

Language Scheme under the Official Languages Act

Inland Fisheries Ireland

June 2022

INTRODUCTION:

Conradh na Gaeilge welcomes this opportunity to submit a submission regarding Inland Fisheries Ireland's First Language Scheme.

As the system of schemes has developed, different bodies have set different targets in their own schemes and there are now differences in relation to the services available through the medium of Irish from different bodies. The difficulty with this is that the public is not always aware of the services that are available through Irish, through English or bilingually, and problems are created when people are looking for services accordingly. This submission contains recommendations, in particular 'An Active Offer' to overcome these issues.

The aim of the recommendations in this submission is also to provide examples of best practice in terms of the provision of services through the medium of Irish in public bodies in one place, so that public bodies will be able adapt this principle to their own companies. These recommendations will support Inland Fisheries Ireland to fulfill their duties in relation to the language in the most efficient and comprehensive way possible.

As a public body, Inland Fisheries Ireland provides services to the public. Inland Fisheries Ireland plays a central role in educating inland fishermen and some of these fishermen are Irish speakers. It is extremely important that service through Irish is available to the Irish speaking community and Gaeltacht community who respect their language rights, and to other people interested in using and/or seeing the Irish language.

PUBLIC ATTITUDES

Not only do public bodies have statutory duties to provide services through the medium of Irish but research shows that people would like to see this and believe that services should be available through the medium of Irish for those who want to use them.

The statistics below¹ show that the public would like to see that public bodies are fulfilling their duties in relation to providing services through the medium of Irish.

Creideann níos mó leath ó thuaidh agus beirt i ngach triúr ó dheas gur cheart don Stát níos mó tacaíocht a thabhairt don Ghaeilge; méadú suntasach ó 2015:

Bunús: Daoine Fásta, Áosa 15+ 16+
(ó dheas=1,085; ó thuaidh=1,012)

"Ba cheart go
gcuirfeadh an Stát
níos mó tacaíocht ar
fáil don Ghaeilge."



KANTAR MILWARDBROWN

Conradh
na Gaeilge

88

¹ Source: What is the Story? Public Attitudes towards the Irish Language 2018 and 2019, Conradh na Gaeilge

Creideann seachtar i ngach deichniúr gur cheart go mbeadh seirbhísí curtha ar fáil ag an Stát trí Ghaeilge dóibh siúd ar mhaith leo iad a úsáid.

Bunús: Daoine Fásta, Áois 15+, 18+
(ó dheas=1,085, ó thuaidh=1,012)

"Ba cheart go mbeadh seirbhísí curtha ar fáil ag an Stát ar fáil trí Ghaeilge dóibh siúd ar mhaith leo iad a úsáid."

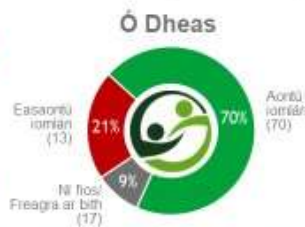


Mós Áirde / Measc	%
15-24	17
25-44	83

Easpaointí iomlán	%
Easpaointí go dtí	3
Easpaointí go poitín	9

Mós Áirde / Measc	%
Tuairimíocht	45
15-24	42
25-44	58
45-64	51

Easpaointí iomlán	%
Easpaointí go dtí	14
Easpaointí go poitín	14



Mós Áirde / Measc	%
Óige Mhór	90
Conradh / Uacht	70
25+	75
25-44	75

Aontú iomlán	%
Aontú go dtí	28
Aontú go poitín	41



Mós Áirde / Measc	%
Conradh / Uacht	85
15-24	65
25-44	88
45-64	99

Aontú iomlán	%
Aontú go dtí	21
Aontú go poitín	38

Léimhinn 9 sampla 2015

KANTAR MILWARDBROWN



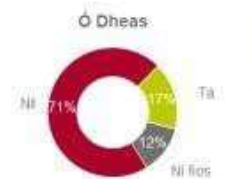
16

Seirbhísí as Gaeilge

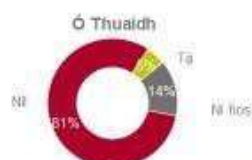


D'iarr duine as seisear seirbhísí as Gaeilge, le duine as fiche ó thuaidh

* Toradh le 'Ní fios' agus 'Gan tuairim tugtha' bainté



1 d'iamraí % den daonra bheadh 13% mbeadh siad le 816,000 daoine ó dheas



1 d'iamraí % den daonra bheadh 5% mbeadh siad le 79,000 daoine ó thuaidh



KANTAR MILWARDBROWN

C 2 Cé chomh laide is a aontairen tu nó rian n-aontairen tu leas na rian a leanas... Iam tar eis seirbhísí in Ghaeilge a iarradh ón Stát nó ó chumhacht seirbhísí phoblí. Bain: Gach duine fásta thar 18 bliana d'aois (Ó Dheas=1,011, Ó Thuaidh=1,022)

17

The statistics above² show that the public would like to see that public bodies are fulfilling their duties in order to provide services through the medium of Irish.

