass of public services in Irish, a critical mass of staff proficient in the Irish language to deliver those services and a high level of demand from the language community must act in synergy to improve public services in the Gaeltacht.
Objective 3	Offices located in LPT, and where those services are provided through the medium of Irish	This is an important audit in the context of the provision whereby the Minister for the Gaeltacht will prescribe a date (section 18E of amended 2021 Act) by which services provided by public bodies in the Gaeltacht will be fully available in Irish.
Objective 4	Specify the level of proficiency in Irish across the public sector; make recommendations regarding recruitment	An audit of the current staff capacity of public bodies is critical and systematic workforce planning is needed to ensure sufficient staff with a high standard of Irish are available.

approach was recommended that would focus on the number of public bodies whose public services are in most demand, with particular emphasis placed on public bodies providing public services in the Gaeltacht. It was stated that a combination of qualitative, quantitative, desktop research and focus groups would be used to compile data to inform the development of the National Plan.

### Public Service Scale

Given the scale of the national effort that will be required to improve public services provided in Irish, I believe it is essential to commission various research streams in the future to inform the attainment of critical recruitment milestones (the 20% provision for Irish language-proficient new entrants) and public services (new language standards) to support the attainment of these statutory provisions during the lifetime of the National Plan. For example, I believe it will be essential to systematically identify the public services that are most in

demand among the Irish-speaking community and to set out a clear approach by which these services would be delivered both in person and online in the Gaeltacht and nationally. The Advisory Committee therefore has the power to undertake research programmes in collaboration with relevant providers as necessary, to underpin the development of the National Plan.

### Funding for Public Services in Irish

The Advisory Committee Report indicates that additional funding of €1.5m has been made available through a new budget line (C11 – Public Service Initiatives), during 2023 and 2024 to help embed the provisions of the amended language legislation across the public sector. A detailed analysis of the level of additional funding required at public service level will be required in the National Plan to ensure that appropriate resources are available to fully implement the new language legislation.

2. (lch 19, Tuarascáil ar dhul chun cinn an Choiste Chomhairligh um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge – 20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023)

2. (page 19, Progress Report of the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee – 20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023)

## 5. PLEANÁIL DON FHÓRSA SAOTHAIR NÁISIÚNTA ATÁ INNIÚIL SA GHAeilGE

Déantar cur síos i Réamhrá Chaibidil 7 (Earcaíocht agus Acmhainn agus Inniúlacht Ghaeilge na hEarnála Poiblí a threisiú) de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh ar na feidhmeanna atá ag an gCoiste faoin reachtaíocht teanga maidir líon na foirne i gcomhlachtaí poiblí atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a mhéadú.

Forordaítear in alt 18C d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021 dhá fheidhm thábhachtach de chuid an Choiste Chomhairligh maidir le líon na foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a mhéadú i gcomhlachtaí poiblí.

Ar an gcéad dul síos forordaítear i bhfo-alt 18C(1)(b) feidhm don Choiste comhairle a roinnt le comhlachtaí poiblí maidir le líon agus grád na foirne a theastóidh le seirbhísí poiblí nach bhfuil á soláthar trí Ghaeilge faoi láthair a chur ar fáil:

Foráil	Sainiú
18C. (1)(b)	comhairle a thabhairt do chomhlachtaí poiblí maidir leis an gcaoi a bhféadfar seirbhísí nach soláthraíonn na comhlachtaí trí mheán na Gaeilge a sholáthar amhlaidh, lena n-áirítear an méid seo a leanas— (i) comhairle maidir leis an líon foirne agus leis an ngrád foirne atá inniúil i nGaeilge a mbeadh gá ag an gcomhlacht leo chun na seirbhísí sin a sholáthar trí mheán na Gaeilge, (ii) ag féachaint don chuspóir dá dtagraítear i bhfo-alt (3)(b), moltaí maidir leis an gcaoi a méadófar an líon foirne atá inniúil i nGaeilge,

In bhfo-alt 18C. (3)(b) sainítear na critéir shonracha as eascraíonn ó fhoráil 18C. (1)(b)(ii) thuasluaite maidir le méadú ar líon na foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge, trí fhoireann le hinniúlacht sa Ghaeilge a earcú.

Foráil	Sainiú
18C. (3)(b)	(3) Le linn dó a fheidhmeanna a chomhlíonadh faoin Acht seo, beidh aird ag an gCoiste Comhairleach ar na cuspóirí seo a leanas— (b) an líon foirne de chuid comhlachtaí poiblí atá inniúil i nGaeilge a mhéadú ionas go mbeidh, a luaithe is indéanta tar éis an lae bunaithe, ach tráth nach déanaí ná an 31 Nollaig 2030, 20 faoin gcéad ar a laghad den fhoireann a earcófar chuig comhlachtaí poiblí inniúil amhlaidh

Nuair a bhreithnítear na feidhmeanna thuasluaite ina n-iomlán is cinnte go mbeidh ról ceannais ag an gCoiste Comhairleach sa bpróiseas trína gcinnteofar go mbeidh fórsa saothair i bhfad níos líonmhaire, le hinniúlacht sa Ghaeilge, ar fáil d'fhonn seirbhísí poiblí a sholáthar as Gaeilge.

Luaithear i Réamhrá Chaibidil 7 de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh freisin:

'Dar ndóigh, is sprioc fhadtéarmach den Acht é seo agus tagann sí go díreach le mianta foriomlána na reachtaíochta líon agus caighdeán na seirbhísí poiblí a chuirtear ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge do phobal na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta a mhéadú agus a fheabhsú ar bhonn céimíúil.'

### 5.1 Feidhmiú na Forála Earcaíochta 20%

#### Amlíne

Is é an tréimhse ábhartha i ndáil le tomhais a dhéanamh ar dhul chun cinn i leith na forála 20% d'earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge ná ón 20 Meitheamh 2022 (lá bunaithe an Choiste Chomhairligh) go dtí an 31 Nollaig 2030, mar a shainítear i bhfo-alt 18C(3)(b).

## 5. PLANNING FOR A NATIONAL IRISH LANGUAGE-PROFICIENT WORKFORCE

The Introduction to Chapter 7 (Recruitment and Strengthening the Irish Language Capacity and Proficiency of the Public Sector) of the Advisory Committee's Report describes the Committee's functions under the language legislation in relation to increasing the number of staff in public bodies who are proficient in Irish.

Section 18C of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 prescribes two key functions of the Advisory Committee in relation to increasing the number of Irish language-proficient staff in public bodies.

Firstly, subsection 18C(1)(b) prescribes a function for the Committee to advise public bodies on the number and grade of staff required to provide public services not currently provided in Irish:

Provision	Definition
18C. (1)(b)	advise public bodies with respect to how services that are not provided by the bodies through the medium of the Irish language may be so provided, including— (i) advice with respect to the number and grade of staff who are competent in the Irish language that the body would require to provide such services through the medium of the Irish language, (ii) with reference to the above statement, discuss: having regard to the objective referred to in subsection (3)(b), recommendations as to how to increase the number of staff who are competent in the Irish language,

Subsection 18C. (3)(b) defines the specific criteria arising from the above-mentioned provision of 18C. (1)(b)(ii) in relation to increasing the number of staff who are competent in Irish.

Provision	Definition
18C. (3)(b)	(3) The Advisory Committee shall, in performing its functions under this Act, have regard to the following objectives— (b) increasing the number of staff of public bodies who are competent in the Irish language so that, as soon as practicable after the establishment day, but no later than 31 December 2030, at least 20 per cent of staff recruited to public bodies are so competent.

When considering the above functions in their totality under subsections 18C. (1)(b) and 18C. (3)(b) of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, the Advisory Committee will undoubtedly play a leading role in the process of ensuring that a much larger workforce with proficiency in Irish is available to provide public services in Irish.

The Introduction to Chapter 7 of the Advisory Committee's Report also states:

'Of course, this is a long-term goal of the Act and complements the overall aspirations of the legislation to increase and improve the number and quality of public services provided through the medium of Irish to the Irish-speaking and Gaeltacht communities on a gradual basis.'

### 5.1 Implementation of the 20% Recruitment Provision

#### Timeline

The relevant period for measuring progress on the 20% of new entrants proficient in Irish is from 20 June 2022 (establishment date of the Advisory Committee) to 31 December 2030, as defined in subsection 18C(3)(b).

### An Acmhainn Dhaonna a thagann faoi scóip na Forála Earcaíochta 20% (Earcaigh Sheachtracha nó Inmheánacha)

D'fhéadfaí a léiriú ón bhfoclaíocht seo a leanas i bhfo-alt 18C. (3)(b) d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú) 2021:

" ... den fhoireann a earcófar chuig comhlachtaí poiblí ...

" ("... of staff recruited to public bodies ..." sa leagan Béarla)

gur baill foirne a thagann isteach sa gcomhlacht poiblí idir 20/6/22 agus 31/12/30 atá i gceist.

D'fhágfadh an léiriú sin go bhféadfadh sé go mbeadh ceapacháin inmheánacha áirithe ann a dhéanfaí i gcomhlachtaí poiblí idir an 20 Meitheamh 2022 agus an 31 Nollaig 2030 nach dtiocfadh faoi scóip alt 18C. (3)(b). Sa chás go n-athródh ball foirne post laistigh den chomhlacht poiblí lena raibh an ball foirne fostaithe roimh an 20 Meitheamh 2022 bheadh sé deacair a léiriú ón bhfoclaíocht thuasluaite fho-alt 18C. (3)(b) go raibh an ball foirne sin ag teacht isteach ('a earcófar chuig') sa gcomhlacht poiblí tar éis dháta tosaigh feidhme (an 20 Meitheamh 2022) na forála earcaíochta. Dár ndóigh, bogann líon suntasach foirne idir comhlachtaí poiblí sa tseirbhís phoiblí gach bliain agus is léir go dtiocfaidís sin faoi scóip an léirithe i bhfo-alt 18C. (3)(b) maidir le hearcaíocht.

Is féidir a léiriú ó fhoráil eile a thagann faoi scáth fheidhmeanna an Choiste Chomhairligh, is é sin fo-alt 18C. (1)(b)(i), go bhféadfadh baill foirne an chomhlachta phoiblí trí chéile a áireamh chun críocha na pleanála don fhórsa saothair atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge. Is mar seo a leanas a shainítear feidhm an Choiste Chomhairligh ina leith seo:

'comhairle maidir leis an líon foirne agus leis an ngrád foirne atá inniúil i nGaeilge a mbeadh gá ag an gcomhlacht leo chun na seirbhísí sin a sholáthar trí mheán na Gaeilge,'  
[Fo-alt 18C. (1)(b)(i), Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021]

Mar chuid lárnach den phleanáil don fhórsa saothair atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge beidh riachtans ann do straitéis oiliúna teanga náisiúnta (sa bhreis ar an bhforáil earcaíochta 20%) le tacú le foireann na seirbhíse poiblí i gcoitinne inniúlacht a fhorbairt sa Ghaeilge, mar shampla baill foirne a bhí i bhfostaíocht le comhlachtaí poiblí roimh Mheitheamh 2022. Tá feidhm thíosluaite an Choiste Chomhairligh faoi fho-alt 18C.(1)(ii) an-ábhartha ina leith seo trí straitéis a shonrú ionas go mbainfidh comhlacht poiblí an úsáid is fearr is féidir as na

hacmhainní atá fáil don chomhlacht poiblí trí chéile d'fhonn cur le soláthar seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge:

'straitéisí a shonrú, ar feadh na tréimhse lena mbaineann an Plean Náisiúnta, is straitéisí a fhéadfaidh comhlachtaí poiblí a úsáid (lena n-áirítear an chaoi a mbainfear an úsáid is fearr as acmhainní atá ar fáil do na comhlachtaí) ionas go bhféadfadh seirbhísí de chuid na gcomhlachtaí poiblí lena mbaineann nach soláthraítear trí mheán na Gaeilge a sholáthar amhlaidh,'

Tá sé tábhachtach nach gcaillfear amharc ar bhunéileamh phobal na Gaeilge i gcomthéacs ról na forála 20% d'earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge, is é sin go dtiocfaidh feabhas agus méadú ar sholáthar seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge. I ndeireadh na dála, is é an rud atá ag déanamh imní do phobal na Gaeilge go mbeidh dóthain foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge fostaithe ag comhlachtaí poiblí d'fhonn seirbhísí poiblí bunúsacha dá leithéidí seirbhísí teileafóin, seirbhísí deisce cabhrach agus fáilithe ar chaighdeán ard a chur ar fáil gan bhac agus gan mhoill i nGaeilge gach lá den tseachtain. Straitéis stuama a bheadh ann baill foirne le líofacht sa Ghaeilge, a bhí fostaithe ag comhlachtaí poiblí roimh Mheitheamh 2022, agus baill foirne nua atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a earcófaí faoin bhforáil 20%, tar éis Meitheamh 2022, a aithint tríd an bpleanáil fórsa saothair, chun aghaidh a thabhairt láithreach ar an easnamh reatha sna croisheirbhísí poiblí thuasluaite i nGaeilge. Is é an Plean Náisiúnta an fheithicil a léireoidh na sruthanna as a dtiocfaidh dóthain foirne chun a chinntiú go mbeidh na seirbhísí uile a fhorordaítear in Achtanna na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (2003, 2021) agus na seirbhísí a leagfar amach i gcóras nua na gcaighdeán teanga á seachadadh ar chaighdeán ard trí mheán na Gaeilge don phobal.

I bhfocail eile, níor chóir breathnú ar an bhforáil 20% earcaíochta foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge aisti féin. D'fhéadfadh earcú foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge tarlú i bhfolús, scartha amach ó phríomhaidhm na reachtaíochta teanga, is é sin líon agus caighdeán na seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge a mhéadú agus a fheabhsú. Tá baol ann go dtarlóidh sé seo mura mbeidh ailíniú iomlán idir na seirbhísí poiblí a bheidh dualgas ar chomhlachtaí poiblí a chur ar fáil i nGaeilge agus an phleanáil don fhórsa saothair a chinnteoidh dóthain foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a bheith ar fáil. Nuair a chuirtear san áireamh go bhfuil breis agus 500 comhlacht poiblí ag teacht faoi scáth na reachtaíochta teanga i láthair na huairé caithfear a bheith thar a bheith airdeallach faoi scála agus scóip an bhirt náisiúnta atá de dhíth.

### The Human Resource that come under the scope of the 20% Recruitment Provision (External or Internal New Entrants)

It could be inferred from the following wording in subsection 18C. (3)(b) of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021:

"... of staff recruited to public bodies..."

("... den fhoireann a earcófar chuig comhlachtaí poiblí ... " in the Irish version)

that it concerns staff members joining the public body between 22/6/22 and 31/12/30.

This interpretation would mean that there might be certain internal appointments made in public bodies between 20 June 2022 and 31 December 2030 that would not fall within the scope of section 18C(3)(b). In the event that a staff member changes posts within the public body in which that staff member was employed before 20 June 2022 it would be difficult to deduce from the above wording of subsection 18C. (3)(b) that the staff member was joining ('recruited to') the public body after the commencement date (20 June 2022) of the recruitment provision. Of course, a significant number of staff move between public bodies in the public service each year and it is clear that these would fall within the scope of the provision in subsection 18C. (3)(B) regarding staff recruitment.

