

20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030:

Department of Justice and Equality

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THE VISION

The objective of Government policy in relation to Irish is to increase on an incremental basis the use and knowledge of Irish as a community language. Specifically, the Government's aim is to ensure that as many citizens as possible are bilingual in both Irish and English. It is an integral component of the Government's Irish language policy that close attention be given to its place in the Gaeltacht, particularly in light of research which indicates that the language's viability as a household and community language in the Gaeltacht is under threat.

The aim of Government policy is also to:

- increase the number of families throughout the country who use Irish as the daily language of communication;*
- provide linguistic support for the Gaeltacht as an Irish-speaking community and to recognise the issues which arise in areas where Irish is the household and community language;*
- ensure that in public discourse and in public services the use of Irish or English will be, as far as practical, 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; and*
- ensure that Irish becomes more visible in our society, both as a spoken language by our citizens and also in areas such as signage and literature.*

Irish is part of the culture and heritage of Northern Ireland and the promotion and protection of the language there is also a priority for the Government.

The Government recognises the tremendous advantage to its citizens of fluency in English, the most widely used language in international affairs. The Government commits to ensuring that this advantage is retained through the development of a bilingual society, where as many people as possible can use Irish and English with equal ease and facility. However, the Government also recognises that the focus of policy in the Gaeltacht needs to be on maintaining the linguistic identity of the community in the Gaeltacht as a distinctive language region, rather than one of bilingualism.

While strengthening the position of the language within our education system is a key focus of this Strategy, the transmission of Irish as a living language within the family and between the generations is critically important. Our overall approach is to create a supportive framework and the opportunities in which Irish can be passed on in a natural way within households and communities. This is of special importance in the context of the Gaeltacht.

The future of the language depends on people who make a positive choice to embrace the opportunities that this Strategy will create. This is the challenge for all of us.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY

Following on from the *Government Statement on the Irish Language 2006*, the headline goal has been set of increasing over 20 years:

- the number of people with a knowledge of Irish to 2 million; and
- the number of daily speakers of Irish to 250,000.

The achievement of these ambitious goals has been the overriding consideration in formulating the decisions on areas for action in this Strategy.

The specific objectives involved in the preparation of the Strategy are to:

- increase the number of speakers who speak Irish on a daily basis outside the education system to 250,000;
- increase the number of speakers who speak Irish on a daily basis in the Gaeltacht by 25% in overall terms as its invigoration will be critical to the overall Strategy; and
- increase the number of people that use State services through the Irish language and can access television, radio and print media through the language.

POLICY CONTEXT

Article 8 of the Constitution of Ireland states that:

“The Irish language as the national language is the first official language.”

This *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language* is built on the foundation of the Constitutional status of the language and follows on the *Government Statement on the Irish Language* published in December 2006. That Statement affirmed the Government’s support for the development and preservation of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht and set out 13 policy objectives. The following objectives are relevant to the Department of Justice and Equality:

Objective 2: The Official Languages Act will be fully implemented. The right of the public to use Irish in dealings with the State and with other bodies will be developed and the appropriate arrangements to deliver this will be put in place.

Objective 3: The Irish language community inside and outside the Gaeltacht will be given encouragement and support to transmit Irish to the next generation as a living household language. Towards this end, a wide range of services in Irish will be provided.

Objective 4: The Gaeltacht will be given special support as an Irish-speaking area.

Objective 12: The use of the Irish language by An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces will be continued and developed.

Implementation Plan – Department of Justice and Equality

1. An Garda Síochána

	Aims	Public Body	Action	Timeframe
1.1	The maintenance and the development of the position of the Irish language in An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces is important, both because of the symbolic importance of these forces in our national life and because of the services, particularly in the case of An Garda Síochána, provided to the public. Measures already in train under the Official Languages Act to strengthen the position of Irish as an internal working language in Gaeltacht areas and among other Irish-speaking units in services to the community and in the symbolic role of An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces in national life and on state occasions will be further developed.		The current Irish language scheme of An Garda Síochána under the Official Languages Act, 2003 recognises the right of citizens to conduct their business in Irish with An Garda Síochána. The scheme also contains a number of commitments in relation to the provision of services in Irish, including a commitment to have a full Garda service in Irish in all Garda stations in the Gaeltacht. Good progress has been made in implementing these various commitments and this work is ongoing.	Ongoing