² Source: What is the Story? Public Attitudes towards the Irish Language 2018 and 2019, Conradh na Gaeilge

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LANGUAGE SCHEME

ACTIVE OFFER

Context: If the public is not aware of the services available from a public body through the medium of Irish, they cannot or will be reluctant to make a demand for these services. An active offer creates a good culture for the public in terms of the Irish language because it is clear to people that speaking Irish is welcome in the community and that services will be available through the medium of Irish if that is the choice. It is not enough that only basic services are available through the medium of Irish if it is not of the same quality as the service available through the medium of English from the same source. These services must be available to the Irish-speaking community without any additional conditions, time or efforts on their part. As part of the active offer, it is necessary to ensure that Irish is seen in public bodies in itself or on an equal footing with English. The prominence of the Irish language creates a comfortable atmosphere for people to use their Irish knowing that their business will be treated appropriately.

- The first greeting and the first conversation with someone in the public office of Inland Fisheries Ireland should be done in Irish, to encourage the public to use Irish and to express that it is possible to do business with the office appropriate through Irish.
- Signage in Irish only or bilingually should be erected inside and outside the Irish Inland Fisheries buildings.
- A worker should have a sign or badge on their desk or uniform that is able to provide a service through the medium of Irish.
- Forms or other publications should be automatically available bilingually or in Irish only, to ensure that there is no need to look for an Irish version.
- Any platform, leaflet, poster, etc. of the public body should be bilingual.
- In bilingual documents, it is recommended to put an Irish version and an English version of the text side by side, using the same font size and style.
- At public events, Irish should be used as part of that event during receptions, speeches, or other talks to serve the Irish-speaking community and the Gaeltacht, the talks should be in Irish.
- A spokesperson should be made available so that he/she can conduct an interview with the media through the medium of Irish.
- Any advertising to be done on behalf of Inland Fisheries Ireland should be bilingual, be it online, in traditional media, on television or radio, social media etc.

PRESENT ONLINE

Context: Like making an 'Active Offer' in public places, it is possible to demonstrate through an online presence that the use of Irish is welcome and that services through the medium of Irish can be obtained from Inland Fisheries Ireland. Due to the significant role played by online services and websites, the impact and importance of this part of the active offer is great.

- **Language option:** A language option should be available on the first page of the website with the Irish option on top or before the English option with the Irish option being placed first. This option should also be available on every page on the site to help people switch between the Irish version and the English version if they like to do so.
- **Content:** All online content should be available in Irish. It is not enough for there to be a single page in the Irish language section of the site with the documents translated into Irish by the company. The Irish language should be used throughout the Inland Fisheries Ireland's site and people can have a full experience of the site through the medium of Irish on an equal footing with those who only speak English.
- **Online forms:** Irish translation forms should be available online in the same place as the English version. Also, it should be ensured that any online system can accept long extensions to ensure that people can fill in these forms appropriately.
- **Translation:** Professional translators should be hired who will do this work right from the start. An automatic translation service such as Google Translate should not be relied upon. It is not accurate and is not suitable for people seeking information from a public body online. With the site's main content translated, there isn't a lot of other translation to do. Any material that is available to the public needs to be ensured that it is available in Irish as well as English.
- **Redirection:** If a user changes their preferred language, while on a site, the site's home page or a page that only deals with Irish should not be redirected. There should always be a proper exchange of language from one language to another.
- **Styles and Sizes:** The same styles and sizes should be used for both languages as much as possible. At times, revisions need to be made due to word size or phrase length in certain parts of the site but the visibility of both languages should be the same in terms of layout, accessibility etc.
- **Domain Address:** An Irish version of the domain name should be available. Two domain names can be registered with the same site, one in Irish and one in English. Long extensions can now be used for a domain name. For example www.iascachéireann.ie and www.fisheriesireland.ie can be used for the same site.
- **Social media:** There has been a significant increase in the frequency of contact through social media with departments and state bodies in recent years and it is necessary to meet this demand and communicate with the public on these platforms. Like websites, all information to be published on social media should be at least bilingual. This can be done by using two languages in one post, or by making two different posts with one in Irish and the other in English if necessary. There is also an option to create a Facebook page or a Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, TikTok or other additional account in Irish. Also, the public should be able to communicate with the public body through the medium of Irish and expect a response in Irish from the same source.
- **Apps:** All apps developed by Inland Fisheries Ireland should be at least bilingual or only in Irish.