It can be deduced from another provision that pertains to the functions of the Advisory Committee, namely subsection 18C. (1)(b)(i), that the staff of the public body in its totality may be included for the purposes of Irish language-proficient workforce planning. The function of the Advisory Committee in this regard is prescribed as follows:

'advice with respect to the number and grade of staff who are competent in the Irish language that the body would require to provide such services through the medium of the Irish language,'  
[Sub-Section 18C. (1)(b), The Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021]

A key component of planning for an increased Irish language-proficient workforce, will require the development of a national language training strategy (in addition to the 20% recruitment provision) to support public sector staff in general attain proficiency in the Irish language, for example staff who were employed by public bodies before June 2022. The following function of the Advisory Committee under subsection 18C.(1)(ii) is particularly relevant in this regard as it specifies

strategies whereby a public body can maximise resources available to the public body as a whole in order to enhance the provision of public services in Irish:

'specify, for the period to which the National Plan relates, strategies public bodies may employ (including how to make best use of resources available to the bodies) so that services of the public bodies concerned that are not provided through the medium of the Irish language may be so provided,'

It is important not to lose sight of the underlying need of the Irish-speaking community in the context of the role of the provision for 20% of Irish language proficient recruits, namely that the provision of public services in Irish will improve and increase. Ultimately, what is of concern to the Irish-speaking community is that public bodies will have sufficient numbers of Irish language-proficient staff to provide basic public services such as telephone services, helpdesk services and high-quality reception services without hindrance or delay in Irish every day of the week. It would be a prudent strategy to identify both staff with proficiency in Irish, employed by public bodies before June 2022, and new staff proficient in Irish recruited under the 20% provision after June 2022, through workforce planning, to immediately address the current shortfall in the above-mentioned core public services in Irish. The National Plan is the vehicle that will indicate the streams from which sufficient numbers of staff will be sourced to ensure that all services prescribed in the Official Languages Acts (2003, 2021) and the services set out in the new system of language standards are delivered to a high standard through the medium of Irish to the public.

In other words, the 20% provision for recruiting Irish language-proficient staff should not be viewed in isolation. Recruitment of Irish language-proficient staff could occur in a vacuum, separate from the primary aim of the language legislation, which is to increase and improve the number and quality of public services in Irish. There is a risk that this will happen unless there is complete alignment between the public services that public bodies will be required to provide in Irish and workforce planning that will ensure that sufficient numbers of Irish language-proficient staff are available to deliver those services.. When considering that over 500 public bodies are covered by language legislation currently, full consideration must be given to the scale and scope of the national undertaking that is required.

## 5.2 Dúshraith d’Fheabhsú Seirbhísí Poiblí i nGaeilge

Is bunriachtanas é go mbeidh cur chuige pleanála náisiúnta don fhórsa saothair agus sainaitheint na seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge a theastaíonn ó phobal na Gaeilge fite fuaite ina chéile. Is é an Plean Náisiúnta um Sheirbhísí Poiblí Gaeilge a leagfaidh amach an chonair trína snífean an dá mhór shruth pleanála agus forbartha seo isteach ina chéile. Má bhíonn an dá ghné chriticiúla sin ag oibriú as lámha a chéile leagfar dúshraith láidir síos chun seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge a fheabhsú.

I measc na mbeart a bheidh riachtanach chuige seo beidh:

1. Scála agus Ilghnéitheacht na hEarnála Poiblí a scóipeáil
2. Pleanáil don Fhórsa Saothair atá inniúl sa Ghaeilge a neadú i bPleanáil Eagraíochtúil Comhlachtaí Poiblí
3. Comhordú agus maoirsiú náisiúnta a dhéanamh ar earcú foirne atá inniúl sa Ghaeilge
4. Soláthar fórsa Saothair Ardoilte atá inniúl sa Ghaeilge
5. Ailíniú Caighdeán Teanga agus Acmhainní Daonna le Gaeilge

### 5.2.1 Scála agus Ilghnéitheacht na Seirbhíse Poiblí

B’ionann caiteachas iomlán an Stáit ar thuarastal na Seirbhíse Poiblí in 2023 agus beagnach €26.6bn<sup>3</sup>, arbh é sin an t-iomlán ab airde riamh. Léiríonn figiúirí a d’fhoilsigh RCPSA go raibh 397,121<sup>4</sup> duine fostaithe sa tseirbhís phoiblí ag deireadh 2023. Áirítear sna figiúirí sin an státseirbhís agus earnálacha an leighis, an oideachais, na cosanta, an dlí, na n-údarás áitiúil agus áisineachtaí stáit neamhthráchtála (NCSA).

De réir na foinse céanna tháinig méadú 19,811 duine ar líon na bhfostaithe sa tseirbhís phoiblí ó 377,310.50 duine ag deireadh ráithe 4 in 2022 go 397,121.81 duine ag deireadh ráithe 4 in 2023. Léiríonn Tábla B thíos an méadú a tháinig ar an líon fostaithe sa tseirbhís phoiblí ina iomláine idir 2018 agus 2023.

**Tábla B: Líon Fostaithe sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí de réir Bliana (2018 – 2023)<sup>5</sup>**

Bliain	Líon Fostaithe	Méadú
2018	330,576	
2019	339,258	8,683
2020	350,454	11,195
2021	365,893	15,439
2022	377,311	11,417
2023	397,122	19,811

- Ba idir 2022 – 2023 a tháinig an méadú na mhó (19,811) ar líon na bhfostaithe sa tseirbhís phoiblí le linn na gcúig bliana idir 2018 - 2023. Cuimsíonn na figiúirí seo fostaithe a earcaíodh sa státseirbhís freisin.
- Méadú 13,309 fostaí ar an meán in aghaidh na bliana a tháinig ar an tseirbhís phoiblí idir 2018 agus 2023. Cuimsíonn na figiúirí seo fostaithe a earcaíodh sa státseirbhís freisin.
- Léiríonn an líon foirne a earcaítear isteach sa tseirbhís phoiblí ar an meán in aghaidh na bliana scála an bhirt náisiúnta a bheidh ag teastáil d’fhonn foireann atá inniúl sa Ghaeilge a earcú chun críoch na forála earcaíochta 20%.

**Tábla C: Líon Fostaithe sa Státseirbhís de réir Bliana (2018 – 2023)<sup>6</sup>**

Bliain	Líon Fostaithe	Méadú
2018	39,922	
2019	42,273	2,351
2020	44,102	1,828
2021	45,637	1,535
2022	47,658	2,022
2023	49,897	2,239

## 5.2 Bedrock for the Provision of Public Services in Irish

It is essential that a national workforce planning process and the specification of public services that the Irish-speaking community requires be intertwined. The National Plan for Irish Language Public Services will set out the path by which these two major pillars for improving public services through Irish will work hand-in-hand. If these two critical elements complement each other, a bedrock will be laid to improve public services in Irish.

Critical measures include:

1. Scoping the Scale and Diversity of the Public Sector
2. Embedding Workforce Planning for an Irish Language-proficient Workforce in the Organizational Planning of Public Bodies
3. Coordinate and monitor the recruitment of Irish language-proficient staff on a national basis.
4. Supply of a Highly Skilled Irish language-proficient Workforce
5. Aligning Language Standards and Irish language-proficient Human Resources

### 5.2.1 Scale and Diversity of the Public Service

Total state spending on the Public Service in 2023 reached a record total of almost €26.6bn<sup>3</sup>. Figures published by DPER show that 397,121<sup>4</sup> people were employed in the public service at the end of 2023. These figures include the civil service and health, education, defence and justice, local authorities and non-commercial state agencies (NCSA).

According to the same source, the number of employees in the public service increased by 19,811 from 377,310.50 at the end of Q4 in 2022 to 397,121.81 at the end of Q4 in 2023. Table B below shows the increase in the number of employees in the public service on an annual basis between 2018 and 2023.

**Table B: Number of Employees in the Public Service by Year (2018 – 2023)<sup>5</sup>**

Year	Number of Employees	Increase
2018	330,576	
2019	339,258	8,683
2020	350,454	11,195
2021	365,893	15,439
2022	377,311	11,417
2023	397,122	19,811

- The largest increase (19,811) in the number of public service employees during the five years between 2018 and 2023 occurred between 2022 and 2023. These figures also include employees recruited into the civil service.
- The number of Public Service employees increased by an average of 13,309 per year between 2018 and 2023. These figures also include employees recruited into the civil service.
- The average number of staff recruited into the public service per year reflects the scale of the national effort that will be required to recruit Irish language-proficient staff for the purposes of the 20% recruitment provision.

**Table C: Number of Employees in the Civil Service by Year (2018 – 2023)<sup>6</sup>**

Year	Number of Employees	Increase
2018	39,922	
2019	42,273	2,351
2020	44,102	1,828
2021	45,637	1,535
2022	47,658	2,022
2023	49,897	2,239

3. [Treochtaí san Earnáil Phoiblí – An Foras Riaracháin 2023]

4. [https://databank.per.gov.ie/Public\\_Service\\_Numbers.aspx?rep=SectorTrend](https://databank.per.gov.ie/Public_Service_Numbers.aspx?rep=SectorTrend)

5. [https://databank.per.gov.ie/Public\\_Service\\_Numbers.aspx?rep=SectorTrend](https://databank.per.gov.ie/Public_Service_Numbers.aspx?rep=SectorTrend)

6. [https://databank.per.gov.ie/Public\\_Service\\_Numbers.aspx?rep=SectorTrend](https://databank.per.gov.ie/Public_Service_Numbers.aspx?rep=SectorTrend)

3. [Public Sector Trends – The Institute of Public Administration 2023]

4. [https://databank.per.gov.ie/Public\\_Service\\_Numbers.aspx?rep=SectorTrend](https://databank.per.gov.ie/Public_Service_Numbers.aspx?rep=SectorTrend)

5. [https://databank.per.gov.ie/Public\\_Service\\_Numbers.aspx?rep=SectorTrend](https://databank.per.gov.ie/Public_Service_Numbers.aspx?rep=SectorTrend)

6. [https://databank.per.gov.ie/Public\\_Service\\_Numbers.aspx?rep=SectorTrend](https://databank.per.gov.ie/Public_Service_Numbers.aspx?rep=SectorTrend)

- Léiríonn na figiúirí thuas i dTábla C go raibh faoi bhun leathchéad míle duine fostaithe sa státseirbhís faoi dheireadh 2023.
- Méadú 1,995 fostaí ar an meán in aghaidh na bliana a tháinig ar an státseirbhís idir 2018 agus 2023.

### Comórtais Earcaíochta d'Fhoireann atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge

Déantar cur síos i mír 7.3 (Staid Reatha Cúrsaí Earcaíochta le Gaeilge) de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh ar chomórtais a reáchtáil 'poistphoiblí' (publicjobs) d'fholúntais le Gaeilge thar cheann na státseirbhíse idir 2022 agus 2023. Tuairiscítear ar leathanach 27 agus 28 den Thuarascáil gur reáchtáladh 7 gcomórtas ar leithligh d'fholúntais le Gaeilge ag gráid Oifigigh Chléireachais, Oifigigh Feidhmiúcháin, Oifigigh Riaracháin, Ard-Oifigigh Feidhmiúcháin, Príomhoifigigh Chúnta agus Príomhoifigigh. De réir na Thuarascála is 411 iarrthóir san iomlán a chuir isteach ar na 7 gcomórtas sin.

Déantar earcaíocht don státseirbhís agus do réimse comhlachtaí poiblí eile faoi na hAchtanna um Bainistíocht na Seirbhíse Poiblí (Earcaíocht agus Ceapacháin), 2004 go 2013 lenar bunaíodh Poist Phoiblí mar ghníomhaireacht lárnach earcaíochta chun na críche sin. Is é 'poistphoiblí' (publicjobs) an soláthraí lárnach seirbhíse earcaíochta don Státseirbhís. Cuireann 'poistphoiblí' seirbhísí earcaíochta ar fáil freisin do na ról is sinsearaí in Údarás Áitiúla, do phoist cheannaireachta agus do ról Lianna Comhairleacha d'Fheidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte (FSS), don Gharda Síochána, agus do raon sainróil gairmiúil agus teicniúil ar fud na hEarnála Poiblí.

Tugann 'poistphoiblí' le fios gur reáchtáil an áisíneacht earcaíochta beagnach 600 comórtas earcaíochta ar leithligh don earnáil phoiblí agus go ndearna sí beagnach 65,000 iarratas ar fholúntais a phróiseáil i gcaitheamh 2022.<sup>7</sup> Chonaic muid ó na sonraí i dTábla B ar leathanach 25 thuas gur earcaíodh 11,417 duine san iomlán isteach sa tseirbhís phoiblí in 2022. Tá an tosaíocht ba chóir do chomhlachtaí poiblí a thabhairt d'earcú foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge le léiriú ó fhorálacha ar leith de chuid Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021. Mar shampla, maidir leis an bpróiseas trína mbeidh deis ag comhlachtaí poiblí maolú a lorg ar chaighdeán teanga a fhorordóidh an tAire TCEGSM, déantar tagairt

shonrach i bhfo-alt 19C(2)(ii) d'Acht na dTeangacha leasaithe do 'iarrachtaí réasúnacha agus sásúla' a bheith glactha ag comhlachtaí poiblí chun críocha foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a earcú. Is féidir le comhlacht poiblí iarratas a dhéanamh ar mhaolú ar chaighdeán teanga ar an mbonn nach raibh an toradh cuí ar 'iarrachtaí réasúnacha agus sásúla'.

19C. – Maolú ar Chaighdeán Teanga

(1) Laistigh de 3 mhí tar éis caighdeán teanga a fhorordú, is caighdeán teanga a mbeidh feidhm aige maidir leis an gcomhlacht faoi alt 19A(2), féadfaidh comhlacht poiblí iarratas a dhéanamh, i scríbhinn, chuig an Aire chun maolú a lorg ar an gcaighdeán nó ar chuid den chaighdeán.

(2) Beidh na nithe seo a leanas in iarratas faoi fho-alt (1)—

(a) ráiteas ina leagfar amach na cúiseanna go measann an comhlacht nach mbeidh sé in ann an caighdeán teanga, nó cuid den chaighdeán, de réir mar a bheidh, a chomhlíonadh mar gheall ar na nithe seo a leanas—

(ii) mainneachtain ag an gcomhlacht, d'ainneoin **iarrachtaí réasúnacha agus sásúla, foireann ag a mbeidh an leibhéal inniúlachta is gá i nGaeilge a earcú**

- Ar mhaithe le dícheall cuí comhlachtaí do 'iarrachtaí réasúnacha agus sásúla' earcaíochta a thomhas, beidh géarghá lena leithéid na samhla monatóireachta a ndéantar cur síos uirthi i Mír 5. 2. 3. (Comhordú agus maoirsiú ar earcú foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge go náisiúnta) thíos.
- Tugadh tosach feidhme don fhoráil earcaíochta 20% (fo-alt 18C(3)(b)) d'Acht na dTeangacha leasaithe (2021) lá bunaithe an Achta an 20 Meitheamh 2022. Is bunriachtanas atá ann, i bhfianaise go bhfuil deireadh na bliana 2024 ag teannadh linn agus an tráchteaireacht seo á déanamh, go mbeadh a leithéid na samhla pleanála don fhórsa saothair a ndéantar cur síos uirthi i mír 4.2.2 thíos den tráchteaireacht seo snaidhmithe isteach i bpleanáil straitéiseach eagraíochtúla gach comhlachta poiblí. Is beart criticiúil í an phleanáil don fhórsa saothair atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge lena chinntiú go mbeifear in ann na seirbhísí poiblí uile i nGaeilge atá dualgas ar chomhlachtaí poiblí a sholáthar faoi

- The figures above in Table C show that just under fifty thousand people were employed in the civil service by the end of 2023.
- The number of Civil Service employees increased by an average of 1,995 per year between 2018 and 2023.

### Recruitment Competitions for Irish language-proficient Staff

Section 7.3 (Current Status of Irish Language Recruitment) of the Advisory Committee's Report provides details on competitions run by 'publicjobs' on behalf of the civil service between 2022 and 2023. Pages 27 and 28 of the Report state that 7 separate competitions were run for vacancies where proficiency in the Irish language was a requirement, at Clerical Officer, Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Senior Executive Officer, Assistant Principal Officer and Principal Officer grades. The Report states that a total of 411 candidates applied for these 7 competitions.

