

An Garda Síochána



Official Languages Act 2003

Section 11

Scheme 2009 – 2012

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An Garda Síochána

Scheme 2009 – 2012 under Section 11
of the Official Languages Act 2003

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The Commissioner of An Garda Síochána was requested by the Minister for Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in April 2007 to prepare a draft scheme under Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003.

An Garda Síochána is the policing service of Ireland and it is a national organisation with a staff of 14,412 (as of 31/12/2008) Gardaí and 1,400 Civilian staff and over 700 stations and other offices nationwide. The Garda Organisation is fortunate in having many staff who can deal with the public in Irish and English. However, the organisation will encounter difficulty in having personnel with the necessary skills at every location of interface with the public, and so a reasoned approach will initially be taken to meet our responsibilities under the Act and provide a quality service in Irish and English.

Section 11 of the Act provides for the preparation of the Statutory Scheme detailing the services that An Garda Síochána, (as a public body), will provide

- Through the medium of Irish.
- Through the medium of English.
- Through the medium of Irish and English.

This Scheme sets out the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by An Garda Síochána through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed period of time.

1.2 Preparation of the Scheme

The Garda Commissioner, in preparing this scheme, takes cognisance of Article 8 of the Irish Constitution, the Supreme Court ruling in the Ó Beoláin case and the Official Languages Act 2003.

This scheme was prepared by An Garda Síochána in accordance with guidelines issued under Section 12 of the Official Languages Act 2003 by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The provision of a service in the Irish language will be cognisant of legal obligations, needs/demands of our customers and resources, such as human and financial.

An Garda Síochána complied with Section 13(1)(a) of the Official Languages Act 2003 by publishing a notice of intention to prepare a draft scheme, in Irish and English, in the main national newspapers on the 9th July 2007. Submissions were invited from the public, Irish

language organisations and staff of An Garda Síochána. Submissions made were examined, and many of the suggestions are included in the scheme.

Coiste Gaeilge an Gharda Síochána, a voluntary Garda committee, which promotes the use of Irish in An Garda Síochána, was consulted and has advised the Garda Commissioner on the preparation of the scheme.

1.3 Objectives of the Scheme

An Garda Síochána, since its inception in 1922, has endeavoured to provide a quality service in Irish, as required, to the public we serve. Over the years, in consultation with Bord na Gaeilge and later Foras na Gaeilge, a series of action programmes have been developed in line with Government Guidelines and Directives. An Garda Síochána recognises the right of citizens to conduct their business in Irish and is committed to the full implementation of the Official Languages Act 2003.

This scheme will be focused to provide structure to the current Irish Language service provision, and allow for an incremental development of an enhanced service provision for customers who wish to conduct their business in Irish. Throughout this scheme we will focus on the level of demand and resource availability as the objectives of this scheme are met. This will be monitored in order to match the provision of a quality service in Irish with the demand levels we identify.

An Garda Síochána believes an incremental and customer focused development of its Irish language service provision will best achieve the objective of full implementation of the provisions of the Official Languages Act 2003.

The nature of the core function of An Garda Síochána will demand an inbuilt flexibility in this scheme to cater for emergency situations.

1.4 Mandate Vision and Mission

An Garda Síochána was founded to provide a policing service to the fledgling State. The organisation has 14,412 sworn officers and 1,400 civilian support staff. The Garda function is set down in Section 7 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, as providing policing and security services for the State with the objectives of:

- a) preserving peace and public order,
- b) protecting life and property,
- c) vindicating the human rights of each individual,
- d) protecting the security of the State,
- e) preventing crime,

- f) bringing criminals to justice, including detecting and investigating crime and
- g) regulating and controlling road traffic and improving road safety.

For the purpose of achieving the objectives referred to above, An Garda Síochána shall co-operate, as appropriate, with other Departments of State, agencies and bodies having, by law, responsibility for any matter relating to any aspect of that objective and shall provide any other service for which it has been given legal responsibility.