2. Measures for Irish in the Public Service

	Aims	Public Body	Action	Timeframe
2.1	Language awareness and language training programmes need to be developed and strengthened so that a higher proportion of public service staff are truly functional in Irish and can deliver services to customers who seek them.		Language Awareness An Garda Síochána have ensured, since 2009, that Student/Probationer Gardaí were informed of the Irish speaking public's language rights and An Garda Síochána's obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003. Language awareness posters have been issued to every station in the country. The Garda portal has been used intermittently in the past to promote various language awareness programmes. However, the creation on the portal of an independent Irish Language Tab, which has been launched recently, will ensure that information pertaining to language rights is constantly visible and easily accessible to members of An Garda Síochána.	Ongoing

			The tab also acts as a useful tool for members who wish to improve their proficiency in the language, covering topics from conversational Irish to work-related topics. Other material such as sample statements, declarations and forms in Irish are available on the portal. The tab consolidates all Irish related material on the portal making it much more user friendly and therefore encouraging members to engage further with the language, ensuring a better level of service for members of the public. Irish Language cards for An Garda Síochána are in the final stages of development and will be issued to each member of the force in 2013. These Irish language cards include basic greetings, expressing lack of fluency in technical Irish (if applicable), taking details, dealing with a member of the public at a check point and dealing with a member of the public under the influence of alcohol, as well as legislation that pertains to drink driving. The cards, which have been measured to fit in the insert at	
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			the back of members' official notebooks, will prove to be a valuable and easily accessible resource for members who may need assistance when dealing with members of the public through the medium of Irish. An Garda Síochána has researched other bilingual policing jurisdictions. It found that the Welsh Policy Force had many similarities with An Garda Síochána in relation to language policy, and the organisation is now in the process of developing a clear and comprehensive protocol in writing to assist members in dealing with members of the public who wish to conduct their business through the medium of Irish. Language Training An Garda Síochána has developed and implemented a unique Irish Language in-service programme. This programme has been in place since June 2011 and has been delivered in the Donegal Gaeltacht as well as the Galway and Kerry Gaeltachtaí.	
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			The objective of this programme is to improve members' proficiency in Irish and give them the ability and confidence to communicate with members of the Irish speaking public, both professionally and positively. These courses have been designed specifically for the organisation, and are based on the European Irish Language Certificate Levels (also known as <i>Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge</i> [TEG]). The programme is currently being rolled out in the Kerry and Galway Gaeltachtaí and An Garda Síochána is currently exploring the possibility of Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge, Gaoth Dobhair, delivering tailor-made courses, for the organisation, to members in the Donegal Gaeltacht. An Garda Síochána has also run three intensive Irish language courses in conjunction with NUIG in the past year and a half. The initial course was run over a three day period by Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge, NUIG	
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			in their campus in An Cheathrú Rua, with another two courses run over a period of 4 days in their Gaoth Dobhair campus. Due to the success of these three courses, not only in improving members' confidence and proficiency in Irish but also in creating awareness among members in relation to An Garda Síochána's language obligations, it is proposed that these courses will be ongoing and take place twice yearly in various Gaeltacht areas. The new BA in Applied Policing was validated by HETAC in 2011. It comprises three phases of learning, with Phase I being delivered in the Garda College and Phases II and III being delivered in Garda Divisions. The new programme is thematic in nature and the Irish language is integrated, but independently assessed, in the Foundation, Traffic Policing, Station Roles and Responsibilities and Policing with Communities modules. The Oral Irish Proficiency Test will be taken towards the end of Phase I to facilitate HRM functions.	
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			The development of an e-learning platform is currently being considered by the Garda College and it may be suitable for the delivery of Irish Language Training in providing learning opportunities through Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the B.A. in Applied Policing. A further opportunity to take the Oral Irish Proficiency Test will be provided at the end of Phase III.	
2.2	The Official Languages Act has adopted the “language scheme” as a core instrument by which bilingual services are to be provided. Future language schemes will specify the posts within the organisation that require an Irish language competency requirement.		See 1.1 above.	Ongoing