Recruitment for the civil service and for a range of other public bodies is carried out under the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Acts, 2004 and 2013 that established Public Jobs as a central recruitment agency for that purpose. Therefore, 'Publicjobs' is the central provider of recruitment services for the Civil Service. 'Publicjobs' also provides recruitment services for the most senior roles in Local Authorities, for leadership positions and Consultant roles for the Health Service Executive (HSE), for An Garda Síochána, and for a range of specialist professional and technical roles across the Public Sector.

'Public Jobs' indicates that the recruitment agency ran almost 600 separate recruitment competitions for the public sector and processed almost 65,000 applications for vacancies during 2022.<sup>7</sup> The data in Table B on page 33 above shows that a total of 11,417 people were recruited into the public service in 2022. In addition to the 20% provision regarding recruits with a proficiency in Irish, the priority that public bodies should give to recruiting staff who are proficient in Irish is also evident in other provisions of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. For example, in relation to the process by

which public bodies will have the opportunity to seek a derogation from language standards prescribed by the Minister for TCAGSM, subsection 19C(2)(ii) of the amended Languages Act makes specific reference to 'reasonable and satisfactory efforts' being taken by public bodies for the purposes of recruiting Irish language-proficient staff. A public body can apply for a derogation of language standards on the basis that 'reasonable and satisfactory efforts' did not produce the appropriate result, as prescribed as follows in the language legislation:

19C. – Derogation from language standards

(1) A public body may, within 3 months of a language standard being prescribed to apply to the body under section 19A(2), apply, in writing, to the Minister to seek a derogation from the standard or part of the standard.

(2) An application under subsection (1) shall include—

(a) a statement setting out the reasons why the body considers that it will not be in a position to comply with the language standard, or part of the standard, as the case may be, due to—

(ii) failure of the body, despite **reasonable and satisfactory efforts, to recruit staff who have the required level of competence in the Irish language**

- In order to measure the due diligence of bodies, particularly public bodies, to 'reasonable and satisfactory efforts' in recruitment, a monitoring system such as that described in Section 5 (2. 3) (Coordinate and monitor the recruitment of Irish language-proficient staff on a national basis.)
- The 20% recruitment provision (subsection 18C(3)(b)) of the amended Languages Act (2021) commenced on the establishment date of the Act namely June 20, 2022. It is critical, given that the end of 2024 is approaching as this commentary is being written, that the model of workforce planning model described in section 4.2.2 of this commentary is embedded into the organisational planning strategies of every public body. Planning for a workforce that is competent in Irish is a

7. <https://www.publicjobs.ie/ga/mol-eolais/nuacht-agus-eachtraí-is-deanaí/858-ostalann-poistphoiblí-imeacht-dar-teideal-ta-tu-san-aireamh-earnail-phoiblí-ionchuimsitheach-ina-bhfuil-eagsúlacht-le-brath-a-fhorbairt-sna-printworks-caisleán-bhaile-atha-cliaith>

7. <https://www.publicjobs.ie/ga/mol-eolais/nuacht-agus-eachtraí-is-deanaí/858-ostalann-poistphoiblí-imeacht-dar-teideal-ta-tu-san-aireamh-earnail-phoiblí-ionchuimsitheach-ina-bhfuil-eagsúlacht-le-brath-a-fhorbairt-sna-printworks-caisleán-bhaile-atha-cliaith>

fhórlacha díreacha na nAchtanna Teanga (2003, 2021) agus na seirbhísí a fhorórdófar trí na caighdeáin, go mbeifear in ann iad a sholáthar gan bhac agus gan mhoill do phobal na Gaeilge.

- Mar a luaitear ar leathanach 28 de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh tá ról lárnach ag an gCoiste Comhairleach i gcomhairliú comhlachtaí poiblí i dtaca lena gcuid straitéisí um fhoireann ag a bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge a earcú:

‘Beidh obair an Choiste Chomhairligh agus forbairt an Phlean Náisiúnta lárnach do na hiarrachtaí seo.’

### 5.2.2 Pleanáil don Fhórsa Saothair atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a neadú i bPleanáil Eagraíochtúil Comhlachtaí Poiblí

Tá feabhsú seirbhísí Poiblí i nGaeilge ag brath go mór ar dhóthain foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a bheith ann chun freastal ar riachtanais phobal na Gaeilge.

Tugtar le fios i Réamhrá Chaibidil 7 de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh freisin:

‘Bhunaigh an Coiste Comhairleach um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge foghrúpa sonrath le breathnú ar chúrsaí earcaíochta i dtreo dheireadh 2023 chomh maith atá comhdhéanta d’oifigigh ón RTCEGSM, Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí, Sheachadadh PFN agus Athchóirithe (RCPSA), agus poistphoiblí. Cuireadh an foghrúpa seo le chéile chun earcaíocht sa státseirbhís trí chéile a scrúdú, chun na próisis atá i bhfeidhm maidir le daoine le hinniúlacht i nGaeilge a earcú a mheas, agus conas is féidir dea-chleachtas a bhaint amach sa spás sin agus a scaipeadh ar fud na hearnála poiblí i gcoitinne. Tionóladh an chéad chruinniú de seo ar an 20 Samhain 2023. Pléadh ag an gcruinniú sin an gá a bheadh ann páirtithe leasmhara eile a thabhairt isteach ag an bhfoghrúpa sin ó am go chéile de réir mar a fhorbraíonn an obair m.sh. Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG), Ranna agus Oifigí Stáit eile srl.’

Is beart dearfach a rinne an Coiste Comhairleach é fo-ghrúpa dá chuid a bhunú d’fhonn breathnú go sonrath ar cheist na hearcaíochta d’fhoireann atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge.

### Earcú Foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a neadú i bPleanáil do Fhórsa Saothair Comhlachtaí Poiblí

Caithfear feidhmiú na forála 20% d’earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a neadú i gcleachtais phleanála d’fhórsa saothair na gcomhlachtaí poiblí ar bhonn leanúnach.

D’fhoilsigh an RCPSA treoirleáirte dar teideal ‘Ár Seirbhís Phoiblí 2020 - Treoir um Pleanáil Straitéiseach don Fhórsa Saothair’<sup>8</sup>. Tá na treoirleáirte sin chun críoch pleanála don fhórsa saothair á bhfeidhmiú go forleathan ar fud na hearnála poiblí agus athnuachan á déanamh orthu ar bhonn rialta.

Déantar cur síos i Réamhrá na dTreoirleáirte ar an aidhm a bhaineann leis an bPleanáil Straitéiseach don Fhórsa Saothair:

‘Uirlis riachtanach is ea Pleanáil Straitéiseach don Fhórsa Saothair (PSFS) chun teacht roimh fhorbairtí féideartha amach anseo agus chun fórsa saothair dea-struchtúrtha a chothabháil, fórsa saothair lena mbaineann méid chuí, atá in ann freastal ar riachtanais athraitheacha na seirbhíse poiblí ar bhealach cost-éifeachtúil.’

Cuimsíonn an tsamhail phleanála don fhórsa saothair seo bearta pleanála agus oibriúchtúla atá thar a bheith ábhartha lena chinntiú go neadaítear i bpleanáil eagraíochtúil na gcomhlachtaí poiblí an riachtanas d’fhoireann atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a earcú lena chinntiú go gcuirfear na seirbhísí poiblí uile trí Ghaeilge a bheidh forordaithe in Achtanna na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (2003, 2021) ar fáil go héifeachtach. Luaitear na céimeanna seo a leanas leis an bpróiseas pleanála don fhórsa saothair:

1. Tosach Oibre - Cad is Pleanáil Straitéiseach don Fhórsa Saothair ann?
2. An eagraíocht agus a timpeallacht a thuiscint
3. Athbhreithniú ar an bhFórsa Saothair Reatha
4. An Fórsa Saothair amach anseo a Shonrú
5. Pleananna Straitéiseacha don Fhórsa Saothair a chur le chéile agus a chur i bhfeidhm
6. An Plean a Mheas agus a Athbhreithniú

Beidh tábhacht ar leith ag baint leis na bearta seo a leanas a chuimsítear i gCéim 4 thuasluaite ‘An Fórsa Saothair amach anseo a Shonrú’ don phleanáil d’fhonn soláthar dóthain foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a chinntiú.

critical undertaking in ensuring that all public services in Irish that public bodies are required to provide under the direct provisions of the Language Acts (2003, 2021) and the additional new services prescribed through language standards are provided without hindrance or delay to the Irish-speaking community.

- As stated on page Page 28 of the Advisory Committee’s Report the Committee plays a central role in advising public bodies on their strategies for recruiting staff with Irish language proficiency:

‘The work of the Advisory Committee and the development of the National Plan will be critical to these efforts.’

### 5.2. 2. Embedding Planning for an Irish Language-proficient Workforce in the Organizational Planning of Public Bodies

Improving public services in Irish is largely dependent on having sufficient numbers of Irish language-proficient staff to meet the needs of the Irish-speaking community.

The Introduction to Chapter 7 of the Advisory Committee’s Report states:

‘The Irish Language Services Advisory Committee has also established, in late 2023, a specific sub-group to examine recruitment, comprising officials from the DTCAGSM, DPER, and publicjobs. This subgroup was formed to examine recruitment in the civil service as a whole, to assess the processes in place for recruiting Irish language-proficient staff, and how best practice can be achieved in that space and disseminated across the public sector in general. The first meeting took place on 21 November 2023. The need to bring other interested parties into the subgroup from time to time as the work develops was discussed at that meeting, e.g. Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG), other State Departments and Offices etc.’

The Advisory Committee has taken a positive step in establishing the above-mentioned sub-group to specifically look at the issue of recruitment of staff proficient in the Irish language.

### Embedding the Recruitment of Irish-Proficient Staff in Public Bodies’ Workforce Planning

The implementation of the 20% provision for Irish language-proficient new entrants must be embedded in the workforce planning practices of public bodies on an ongoing basis.

In 2020 the DPENDR published guidelines entitled, Our Public Service 2020 - Strategic Workforce Planning Guide<sup>8</sup>. These guidelines for workforce planning are being implemented widely across the public sector and are updated on a regular basis.

The Introduction to the Guidelines describes the purpose of Strategic Workforce Planning:

Strategic Workforce Planning (SWFP) is an essential tool for anticipating possible future developments and maintaining a well-structured workforce of an appropriate size, which is able to meet the changing needs of the public service in a cost-efficient manner.’

This workforce-planning model includes planning and operational practices that are highly relevant to ensuring that the requirement to recruit Irish language-proficient staff is embedded in the organisational planning of public bodies to ensure the effective delivery of all of the Irish language services prescribed in the Official Languages Acts (2003, 2021). The following steps are set out in the Guidelines with respect to the workforce planning process:

1. Getting Started - What is Strategic Workforce Planning?
2. Understanding the organization and its environment
3. Review of the Current Workforce
4. Identify Future Workforce
5. Develop and implement SWFP
6. Evaluate and revise the plan

The following measures included in the above-mentioned Step 4 ‘Specify Future Workforce’ will be a key planning requirement to ensure the provision of a sufficient number of staff who are competent in Irish.

‘4. An Fórsa Saothair amach anseo a Shonrú

- Anailís a dhéanamh ar an mbearna tallainne
- Tosaíocht a thabhairt do bhearnaí agus do riachtanais’.

Chiallóidh feidhmiú na gcéimeanna tosaigh thuasluaite den phleanáil don fhórsa saothair atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge go mbeadh comhlachtaí poiblí in ann, ar an gcéad dul síos, na bearnaí maidir le foireann atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a shonrú. Ach a ndéanfaí na bearnaí a shonrú, d’fhéadfaí céimeanna a thógáil ansin chun an foireann chúí a earcú ionas go mbeadh ar chumas an chomhlachta poiblí na seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge a sholáthar mar a éilítear air faoin reachtaíocht teanga.

### 5.2.3 Comhordú agus maoirsiú náisiúnta ar earcú foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge

Mar aon le feidhmiú na pleanála don fhórsa saothair atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge laistigh de na comhlachta poiblí aonair, beidh comhordú, maoirseacht agus tuairisciú leanúnach de dhíth ar leibhéal náisiúnta ar mhaithe le tomhas a dhéanamh ar dhul chun cinn ar ghnóthú na forála earcaíochta 20%. Beidh tacaíocht leanúnach de dhíth ar an gCoiste Comhairleach ina leith seo.

Ba chóir breathnú ar ról an Aonaid um Pleanáil Straitéiseach don Fhórsa Saothair laistigh de RCPSPA don chúram seo nó eintiteas eile dá leithéid a bheadh ag tuairisciú go rialta don Choiste Comhairleach ar an dul chun cinn atáthar á dhéanamh chun críocha na forála 20% d’earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge. Maidir le tuairisciú rialta ar dhul chun cinn, d’fhéadfaí breathnú ar leithéid na samhla tuairiscithe atá ag an bhForas Riaracháin ar threochtaí fhórsa saothair na hearnála poiblí, (e.g. Treochtaí san Earnáil Phoiblí 2023, Richard Boyle, Fergal O’Leary agus John O’Neill, Nollaig 2023).

Ba chóir breathnú ar fhoilseacháin den chineál thuasluaite de chuid an Fhorais Riaracháin chun tábhacht na forála earcaíochta 20% a shuíomh i gcomhthéacs pholasaí agus threochtaí náisiúnta na seirbhíse poiblí in Éirinn. Chuirfeadh seo go mór le feachtas ar an bhforáil a mhéadú. D’fhéadfaidh an Coiste Comhairleach úsáid a bhaint as a fheidhm faoi alt 18C(1)(c) ar mhaithe le taighde a dhéanamh nó a choimisiúnú mar is gá chun críocha monatóireachta agus tuairiscithe mar a leagtar amach thuas a dhéanamh ar an bhforáil 20% d’earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge.

Beidh ról an-tábhachtach ag an tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí lena chinntiú go mbeidh na timthrialacha earcaíochta comórtais do dhaoine atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge á réachtáil go tráthrialta d’fhonn freastal ar an éileamh a chothóidh an fhoráil earcaíochta 20% d’earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge. Cuirfidh an phleanáil don fhórsa saothair ag leibhéal na gcomhlachtaí poiblí éagsúla bonn eolais ar fáil don phróiseas pleanála maidir le líonmhaireacht agus grád na gcomórtais d’iarrthóirí atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a bheidh de dhíth a réachtáil. D’fhéadfaidh an tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí an fhaisnéis maidir le líon agus grád na foirne is riachtanach le comhlachtaí poiblí a úsáid freisin chun críoch a sceideal um comórtais do phoist dá n-éilítear inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge a réachtáil.

### 5.2.4 Fórsa Saothair Ardoilte a Sholáthar atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge

Déantar cur síos i mír 7.2. (Forbairtí déanta ar chúrsaí oiliúna Gaeilge agus dul chun cinn) de Chaibidil 7 de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh ar thosaíochtaí atá an Coiste a ghlacadh d’fhonn cur le soláthar na gcúrsaí oiliúna Gaeilge.

#### OneLearning – Aonad Oiliúna agus Forbartha na Seirbhíse Poiblí

Bunaíodh OneLearning faoi scáth na Roinne Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe in 2017 ina aonad foghlama agus forbartha d’fhoireann na Seirbhíse Poiblí. Deir RCPSPA go bhfuil cuspóirí OneLearning ailínithe le straitéis an rialtais d’fhorbairt na Seirbhíse Poiblí idir seo agus 2030 (Seirbhísí Poiblí Níos Fearr – Straitéis Chlaochlaithe na Seirbhíse Poiblí 2030).

Tugann tuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh le fios gur fhreastail 1463 státseirbhíseach ar chúrsa Gaeilge le OneLearning idir Earrach 2022 – Earrach 2024. Is é 699 státseirbhíseach nó 48% de líon iomlán na státseirbhíseach sin (1463) a thug faoi scrúdú Theastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG) mar chuid den chúrsa a rinne siad. Ní shonraítear sa Tuarascáil leibhéal na gcúrsaí TEG a bhí i gceist i gcás na 699 státseirbhíseach thuasluaite sin. Is é Lárionad na Gaeilge in Ollscoil Mhá Nuad a riarann TEG agus réachtáiltear cúrsaí ag leibhéil, A1, A2, B1, B2 agus C1 de Chomhchreat Tagartha na hEorpa um Theangacha.

