LANGUAGE SCHEME

UNDER SECTION 15 OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT 2003

May 2021

An Roinn Airgeadais
Department of Finance

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This is the Department of Finance's Fourth Language Scheme which will cover the period 2021 – 2024 and has been prepared by the Department pursuant to the Official Languages Act 2003 and the Official Languages Act 2003 (section 9) Regulations 2008.

Section 11 of the Act provides for the preparation by public bodies of a Language Scheme detailing the services which they will provide:

- through the medium of Irish
- through the medium of English, and
- through the medium of Irish and English

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not currently provided by the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

The main objective of this Fourth Scheme is to build on progress achieved in the Third Scheme in the promotion and provision of quality services to our Irish speaking customers and to expand on the range of services provided in both official languages over the life-time of the Scheme.

In accordance with section 14(3) of the Official Languages Act 2003, Language Schemes remain in force for a period of 3 years or until such time as a new Scheme is confirmed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht pursuant to section 15, whichever is the later.

1.2 Preparation and Content of the Language Scheme 2022-2025

In the preparation of this Language Scheme, due regard has been given to the Guidelines issued by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. In addition, there has been a comprehensive process of consultation with relevant stakeholders as outlined within this Scheme.

The Department is guided by the principle that the provision of Irish language services should be based on:

- the underlying level of demand for specific services in the Irish language
- the importance of a proactive approach to the provision of such services, and
- the resources, including human and financial resources, and the capacity of the body concerned to develop or access the necessary language capability.

This Scheme complements the principles of Quality Customer Service and the Department's Customer Charter. It has been formulated with the intention of ensuring that all relevant obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003 will be fully addressed, through this and future Schemes.

1.3 Consultation Process

The Department undertook a public consultation process inviting submissions from members of the public concerning formulation of this Scheme. The notice under section 13 of the Act was placed on the Department's website within the Irish Independent (Seachtain supplement) and was 'tweeted' from the Department's twitter.

A Department wide engagement process was also undertaken to inform the development and content of this Scheme.

The Department considered all communications submissions received under both of the above processes in relation to formulation of the updated Scheme.

1.4 Review of the Third Language Scheme 2018-2021

The commitments in the Third Language Scheme 2018-2021 increased the level and range of those included under the preceding Scheme. Over the course of the operation of the Scheme there was promotion of awareness of the Scheme and the requirement to maintain compliance with its composite obligations. The Department's Annual Review, which is published on the Department's website in both Irish and English, outlines the main achievements and developments during the year including a summary table of progress under the Third Language Scheme 2018-2021. The Scheme was reviewed on a periodic basis with regard to the core commitments and a summary review document provided to senior management in the Department. An independent review of the Scheme undertaken by Internal Audit provided an objective view of compliance with key commitments and potential actions to further enhance adherence to applicable items. Similarly, any reviews undertaken by the Office

of An Coimisinéir Teanga provide an independent assessment of the Scheme whereby any areas requiring clarification are highlighted to relevant Divisions. In addition, these items also bring to light any issues that Divisions may be encountering in meeting obligations.

Chapter 3 of this document provides the updated commitments by area for this Scheme with reference to the prior Scheme's commitments where relevant.

1.5 Commencement date of the Fourth Scheme

This Scheme has been approved by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and will commence with effect from 2 February 2022. The Scheme will remain in force for a period of 3 years or unless a new Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to section 15 of the Act, whichever is the later.

CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

Mission

The Department has a central role in the achievement of the Government's economic, fiscal, banking, financial services, EU, International and climate change objectives. The Department's mission is "To lead in the achievement of the Government's economic, fiscal and financial policy goals, having regard to the goals set out in the Programme for Government - Our Shared Future."[1].

Main functions of the Department

The Department of Finance is directly involved in the provision of a range of Government services and policy functions whereby it is divided into a number of divisions and units for the purposes of day-to-day management. A summary of the overall structure of the organisation and core responsibilities of its Divisions have been outlined below.

2.1 Summary of the services provided by the Department

Economic Division

This Division is responsible for macroeconomic analysis, forecasting and budgetary policy. It is also responsible for developing strategies for the Irish economy and inputting to the development of sectoral and other policies that affect the economy. It undertakes research and provides advice on the impact of taxation and other policies. This Division also deals with overall budgetary policy, including coordinating the budgetary process within the European

[1] Department of Finance Statement of Strategy 2021-2023

Semester, fiscal forecasting, monitoring budget performance, analysing the impact of policy on Government finances and liaising with the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council. The Division is responsible for management of the Exchequer Account (which is aggregated in the production of the Annual Finance Accounts and monthly Exchequer Statement) and the Paymaster General function.

