

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

Department of Health

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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 Health:

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.

Implementation Plan – Department of Health

1. Language Planning in the Gaeltacht

Under the Gaeltacht Act 2012, a language planning process will be instigated whereby a language plan will be prepared at community level for each Gaeltacht district. These plans will integrate the approach in relation to linguistic issues, education, physical planning, and social and community development. Community co-operation and participation will be critical.

These plans will be first and foremost language-centred, incorporating all aspects of community life in these districts. In order to address the threat to the sustainability of the Gaeltacht as a linguistic entity, priority will be given to language planning activities necessary to stabilise the position of Irish as the community language. With regard to the Department of Health, these language plans will comprise activities under the following headings:

	Aims	Public Body	Action	Timeframe
1.1	The provision of primary care services through primary care teams.	Health Service Executive (HSE) as the statutory provider of health and personal social services	The HSE commits to a process of developing Primary Care Teams which can provide their services through Irish in the various Gaeltacht areas, including Gaoth Dobhair/Na Rosa/Cloich Chionnfhaola, Donegal, Conamara/Oileáin Árann, Galway and Corca Dhuibhne, Kerry. The process will include consultation with existing health staff/management in these areas as well as the public. We will seek to recruit staff who are fluent in Irish as vacancies arise in the Gaeltacht through the implementation of the HSE recruitment protocol. HSE will develop further its Speech and Language Therapy Gaeltacht network and will identify areas outside the Gaeltacht where these services are needed.	2013-2015
1.2	The provision of Acute Hospital and associated health services.	HSE	The HSE commits to a process that will ensure that Irish speakers' linguistic rights are respected by its staff and will include a module on Patient care through Irish in its induction of new staff. Hospitals that cater for Gaeltacht patients regularly will be prioritised.	2013-2015

1.3	The provision of health and personal social services to older people and people with disabilities and mental health services.	HSE	The HSE will continue to provide services in Irish in the following facilities: Teach Altranais an Fháil Charraigh, Otharlann an Chlocháin Léith, Áras Mhic Dara, Buaile Cheoinín, Áras Rónáin, Ospidéal an Daingin. It commits to enhancing the services through Irish by committing to a process of consultation with existing staff and the public regarding recruitment of replacement and new posts through implementing its recruitment protocol.	2013-2015
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2. Family transmission of the language – Early Intervention

	Aims	Public Body	Action	Timeframe
2.1	In the promotion of language transmission in the family, the State aims to provide advice, guidance and support for families where Irish is spoken in the home and to promote a greater understanding of practical bilingualism in a family environment. In practical terms, this will entail bringing the message of the advantages of bilingualism into the mainstream work of the health and social services providers who give advice to new parents and work with young families.	HSE	The HSE will continue to support the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht initiatives, including the Family Language Support Programme, as well as exploring new language cost effective initiatives.	2013-2015

3. Measures for Irish in the Public Service

	Aims	Public Body	Action	Timeframe
3.1	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.	Department of Health (DOH), HSE and other health State agencies	The Department of Health, HSE and other health State agencies commit to training their staff in accordance with Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht guidelines and available training programmes.	2013-2015
3.2	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.	DOH/HSE and other health State agencies	In general, recruitment by the Department of Health and other State agencies is guided by the policies of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Posts in the HSE that require an Irish language competency will be filled in accordance with the HSE's recruitment protocol in this regard.	2013-2015