‘4. Identify Future Workforce

- Analysis of workforce gaps
- Prioritisation of Gaps and Needs’.

Implementing the aforementioned workforce planning steps would enable public bodies in the first instance identify gaps with respect to their staff complement who are proficient in Irish. Once those gaps were identified, steps could then be taken to recruit the a sufficient number of staff to provide all of the Irish language public services prescribed in language legislation.

### 5. 2. 3. Coordinate and oversee on a national basis the recruitment of Irish language-proficient staff

As well as implementing planning for an Irish language-proficient workforce within individual public bodies, ongoing coordination, oversight and reporting will be required at a national level in order to measure progress on the 20% recruitment provision. The Advisory Committee will need ongoing support in this regard.

Consideration should be given to the role of the Strategic Workforce Planning Unit within DPER or a similar such entity in this regard that would regularly report to the Advisory Committee on the progress being made for the purposes of the 20% provision for Irish language-proficient recruits. In terms of regular reporting on progress, the Institute of Public Administration’s reporting model on public sector workforce trends, (e.g. Public Sector Trends 2023, Richard Boyle, Fergal O’Leary and John O’Neill, December 2023) could be considered.

Publications of this nature by the Institute of Public Administration could be utilised to position the importance of the 20% recruitment provision in the context of national public service policy and trends in Ireland. This would go a long way in increasing awareness of the provision. The Advisory Committee could exercise its function under section 18C(1)(c) for the purpose of conducting or commissioning research as necessary for the purposes of monitoring and reporting, as outlined above, on the provision of 20% of Irish language-proficient recruits.

The Public Appointments Service will play a crucial role in ensuring that the competitive recruitment rounds for people who are proficient in Irish are run regularly in order to meet the demand that the 20% recruitment provision for Irish language-proficient new entrants will generate. Workforce planning at the level of the various public bodies will inform the planning process regarding the number and grade of competitions that will be required for Irish language-proficient candidates. The Public Appointments Service could also use information regarding the number and grades of staff required by public bodies for the purpose of scheduling competitions for positions requiring proficiency in Irish.

### 5.2.4. Developing a Highly Skilled Irish language-proficient Workforce

Section 7.2. (Developments made on Irish language training courses and progress) of Chapter 7 of the Advisory Committee’s Report describes the Committee’s priorities to increase the provision of Irish language training courses.

#### OneLearning – Public Service Training and Development Unit

OneLearning was established under the auspices of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in 2017 as a learning and development unit for Public Service staff. DPENDR states that the objectives of OneLearning are aligned with the government’s strategy for the development of the Public Service by 2030 (Better Public Services – a transformation strategy for the Public Service 2030).

The Advisory Committee’s report indicates that 1463 civil servants attended an Irish language course with OneLearning between Spring 2022 – Spring 2024. 699 civil servants or 48% of that total cohort of civil servants (1463) undertook the Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG) examination as part of the course they completed. The Report does not specify the level of TEG courses that the 699 civil servants mentioned above undertook. TEG is administered by the Lárionad na Gaeilge at Maynooth University and courses are run at A1, A2, B1, B2 and C1 levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

### Gaelchultúr (Teastas sa Ghaeilge Ghairmiúil)

Tugtar le fios i Mír 7.2 de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh freisin go ndearna 2,049 fostaí de chuid na seirbhíse poiblí cúrsa le Coláiste na hÉireann/Gaelchultúr in 2022 agus 2,994 in 2023. Tuairiscítear go ndearna 712 nó 35% de na 2,049 fostaí sin an scrúdú Teastas sa Ghaeilge Ghairmiúil (TGG) in 2022 agus 704 nó 24% fostaí de na 2,994 an scrúdú faoi seach in 2023.

Díol suntais é gur 20% (284 fostaí) den líon freastail iomlán (1,416 fostaí) in 2022 – 2023 a rinne leibhéal B2 den scrúdú TGG agus 59 nó 4% den líon iomlán freastail a rinne an scrúdú TGG leibhéal C1. Fágann sin gur duine as gach ceathrar a thug faoi scrúdú TGG ag leibhéal B2 agus C1. De réir ghreille féinmheasúnaithe Chomhairle na hEorpa a leagann amach inniúlachtaí an Chomhchreata, d'fhéadfaí a áiteamh i gcás comhlachtaí poiblí a chuireann seirbhísí ar fáil i gceantar Gaeltachta gur chóir leibhéal C1 ar a laghad a bheith ag baill foirne a bhíonn ag déileáil le cainteoirí dúchais.

Maidir le comhlachtaí poiblí a bheadh ag cur seirbhísí ar fáil lasmuigh de cheantar Gaeltachta, beidh inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ar leibhéal B2 ar a laghad de dhíth ar na baill foirne a bheidh ag déileáil leis an bpobal. Is é leibhéal B2 an leibhéal is ísle a éilíonn go mbeadh cumas 'cainte [an duine] sách líofa agus sách spontáineach chun gur féidir [leis nó léi] idirghníomhú le cainteoirí dúchais go rialta'. Is é an leibhéal is ísle freisin é a éilíonn go mbeadh duine in ann 'mionchuntais shoiléire a thabhairt ar raon leathan ábhar a bhaineann [lena] réimse spéise féin' ó bhéal agus in ann 'aiste nó tuairisc a scríobh chun eolas a sheachadadh nó chun cúiseanna a sholáthar i bhfabhar nó i gcoinne dearcadh áirithe'.

### Ollscoil Mhá Nuad - Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG)

Mar a luadh thuas is é Lárionad na Gaeilge in Ollscoil Mhá Nuad a riarann córas TEG. Tugtar le fios i Mír 7.2.1 den Thuarascáil go gcuireann RTCEGSM maoiniú bliantúil ar fáil d'Ollscoil Mhá Nuad maidir le forbairt agus cothabháil chóras TEG. Anuas ar an teistiú thuasluaite a dhéantar faoi chóras TEG ar chúrsaí OneLearning agus Gaelchultúr, tugtar le fios sa Thuarascáil freisin go ndéantar teistiú faoi chóras TEG mar chuid de chomórtais a réachtálann Poistphoiblí, an Roinn Oideachais, roinnt eagraíochtaí Gaeilge agus roinnt institiúidí tríú leibhéal.

Tugtar le fios gur chuir RTCEGSM maoiniú méadaithe ar luach €1,604,881 ar fáil do Lárionad na Gaeilge, Ollscoil Mhá Nuad don tréimhse 3 bliana 2022-2025 chun:

'méadú a dhéanamh ar acmhainneacht an Lárionaid córas tástála teanga an TEG a réachtáil mar chuid de dheontas níos leithne. Leis an leithdháileadh seo, aithníodh agus tacaíodh leis an ról lárnach atá agus a bheidh ag teistiú TEG i gcomhthéacs sprioc earcaíochta an Rialtais faoin Acht.'

Is infheistíocht thábhachtach an maoiniú thuasluaite do Lárionad na Gaeilge, Ollscoil Mhá Nuad le go méadófar an acmhainn a bheidh ar fáil don earnáil phoiblí tástáil teanga agus deimhniú creidiúnaithe teanga a dhéanamh leis an bhfoireann a bheifear a chur ar fáil sna comhlachtaí poiblí éagsúla d'fhonn seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge a sholáthar. Beidh an t-éileamh ar dheimhniú creidiúnaithe teanga ag méadú as cuimse i bhfianaise na forála 20% d'earcaigh atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge agus inniúlacht teanga fhoireann na gcomhlachtaí poiblí trí chéile a threisiú chun na seirbhísí breise a eascróidh ó fheidhmiú na reachtaíochta teanga nua, a sheachadadh.

Déantar tuilleadh plé thíos i Mír 5. (Inniúlacht Teanga na Foirne agus Soláthar Seirbhísí Poiblí i nGaeilge a Ailíniú) ar an mbunriachtanas go n-oibreoidh na forála earcaíochta 20% agus córas na gcaighdeán teanga i bpáirt le chéile. Mura dtarlóidh sin ní thiochfaidh an feabhas, a bhfuil géarghá leis ar bhonn córasach, ar sheirbhísí poiblí trí Ghaeilge.

### Gréasán Gaeilge na hEarnála Poiblí

Tuairiscítear i Mír 7.2.2. (Gréasán Gaeilge don Earnáil Phoiblí a Bhunú) de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh gur bunaíodh Gréasán Gaeilge na hEarnála Poiblí faoi scáth Oireachtas na Gaeilge i Mí na Nollag 2023. Tugtar le fios sa Thuarascáil gur cheadaigh an RTCEGSM deontas sa bhreis ar €1m ar mhaithe le:

'gréasán Gaeilge a bhunú chun tacú le cainteoirí agus foghlaimeoirí Gaeilge atá ag obair san earnáil phoiblí cheana féin, a gcuid Gaeilge a úsáid agus iad i mbun a gcuid oibre (GA/EN). Tháinig ceadú an deontais seo go dlúth le mianta rannpháirtithe na gcúrsaí Gaeilge a bhí ag iarraidh deiseanna cleachtadh teanga lasmuigh den seomra ranga a bheith ar fáil dóibh.' [lch 26, Thuarascáil ar dhul chun cinn an Choiste Chomhairligh um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge - 20 Meitheamh 2022 - 31 Nollaig 2023]

Is próiseas dinimiciúil agus casta é sealbhú teanga ar mó é ná stór focal agus rialacha gramadaí a shealbhú. Gné ríthábhachtach den aistear sealbhaithe teanga seo a ndéantar dearmad air go minic is ea idirghníomhaíocht

### Gaelchultúr (Teastas sa Ghaeilge Ghairmiúil)

Section 7.2 of the Advisory Committee's Report also indicates that 2,049 public service employees completed a course with Coláiste na hÉireann/Gaelchultúr in 2022 and 2,994 in 2023. It states that 712 or 35% of those 2,049 employees took the Teastas sa Ghaeilge Ghairmiúil (TGG) [Certificate in Professional Irish] exam in 2022 and 704 or 24% of the 2,994 employees took the exam in 2023.

It is noteworthy that 20% (284 employees) of the total number of attendees (1,416 employees) in 2022 – 2023 took the TGG exam at level B2 with 59 or 4% of the total number of attendees taking the TGG exam at C1 level. This means that one in four people took the TGG exam at level B2 and C1. According to the European Council's self-assessment grid setting out the Common Framework competencies, it could be argued that in the case of public bodies providing services in a Gaeltacht area, staff members who deal with native speakers should have at least a C1 level of proficiency.

For public bodies providing services outside of Gaeltacht area, staff members dealing with the public will need to have at least a level B2 proficiency in Irish. Level B2 is the lowest level that establishes that a speaker 'can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible'. It is also the lowest level that establishes that a speaker 'can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest' orally and 'can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view'.

### Maynooth University - Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG)

As mentioned above, the TEG system is administered by Lárionad na Gaeilge in Maynooth University. Section 7.2.1 of the Report indicates that DTCAGSM provides annual funding to Maynooth University to develop and maintain TEG. In addition to the above-mentioned certification carried out under the TEG system on OneLearning and Gaelchultúr courses, the Report also indicates that certification is carried out under the TEG system as part of competitions run by Publicjobs, the Department of Education, a number of Irish language organisations and third-level institutions.

It states that DTCAGSM has provided increased funding of €1,604,881 to Lárionad na Gaeilge in Maynooth University for the 3-year period 2022-2025 to:

'increase the Centre's capacity to run the TEG language testing system as part of a wider allocation. This allocation recognised and supported the central role that TEG certification plays, and will play, in the context of the Government's recruitment target under the Act.'

The above funding is an important investment to enable Lárionad na Gaeilge in Maynooth University increase capacity to carry out language accreditation of the additional staff that will be required by public bodies in order to provide public services in Irish. The demand for language testing and accreditation certification will increase dramatically in light of the provision of 20% of Irish language-proficient recruits and the need to strengthen the Irish language competency of public body staff as a whole to deliver the additional services that will result from the implementation of the new Irish language legislation.

The fundamental need for the 20% recruitment provisions and the language standards system to work in tandem is discussed further below in Section 5. (Aligning Staff Language Competence and the Provision of Public Services in Irish). Without this, the much-needed systemic improvement in public services through Irish will not occur.

### Gréasán Gaeilge na hEarnála Poiblí [Public Sector Irish Language Network]

Section 7.2.2. (Establishment of an Irish Language Network for the Public Sector) of the Advisory Committee's Report states that Gréasán Gaeilge na hEarnála Poiblí was established under the auspices of the Oireachtas na Gaeilge in December 2023. The Report states that a grant in excess of €1m was approved by DTCAGSM for the purposes of:

'establishing an Irish language network to support Irish speakers and learners who are already working in the public sector, to use Irish in their work (GA/EN). The approval of this grant was in line with the wishes of participants in Irish language courses who sought opportunities to practice the language outside the classroom. '[page 26, Progress Report of the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee - 20 June 2022 - 31 December 2023]

Language acquisition is a dynamic and intricate process that extends well beyond simply learning vocabulary and grammatical rules. A crucial and often overlooked aspect

shóisialta idir cainteoirí líofa agus foghlaimeoirí teanga ar gach leibhéal inniúlachta. Tugann idirghníomhaíocht shóisialta timpeallacht dhinimiciúil d'fhoghlaimeoirí inar féidir leo an próiseas sealbhaithe teanga a threisiú i suíomhanna nádúrtha labhartha teanga. Ina theannta sin, tugann an comhthéacs sóisialta foghlaimeoirí i dteagmháil le cainteoirí ag a bhfuil canúintí éagsúla, le nathanna cainte éagsúla, agus le húsáid neamhfhoirmiúil teanga, gnéithe a bhíonn in easnamh uaireanta i suíomhanna foirmiúla oibre agus oideachais.

Is cuid thábhachtach den ghréasán sealbhaithe agus saibhrithe teanga a theastóidh go náisiúnta d'fhonn dóthain foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a chur ar fáil don tseirbhís phoiblí é bunú Ghréasán Gaeilge na hEanála Poiblí. Tá na páirtithe leasmhara uile a bhí páirteach ina bhunú le moladh. Tá an cuntas teiste atá ag Oireachtas na Gaeilge i gcur chun cinn na n-ealaíon teangabhunaithe Gaeilge trí fhéilte náisiúnta ar nós Oireachtas na Samhna a reáchtáil ina bhuntáiste mór. 'Is acmhainn fhíorthábhachtach don Ghréasán Gaeilge freisin an raon leathan imeachtaí sóisialta ar a bhfreastalaíonn Gaeilgóirí ó chuile chearn den tír agus den oileán orthu, a bheith á roinnt le pobal foghlaimeoirí teanga na hearnála poiblí.

### An Tionscnamh Ardscileanna Gaeilge

Déantar cur síos i Mír 7.2.3. de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh ar an Tionscnamh Ardscileanna Gaeilge.

Luaitear gurb é aidhm an Thionscnaimh:

'a chinntiú go mbeidh dóthain daoine cáilithe ag a bhfuil scileanna Gaeilge ar fáil chun freastal ar riachtanais earcaíochta in Éirinn agus san AE. Faoin scéim seo faoi láthair, cuireann RTCEGSM maoiniú ar fáil do réimse sainchúrsaí tríú leibhéal Gaeilge dá leithéidí an aistriúcháin, na hateangaireachta agus dlí.' [lch 26]

Bhí an Tionscnamh dírithe ar dhóthain céimithe a chur ar fáil a shásódh an t-éileamh a d'eascródh ó chealú an mhaolaithe ar stádas iomlán Oifigiúil don Ghaeilge san AE ó dheireadh 2021. Chun na críche sin cuireann RTCEGSM maoiniú ar fáil do na cúrsaí lán-aimseartha agus páirt-aimseartha thíosluaite ar mhaithe le céimithe ardoilte a sholáthar do na hinstiúidí Eorpacha.