Tax Division

This Division is responsible for all aspects of tax policy, domestic and international. It works closely with the Office of the Revenue Commissioners, OECD and the EU on tax matters. It analyses policy proposals and drafts and prepares legislation, including the Finance Bill.

EU & International

This Division deals with the development and implementation of strategies at EU/Euro level and internationally in relation to economic, fiscal and financial policy formulation and the cross-Departmental coordination of EU policy. It manages the EU budgetary process and EU economic governance and the development of departmental policy advice on issues relating to UK/EU relationships. It also builds relationships through Ireland's diplomatic network and ensures that the Minister and Department is fully appraised of EU and international developments. The Division supports the Minister in his role as President of the Eurogroup.

Corporate Affairs

Corporate Affairs is responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of the Governance framework, the Integrated Business Planning framework, internal control framework of oversight for Bodies under the Aegis and the coordination and monitoring of Data Governance and Information Management. Responsibility also includes Secretary to the Executive Board and having responsibility for the Finance Unit which manages the internal finance and budget management activities for the Department. The Facilities Management Unit is responsible for the on-going day to day operations to support the Department through management of accommodation and facilities for the provision of safe accommodation and welfare facilities and maintenance of the Safety Management System. It is also responsible for ensuring that all activities are carried out within the framework of the Safety Management System and Safety Statement.

Human Resources

Human Resources is responsible for the development and delivery of the Department's HR Business strategy and the provision of a wide range of HR services to management and staff. The Department's HR Business strategy is focusing on five key elements; organisational structure, workforce and succession planning, organisational learning and development, performance management and employee engagement initiatives.

Banking Division

This Division deals with strategies for the banking and payment sectors in Ireland, policies relating to the provision of credit in the economy, credit and payments regulation, consumer protection, addressing distressed mortgages and difficulties with personal and small/medium business debt. It is responsible for policies on Central Bank powers and functions and NTMA managed funding and investment strategies (e.g. NewEra or the ISIF). It is also responsible for the management of the Minister's shareholding in the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland.

Financial Services Division

This Division is responsible for the development of domestic and EU/International policy and legislation in relation to the financial services sector, with the exception of the banking sector and manages the transposition of EU directives. Its primary functions relate to insurance and pensions, funds, financial markets, anti-money laundering policy and the International Financial Services Strategy.

Shareholding and Financial Advisory Division

The Shareholding and Financial Advisory Division (SFAD) is responsible for the management of the State's investments in the banking sector (Allied Irish Banks, Bank of Ireland, and Permanent TSB). It is also responsible for the management of the Minister's shareholdings in the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) and Home Building Finance Ireland (HBFI), representing the Minister's interests in relation to the oversight of NAMA in line with the NAMA Act. SFAD is responsible for representing the Minister's interests in relation to the liquidation of IBRC. This Division advises the Minister in relation to the Credit

Union sector. Finally, using the expertise within the Division, it provides financial advisory services to the wider Department as required.

International Finance and Climate Division

This Division is responsible for managing Ireland's relationship with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and for the Department's role in climate change and climate finance. The IFIs include: the IMF, World Bank Group, European Investment Bank (EIB) and other multilateral development banks.

This Division is also responsible for the Department's risk management framework in line with the governance structure. The Division will, where appropriate, align and co-ordinate with the National Risk Assessment structure. The compliance Unit provides assurance to the Executive Board, and ultimately to the Secretary General, that the Department is operating within its legal and regulatory framework.

Legal Unit

The Legal Unit is responsible for providing legal advisory services for the Department through the Head of Legal.

Accounts Branch

The Accounts Branch is responsible for transaction processing on the Department's Vote and also for five of the Votes in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (PER) group.

2.2 Customers of the Department

Our main customers include the Government, Ministers, Dáil Éireann, other Government Departments and offices, and the wider public sector. We also have regular contact, both formal and informal, with EU and International Institutions, journalists, academics, economists, lobby groups and to a lesser extent with the public.

The Department of Finance is committed to providing a professional, efficient and courteous service to all our customers, providing and delivering the highest quality service in accordance with the 12 Principles of Quality Customer Service. In doing this, we will be sensitive to our customers' particular needs and circumstances and respect their rights under equality and legislation.

