



An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

Scheme 2014 - 2017

under

Section 15

of the

Official Languages Act 2003

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The Department of Defence has prepared this Language Scheme in accordance with the Official Languages Act 2003. The primary objective of the Act is to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish. This third scheme covers the period 2014 to 2017.

The Act provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme outlining the services they will provide:-

- ❑ through the medium of Irish
- ❑ through the medium of English
- ❑ through the medium of both the Irish and English languages

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by the Department through the medium of Irish will be provided in an agreed timeframe.

1.2 Preparation of the Language Scheme

Under section 13 of the Act, the Department engaged in a public consultation process and placed an advertisement in a national newspaper, inviting members of the public and interested parties to submit their views on the Scheme. The advertisement was also circulated to staff within the Department and the Defence Forces. The views and suggestions put forward informed the preparation of this Scheme. The Department would like to take this opportunity to thank those who participated for their valued contributions.

1.3 The Content of the Language Scheme

The Scheme builds on the commitments set out in the Department's previous Schemes that came into effect in 2007 and 2010 respectively. It also builds on the principles of Quality Customer Service and the commitments outlined in the Customer Service Action Plan and Customer Charter to ensure that customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish can do so. It includes a commitment to assess, on an ongoing basis, the level of demand for services through Irish and to ensure that the Department continues to meet this demand in a planned way.

1.4 Commencement Date of the Scheme

The Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The Scheme is commenced with effect from 3 March 2014 and will remain in force for a period of three years from this date or until a new Scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

1.5 Overview of the Department of Defence

The Department of Defence was established by the Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924 and the Act assigns to the Department “the administration and business of the raising, training, organisation, maintenance, equipment, management, discipline, regulation and control according to law of the military defence forces”.

The primary role of the civil element of the Department is to support the Minister as Head of the Department, in particular by providing policy advice and support on Defence matters. This includes assistance with policy formulation and the implementation of policy as directed by the Minister as well as administrative functions, including the payment of military pensions. The Secretary General is the Minister’s principal defence policy advisor.

The Defence Acts 1954 to 2011 provide the legislative basis for the Defence Forces (Óglaigh na hÉireann). The Defence Forces produce a separate Official Language Scheme and Defence Forces Headquarters, which is the military element of the Department of Defence, is encompassed within that scheme.

1.6 Customers and Stakeholders

The Department provides services to the community mainly through other Government Departments and agencies and, as such, has limited direct contact with the general public. For example, there are no public offices, public counters or call-centres where the individual citizen can request services on demand. However, members of the public do contact the Department for information or with queries that are handled by the appropriate branches within the Department. The Department’s Press Office also has an important role in conveying information to the wider public.

1.7 Assessment of the extent to which services are already available through Irish

The Department currently provides a number of services bilingually, for example, the Department’s corporate publications – its Statements of Strategy, Annual Reports, Customer Service Action Plan and Customer Charters are available in Irish and English.

A number of commitments were made in the previous Schemes to improve the level of service in Irish. All of these commitments have been delivered. The objective of this Third Scheme is to continue the

delivery of these commitments and to further enhance the level of service over the period of the Scheme (2014-2017) by developing a positive culture that encourages the use of Irish within the Department and in dealing with our customers.

CHAPTER 2

PROVISION OF GENERAL DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES/ACTIVITIES

This chapter outlines the ways in which the Department currently provides its services through English only, Irish and English and Irish only.

2.1 Means of communication with the public include the following:-

- Telephone Services
- Press Releases
- Written Correspondence
- E-mail
- Websites
- Information Leaflets
- Applications Forms

2.2 English only Services

Reports aimed at specialist groups, those reports which do not contain policy proposals and those which have limited circulation will continue to be issued in English only during the duration of this scheme.

2.3 Irish and English Services

The Department's corporate documents are available in both English and Irish as follows:-

- Annual Report
- Strategy Statement
- Customer Service Action Plan
- Customer Charter
- Section 15 & 16 Reference Books (under Freedom of Information Acts)

2.4 Irish only Services

A pool of Irish speakers has been established on a voluntary basis to assist Branches in providing services through Irish. In addition, a list of accredited translators is available to support the delivery of services through Irish. There are no Branches in the Department required to deliver services exclusively in Irish.

2.5 The Department's Website

The Department's Website is www.defence.ie. The current policy is to ensure that all corporate documents (outlined above) produced in Irish are also available on the Department's website in Irish. The Department will continue, on a phased basis over the lifetime of this Scheme, to improve the structure, content and ease of use of its website.

Some Branches within the Department also have separate websites. These are the Office of Emergency Planning websites www.emergencyplanning.ie and www.winterready.ie (both of which are already bilingual) and the Civil Defence website www.civildefence.ie. Civil Defence is currently in the process of developing a new website. The Department will ensure that the static content of this new website will be bilingual.

2.6 Speeches and Statements

Speeches and statements, including those made by the Minister and Minister of State, will continue to be made available in the language(s) in which they are delivered.

2.7 Points of contact with the Public

Reception and switchboard staff are generally the first point of contact with the public. It is the policy of the Department that:-

- Reception/switchboard staff give the name of the Department in Irish;
- Reception/switchboard staff are familiar with the basic greetings in Irish;
- Suitable arrangements are in place so that they can put members of the public in touch, without delay, with the officer responsible for offering the service required through Irish.

2.8 Irish Language Network

The Irish Language Network within the Department, which was established during the first scheme, will continue to operate and assist with the implementation of the scheme.

CHAPTER 3

ENHANCEMENT OF SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED BILINGUALLY

This chapter outlines the measures that the Department of Defence will undertake to enhance services in Irish. These measures will be implemented over the period that this Scheme remains in force.