- MA san Ateangaireacht Chomhdhála (Ollscoil na Gaillimhe)

- Dioplóma larchéime san Aistriúchán – (Gaelchultúr / Coláiste na hÉireann)
- Ard-Dioplóma sa Dlítheangeolaíocht agus san Aistriúchán Dlíthiúil agus an tArd-Dioplóma sa Dlí-Chleachtadh i nGaeilge – (Cumann Onórach Óstaí an Rí)
- Ard-Dioplóma san Aistriúchán – (Ollscoil Mhá Nuad)
- Cúrsaí léinn eile de chuid Choláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Coláiste na hOllscoile BÁC, agus Ollscoil Chathair BÁC<sup>9</sup>

Eagraítear na cúrsaí faoi stiúir an Ionaid Barr Feabhais i gcomhair Gairmeacha san Aontas Eorpach a bhunaigh RTCEGSM. D'fhéadfadh oiread agus ceithre scór mac léinn teacht faoi scáth an Tionscnaimh Ardscileanna Gaeilge in aghaidh na bliana.

Tugtar le fios sa Tuarascáil go bhfuil beartaithe ag an RTCEGSM:

'athbhreithniú agus leathnú a dhéanamh ar fheidhmeanna an Tionscnaimh Ardscileanna Gaeilge chun go ndíreofaí níos mó ar chúrsaí oiliúna agus earcaíochta do sheirbhís phoiblí na hÉireann, sa bhreis ar na cinn sin don Aontas Eorpach. Táthar ag súil go gcuirfear an t-athbhreithniú seo i gcrích roimh dheireadh 2024.'

Is cinneadh tábhachtach é cinneadh RTCEGSM athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an Tionscnamh Ardscileanna Gaeilge chun críocha an tsoláthair oiliúna a bheidh de dhíth d'fhonn foireann bhreise ag a bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge a oiliúint. Beidh sé riachtanach áfach cibé tionscnamh nó straitéis a fheidhmeoidh RTCEGSM agus a mholfaidh an Coiste Comhairleach d'fhonn freastal ar an riachtanas i ndáil dóthain foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a sholáthar don tseirbhís phoiblí, go ndéanfar breithniú cuí ar scála na hidirbheartaíochta a bheidh de dhíth ar fud na hearnála poiblí.

I measc na mbeart oideachasúil eile a thuairiscíonn an Coiste Comhairleach a bheith á nglacadh ar mhaithe le soláthar dóthaineach acmhainne daonna atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a láidriú tá:

'gealltanais sonracha tugtha ag an RTCEGSM anois i bPlean Printíseachta na Seirbhíse Poiblí 2023 (GA/EN) de chuid na Roinne Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais, Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus

of this language acquisition journey is social interaction between fluent speakers and language learners at all levels of proficiency. Social interaction provides learners with a dynamic environment in which they can enhance the language acquisition process in natural language speaking settings. In addition, the social context exposes learners to speakers of different dialects, with different expressions, and to informal language use, features that are sometimes absent in formal work and educational settings.

The establishment of the Public Sector Irish Language Network is an important part of the language acquisition and enrichment network that will be required nationally in order to provide a sufficient number of staff proficient in the Irish language. All stakeholders involved in its establishment are to be commended. Oireachtas na Gaeilge's track record in promoting Irish language-based arts through national festivals such as Oireachtas na Samhna is a significant advantage. The wide range of social events organised by an tOireachtas annually and attended by Irish speakers from all over the country and island, being accessible to the public sector language learning community, is also a very important asset to the Network

### The Advanced Irish Language Skills Initiative

The Irish Language Advanced Skills Initiative is detailed in Section 7.2.3. of the Advisory Committee's Report.

The aim of the Initiative is stated as:

'ensuring that there are sufficient qualified people with Irish language skills available to meet recruitment needs in Ireland and the EU. Under this scheme, currently DTCAGSM makes funding available for a range of specialist third-level Irish language courses in the areas of translation, interpreting and law.' [pg. 26]

The Initiative aimed at providing sufficient graduates to meet the demand that would arise once the derogation on full Official status for the Irish language in the EU ended at the end of 2021. To this end, DTCAGSM provides funding for the full-time and part-time courses listed below in order to provide highly skilled graduates for the European institutions.

- MA san Ateangaireacht Chomhdhála [MA in Conference Interpreting] (University of Galway)

- Dioplóma larchéime san Aistriúchán [Postgraduate Diploma in Translation] – (Gaelchultúr / College of Ireland)
- Ard-Dioplóma sa Dlítheangeolaíocht agus san Aistriúchán Dlíthiúil [Higher Diploma in Legal Linguistics and Legal Translation] and Ard-Dioplóma sa Dlí-Chleachtadh i nGaeilge [Higher Diploma in Legal Practice in Irish] – (Honorary Society of the King's Inns)
- Ard-Dioplóma san Aistriúchán [Higher Diploma in Translation] – (Maynooth University)
- Other courses of study at University College Cork, University College Dublin, and Dublin City University<sup>9</sup>

The courses are organised under the auspices of the Ionaid Barr Feabhais i gcomhair Gairmeacha san Aontas Eorpach [Centre of Excellence for Careers in the European Union] established by DTCAGSM. Up to eighty students undertake courses covered by the Advanced Irish Language Skills Initiative per year.

The Report indicates that the DTCAGSM intends to:

'review and expand the functions of the Irish Language Advanced Skills Initiative to focus more on training and recruitment courses for the Irish public service, in addition to those for the European Union. The review is due to be completed before the end of 2024.'

DTCAGSM's decision to review the Advanced Irish Language Skills Initiative in light of the necessity to significantly increase the national language training provision that will be required to provide for additional staff proficient in Irish was an important decision. However, whatever initiative or strategy DTCAGSM implements and the Advisory Committee recommends in order to meet the need to provide sufficient Irish-speaking staff for the public service, it is critical that the scale of the intervention that will be required across the public sector, particularly for the purposes of the 20% recruitment provision, will be fully factored in.

Other educational initiatives mentioned in Advisory Committee's report being taken to improve the supply of human resources competent in Irish include:

'DTCAGSM has now made a specific commitment in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science's

Eolaíochta (RBATNE) a foilsíodh i mí Mheán Fómhair 2023, go ndéanfar clár Speisialtóir Gaeilge a fhorbairt (Ginearálá ag leibhéal Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin le hinniúlacht sa Ghaeilge) faoi Ráithe 3 2025, i gcomhar le Ranna Stáit eile.’

[lch 23, Tuarascáil ar dhul chun cinn an Choiste Chomhairligh um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge – 20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023]

### An Riachtanas do Straitéis Náisiúnta d’Éarnáil an Ardoideachais Gaeilge

Meastar coibhneas na mac léinn a fhreastalaíonn ar chúrsaí ardoideachais a bhfuil an Ghaeilge mar ábhar orthu a bheith isteach agus amach ar 1% de líon iomlán na mac léinn a dhéanann cúrsaí ardoideachais in Éirinn. De bharr scála agus ilghnéitheacht na seirbhíse poiblí beidh riachtanas ann do bheart náisiúnta de chuid eárnáil na hOllscolaíochta d’fhonn dóthain céimithe atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a sholáthar i ndisciplíní éagsúla chun a chinntiú go n-éireoidh leis an bhforáil 20% d’earcáithe atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge faoi dheireadh 2030. Beidh géar-riachtanas do shruth leanúnach céimithe sna hearnálacha seo a leanas: Riarachán & Beartas Poiblí, Rialachas Corparáideach, Bainistíocht Eagraíochtúil, Pleanáil Teanga, Pleanáil Straitéiseach, Oiliúint Múinteoirí Bunscoile agus Iar-bhunscoile, Oideachas do Ghairmithe Cúraim Shláinte agus araile.

Is í an Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais, Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta an Roinn Stáit atá freagrach as beartas, maoiniú agus rialachas i dtaca le hearnálacha an ardoideachais, taighde agus breisoideachais. Tá an Roinn freagrach freisin as maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar obair ghníomhaireachtaí an Stáit agus institiúidí poiblí a oibríonn sna réimsí sin. Is é an tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas (HEA) an ghníomhaireacht reachtúil forbartha, taighde, maoinithe agus chomhairleach don ardoideachas agus do thaighde. Rinne Acht an Údarás um Ard-Oideachas, 2022 athruithe ar fheidhmeanna agus rialachas an Údarás um Ard-Oideachas. Tá forálacha an-tábhachtach san Acht nua a chuireann dúshraith reachtúil faoi chur chun cinn an ardoideachais trí mheán na Gaeilge go náisiúnta.

Forordaítear, ar an gcéad dul síos faoi fho-alt 8(1)(b) maidir le cuspóirí an Údarás, cur chun cinn na Gaeilge faoi réim na tacaíochta a thabharfaidh an tÚdarás do na hinstitiúidí ainmnithe ardoideachais a thagann faoi scáth

an Achta. Forordaítear faoi fho-alt 9(1)(f) mar fheidhm de chuid an Údarás tacaíocht a chur ar fáil do chlár ardoideachais agus oiliúna a sholáthar a thabharfaidh aird ar riachtanais oideachais agus oiliúna an phobail i Limistéir Phleanála Teanga, i mBailte Seirbhíse Gaeltachta agus i Líonraí Teanga go náisiúnta, mar aon le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge sna limistéir lasmuigh d’abhantrach reachtúil náisiúnta na pleanála teanga.

Forordaítear faoi alt 33. (1) d’Acht an Údarás um Ard-Oideachas, 2022 go mbeidh aird ag an Aire Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais, Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta le linn straitéis a bheith á ullmhú ar:

‘chun oideachas treasach a sholáthar, lena sainaitheofar na cuspóirí agus na haschuir an córas breisoideachais agus oiliúna agus an t-ardoideachas agus an taighde’

Agus chun críocha an dualgais a fhorordaítear don Aire faoi alt 33(1) thuasluaite go mbeidh aird aige/aici freisin faoi fho-alt 33 (4)(a) ar:

‘aon bheartais náisiúnta atá ábhartha don straitéis, lena n-áirítear beartais a bhaineann forbairt agus inbhuanaitheacht shóisialta, eacnamaíoch, chultúrtha agus chomhshaoil agus **cur chun cinn agus úsáid na Gaeilge**’ [Acht an Údarás um Ard-Oideachas, 2022 fo-alt 33 (4)(a)]

- Is bunriachtanas pleanála agus feidhmithe straitéise a bheidh ann maidir le fórsa saothair ardoilte a fhorbairt atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge go mbainfear leas as an bhforáil atá in Acht an Údarás um Ard-Oideachas, 2022 i dtaca le straitéis nua don Ollscolaíocht Ghaeilge go náisiúnta a fhorbairt. Cruthaíonn an soláthar reachtúil atá i bhfo-alt 8(1)(b) d’Acht an Údarás um Ard-Oideachas, 2022 maidir le clár ardoideachais lán-Ghaeilge nua a fhorbairt trí líonra na Pleanála Teanga go náisiúnta, deis eiseachtúil tacú le gnóthú an ardaithe suntasach atá ag teastáil ar fhoireann le Gaeilge san eárnáil phoiblí. Bheadh straitéis dá leithéid mar bhonn agus mar thaca d’fhorbairt na molchamps, a ndéantar cur síos orthu in alt 6.1 thíos, ar mhaithe lena chinntiú go mbeadh seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge á soláthar ar bhealach i bhfad níos éifeachtaí go náisiúnta, mar go gcuirfeadh sé go mór le rochtain an phobail i gcoitinne ar sheirbhísí poiblí ar ardchaighdeán i nGaeilge
- Tá tábhacht mhór ag baint leis an soláthar atá i bhfo-alt 34 (3) den Acht freisin sa mhéid go dtugann sé cumhachtaí pleanála don Údarás um Ard-Oideachas

(DHERIS) Public Service Apprenticeship Plan 2023 (GA/EN) published in September 2023, to develop an Irish Language Specialist programme (Generalist at Executive Officer level with proficiency in Irish) by Q3 2025, in collaboration with other Departments of State.’

[page 23, Progress Report of the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee – 20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023]

### The Requirement for a National Strategy for the Irish-Medium Higher Education Sector

The proportion of students attending higher education courses in which Irish is a subject is estimated to be around 1% of the total number of students undertaking higher education courses in Ireland. Due to the scale and diversity of the public service, there will be a need for a national effort by the University sector to produce sufficient numbers of Irish language-proficient graduates in a variety of disciplines to ensure that the target of 20% of new entrants with competency in Irish by the end of 2030 is met. There will be a critical need for a continuous stream of graduates in the following sectors: Administration & Public Policy, Corporate Governance, Organizational Management, Language Planning, Strategic Planning, Primary and Post-Primary Teacher Training, Education for Healthcare Professionals and so on.

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science is the State Department responsible for policy, funding and governance of the higher education, research and further education sectors. The Department is also responsible for overseeing the work of State agencies and public institutions operating in these sectors. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory development, research, funding and advisory agency for higher education and research. The Higher Education Authority Act 2022 changed the functions and governance of the Higher Education Authority. The new Act contains very important provisions that provide a statutory basis for the promotion of higher education through the medium of Irish nationally.

The promotion of the Irish language is prescribed, firstly, under subsection 8(1)(b) in relation to the objectives of the Authority, within the scope of the support that the Authority will provide to the designated higher education institutions that fall under the auspices of the

Act. Subsection 9(1)(f) prescribes as a function of the Authority to support the provision of higher education and training programmes that will take into account the community educational and training needs in Language Planning Areas, in Gaeltacht Service Towns and in Language Networks nationally, as well as the promotion of the Irish language in areas outside the statutory national language planning catchment area.

Section 33. (1) of the Higher Education Authority Act 2022 prescribes that the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, when preparing a strategy, will have regard to:

‘for the provision of tertiary education, which shall identify the objectives and outputs for the further education and training system and the higher education and research system’

And for the purposes of the duty prescribed for the Minister under section 33(1) above, he/she shall also have regard under subsection 33(4)(a) to:

‘any national policies that are relevant to the strategy, including policies relating to social, economic, cultural and environmental development and sustainability and the **promotion and use of the Irish language**’ [Higher Education Authority Act 2022 subsection 33 (4)(a)]

- It will be a fundamental requirement of strategic planning and implementation, in order to foster an Irish language-proficient workforce, that full effect be given to the statutory provisions prescribed in the Higher Education Authority Act 2022 in relation to developing a new strategy for Irish-medium University Education nationally. The statutory provision in subsection 8(1)(b) of the Higher Education Authority Act 2022, regarding the development of new Irish-medium higher education programmes through the Language Planning network nationally, creates an exceptional opportunity to contribute to the significant increase required in public sector staff who are proficient in Irish. Such a strategy would also underpin the development of the campus hubs as discussed in section 6.1 below, to ensure the more effective delivery of public services in Irish nationally, as it would greatly enhance the public’s access to high-quality public services in Irish.
- The provision in subsection 34 (3) of the Act is also very important as it gives the Higher Education Authority planning powers to review the higher education needs

maidir le riachtanais ardoideachais phobal na Gaelscolaíochta laistigh d'abhantrach fhearann na pleanála teanga go náisiúnta a athbhreithniú ar bhonn leanúnach. Faoi fho-alt 34(4) den Acht is féidir leis an ÚAO moltaí a dhéanamh don Aire maidir le líon na n-áiteanna ba chóir a chur ar fáil ar chlár ardoideachais d'fhonn freastal ar riachtanais an phobail teanga go náisiúnta. Ba chóir go n-úsáidfí an phleanáil don fhórsa saothair mar a déantar cur síos uirthi in alt 5.2.2 thuas chun chun leibhéal an tsoláthair a bheidh de dhíth i ndisciplíní léinn éagsúla a ríomh ar mhaithe leis na cineálacha folúntais a bheidh ag teacht chun cinn a shásamh.