CHAPTER 3: SUMMARY OF IRISH LANGUAGE SERVICES AND IMPROVEMENTS PLANNED FOR THE FOURTH SCHEME 2022-2025

3.1 Summary of Irish Language Services and further commitments under the Fourth Scheme

The Department of Finance is committed to providing quality services in Irish and/or bilingually to its customers. This chapter outlines the measures which the Department will undertake over the course of the Scheme in order to develop the level of services provided and to build upon those specified in the third Scheme.

PROGRESS TO END OF THE THIRD LANGUAGE SCHEME 2018 – 2021:

In addition to statutory requirements prescribed within the Official Languages Act, the Department committed to a programme which developed the commitments provided in the Second Scheme.

3.2 Details of Services provided in English only, or bilingually

The main customers and stakeholders of the Department are summarised in Chapter 2. Due to the nature of the role of the Department and its functions, it generally does not have a high level of contact with, or provide services to, members of the public on an individual basis. Accordingly, the Department provides its main services primarily through English. However, arrangements will continue throughout this Scheme to ensure that the facility for provision of Irish language services to the public remain in place. In addition, the

Department will endeavour to increase and normalise the level of Irish within its day-to-day activities.

3.3 Means of communicating with the public/Information to the public

3.3.1 Correspondence

In accordance with section 9 (2) of the Act, all written correspondence (letters and email) will continue to be responded to in the language in which it was received. The Department will also continue to strive to initiate correspondence in Irish with those who are known to prefer correspondence through Irish. Staff will be instructed to maintain a record of such organisations in order to achieve this commitment. The Department will maintain a log of all Irish correspondence received through Irish via the 'eCorrespondence' portal for monitoring of demand and to record organisations with a preference for communication in Irish as outlined.

Standard messages on the Department's e-mail system, such as disclaimers of responsibility, will continue to be both in English and Irish per the Department's standardised e-mail signature. Correspondence for officials will commence and end with a greeting and signature in the Irish language, where possible and appropriate, including instances where the main text is in English.

3.3.2 Oral Announcements / Telephone Communication with the public

The Department aims to ensure that if a member of the public wishes to conduct their business through Irish by telephone that an official in the Department will be available to provide such a service where required.

In accordance with the principles of quality customer service, the Department will continue to ensure that switchboard operators and receptionists, who are the first point of contact with the public, will:

- give the name of the Department in English and Irish
- are familiar with basic greetings in Irish
- put members of the public in contact without delay with whatever offices or officer is responsible for offering the service required through Irish.

The Compliance Unit will provide staff with examples of 'out of office' and 'voice mailbox messages' in the Irish language and will encourage staff to leave out of office and voice mail messages in both Irish and English language.

The following recorded oral announcements will be in Irish or bilingually in accordance with the Act:

- recorded telephone announcements outside office hours of the Department
- recorded oral announcements transmitted via a computerised messaging system or telephone answering system.

3.3.3 Speeches

Speeches or statements given by the Minister, in the Oireachtas or elsewhere, in addition to speeches by senior officials will continue to be made available in the language in which they were delivered. This will include speeches which have been made in Irish.

3.3.4 Public Meetings

Due to the nature of the core work of the Department and its diverse range of stakeholders, including international entities, the majority of meetings are conducted through English. As per the Third Language Scheme, it will continue to be the policy of the Department that, when warranted and sufficient notice has been provided, staff proficient in Irish will be made available for meetings with Irish language organisations or otherwise.

3.3.5 Internal Communication

- recorded oral announcements transmitted within the Department by a public address system, including elevator announcements, will be transmitted bilingually
- the Facilities Management Unit will continue to ensure that all public notices in the Department's buildings containing text are in both English and Irish
- the Department's '*This Week in Finance*' newsletter will be used to publicise Irish language related information, including associated events, and will publish Irish language segments during the year
- the Department's intranet site will be used to publicise details concerning this Scheme and the Irish language within the Department and in addition as a resource for staff concerning the overall area
- in accordance with mandatory provisions of the Act, headings of all official Department stationery including paper, compliment slips, envelopes, and file covers, will continue to be bilingual or exclusively in Irish
- as new staff ID badges and business cards are replaced, the Department's name will be published in both the Irish and English language.

3.3.6 Media Communications

The Department's Press Office will:

- increase the number of press releases over the lifetime of the Scheme from 35%, as committed under the Third Language Scheme, to 40% by the end of this Scheme (subject to the availability of timely translation service)

- create a greater Irish language presence on its social media platforms, including increasing the number and frequency of ‘tweets’ in Irish and the amount of Irish language content on its LinkedIn page
- Open and close press releases in Irish, where possible and appropriate, even if main text of release is in English
- provide that Press Office staff will be facilitated in attending Irish language courses during office hours
- ensure that priority is given to Irish language press releases concerning Irish language or Gaeltacht affairs
- be provided with suitable Irish language resources such as dictionaries, phrase books, and on-line resources
- will ensure that queries from members of the public, journalists, and public representatives received in Irish will be answered in Irish.