Vision

Excellent people delivering policing excellence.

Mission

To achieve the highest attainable level of Personal Protection, Community Commitment and State Security.

CHAPTER 2

ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF SERVICES ALREADY AVAILABLE THROUGH IRISH

2.1 Current Garda Policy

The current Garda policy regarding the Irish language is outlined in *A Strategy for the Irish Language in An Garda Síochána* (1998), the main provisions of which are outlined below.

2.2 Main Provisions of Current Garda Policy

- *Personnel in Gaeltacht Stations* - The policy of An Garda Síochána is to ensure a high standard in oral Irish proficiency for members serving in Gaeltacht areas.
- *Telephone Calls* - In Gaeltacht stations a comprehensive service in Irish is available. In non-Gaeltacht areas an informal structure exists to facilitate a caller who seeks to have business transacted through Irish.
- *Personal Callers* - In non-Gaeltacht areas an informal structure exists to facilitate personal callers.
- *Correspondence* - All letters, facsimile transmissions and electronic mails (e-mails) received in the Irish language are responded to in Irish.
- *Publications* - All major reports issued by An Garda Síochána are in Irish and English. Most official forms are in Irish and English.
- *Website* - The website of An Garda Síochána is in English apart from corporate publications as above.

2.1 Rannóg na Gaeilge – Irish Language Section

This is a special section in the Garda College which provides assistance to the organisation in dealing with Irish language matters. It offers research and translation services for statements, reports, legal charges and other various documents requiring translation into the Irish language.

An English/Irish dictionary of specialist and legal terminology used by Gardaí has been issued for the organisation.

Computer generated official forms are translated into the Irish language.

An externally contracted Irish translation service is also available to the Garda organisation.

CHAPTER 3

ENHANCEMENT OF SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED BILINGUALLY

3.1 Service Provision in Irish

The Official Languages Act, 2003, at Section 11(1)(b) contains a requirement that a public body must set out the steps it proposes, to ensure that any services not currently provided in Irish will be so provided. The following measures/provisions will be put in place with a view to enhancing the services to be provided bilingually. In some instances it may not be possible to provide a service through Irish, due to the emergency nature of calls.

3.2 Telephone Systems

An Garda Síochána has over 700 stations and many other offices throughout the country. In order to satisfy the requirements of a bilingual greeting it is felt that the response “An Garda Síochána” is readily identifiable and presents an implied invitation to the caller to continue in either Irish or English. Staff will be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish and arrangements will be put in place to put members of the public in touch speedily with whatever office or officer is responsible for offering the service required through Irish.

Timeframe for completion: End of first year of this Scheme.

3.3 Official Forms and Notices

All new forms, public notices and information leaflets issued by An Garda Síochána will be in Irish and English on one document, except where for reasons of design or size this is not possible and in such instance separate Irish and English documents will be produced. The new versions of forms will be produced when current stocks are expended.

Timeframe for completion: End of first year of this Scheme.

3.4 Fixed Charge Notices

An Garda Síochána will produce all Fixed Charge Notices in bilingual format. This will be achieved in co-operation with the Garda IT section and other relevant outside agencies.

Timeframe for completion: End of this Scheme.

3.5 Press Office

A media spokesperson will be made available by the organisation to provide a service in Irish, where reasonable notice is given.

Timeframe for completion: From the commencement of this Scheme.

All Press Releases pertaining to Garda Policy matters will be provided in Irish and English.

Timeframe for completion: End of first year of this Scheme.

3.6 Computer systems

All newly acquired computer systems having an interface with the public will be capable of handling the Irish language.

Timeframe for completion: From the commencement of this Scheme

Existing computer systems having an interface with the public will be made compatible with the Irish language as the systems are upgraded.

Timeframe for completion: End of second Scheme.

Any interactive services which allow the general public to make applications on line will be introduced simultaneously in both languages.

Timeframe for completion: End of this Scheme.