PUBLICATIONS AND FORMS

- Information about current services, plans and all other types of information must be available bilingually.
- All materials should be made available bilingually or Irish only, including: information leaflets, pamphlets, forms, annual reports, accounts, signs, public announcements and all other information provided. This information should be available simultaneously and without the need to do any additional work that would be required to access the information in English.
- Irish and English should be side by side in any bilingual document or form under one cover (this will solve the fact that Irish forms are not available in state offices and would give the public an opportunity and encouragement to while filling out forms in Irish if they wish).
- The Irish publications should be available on the same platforms as the English publications ie, printed, on the website, social media, etc.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Context: In order to provide language services through the medium of Irish in an efficient and suitable way for the work of the organisation, it is necessary to take human resources matters into account as part of the organisation's language planning.

- Awareness campaigns and information seminars should be made available to operators regarding the duties of public bodies in relation to the Irish language under the Official Languages Act and why it is important to fulfill these duties appropriately.
- Information should be made available to the public about the staff who are able to provide service(s) through the medium of Irish and that a definite system be organized to contact those staff members and to indicate which area of service they are able to provide.
- Proficiency in Irish should be taken into account during the recruitment process and recognize that there will be added value for Inland Fisheries Ireland, i.e. the person with Irish will be able to provide the service in Irish and in English. Not only that, but it must be ensured that proficiency in Irish is **essential** for certain jobs such as receptionist, Irish language officer, press officer, site master, translators, interpreters and any other job that is thought to require Irish in their field of work.
- Training opportunities should be available for staff members who are unable to provide services through the medium of Irish to support them to do this in the future.
- The Irish language should be visible in the workplace, including places that are private for workers only. This would contribute to a culture where the use of Irish is welcomed if it is visible and encouraged to use it.
- Anyone working in the public service should have the same rights to do their work with the state through Irish, ie. promotion, staff assessment, internal staff correspondence, etc.

- The choice of Irish should be available without question at all levels and units/departments of Inland Fisheries Ireland to ensure that the 'chain of communication' through Irish is not broken with the citizen who seeks a service in Irish.
- There is a need to identify jobs that require people with fluent Irish ability to speak, listen, read and write Irish, e.g. receptionist (main contact with the public), Irish language officer, press officer, interpreters, translators, etc.
- The standard of Irish for the workers in Inland Fisheries Ireland should be recognized through the common European framework, and Conradh na Gaeilge would recommend at least a B2 level for the jobs with Irish.
- New Irish legislation has recently come in, the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 and as part of that 20% of new recruits will have to be competent in Irish by 31 December 2030. It is therefore necessary to create a recruitment policy to ensure that the number of Inland Fisheries Ireland staff with Irish is growing rapidly to achieve that legal obligation.

CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

Context: The term correspondence covers all contact between the citizen and the public body, letters, emails, phone calls, messages on social media etc. Certain parts of the correspondence will be discussed further below but the following are the basic principles to be applied in relation to all types of correspondence:

- It is necessary to ensure that if a citizen chooses to use Irish in correspondence with Inland Fisheries Ireland that Irish will be used with him/her from the beginning to the end of that correspondence.
- There should be no delay or difficulties for those who contact Inland Fisheries Ireland through the medium of Irish because of the choice of language. This means that they would not have to wait more time for a response to correspondence, or that their business would be delayed because of the language choice they made. If doing business with a public association through the medium of Irish would require more time or work, the choice will be taken away from people in practical terms due to time pressure or because people do not want to create difficulties.

E-MAIL

- Corporate email extensions should always be set bilingually.
- Any out-of-office message or other automatic response should be written bilingually.
- People who speak Irish should have a line in their email extensions saying that they speak Irish and that the use of Irish with that person is welcome. Although people always have the right to correspond through the medium of Irish, this makes people aware that they can discuss with a specific person in the organization through the medium of Irish and the use of Irish will be encouraged because of it.
- There should be two domain names used, one in Irish and one in English. The addresses can be linked and both emails would have the same destination. For example eolas@iascacheireann.ie and info@fisheriesireland.ie could be used.