3.3.7 Official Invitations

The Department will continue to ensure that invitations to appropriate events hosted by the Minister for Finance and the Minister of State will be issued in both official languages.

3.3.8 Service to Gaeltacht areas

The Department will continue to provide services through Irish to members of the public in Gaeltacht areas as the need arises.

3.3.9 Gaeltacht Placenames

The official placenames of Gaeltacht areas, as declared by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, will continue to be used by the Department.

3.3.10 Departmental website and Computer Systems

The Department's official website (http://www.gov.ie/finance) was transferred to the consolidated government website gov.ie from 2019 that combines the websites of Irish Government Departments. The overall functionality of this website allows that all sub-headings and menus can be navigated through Irish with static content displayed in the language chosen.

- the Department will continue to ensure that all webpages contained within the main structure of the site will be available bilingually
- the Department will endeavour to continually increase the level of Irish language content on the website throughout the current scheme, as resources permit. This includes the translation and incorporation of additional Departmental static and appropriate policy based content as it arises
- Divisions will be encouraged to examine their online content in order to further increase the amount of Irish content available including publications
- the search function on the Departmental website shall continue to be searchable through Irish
- Irish language content and information will be published by relevant Divisions on the Intranet SharePoint site including a section dedicated to both the Irish language and the Irish language Scheme
- ICT developments, including future system upgrades, will be navigable through Irish where possible
- the Department will continue to ensure that all its ICT developments adhere to the statutory Irish Language Scheme obligations.

3.3.11 Publications

The Department produces a range of publications from various policy areas of the Department.

Certain key documents are simultaneously published in both Irish and English in accordance with the provisions of section 10 of the Act, including:

- the Annual Review
- Budget leaflet and Summary of key Budget taxation measures
- White paper on estimates of Receipts and Expenditure
- Expenditure Strategy for Ireland
- Irish Language Scheme
- Finance Accounts
- Statement of Strategy
- documents setting out public policy proposals
- certain documents of major public importance.

In addition, the appropriation accounts of the Department are published by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General in both languages.

The Department will make an effort to increase the level of official documents and information published bilingually and within the same cover (either hard copy or electronic) where possible – in particular documents of wider public interest.

CHAPTER 4: IMPROVING LANGUAGE CAPABILITY

The Department remains committed to ensuring that there are adequate language resources within the Department to provide the required level of Irish language service. The Human Resources Learning and Development unit will provide the opportunity for staff to develop their proficiency in the Irish language in addition to the provision of adequate language resources and specific training where appropriate.

4.1 Human Resources

In order to assess the level of Irish in the Department and publicise staff available to provide Irish language services, Human Resources and Learning Development unit will:

- continue to ascertain the level of Irish proficiency of new entrants to the Department
- undertake an annual language review within the Department including an assessment of the level of written and spoken Irish of all staff
- on an annual basis undertake a survey of staff available to deal in Irish with members of the public who will volunteer to provide such a service as the need arises
- publish on the Department's intranet site the names of officials proficient in the Irish language and their standard in both oral and written Irish
- promote Seachtain na Gaeilge and other Irish language events in the Department including information sessions and presentations provided in Irish
- engage with the Compliance Unit and provide relevant information as part of the systematic monitoring and review of the Scheme.

4.2 Training and Development

In its commitment to provide appropriate training and development for all staff, the Department will:

- continue to be committed to making available opportunities for staff to attend accredited Irish language training courses, as resources permit, including those afforded via training provided directly to the Department
- promote all forms of Irish language further education through the Department's Refund of Fees Scheme, including the facilitation of staff in attending training during office hours
- make specific or targeted Irish language training available, as required, including to all reception staff/telephonists and service officers to increase their awareness of basic greetings and knowledge of the Irish language
- publicise the One Learning Centre that provides a range of services for staff including those pertaining to the Irish language
- include a focus on the Department's Language Scheme at induction seminars in order to ensure that all new entrants are made aware of all commitments under the Scheme
- continue to provide staff with access to language resources including those available online and via Departmental access to various library facilities
- highlight the availability of all Irish language training and resources within the HR section of the Department's intranet site
- in addition to the availability of training, reception staff will be provided with basic greetings in Irish to assist with visitors who wish to converse in Irish.