- Tá deis ag an gCoiste Comhairleach ról ceannais a ghlacadh trí fhorbairt an Phlean Náisiúnta i ndáil le conair a leagan amach leis na páirtithe leasmhara (An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais, Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta, ÚAO, RTCEGSM agus Institiúidí Tríú Leibhéal), trína bhforbrófar acmhainneacht na hearnála Ollscolaíochta Gaeilge chun dóthain foirne ag a bhfuil Gaeilge mhaith a sholáthar, chun críocha na forála earcaíochta 20% agus d'fhonn cur le líon na foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge sa tseirbhís phoiblí trí chéile.

### 5.2.5 Córas Nua na gCaighdeán Teanga agus Acmhainní Daonna le Gaeilge

Léiríonn líon agus cineál na ngearán a fhaigheann Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga go bliantúil go bhfuil easpa foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge san earnáil phoiblí ar cheann de na bacannaí is mó maidir le seirbhísí poiblí ar chaighdeán sásúil i nGaeilge a chur ar fáil don phobal. Tuairiscítear go mion minic don Oifig go gcliseann ar an ngné chumarsáide labhartha idir an pobal agus ball foirne an chomhlachta phoiblí ceal inniúlachta cuí sa Ghaeilge labhartha a bheidh ag an mball foirne nó toisc nach bhfuil ball foirne atá inniúil go cuí ar fáil le déileáil leis an ábhar atá an ball den phobal a phlé leis an gcomhlacht poiblí.

Dá réir sin, is riachtanas criticiúil é go ndéanfar ailíniú iomlán idir:

1. seachadadh na seirbhísí a fhorordaítear in Achtanna na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (2003, 2021), na seirbhísí breise a leagfar síos trí chóras nua na gcaighdeán teanga agus
2. líon foirne agus leibhéal inniúlachta teanga na foirne a theastóidh d'fhonn freastal go cóir ar phobal na Gaeilge trí na seirbhísí poiblí uile a bheidh dualgas ar an gcomhlacht poiblí a sheachadadh.

Is é An Plean Náisiúnta an phríomhuirlis a thagann faoi scáth na reachtaíochta teanga a chinnteoidh an t-ailíniú criticiúil seo. Tá feidhmeanna tábhachtacha ag an gCoiste Comhairleach freisin i leith an riachtanais seo. Ar an gcéad dul síos, faoi fho-alt 18C. (1)(b)(iii) d'Acht na dTeangacha leasaithe (2021) is féidir leis an gCoiste Comhairleach moltaí a dhéanamh maidir leis an leibhéal inniúlachta teanga faoi Chomhchreat Tagartha na hEorpa um Theangacha a bheidh de dhíth lena chinntiú go bhfuil dóthain inniúlachta ag foireann na gcomhlachtaí poiblí le seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge a sholáthar go héifeachtach.

Sonraítear i ndlínsí eile go bhfuil an chéim ina ndéantar sainiú ar an leibhéal inniúlachta teanga atá riachtanach do phost a bheidh ag freastal ar an spriocphobal teanga ar cheann de na céimeanna is criticúla chun a chinntiú go gcuirtear an tseirbhís phoiblí ar fáil ar leibhéal sásúil sa sprioctheanga. D'fhonn cabhrú leis an bpróiseas pleanála seo mar shampla, cuir Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla i gCeanada uirlis le chéile (<https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/tools-resources/tool-linguistic-identification-positions>) a chuidíonn le forais fheidearálacha sonraíocht theangeolaíoch poist a mheas. Bheadh a leithéid d'acmhainn ina cabhair mhór sa dlínse seo agus pleanáil don fhórsa saothair idir lámha do rólanna dá mbeidh inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge riachtanach.

Feidhm rithábhachtach eile atá ag an gCoiste Comhairleach is ea gur féidir leis faoi fho-alt 18C. (1)(b)(i) d'Acht na dTeangacha leasaithe (2021) comhairle a chur ar fáil do chomhlachtaí poiblí maidir le líon agus grád na foirne a bheidh ag teastáil d'fhonn seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge a sholáthar. Beidh sé riachtanach go dtabharfar an fhoráil seo isteach i lár an phróisis phleanála don fhórsa saothair lena chinntiú go bhfuil dóthain foirne ag a bhfuil Gaeilge mhaith fostaithe, ar lámh amháin, ionas go mbeidh an tseirbhís i nGaeilge ar fáil gan bhac, gan mhoill agus gan dua i nGaeilge gach lá den tseachtain, mar a bhíonn i mBéarla. Ar an lámh eile, ní mór freisin gráid na foirne a bheidh ag teastáil, ní hamháin chun seirbhísí Gaeilge ar ardchaighdeán a sholáthar, ach chun a chinntiú go mbeidh ceannaireacht dhóthanach shinsearach foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge i gcomhlachtaí poiblí chun an reachtaíocht teanga a neadú i sícé rialachais chorparáidigh na heagraíochta.

of the Irish-medium education community within the catchment area of national language planning on an ongoing basis. Under subsection 34(4) of the Act, the HEA may make recommendations to the Minister regarding the number of places that should be made available on higher education programmes in order to meet the needs of the Irish language community nationally. The workforce planning outlined in section 5.2.2 above should be used to calculate the number of places to measure the levels of provision required in different academic disciplines to meet the vacancies that will arise.

- The Advisory Committee has an opportunity to take a lead role through the development of the National Plan in relation to setting out a pathway with key stakeholders (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, HEA, DPER and Third Level Institutions), through which the capacity of the Irish-medium University sector will be developed to meet the requirements of the 20% recruitment provision and to increase the number of Irish language-proficient staff in the public service as a whole.

### 5.2.5 New System of Language Standards and Irish Language-proficient Human Resources

The number and nature of complaints received by Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga annually indicate that the shortfall in staff competent in Irish in the public sector is one of the greatest obstacles to providing public services of a satisfactory standard in Irish. It is frequently reported to the Office that the oral communication aspect of the relevant public service, between the public and public body staff fails due to the staff member's lack of proficiency in spoken Irish or because there is no member of staff with proficiency in Irish available to deal with the matter.

Therefore, it is imperative that full alignment be achieved between:

1. the delivery of the services prescribed in the Official Languages Acts (2003, 2021), the additional services that will be prescribed through the new system of language standards and
2. the number of staff and the level of language proficiency required to equitably serve the Irish-speaking community through all the public services that the public body will be obliged to deliver.

The National Plan is the primary tool under the scope of language legislation through which this critical alignment will occur. The Advisory Committee also has important functions in relation to this requirement. Firstly, under subsection 18C. (1)(b)(iii) of the Languages Act (2021), the Advisory Committee may make recommendations regarding the required level of language proficiency required under the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to ensure that public staff have sufficient proficiency in the Irish language to deliver the service effectively in Irish.

Other jurisdictions identify the stage of defining the level of language proficiency required for a position that will serve the target language community as one of the most critical stages in ensuring that the public service is provided to a satisfactory level in the target language. To assist in this planning process, for example, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in Canada has developed a tool (<https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/tools-resources/tool-linguistic-identification-positions>) that helps federal institutions assess the linguistic specifications of jobs. Such a resource would be of great assistance in this jurisdiction when workforce planning is undertaken for roles where proficiency in Irish is required.

Another very important function of the Advisory Committee is that it can, under subsection 18C. (1)(b)(i) of the Languages Act (2021), provide advice to public bodies regarding the number and grade of staff required to provide public services in Irish. It will be critical that this provision is embedded in the workforce planning process to ensure that sufficient numbers of Irish language-proficient staff are employed, on the one hand, so that the service in Irish is available without hindrance, delay, or difficulty in Irish every day of the week, as is the case with English. On the other hand, the grades of staff required are also important, not only to provide high-quality Irish language services, but to ensure that there is sufficient senior leadership of staff who are competent in Irish in public bodies to embed the language legislation into the organisation's corporate governance psyche.

## 6. CEARTA TEANGA AGUS BEARTAS POIBLÍ AN STÁIT DON GHAELIGE

Tagraítear i Réamhrá Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh don aidhm go mbeadh An Plean Náisiúnta ag tógáil ar bheartais phoiblí an Stáit i leith na Gaeilge.

‘I ndáil le feidhmeanna an Choiste faoin Acht is ar ullmhú an chéad Phlean Náisiúnta um Sheirbhísí Poiblí Gaeilge atá obair an Choiste dírithe go príomhúil don chéad dhá bhliain chun go mbeidh sé seo curtha faoi bhráid an Aire faoin spriocdháta reachtúil de 19 Meitheamh 2024. Leis an bPlean Náisiúnta sin, beifear ag iarraidh tógáil ar an obair atá déanta go dtí seo faoi Achtanna na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003-2021; Acht na Gaeltachta, 2012; An Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030 agus an Plean Gníomhaíochta 5 Bliana don Ghaeilge; agus an Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta.’

[lch 7, Tuarascáil ar dhul chun cinn an Choiste Chomhairligh um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge – 20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023]

Mar atá le tuiscint ón sliocht thuas is chun leasa phobal na Gaeilge é go mbeadh sineirgíocht idir beartais phoiblí an stáit do chur chun cinn na Gaeilge agus láidriú cearta teanga. Tá tagairtí sonracha d’fheabhsú seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge i bpríomhbhearta straitéise an stáit, eadhon an Straitéis 20 Bliain Don Ghaeilge 2010 – 2030 agus Plean Gníomhaíochta an Rialtais don Ghaeilge. Luaitear soláthar seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge i measc na bpríomhchuspóirí sa Straitéis 20 Bliain Don Ghaeilge 2010 – 2030:

‘a chinntiú chomh fada agus is féidir go mbeidh úsáid na Gaeilge nó an Bhéarla mar rogha ag an saoránach i ndioscúrsa poiblí agus i seirbhísí poiblí agus de réir a chéile go ndéanfaidh níos mó daoine ar fud an Stáit cinneadh a gnó a dhéanamh trí mheán na Gaeilge’

[lch 3, Straitéis 20 Bliain Don Ghaeilge 2010 – 2030]

Is bearta suntasacha de chreat reachtúil an stáit do bhuanú na Gaeilge mar theanga phobail sa Ghaeltacht, agus do mhéadú úsáid na Gaeilge go náisiúnta iad Acht na Gaeltachta 2012, a chuir an próiseas pleanála teanga ar bhonn reachtúil, agus Achtanna na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (2003 & 2021) a láidríonn cearta teanga an

phobail. Is cinnte go bhfuil deiseanna, nach bhfacthas a léithéid cheana, ann chun sineirgíocht a chothú idir na bearta thuasluaite d’fhonn teacht aníos le réitigh shamhlaíocha nua trína mbeidh freastal i bhfad níos fearr á dhéanamh ag an stát ar phobal na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht agus go náisiúnta.

### 6.1 Bonneagar Náisiúnta Nua do Sholáthar Seirbhísí Poiblí i nGaeilge

Tá bonneagar náisiúnta pleanála teanga á fhorbairt ag an Stáit le blianta beaga sna limistéir phleanála teanga, i líonraí teanga agus i mbailte seirbhíse Gaeltachta ba chóir a úsáid ionas go mbeadh fáil i bhfad níos éasca ar sheirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge.

Bíodh seirbhísí poiblí as Gaeilge á seachadadh go fíorúil, ar líne nó ar láithreacha fisiciúla, d’fhéadfaí leas a bhaint as an mbonneagar náisiúnta pleanála teanga chun molchamps seirbhísí poiblí a fhorbairt i Limistéir Phleanála Teanga Gaeltachta, i mBailte Seirbhíse Gaeltachta laistigh den Ghaeltacht agus lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht. Ba chóir féachtaint freisin ar dhúlú seirbhísí poiblí trí Ghaeilge a neadú i líonraí Ghaeilge i gcathracha. Chothódh molchamps atá fréamhaithe sa mbonneagar pleanála dlús sa raon seirbhísí poiblí, dlús sa bpobal foirne le Gaeilge sa tseirbhís phoiblí a bheadh ag seachadadh na seirbhísí agus chuirfeadh sé bonn faoin éileamh ar sheirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge ón bpobal teanga. Luíodh an forás seo isteach go huile agus go hiomlán leis na forálacha nua (alt 18E) atá san Acht leasaithe (2021) freisin go mbeidh an Ghaeilge ina teanga oibre in oifigí na gcomhlachtaí poiblí sa Ghaeltacht, agus go mbeidh gach uile seirbhís a bheidh á sholáthar ag comhlacht poiblí sa Ghaeltacht á cur ar fáil i nGaeilge, ó dháta a fhorordóidh Aire na Gaeltachta. Tá deiseanna suntasacha ann go dtógfadh na molchamps ar an mbonneagar oideachais tríú leibhéal, teicneolaíochta, sealbhaithe agus buanaithe teanga atá forbartha sa Ghaeltacht cheana féin.

### 6.2 An Nua-Theicneolaíocht

Déantar cur síos i gCaibidil 8 (Teicneolaíocht) de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh ar dhá fhoráil reachtúla nua faoin Acht Teanga leasaithe (2021) a

## 6. LANGUAGE RIGHTS AND IRISH LANGUAGE STATE PUBLIC POLICY

The Introduction to the Advisory Committee’s Report refers to the aim that the National Plan will build on the State’s public policies for the Irish language.

‘In relation to the Committee’s functions under the Act, the Committee’s work is primarily focused on the preparation of the first National Irish Language Public Services Plan for the first two years so that this can be submitted to the Minister by the statutory deadline of 19 June 2024. This National Plan will seek to build on the work that has been done to date under the Official Languages Acts 2003-2021; the Gaeltacht Act, 2012; the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 and the 5-Year Action Plan for the Irish Language; and the Gaeltacht Education Policy.’ [page 7, Progress Report of the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee – 20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023]

As can be discerned from the passage above, creating synergy between the state’s public policies for the promotion of the Irish language and the strengthening of language rights will greatly benefit the Irish-speaking community. There are specific references in key State strategies, namely the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030 and the Government’s Action Plan for the Irish Language, to improving public services in Irish. The provision of public services in Irish is set out as one of the primary objectives in the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030:

‘to ensure that in public discourse and in public services the use of Irish or English will be a choice for the citizen to make and that over time more and more people throughout the State will choose to do their business in Irish’

[page 3, 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030]

Acht na Gaeltachta 2012, which places the language planning process on a statutory basis, and the Official Languages Acts (2003 & 2021) which strengthen the language rights of the community, are significant measures in the State’s statutory framework for sustaining the Irish language as the community language in the Gaeltacht, and increasing the use of Irish on a national

basis. There are unprecedented opportunities to foster synergy between the above-mentioned measures to progress imaginative solutions through which the state will better serve the Irish-speaking community in the Gaeltacht and nationally.

### 6.1 New National Infrastructure for the Provision of Public Services in Irish

The State has been developing a national language planning infrastructure in recent years in language planning areas within the Gaeltacht, in language networks and in Gaeltacht service towns which should be used to make public services in Irish much easier to access.

Whether public services through the medium of Irish are delivered virtually, online or in physical locations, the national language-planning infrastructure could form the bedrock developing campus hubs for delivering public services in Irish in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, in Gaeltacht Service Towns both in the Gaeltacht and outside it. Consideration should also be given to clustering public services in Irish language service hubs in cities. Campus hubs embedded in the national language planning infrastructure, would foster a critical mass of public services, a critical mass of public service staff proficient in Irish delivering the public services, and a underpin demand from the language community for public services in Irish. This development would also compliment the new provisions (section 18E) in the amended language Act (2021), requiring that Irish will be the working language in the offices of public bodies in the Gaeltacht and that all public services will be provided within the Gaeltacht, from a date to be prescribed by the Minister for the Gaeltacht. There are significant opportunities for the new campus hubs to build on the third-level education, technology, language acquisition and sustainment infrastructure that has already developed in the Gaeltacht.