PHONE CALLS

- When phone calls go to Inland Fisheries Ireland to the Fish Register office automatically, options in Irish should be available as the first choice.
- An Irish version of the organization's name should be given when answering a phone call.
- The receptionist in every office should be recognized as a position where Irish is a requirement. The receptionist is the first main point of contact with the public and therefore they must have Irish to deal with the public properly. If the recipient does not speak Irish, the Irish speaker will be reluctant to request services through Irish in the future, as it will be understood by them that an Irish language service is not available.

SOCIO-LINGUISTIC AUDIT

- Any action (drafting strategy, policy, legislation, etc.) carried out by Inland Fisheries Ireland requires that Inland Fisheries Ireland carry out a sociolinguistic audit before the action is taken. The Official Languages Bill needs to be taken into account in the future with any action taken on future recruitment.
- In order to do a correct sociolinguistic audit, you have to look and make sure that your action is in line with the legislation and strategies that exist regarding the Irish language. Among them, Article 8 of the Irish Constitution, the Official Languages Act 2003 (as part of this, your own Language Scheme), the 20 Year Strategy for Irish and the 2018-2022 Action Plan must be looked at.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

- A Senior Manager should be regularly monitoring (at least on a monthly basis) the implementation of the scheme. A record should be kept of every time a service is requested in Irish and what type of service is sought. Records should be made of how often services are actively offered in Irish as well. A monitoring report must be included in the Annual Report.
- Inland Fisheries Ireland should apologize in writing to any citizen who does not receive a service through Irish when they seek it.

CUSTOMERS/USERS OF SERVICES

- The customers/service users of Inland Fisheries Ireland include local public representatives, the public, workers in Inland Fisheries Ireland, other public bodies, individuals and companies with whom Inland Fisheries Ireland have a direct business relationship, government departments, public bodies, the European Union, cross-border bodies, international organisations, the media, and voluntary groups who are in contact with Irish Inland Fisheries because of their specific interests and concerns. Some of those customers/service users are Irish speakers and their human rights must be recognized by providing them with services through Irish when they speak Irish.

SIGNAGE

- An audit should be made of signage in Inland Fisheries Ireland's offices and ensure that the signage complies with Statutory Instrument No. 391 of 2008.

ADVERTISING

- Every advertisement promoting Inland Fisheries Ireland in the media or in a public place should be at least bilingual or only in Irish.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- A new Language Act is now operational. One of the goals in the Act is to increase the number of staff of public bodies who are competent in Irish so that, as soon as possible after the day of establishment, but no later than 31 December 2030, at least 20 percent of the staff who will be recruited to public bodies are competent' [Official Languages \(Amendment\) Act, 2021 \(irishstatutebook.ie\)](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/act/1/section/1). There is a need to prepare and act on this immediately. It will be easier to introduce this policy now, rather than waiting for legislation and not being prepared for it.
- Courses and information leaflets should be made available in Irish, especially in the Gaeltacht so that Irish speakers are receiving the same education as English speakers.
- If Inland Fisheries Ireland is funding scholarships to conduct research on Inland Fisheries Ireland, consideration should be given to providing a scholarship to conduct research in Irish. There is a strong link between native languages and conservation <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/indigenous-languages-contributors-preservation-biodiversity>. Michael Cronin's Book discusses this subject in relation to the Irish language *Irish and Ecology*. In the Irish Folklore Collection in University College, Dublin there are mentions of conservation fishing methods. Much of that knowledge would come from Irish. Folklore is an important tool that should be used to find conservation methods.

CONCLUSION

Inland Fisheries Ireland should be able to provide a satisfactory service to the Irish-speaking and Gaeltacht community if the above recommendations are taken into account in the language scheme being put together.

It is necessary to remember when drafting the Language Scheme that a new Language Act has come in which will be based on standards rather than schemes. Inland Fisheries Ireland needs to prepare towards the standards when this new Language Scheme is being drawn up. As the Languages Commissioner said before the Joint Committee of the Irish Language, Gaeltacht and Islands on May 21, 2019 'In terms of language schemes, what I have said is that any new language scheme that is confirmed by the Minister should be knowing that the quality is coming, as long as we are waiting for it. If a new language scheme is being agreed, it should be understood and accepted that it must be moving towards the standards. As a result, when a language scheme is being confirmed with companies, the Department should be telling them that a standard is on the way, that there will be things in the standard for interactive services, so, as long as we are waiting for it that, it will be in the language scheme.'

Conradh na Gaeilge is always available if there is any aspect of this submission to discuss.