3.7 Website

The static information on the Garda website will be available in Irish and English.

Timeframe for completion: End of first year of this Scheme.

3.8 Public Meetings

It is the policy of An Garda Síochána when holding public meetings/consultations in Gaeltacht areas to do so through the medium of Irish.

Where a public meeting is being held outside of Gaeltacht areas, An Garda Síochána will facilitate a person who wishes to make a contribution or submission in Irish by providing a translation service. The provision of this service will require that a request is made in advance of the meeting to allow for the necessary arrangements to be put in place. Advertisements for meetings will invite people to make requests for a translation service in advance of such meetings.

Timeframe for completion: End of first year of this Scheme.

3.9 Gaeltacht Placenames

All Garda Stations situated in Gaeltacht areas will use the official Irish language name of the town or village in which the station is situated as set out in the Placenames (Ceanntair Gaeltachta) Order 2004.

Timeframe for completion: End of first year of this Scheme.

Within each Garda sub-district in Gaeltacht areas the Irish language name of all townlands, as set out, will, where not already used, be brought into usage in all registers and databases.

Timeframe for completion: End of this Scheme.

3.10 Persons attending at Stations

An Garda Síochána must deal with persons who can be categorised as:

- Arrested persons
- Complainants
- Witnesses
- Other

Arrested persons have a legal entitlement to have their business conducted in Irish.

Where a person wishes to make a complaint in Irish a service in Irish will be provided subject to the provisions of Paragraphs 3.12 (3) (4) & (5) below.

Witnesses and other persons seeking a service in Irish will be facilitated subject to the provisions of Paragraphs 3.12 (3) (4) & (5) below.

3.11 An Ghaeltacht

The Garda Síochána Act 2005 sets out at Section 33(2)

“The Garda Commissioner shall, to the extent practicable, ensure that members of the Garda Síochána stationed in a District that includes a Gaeltacht area are sufficiently competent in the Irish language to enable them to use it with facility in carrying out their duties”.

In Gaeltacht areas a full service in Irish will be made available to the public subject to the provisions of Paragraph 3.12 (3) below.

All personnel being allocated to Stations in the Gaeltacht will have the necessary qualifications in Irish.

Timeframe for completion: From the commencement of this Scheme.

Persons already based in these areas will be offered an opportunity to obtain the necessary qualifications in Irish.

Timeframe for completion: End of this Scheme.

In compliance with Section 13 (2) (e) of the Official Languages Act 2003, arrangements will be put in place to ensure the Irish language becomes the working language of every Garda Station in a Gaeltacht area.

Timeframe for completion: End of second Scheme.

3.12 Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management will:

- (1) Update the allocation policy to reflect the plans for enhancing the provision of a Garda service through the Irish language.

This will be achieved by an analysis of the personnel records database to ensure that it captures the level of Irish language proficiency of personnel in An Garda Síochána.

Timeframe for completion: End of first year of this Scheme.

- (2) Carry out a full review of the Gaeltacht allowance paid to qualifying Gardaí based in certain stations.

Timeframe for completion: End of this Scheme.

- (3) Have a full Garda Service in Irish available in all Garda Stations in the Gaeltacht.

This will be achieved by maximising the efficiency of the personnel allocation policy with a focused training approach, and it will be rolled out as follows:

- (a) With the exception of a number of Gaeltacht Stations not currently qualifying for the Gaeltacht Allowance all personnel working in the Gaeltacht will be proficient in the use of the Irish Language.

Timeframe for completion: End of this Scheme.

- (b) All personnel working in the Gaeltacht (including Gaeltacht Stations not currently qualifying for the Gaeltacht Allowance) will be proficient in the use of the Irish Language.

Timeframe for completion: End of second Scheme.

- (4) Draw up and maintain a panel of proficient Irish speakers in each Garda Region. This panel will be available to provide a full Irish service as soon as is practicable after a request for such service has been made.