### 6.2 New Technology

Chapter 8 (Technology) of the Advisory Committee’s Report describes two new statutory provisions under the

mbeidh impleachtaí acu do na córais teicneolaíochta agus chumarsáide atá comhlachtaí poiblí a úsáid. Leagfaidh fo-alt 9A(3)(a) dualgas ar chomhlachtaí a chinntiú go mbeidh na córais faisnéise agus chumarsáide, agus aon chórais eile (cibé acu córais leictreonacha nó eile), in ann ainmneacha, seoltaí agus teidil i nGaeilge de chuid bhaill an phobail a thairseach agus a úsáid i gceart. Faoi alt 9A(3)(b) freisin beidh ar chomhlachtaí poiblí a chinntiú go mbeidh a gcórais in ann úsáid sínte fada i nGaeilge a éascú.

Tuairiscítear i gCaibidil 8 den Tuarascáil freisin gur shocraigh baill an Choiste Chomhairligh tabhairt faoi bheartas scóipeála sna comhlachtaí poiblí a bhfuil baill an Choiste féin ag obair iontu mar ullmhúchán do theacht i bhfeidhm na forála seo:

‘chun taiscéalaíocht a dhéanamh ar cén sórt córais agus amscálaí a d’fhéadfaidh a bheith i gceist leis seo mar aon le haon straitéisí nó dúshlán fhéideartha ar leith a aithint.’

De thoradh an bhirt scóipeála thuas shocraigh an Coiste Comhairleach:

‘an gá atá ann grúpa oibre teicniúil a bhunú chun breathnú go mion ar an gceist leis an saineolas cúí agus páipéar a chur le chéile a leagann amach dea-chleachtas don earnáil phoiblí i gcomhthéacs chur i bhfeidhm iomlán rathúil Ailt 9A agus 9B. Moladh go scrúdódh an grúpa oibre seo seirbhísí idirghníomhacha freisin ó thaobh na cinn i nGaeilge ar bheith ar chomhchaighdeán ar a laghad leis na cinn i mBéarla.’

De réir na Tuarascála bhí sé beartaithe an grúpa oibre teicniúil thuasluaite a bhunú i bhFómhar na bliana 2024. Tá moladh ag dul don Choiste Comhairleach as an gcinneadh an ‘grúpa oibre teicniúil’ a bhunú chun scagadh a dhéanamh ar an riachtanas go mbeidh na córais teicneolaíochta a bheidh comhlachtaí poiblí a úsáid oiriúnach do sheirbhísí poiblí a sheachadadh a bheidh ar comhchaighdeán i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla.

### 6.3 Seirbhísí Poiblí ar líne

Tá go leor de na seirbhísí poiblí trína mbíonn caidreamh ag saoránaigh leis an Stát ó lá go lá ag bogadh ar líne. Mar a luadh i gCaibidil 4 thuas, is díol suntais na cuspóirí a luaigh an Rialtas freisin maidir le seachadadh seirbhísí poiblí sna blianta beaga amach romhainn sa straitéis: ‘Cónascadh Rialtais 2030: Straitéisí Dhigiteach agus TFC do Sheirbhísí Poiblí na hÉireann’.

Gan ach sprioc thábhachtach amháin a roghnú, luaitear sa straitéis go bhfuiltear ag súil go mbeidh 80% de shaoránaigh ag úsáid leithéid an ardáin MyGovID faoi 2030. Tairseach é MyGovID trína bhfuil bunseirbhísí ar fáil, cuir i gcás iarratas a dhéanamh ar cheadúnas tiomána, ar phas, ar chárta seirbhíse sóisialta, ar sheirbhísí tithíochta agus araile. Ach má scrúdaítear leibhéal an tsoláthair i nGaeilge ar an tairseach náisiúnta seo i láthair na huaire tá éagothromaíocht ollmhór idir caighdeán agus cuimsitheacht na seirbhísí poiblí atá ar fáil i mBéarla i gcomparáid leis an tseirbhís thearc agus bhearnach i nGaeilge. Beidh sé ina bhunriachtanas go bhfaighidh na caighdeáin teanga tosaigh greim ar na comhlachtaí poiblí atá ag úsáid córais idirghníomhacha ar líne chun seirbhísí poiblí bunúsacha a sholáthar don phobal. Caithfear riachtanais teangeolaíochta agus miondífriochtaí na seirbhíse i nGaeilge a thabhairt isteach i bpróisis phleanála d’fhorbairt seirbhísí poiblí teicneolaíocht-bhunaithe ón tús seachas an réiteach don tseirbhís i nGaeilge a bheith ina réiteach post-factum i ndiaidh don tseirbhís a bheith curtha ar fáil i mBéarla ar dtús.

### 6.4 Plean Digiteach don Ghaeilge (2023-2027)

D’fhoilsigh RTCEGSM an Plean Digiteach don Ghaeilge (2023-2027) i Mí na Nollag 2022. Luaitear ar cheann de phríomhchuspóirí an Phlean Dhigiteach:

‘go gcuirfear ar chumas phobal na Gaeilge an teanga a chothú agus a athbheochan trí earnáil bhríomhar teicneolaíochta Gaeilge a bhunú agus a fhorbairt, ionas go mbeidh deiseanna úra ag an bpobal sin a bheith rannpháirteach go hiomlán i sochaí nua-aimseartha na linne seo.’

[Ich 4, Plean Digiteach don Ghaeilge (2023-2027)]

Aithnítear sa bPlean Digiteach freisin ar nasc criticiúil atá idir seirbhísí poiblí feabhsaithe, a bhaineann leas as an nuaiteicneolaíocht, a chur ar fáil i nGaeilge:

‘Ina cheann sin, agus is díol suntais an méid seo a leanas i gcás teanga mionlaigh ar nós na Gaeilge, is féidir stádas na teanga a dhaingíú trí bhíthin seirbhísí feabhsaithe teanga a mbeidh méadú ar inneachar digiteach Gaeilge mar thoradh orthu, rud a chosnóidh cearta na saoránach teagmháil a dhéanamh leis an Stát agus úsáid a bhaint as seirbhísí i nGaeilge dá réir.’

[Ich 84, Plean Digiteach don Ghaeilge Teicneolaíochtaí (2023-2027)]

amended Language Act (2021) which will have implications for the technology and communications systems used by public bodies. Subsection 9A(3)(a) will oblige public bodies to ensure that information and communication systems, and any other systems (whether electronic or otherwise), are capable of correctly recording and using names, addresses and titles of members of the public in Irish. Under section 9A(3)(b) public bodies will also be required to ensure that their systems are capable of facilitating the correct use of the Irish language accented characters or ‘síneadh fada’.

Chapter 8 of the Report also states that the members of the Advisory Committee decided to undertake a scoping exercise within the public bodies in which they are employed in preparation for the commencement of this provision:

‘to explore the kind of systems and timescales this might involve as well as identify any specific potential strategies or challenges.’

As a result of the aforementioned scoping exercise, the Advisory Committee decided:

‘the need to establish a technical working group to look into the issue in detail with the appropriate expertise and to produce a paper setting out best practice for the public sector in the context of the full and successful implementation of Sections 9A and 9B. It was recommended that this working group also examine interactive services from the perspective of services in Irish being of at least the same standard as those in English.’

The Report states that it was planned to establish the aforementioned technical working group in the Autumn of 2024. The Advisory Committee is to be commended for its decision to establish the ‘technical working group’ to examine the requirement that ICT systems used by public bodies are suitable for delivering public services to an equal standard in Irish and English.

### 6.3 Online Public Services

Many of the public services through which citizens interact with the State on a day-to-day basis are moving online. As mentioned in Chapter 4 above, of note are the Government objectives set out in the national strategy regarding the delivery of public services in the coming years: ‘Connecting Government 2030: A Digital and ICT Strategy for Ireland’s Public Service’.

To mention just one important goal, the strategy states that it is expected that 80% of citizens will be using platform such as MyGovID by 2030. MyGovID is a portal through which basic public services are available, such as applying for a driver’s license, passport, social service card, housing services, etc. However, an examination of the current level of provision in Irish on this national portal shows a huge imbalance between, on the one hand, the quality and comprehensiveness of public services available in English and, on the other, the scarce and incomplete service available in Irish. It will be essential that the initial language standards encompass public bodies that are using interactive online systems to provide basic public services to the public. The linguistic needs and nuances of Irish language service provision must be incorporated into the planning of information technology based public services projects from the outset rather than seeking the solution for the service in Irish on a post-factum basis after the deliverable is available in English to the public in the first instance.

### 6.4 Digital Plan for the Irish Language (2023-2027)

DTCAGSM published the Digital Plan for the Irish Language (2023-2027) in December 2022. One of the key objectives of the Digital Plan states:

‘enable the Irish-language community to build and revitalise the language by establishing and developing a vibrant Irish-language technology sector, enabling this community to take up new opportunities to participate fully in modern day society.’

[Page 4, Digital Plan for the Irish Language (2023-2027)]

The Digital Plan also recognises the critical link between improved public services, which take advantage of new technology, and providing them in Irish:

‘Additionally, and of significance for a minority language like Irish, the status of the language can be bolstered through improved translation services that will result in an increase of Irish digital content, thus protecting citizens’ rights to interact with the state and services through Irish.’

[Page 84, Digital Plan for the Irish Language (2023-2027)]

Is cinnte gur chóir scóip an Phlean Dhigitigh don Ghaeilge a scrúdú le breathnú go sonrach ar na deiseanna móra atá ann leas a bhaint as an nuatheicneolaíocht d'fhonn seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge a fheabhsú. I gcomhthéacs an chinnidh a ghlac an Coiste Comhairleach 'grúpa oibre teicniúil' a bhunú d'fhonn scagadh a dhéanamh ar a oiriúnaí a bheidh na córais teicneolaíochta a bheidh comhlachtaí poiblí a úsáid do sholáthar seirbhísí poiblí ar ardchaighdeán i nGaeilge d'fhéadfaí breathnú ar fhreagracht a thabhairt d'eagraíocht ar leith pleanáil leanúnach a dhéanamh chun na críche seo. Rogha eile a bheadh ag an gCoiste Comhairleach is ea úsáid a bhaint as a fheidhm faoi fho-alt 18C. (1)(c) d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021 agus clár taighde agus comhairliúcháin a choimisiúnú a bhreathnódh na córais teicneolaíochta atá an tseirbhís phoiblí a úsáid ar bhonn earnála agus moltaí a dhéanamh faoin gcur chuige struchtúrtha a bheadh de dhíth chun a chinntiú go dtabharfar riachtanais phobal na Gaeilge isteach ón tús i bhforbairt na gcóras teicneolaíochta nua.

## 6.5 Intleacht Shaorga

An 1 Lúnasa 2024, tháinig an Gníomh Eorpach um an Intleacht Shaorga i bhfeidhm san Aontas Eorpach. Is é aidhm an Ghníomh forbairt agus freagracht i leith dea-úsáid na hintleachta saorga a chothú san Aontas Eorpach. D'fhoilsigh Rialtas na hÉireann treoirínte i gcaitheamh 2024 freisin maidir le húsáid na hIntleachta Saorga sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí in Éirinn. I measc na ndeiseanna is mó a luaitear leis an Intleacht Shaorga do sheachadh seirbhísí poiblí tá pointí iontrála aonair a chruthú chun raon leathan seirbhísí a rochtain agus chun seirbhísí a phearsanú do riachtanais faoi leith an úsáideora.

Díol suntais an fógra a rinneadh le gairid agus an Plean Náisiúnta um Seirbhísí Poiblí Gaeilge á sheoladh go raibh sé beartaithe ag Údarás na Gaeltachta "uirlis úrnua" don Ghaeilge a bheidh bunaithe ar an intleacht shaorga (AI) a fhorbairt. Tá sé i gceist ag an tionscadal 'Ard-Intleacht na Gaeilge' uirlis a fhorbairt faoi dheireadh 2026 a chuirfidh seirbhísí cainte AI Gaeilge go Gaeilge ar fáil. Mar aon le hacmhainní nua Intleachta Saorga i nGaeilge a fhorbairt a d'eascódh rochtain ar sheirbhísí faisnéise poiblí i nGaeilge ba chóir breathnú ar na deiseanna freisin a chothóidh Intleacht Shaorga i gcomhthéacs na molchamps ilseirbhísí thuasluaite i bhfo-mhír '6.1 Bonneagar Náisiúnta Nua do Sholáthar Seirbhísí Poiblí i nGaeilge.' Is féidir na molchamps ilseirbhíse a shamhlú ina gcumasc de sheirbhísí poiblí a

bheadh á seachadadh tríd an nuatheicneolaíocht an Intleacht Shaorga, agus den acmhainn dhaonna atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a bheadh ag soláthar mais chriticiúil de sheirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge, beart a chruthódh, faoi seach, dlús éilimh ón bpobal ar na seirbhísí. D'fhéadfaí gréasán na molanna gteic faoi scáth Údarás na Gaeltachta a scrúdú i gcomhthéacs molchamps do sholáthar seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge a fhorbairt sa Ghaeltacht freisin.

## 6.6 Líonmhaireacht an Phobail Teanga

Déantar cur síos i Mír 7.4. (Staid Reatha na Gaeilge – Daonáireamh 2022) de Thuarascáil ar thorthaí Dhaonáireamh 2022 maidir le líon na gcainteoirí Gaeilge go náisiúnta. Déantar cur síos sa Tuarascáil ar líonmhaireacht na gcatagóirí a labhraíonn an Ghaeilge go rialta:

'is 71,968 a thuairisc gur labhair siad Gaeilge go laethúil agus 115,065 a thuairisc gur labhair siad í go seachtainiúil.'

[Ich 28, Tuarascáil ar dhul chun cinn an Choiste Chomhairligh um Sheirbhísí Gaeilge – 20 Meitheamh 2022 – 31 Nollaig 2023]

Tá tuiscint agus airdeall ar staid reatha phobal labhartha na Gaeilge rithábhachtach mar dhúshraith d'fheidhmiú éifeachtach bheartais phoiblí an stát do chur chun cinn an Gaeilge. Leagadh béim ar leith sa Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030 ar líon na gcainteoirí laethúla Gaeilge a mhéadú go mór go náisiúnta agus sa Ghaeltacht i gcaitheamh shaolré na Straitéise. I gcomparáid le Daonáireamh Náisiúnta 2016, de réir Dhaonáireamh 2022 tháinig méadú 6% ar líon na ndaoine a thug le fios go raibh siad in ann an Ghaeilge a labhairt, méadú ó 1.76 milliún cainteoir in 2016 go 1.87 milliún cainteoir in 2022. Mar is eol dúinn, tá Daonáirimh ag brath ar fhéintuairisciú, mar sin tá sé tábhachtach na figiúirí sin a mheas go cúramach. As an 1.87 milliún duine a luaigh i nDaonáireamh 2022 go raibh siad in ann an Ghaeilge a labhairt, dúirt 10% nó 195,029 acu go raibh ar a gcumas Gaeilge a labhairt go han-mhaith agus dúirt 32% nó 593,898 gur labhair siad go maith í.

Léiríonn torthaí Dhaonáireamh 2022 maidir le staid na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht gur tuairiscíodh go raibh 65,000 duine as daonra iomlán na Gaeltachta, is é sin 106,000 duine, ábalta an Ghaeilge a labhairt. Léiríonn sé sin laghdú beag ó 67% in 2016 go 66% faoi láthair. Ba chóir breathnú ar na molchamps thuasluaite d'fhonn cur le dlús na gcainteoirí laethúla Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht ach

The scope of the Digital Plan for the Irish Language should be explored to look specifically at the tremendous opportunities that exist to take advantage of new technology to improve public services in Irish. In the context of the decision taken by the Advisory Committee to establish a 'technical working group' in order to examine the suitability of the technological systems that public bodies will use for the provision of high-quality public services in Irish, consideration could be given to assigning responsibility for carrying out ongoing planning for this purpose to a specific organisation. Another option for the Advisory Committee would be to use its function under subsection 18C. (1)(c) of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 and commission a research and consultation programme that would look at the technology systems used by the public service on a sectoral basis and make recommendations on the structured approach that would be required to ensure that the needs of the Irish-speaking community are incorporated from the outset in the development of new technology systems.