3.1 Bilingual Services

In accordance with, and building on the commitments contained in previous schemes:

- ❑ All new application/information forms and leaflets will continue to be fully bi-lingual (within the same cover, except where it is not feasible because of the size, nature or layout of the material) and any remaining existing forms and leaflets will be made fully bilingual as current stocks expire and new leaflets are printed.
- ❑ The Department will continue to ensure that all publications, including information leaflets and brochures that are produced in Irish or bilingually, will be made available on the website concurrently in Irish and English.
- ❑ Each Branch has and will continue to have access to a pool of Irish speakers who are available to them to provide services in Irish when requested to do so. The Department will seek to widen this pool over the course of this Scheme. This will continue to ensure that a bilingual service is available from each Branch.
- ❑ The Department will ensure that where new websites are being introduced or whenever sites are being upgraded, the static content will be bilingual.
- ❑ The Department will continue to improve its website over the course of the lifetime of the Scheme. The Department's "Home Page" and "About Us Page" will continue to be available in both English and Irish and additional pages will be made available in Irish over the timeframe of the Scheme. An option to allow users to select an English or Irish version of the "Home Page" will be included.
- ❑ Existing computer systems are Irish language compliant. Any new computer systems being installed by or on behalf of the Department will also be Irish language compliant.
- ❑ Eolas@defence.ie is the generic e-mail address for queries in Irish, and enquiries to this e-mail address will continue to be dealt with in Irish in accordance with current quality customer service standards.

- ❑ Payroll information, where available electronically, is available in both languages and the paper version (Payslip and Payable Order / Payslip) is fully bilingual.
- ❑ The statement “Cuirfear fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge” will be included on all new Departmental stationery.
- ❑ Documents which do not set out public policy proposals, internal policy documents and documents of a technical nature with limited circulation will only be published in Irish during the course of the third Scheme, if there is a specific prior demand for their publication in Irish.
- ❑ The Department will issue 20% of press releases per annum in Irish at the same time as the English version. These will also be made available on the Department’s website.

3.2 Staff Placement

In order to ensure the continued availability of a pool of Irish speakers the Department will:-

- ❑ Continue to assess the Irish proficiency of new staff coming into the Department;
- ❑ Continue to seek additional volunteers to provide Irish language services.

3.3 Training and Development

The Training and Development Unit is committed to providing training to all staff in accordance with the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) to enhance the general development of staff within the Department. To enhance our services through Irish we will continue to:-

- ❑ Advertise all Irish language courses available to staff;
- ❑ Ensure that staff are aware that Irish language courses can form part of their learning and development plan under PMDS;
- ❑ Assess Irish Language courses on a regular basis to ascertain how effectively they meet the Department’s requirements;
- ❑ Include Irish language awareness at Induction and Customer Service training to ensure that staff are aware of the importance of implementing a bi-lingual policy in the Department;
- ❑ Facilitate staff attending Irish Language classes, including during working hours;

- ❑ Include a module on the Official Languages Act in the Induction Programme to increase awareness.
- ❑ Explore the feasibility of expanding Irish Language training in the Department.

3.4 DNET

The Department will ensure that the designated area for the Irish Language on the Department's Intranet site, DNET, continues to assist staff in the delivery of services through Irish. This area includes:-

- ❑ Names of staff available to deal with queries through the medium of Irish
- ❑ Irish/English Dictionary and English/Irish Dictionary
- ❑ List of accredited translators
- ❑ Commonly used Irish phrases
- ❑ Sample 'out of office' messages and voicemail messages
- ❑ Information on Irish language training courses
- ❑ Copies of Official Languages Act and Schemes
- ❑ Online links to recognised Irish language terminology sites www.focal.ie and www.gaeilge.ie

3.5 Gaeltacht Placenames

The Department will use the official version of Gaeltacht placenames as declared in the Placenames (Ceantair Ghaeltachta) Order 2004.

3.6 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030

The Department is represented on the Inter-Departmental Group on the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language. The Department's Implementation Plan for the Strategy has been prepared and published on the Department's website. The Department will continue to actively support the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language and engage with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and other stakeholders involved in the process.

3.7 Civil Defence

Civil Defence has been re-integrated into the Department of Defence and, as such, it is included as an integral part of this Scheme. Civil Defence Branch will arrange, on a phased basis, that all new uniforms/protective clothing purchased will be marked bilingually. All newly purchased vehicles will be marked in both languages. The new Civil Defence website, which is currently being updated, will be bilingual.

CHAPTER 4

MONITORING AND REVISION

The Management Advisory Committee will review the operation of this Scheme. The Customer Services Officer, Line Managers and the Irish Language Network will assist them in this.

The Customer Service Officer will include questions regarding satisfaction with the provision of services through Irish in future customer surveys, and, with the assistance of the Irish Language Network, monitor the demand for services in Irish over the life of the Scheme.

Progress on commitments will be included in the Department's Annual Report.

CHAPTER 5

PUBLICISING OF AGREED SCHEME

The scheme will be publicised to the General Public by the following means:-

- ❑ Press Release;
- ❑ Circulation to the appropriate agencies, public bodies and parties who made submissions to the Department;
- ❑ Department's Website.

The Department will also take every opportunity in its day-to-day interactions with customers to promote and publicise the services it provides through Irish, including:-

- by directly informing customers on a pro-active basis of the option of dealing with the Department through Irish; for example by the display of notices at reception areas indicating the Irish language services that are available and also by prominently listing these on the Department website;
- through footnotes on selected information leaflets and application forms explaining that these documents are also available in Irish (in cases where bilingual printed material is not produced under a single cover).

A copy of this scheme has also been forwarded to Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.

The English version of this document is the original version.