

Frequently Asked Questions - Action Plan 2018-2022

1. What is the background of the Action Plan 2018-2022?

The **20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030** (the Strategy), which represents the Government's policy on the Irish language, was published in December 2010, following cross-party support in the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Strategy has as its key objectives:

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

It contains a range of recommendations across the following nine areas identified in the Strategy: Education; The Gaeltacht; Family Transmission of the Language - Early Intervention; Administration, Services and Community; Media and Technology; Dictionaries; Legislation and Status; Economic Life; and Cross-cutting Initiatives.

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) has overall responsibility for co-ordinating the implementation of the Strategy.

2. What is the policy context of the Action Plan?

In light of the fact that the Strategy represents the cornerstone of the Government's policy on the Irish language, **A Programme for a Partnership Government (2016)** contains the following reference: *"The Irish language is of crucial importance to our heritage and culture. The new Government needs to systematically implement the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish language, increase the number of people using Irish in their daily lives and ensure that Irish becomes a more visible language in today's society, both as a spoken language and also in areas such as signage and literature."*

The **National Planning Framework: Project Ireland 2040** contains the following: *"It is vitally important for the maintenance of the Irish language as the vernacular of the Gaeltacht and for the promotion of the language outside the Gaeltacht that ongoing supports be provided for the language planning process and that support for the Gaeltacht development authority, Údarás na Gaeltachta, be strengthened"*.

Accordingly, the Action Plan 2018-2022 aligns with the overall objectives of the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 and by extension, with relevant Government policies and programmes, including those referenced above, in addition to: *Realising Our Rural Potential - Action Plan for Rural Development and the Creative Ireland Programme*.

3. What progress has been made regarding the implementation of the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 to date?

Notwithstanding the challenges presented in advancing implementation of the Strategy with significantly curtailed resources in its early years, significant progress has been made to date in advancing its implementation. An overview of progress since the Strategy was published in relation to each of the nine areas of action is presented in the Plan.

Key new measures since the 20-Year Strategy was published include:

- the enactment of the Gaeltacht Act in 2012 and the subsequent and ongoing implementation of the language planning process set out therein; and
- the publication by the Department of Education and Skills in 2016 of the *Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017–2022* and its ongoing implementation, in partnership with DCHG and other key stakeholders.

4. What has been done to get the public and stakeholders' opinions and suggestions on the subject?

In order to facilitate feedback regarding the implementation of the Strategy and to identify key priorities, DCHG conducted an Open Policy Debate under the *Civil Service Renewal Plan* in December 2015. As part of that process, a series of public meetings was convened, in addition to written submissions being sought from both the public and key stakeholders alike. Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge NUIG, were engaged by the Department to prepare a report summarising the key conclusions of the consultation process and identifying key strategic priorities.

More recently DCHG has engaged in detailed discussions with a wide range of key stakeholders, including the Department of Education and Skills (DES); the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA); the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER); Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge in order to advance a number of key objectives and actions for implementation over 5 years in support of the Strategy and the language.

The Action Plan 2018-2022 represents the culmination of this process of engagement, consultation and agreement. It sets out a suite of agreed actions to be implemented over the period 2018 to 2022 in support of the accelerated implementation of the 20-Year Strategy. The Plan also outlines a revised approach to monitoring progress in order to provide for greater accountability.

5. What are the most important things in relation to the Gaeltacht?

- Continue to advance the implementation of the language planning process at local level across all Gaeltacht regions, Gaeltacht Service Towns and Irish Language

Networks by way of significant additional investment, both current and capital, in support of the process by DCHG, Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge; and

- Implement a suite of measures at central level in further support of the language planning process in Gaeltacht regions in the realms of early years, the family, the traditional arts, and youth.

6. What about the education system?

- Continue to advance the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022, which sets out a vision for Gaeltacht education that recognises the role that schools and early-years settings play in providing high quality Irish-medium education through Irish and in encouraging fluency and use of the Irish language in the greater Gaeltacht community;
- Develop the area of Irish medium education at primary and post –primary level;
- Develop the area of Teacher Education, including models of Continuing Professional Development that focus on a communicative approach as a means of addressing concerns in relation to language competency and pedagogy;
- Further develop aspects of the Curriculum including a review of the programme for learning Irish at senior cycle and the commitment for research in the area of partial immersion education for the trial usage of a model in some English-medium schools; and
- Provision of increased access to Irish language learning and cultural experiences abroad, for example partnership with the Fulbright Commission; the Ireland – Canada University Foundation and Culture Ireland in relation to the Global Footprint Initiative.

7. What are the other areas of action involved?

Family Transmission of the Language - Early Intervention

- Provision of increased supports in relation to Irish language provision in the early-years sector, including the appointment of two specialists within the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

Administration, Services and Community

- Provision of enhanced public services to Gaeltacht areas and for Irish speakers through the enactment of the Official Languages Bill (Amendment) 2017; replace language schemes with a language standard; and increase the number of functional bilingual speakers recruited to the public service to 20%.

Media and Technology

- Implementation of the Digital Plan for the Irish Language which will allow greater access to digital resources developed for the benefit of speakers and learners of Irish; and
- Provision of a digital Irish language infrastructure for learning, information and cultural services.

Dictionaries

- Publishing of a hard-copy version of the New English-Irish Dictionary and the continuation of relevant planning in relation to lexicography, terminology and other resources.

Legislation and Status

- Enactment of the Official Languages Bill (Amendment) 2017 to ensure that the Language Act remains an effective support to anyone wishing to access high-quality Irish language services from the State.; and
- Ending of the derogation on the use of Irish in the EU in December 2021. In that context work will continue with relevant EU institutions to actively support the status of the Irish language in the EU.

Economic Life

- Further enable Údarás na Gaeltachta in discharging its remit in relation to job retention and creation in Gaeltacht regions by providing an incrementally increased capital budget allocation to the organisation with the overall objective of facilitating the retention of 8,500 fulltime jobs in Gaeltacht companies by 2022.

Cross-cutting Initiatives

- Development and implementation a cultural tourism campaign in the Gaeltacht aimed at former students of Irish-language colleges, individuals/families who wish to attend Irish language courses and parents visiting Irish language students.

8. How to ensure progress on implementation?

Following the review of the monitoring and supervisory arrangements related to the implementation of the Strategy, the following revised measures will now be implemented:

- The establishment of an **Oversight Group**, comprising of representatives from all relevant Government Departments as well as key stakeholders, including Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge. This group will be tasked with:
 - monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the agreed actions set out in the Plan; and
 - supporting the identification of further actions and initiatives to advance the overall implementation of the Strategy.

This Oversight Group will be chaired by DCHG and will oversee the preparation and publication of an annual progress report which will be presented to the relevant Government committee and published.

- Continuation of bilateral engagement between DCHG and relevant stakeholders.
- Continuation of the Advisory Committee, composed of key stakeholders, to advise on the implementation of the Action Plan and the Strategy.

9. What is planned and outlined in the plan - is it enough?

It is anticipated that further additional actions will also be identified and implemented over the period of the plan, depending on emerging opportunities, capacity and resources over its 5-Year cycle. Subject to the overall outcome, the intention is to recast the Plan towards the end of its cycle and to plot the best way forward at that point in time in support of the ongoing implementation of the Strategy.

For more information or inquiries:

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