4.3 Recruitment and Placement

Our recruitment policy, which is subject to the framework of agreed national recruitment procedures, will have regard to the need to improve Irish language capability on an incremental basis.

Subject to conditions governing staff placement, we will determine if any posts in the Department should be designated as an Irish language position and advise the Executive Board in advance of a 'Resources Review'. The method of filling of such posts will be a decision of Departmental senior management however it is expected that the recruitment of staff through the Public Appointments Service, with the appropriate level of competence in the Irish language, will be the primary means of optimising the availability of services through Irish.

Designated Irish Language Posts

The role of Irish Language Officer is currently held by the compliance officer of the Department whose responsibilities within this area are to oversee implementation of the Act and Scheme in the Department. The Irish language officer is supported by the Executive Board in relation to successful implementation of commitments under the Scheme in accordance with the *Official Languages Act 2003*.

4.4 Translation Services

The Compliance Unit will ensure that the Department has an appropriate Irish language translator in place and all Department staff will be made aware of this service.

4.5 Irish language Promotion and Seachtain na Gaeilge

The Department is committed to promoting cultural initiatives which support and encourage the use of the Irish language. The promotion of the Irish language will be directed by a number of Divisions within the Department, including the Compliance Unit and Human Resources.

The Department will promote activities organised during Seachtain na Gaeilge. The Social Club will host at least one informal event each year for staff to promote the use of Irish in the Department such as a table quiz 'as Gaeilge' and a 'Cupán Tae agus Cúpla Focail' meet-ups during the year. The Social Club will also endeavour to issue bilingual communications to staff regarding social events where possible, particularly those that concern the Irish language.

As part of the organisation timetable for internal 'Power Hour' information sessions, the Learning and Development unit will engage with Irish language bodies and/or individuals to provide at least one session in Irish for promotion of the language. Where there is sufficient public interest the Department will also host an Irish language talk as part of 'Culture Night' and other such events.

CHAPTER 5: MONITORING, REPORTING AND REVISION

Executive Board

The Executive Board will support and promote the use of the Irish language in the Department and will keep the effective operation of the Language Scheme under review.

Compliance Officer

The Compliance Officer is responsible for ensuring that the Department has a Language Scheme in place.

The Compliance Officer will:

- at least on a half-yearly basis examine progress in relation to the commitments set out in the Department's Language Scheme
- will throughout the Scheme consider any additional measures that are necessary to improve the level of service provided in light of demand and arising from the half-yearly assessment of progress
- report to the Secretary General and Executive Board following the assessment on progress in relation to the commitments contained in the Scheme and on any additional new measures considered appropriate.

Business Units

Each section of the Department will be required to reflect the commitments of the Language Scheme in its Business Plan, as appropriate. The day-to-day monitoring function will be carried out primarily by line managers in those sections which have responsibility for the implementation of the Scheme in their respective areas. On a six-monthly basis, each Business Unit will be required to report details of adherence to their commitments to the Head of Compliance.

Annual Review

Details of progress in meeting the commitments contained in this Scheme will be published annually in the Department's Annual Review which will account for:

- additional policies or initiatives promoting the use of the Irish language
- materials published in whole or in part in Irish
- the incidence and nature of complaints and suggestions relating to the provision of services in Irish by the Department
- progress against each of the commitments set out in the Scheme
- the level of demand for services through Irish.

CHAPTER 6: PUBLICISING THE AGREED SCHEME

Official Languages Act 2003

All Department of Finance staff have been made aware of their responsibilities in respect of the Official Languages Act 2003.

Fourth Language Scheme 2022 – 2025

All Department of Finance staff have been provided with a copy of this Language Scheme and will continue to be made aware of their responsibilities through a number of means, including:

- information on the Department's Intranet home page
- updates from the Head of Compliance
- promotion of cultural events
- induction training.

General Public

This Language Scheme, along with progress reports, will be made available to the public by means of:

- a press release launching the Scheme
- clear display on the Department's website
- a short Information leaflet setting out the services available in Irish will be made available at reception desks and on the Department's website
- the Department's Annual Review which will outline progress in meeting the commitments contained in the Scheme.

In addition to the above measures the Department will continue to take every opportunity in its day-to-day interactions with customers to promote and publicise the services it provides through Irish, including:

- pro-actively informing customers of the option of dealing with the Department through Irish by the display of notices at reception areas indicating the services available and also by listing these on the Department's website
- provision of notes in publications and advertisements that the Department provides services through Irish and welcomes customers who wish to deal with it through Irish, according to the commitments in the Scheme.

A copy of the Scheme has also been sent to Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.

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