## 6.5 Artificial Intelligence

On 1 August 2024, the European Artificial Intelligence Act came into force in the European Union. The aim of the Act is to ensure that artificial intelligence (AI) systems are developed and used responsibly in the European Union. The Irish Government also published guidelines during 2024 regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence in the Irish Public Service. Among the most cited opportunities for Artificial Intelligence for the delivery of public services is the creation of single entry points to access a wide range of services and the personalization of services to the specific needs of the user.

Of note was the recent announcement made at the launch of the National Plan for Irish Language Public Services that Údarás na Gaeltachta planned to develop a "new tool" for the Irish language that will be based on artificial intelligence (AI). The 'Ard-Intleacht na Gaeilge' project aims to develop a tool by the end of 2026 that will provide Irish-to-Irish AI speech services. In addition to developing new Artificial Intelligence resources in Irish that would facilitate access to public information services in Irish, consideration should also be given to the opportunities that Artificial Intelligence will create in the context of the multi-service hub campuses mentioned in subsection 6.1 above: 'New National Infrastructure for the Provision of Public Services in Irish.' Multi-service

campus hubs can be imagined as a combination of new technology, including Artificial Intelligence, and Irish language human resources that would provide a critical mass of public services in Irish, a measure that would, in turn, underpin increased demand for public services in Irish. The network of gteic hubs already established under the auspices of Údarás na Gaeltachta could also be examined in the context of technology based developing campus hubs for delivering public services in Irish, in the Gaeltacht.

## 6.6 Size of the Language Community

Section 7.4. (Current State of the Irish Language – Census 2022) of the Advisory Committee's Report comments on the results of the 2022 Census of population with regard to the use of the Irish language. The Report outlines the number of Irish speakers according to their frequency of speaking Irish:

'71,968 reported speaking Irish daily and 115,065 reported speaking it weekly.'

[page 28, Progress Report of the Irish Language Services Advisory Committee – 20 June 2022 – 31 December 2023]

Understanding and awareness of the current state of the Irish-speaking community is an essential cornerstone for the effective implementation of the State's public policies for the promotion of the Irish language. Particular emphasis was placed in the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 to significantly increase the number of daily Irish speakers nationally and in the Gaeltacht over the lifetime of the Strategy. Compared to the 2016 National Census, according to the 2022 Census there was a 6% increase in the number of people who indicated that they could speak Irish, an increase from 1.76 million speakers in 2016 to 1.87 million speakers in 2022. As we are aware, Censuses rely on self-reporting, so it is important to interpret these figures carefully. Of the 1.87 million people who said in the 2022 Census that they were able to speak Irish, 10% or 195,029 said that they were able to speak Irish very well and 32% or 593,898 said that they spoke it well.

The results of the 2022 Census regarding the state of the Irish language in the Gaeltacht show that 65,000 people out of the total population of the 106,000 in Gaeltacht areas reported that they were able to speak Irish. That represents a slight decrease from 67% in 2016 to 66% currently. The aforementioned public service campus

deiseanna athlonnaithe a thabhairt d'fhostaithe ón tseirbhís phoiblí chun na Gaeltachta. Lena chois sin, chuirfeadh na molanna go mór leis na deiseanna fostaíochta do phobal na Gaeltachta trí chéile, rud a threiseadh seasamh na Gaeilge mar phríomhtheanga phobail sa Ghaeltacht. D'fhéadfaí pobal teanga nua a shamhlú, fiú, dá ndéanfaí dílárú ar roinnt seirbhísí poiblí agus foirne chun na Gaeltachta ar mhaithe le dul i ngleic leis na bacanna reatha atá ar phobal na Gaeltachta seirbhísí áirithe a rochtain agus go gcinnteodh na molchamps nua rochtain ar sheirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge, gan bhac gan mhoill. Tá socruithe oibre cumaisc tagtha chun cinn go mór ó aimsir phaindéim COVID-19, rud a léiríonn gur féidir clár oibre na seirbhíse poiblí a sheachadadh, in go leor cásanna, lasmuigh de láithreacha uirbeacha.

Ba chóir go mbreathnófaí ar na molchamps freisin i gcomhthéacs an riachtanais leanúnaigh a bheidh ann go gcuirfidh na mílte oibrí de chuid na seirbhíse poiblí lena n-inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ionas go mbeidh dóthain foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge ar fáil chun na seirbhísí poiblí uile a leagfar amach sa reachtaíocht nua teanga a sholáthar. Chuige seo, d'fhéadfaí soláthar seirbhísí poiblí i nGaeilge, foghlaim teanga agus clár thumoideachais teanga a sheachadadh lámh ar lámh ar na moilchamps, trí chomhoibriú ó na páirtithe leasmhara ábhartha. Cruthóidh an riachtanas do láidriú na hinniúlachta teanga sa Ghaeilge i measc foirne na seirbhíse poiblí pobal nua foghlaimoírí teanga agus ba chóir breathnú ar an mbeart seo i gcomhthéacs deiseanna athlonnaithe foirne na seirbhíse poiblí go dtí na molchamps a bheadh fréamhaithe sa mbonneagar pleanála teanga go náisiúnta.

### 6.7 Muiníne a Chothú i gCearta Teanga

Mar a luaigh mé ag tús na cainte seo is é *raison d'être* seirbhísí poiblí ná caighdeán saoil an phobail a fheabhsú agus seirbhísí poiblí a sholáthar a fhreastalaíonn ar riachtanais chomhaimseartha an phobail. Léiríonn líonmhaireacht na ngearán a fhaigheann m'Óifig go rialta go bhfuil buncheist ann maidir leis an leibhéal muiníne atá ag pobal na Gaeilge sna seirbhísí poiblí atá á gcur ar fáil i nGaeilge, i láthair na huaire. Tá sé rithábhachtach go mbeadh muinín ag pobal na Gaeilge sna seirbhísí poiblí a chuireann an Stát ar fáil as Gaeilge. Cothaítear muinín nuair a fhaigheann an pobal teanga cothrom na Féinne maidir le caighdeán na seirbhísí poiblí a chuirtear ar fáil sa dá theanga oifigiúla.

Is díol spéise í an bhéim atá an Rialtas a leagan faoi láthair ar an tábhacht a bhaineann le muinín a chothú i seirbhísí poiblí an stáit don phobal. D'fhoilsigh Rialtas na hÉireann straitéis anuraidh (2023) dar teideal 'Seirbhísí Poiblí Níos Fearr – Straitéis chlaochlaithe chun seachadadh don phobal agus muinín a chothú.' Mar atá le léiriú ó theideal na straitéise, tá sí dírithe ar a chinntiú go mbeidh an Earnáil Phoiblí in Éirinn in ann freagairt níos fearr do dhúshláin reatha agus do dhúshláin sna blianta beaga amach romhainn.

Deir an Rialtais go ndéanfar tomhas go háirithe sa straitéis ar ghnóthú na dtorthaí ardeibhéil a bhaineann le Creat Claochlaithe na Seirbhíse Poiblí 7 mbliana 2023 – 2030 a chur i bhfeidhm. Luaitear 5 príomhluach d'fhíorú an bhunchuspóra um sheirbhísí poiblí níos fearr a sholáthar, is iad sin luachanna na macántachta, na cothroime, na hoscailteachta, na freagrachta agus na hiontaofachta agus seirbhísí poiblí á soláthar don phobal.

Deirtear sa Straitéis go dtugann an Eagraíocht um Chomhar agus Forbairt Eacnamaíochta (ECFE - OECD) aitheantas do na cúig bhunphrionsabal nó luach sin agus go gcuireann siad creat praiticiúil ar fáil don tSeirbhís Phoiblí chun céimeanna réamhghníomhacha agus comhoibriúchá a ghlacadh d'fhonn muinín a chothú in institiúidí poiblí, foghlaim ón gcleachtas is fearr idirnáisiúnta, leibhéil mhuiníne a thomhas thar am agus a fheabhas atáimid i gcomparáid le seirbhísí poiblí idirnáisiúnta a thomhas. Dar liom, is bunriachtanas é go mbeidh na bunluachanna seo i gcroílár an phróisis phleanála do na seirbhísí poiblí nua agus do sheirbhísí poiblí feabhsaithe a eascróidh ó fheidhmiú Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021.

### 6.8 Feasacht Náisiúnta ar an Reachtaíocht nua Teanga

Déantar cur síos i gCaibidil 9 (Feasacht) de Thuarascáil an Choiste Chomhairligh ar bhearta a tógadh agus atá idir lámha ar mhaithe le tuiscint ar an reachtaíocht nua teanga a threisiú. Tagraítear do shraith seimineár faisnéise a reáchtáladh faoi choimirce RTCEGSM i gcaitheamh 2022 agus 2023 d'fhonn cur le feasacht na gcomhlachtaí poiblí faoi na forálacha nua a chuimsítear in Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2021. D'fhreastail os cionn 1,000 fostaí de chuid na seirbhíse poiblí ar cheann amháin de na seimineáir seo.

hubs should be considered in order to increase the density of everyday Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht by providing relocation opportunities for public service employees to the Gaeltacht. The hubs would also greatly enhance employment opportunities for the Gaeltacht community as a whole, which would strengthen the position of Irish as the main community language in the Gaeltacht. A new language community could even be imagined if some public services and staff were decentralised to the Gaeltacht in order to address the current barriers that Gaeltacht residents experience when accessing certain public services and that the new campus hubs would facilitate the availability of certain public services in Irish, without hindrance or delay. Blended working arrangements have emerged significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating that public services can, in many cases, be delivered outside of urban locations.

The campus hubs located in the Gaeltacht should also be considered in the context of the ongoing need for thousands of public service employees to improve their Irish language skills so that there will be sufficient workforce available to provide all the public services in Irish prescribed in the new language legislation. To this end, the delivery of public services in Irish, language learning and language immersion programmes could be delivered in tandem on the campus hubs, through co-operation from the relevant stakeholders. The need to strengthen Irish language proficiency among public service staff will create a new community of language learners and this measure should be viewed in the context of opportunities for the relocation of public service staff to campus hubs throughout the national language planning infrastructure.

### 6.7 Promoting confidence in Language Rights

As mentioned previously, the *raison d'être* of public services is to improve the quality of life of the community and to provide public services that meet the contemporary needs of the community. The number of complaints that my Office regularly receives shows that there is a fundamental question regarding the lack of confidence that the Irish-speaking community has in public services in Irish at present. It is critical that the Irish-speaking community has confidence in the public services that the State provides through the medium of Irish. Confidence is fostered when language communities are treated equitably with regard to the standard of public services offered by the State in both official languages.

The Government's current focus on enhancing public trust in its public services is noteworthy. The Irish Government published a strategy last year (2023) entitled 'Better Public Services - a transformation strategy for the Public Service aimed at delivering for the public and building trust.' As the title of the strategy suggests, it is aimed at ensuring that the Public Sector in Ireland will be able to respond better to current and future challenges.

The Government says that the strategy will measure in particular the high-level results related to the implementation of the 7-year Public Service Transformation Framework from 2023 – 2030. Five key values are mentioned for the realization of the basic goals for providing better public services, those values being: honesty, fairness, openness, responsiveness and trustworthiness when providing services to the public.

The Strategy states that the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD - OECD) recognizes these five basic principles or values and that they provide a practical framework for the Public Service to take proactive and collaborative steps in order to build confidence in public institutions, learn from international best practice, measure levels of trust over time and measure how well we compare to international public services. It is essential that these basic values are at the core of the planning process for improving the standard and increasing the availability of public services in Irish as set out in the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021.

### 6.8 National Awareness of the new Language Legislation

Chapter 9 (Awareness) of the Advisory Committee's Report describes measures that have been taken and are underway to enhance understanding of the new language legislation. Reference is made to a series of information seminars held under the auspices of DTCAGSM throughout 2022 and 2023 in order to increase public bodies' awareness of the new provisions contained in the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. Over 1,000 public service employees attended one of these seminars.

Tuairiscítear faoi mhír 9.2. (Feachtais Feasachta) go bhfuil sé beartaithe feachtas feasachta bliantúil a réachtáil ar an reachtaíocht nua teanga, beart a luíonn isteach le gealltanais i gClár an Rialtais: ‘Ár dToghcháil le Chéile’:

‘An Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn in ionaid oibre agus suíomhanna sóisialta trí Chonradh na Gaeilge agus trí eagraíochtaí eile. Feachtas meán náisiúnta a fhorbairt chun tacú leis an obair sin.’

Tá béim ar leith á leagan ar fheasacht ar na deiseanna fostaíochta le Gaeilge atá sa tseirbhís phoiblí a ardú agus chuige seo ceapadh an comhlacht B&A (Behaviour & Attitudes) in Earrach 2023 chun pobalbhreith a dhéanamh le daoine óga. Tá na torthaí a d’eascair ón bpobalbhreith le húsáid chun feachtas feasachta a leagan amach maidir leis na gairmeacha le Gaeilge atá ar fáil do dhaoine óga.

Tuairiscítear freisin faoi mhír 9.3 go bhfuil maoiniú breise á chur ar fáil do Chonradh na Gaeilge don tionscadal

‘Gluaiseacht’, ar mhaithe le labhairt na Gaeilge a spreagadh i measc an aosa óig agus clár feasachta treisithe faoi dheiseanna fostaíochta sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí a roinnt leo.

Is bearta dearfacha na tionscnaimh thuasluaite uile atá á réachtáil faoi scáth RTCEGSM le tacaíocht an Choiste Chomhairligh, Chonradh na Gaeilge agus na bpáirtithe leasmhara eile. Buntáiste ar leith é an gréasán náisiúnta atá ag an gConradh d’fhonn tabhairt faoi thionscnamh feasachta náisiúnta dá shórt. Is cinnte go mbeidh riachtanas ann do chlár leanúnach feasachta náisiúnta don phobal trí chéile maidir leis na deiseanna uile atá ag eascairt ón reachtaíocht nua teanga. Is caibidil thábhachtach den Phlean Náisiúnta ba chóir a bheith sa tionscnamh feasachta náisiúnta sin maidir leis na deiseanna fostaíochta a bheidh á gcruthú do phobal na Gaeilge do chainteoirí nua Gaeilge agus do chur chun cinn na Gaeilge mar theanga bhisiúil chomhaimseartha.

CRÍOCH

Section 9.2. (Awareness Campaigns) reports that it is planned to run an annual awareness campaign on the new language legislation to complement commitment in the Programme for Government: ‘Our Future Together’:

‘Promoting the Irish language in workplaces and social settings through Conradh na Gaeilge and other organisations. Develop a national media campaign to support this work.’

Particular emphasis is being placed on raising awareness of the employment opportunities with Irish in the public service and to this end the B&A (Behaviour & Attitudes) company was appointed in Spring 2023 to survey young people. The results of the survey will be used to design an awareness campaign regarding the Irish-language careers for young people.

Paragraph 9.3 states that additional funding is being provided to Conradh na Gaeilge for the ‘Gluaiseacht’

[movement] project, in order to encourage spoken Irish among young people and provide a programme of enhanced awareness around employment opportunities with Irish in the Public Service.

All of the above initiatives are positive measures being run under the auspices of DTCAGSM with the support of the Advisory Committee, Conradh na Gaeilge and other interested parties. Conradh na Gaeilge’s national network is particularly advantageous in order to undertake such a national awareness initiative. There will certainly be a need for an ongoing national awareness programme for the general public regarding all the opportunities arising from the new language legislation. This national awareness initiative should be an important chapter of the National Plan regarding the employment opportunities that will be created for the Irish-speaking community for new speakers of Irish, and for promotion of Irish as a contemporary living language.

END