Timeframe for completion: End of this Scheme.

- (5) Draw up and maintain a panel of proficient Irish speakers in each Garda Division. This panel will be available to provide a full Irish service as soon as is practicable after a request for such service has been made.

Timeframe for completion: End of second Scheme.

3.13 Training Courses and Staff Development

An Garda Síochána is committed to ensuring that the Irish language is retained as part of the core programme for Garda Student/Probationer training. In order to facilitate Human Resource Management in the proportionate allocation of Irish speaking Probationer Gardaí throughout the country, the Oral Irish Proficiency Test will be moved to Phase I of the Student Probationer training programme.

Timeframe for completion: End of year one of this Scheme.

Gaeleagras na Seirbhíse Poiblí

Gaeleagras provides training courses for Gardaí who wish to learn Irish and expand their competence in using the language. Each year many Gardaí avail of the opportunity to undergo the courses offered in the Gaeltacht areas of Donegal, Galway and Kerry. Garda management will make every effort to encourage and maximise staff participation in these courses.

Timeframe for completion: From the commencement of this Scheme.

Training Review

To progress the organisational responsibilities under The Official Languages Act, 2003, the Strategy and Change Section will review training needs of staff and will identify suitable Irish language courses for staff to meet the service requirement needs. Study courses in the Irish language will be selected and approved for financial aid as part of the education fund scheme.

Timeframe for completion: End of first year of this Scheme.

CHAPTER 4

MONITORING AND REVIEW

4.1 Irish Language Policy Implementation Committee

The responsibility for implementation and monitoring of this scheme rests with the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Strategy and Change Management, who will chair the Irish Language Policy Implementation Committee.

The Irish Language Policy Implementation Committee will have membership as follows:

- Deputy Commissioner, Strategy & Change Management – Chairperson
- Assistant Commissioner, Human Resource Management
- Assistant Commissioner, Strategy & Training
- Assistant Principal, Human Resource Management
- Representative from Foras na Gaeilge.

Each Assistant Commissioner will be responsible for implementation of the Scheme in their respective areas. Each Regional Inspector will act as the Irish Language Liaison Officer for their respective Region or Section. Each Divisional Officer will nominate an Inspector to co-ordinate the implementation at Divisional level, and to monitor achievements against the specific commitments set down in this scheme, and report to the Regional Irish Language Liaison Officer.

The function of the Liaison Officers is to assist with the structured implementation of this Scheme as directed by the Irish Language Policy Implementation Committee.

The Irish Language Policy Implementation Committee will ensure through briefings and newsletters that all staff within the organisation are aware of the commitments contained in the agreed scheme.

4.2 Comment Cards

Comment cards will be circulated to each Garda Station to facilitate public comment/suggestions and these will be examined as part of the review of the scheme. Suggestions of interested parties will be welcomed and a facility will be arranged on the Garda website to this end.

4.3 Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management will conduct an annual review of progress towards the objective of full compliance with the Act and will present this report to the Irish Language Policy Implementation Committee, at the end of each year of the Scheme.

4.4 Garda Annual Report

The Garda Commissioner will report in the Garda Annual Report on performance against commitments in the scheme in accordance with the Guidelines issued under Section 12 of the Official Languages Act 2003.

An Garda Síochána will continue to actively seek the views of Gaeltacht communities, other interested parties and groups that work in the area of advancement of the Irish Language.

CHAPTER 5

PUBLISHING OF AGREED SCHEME

An Garda Síochána will circulate copies of this scheme to all stakeholders of the organisation.

The content of this scheme will be available to the public on the Garda Síochána website, in Irish and English, and the public may make submissions about the scheme on a dedicated webpage.

Copies of this scheme will be available to any member of the public, by contacting the local Superintendent's Office.

A Press Release will announce the launch of this Scheme and publicise locations where full details of the scheme are available.

This scheme will be available to all staff of the organisation on the Garda Síochána Information Portal on the PULSE system.