

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

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

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

### 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 Foreign Affairs and Trade:

**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 8:** The State will continue to support Foras na Gaeilge in the context of the British-Irish Agreement Act 1999.

It is also an objective of Government to support the promotion and teaching of Irish abroad, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Particular emphasis has been placed on supporting the teaching of Irish in third-level colleges in a range of different countries.

In the context of the Government’s continuing commitment to the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, it will continue to support Foras na Gaeilge, an agency of the North/South implementation body charged with promoting the language on an all-island basis, and to ensure its continued effective operation. The Government’s Strategy will have a beneficial impact on speakers of the Irish language in Northern Ireland. The Government will also continue to press for the full implementation of commitments relating to the Irish language, which fall to the British Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, including the introduction of an Irish Language Act and the enhancement, protection and development of the Irish language in Northern Ireland.

# Implementation Plan – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

## 1. Media and Technology

	<b>Aims</b>	<b>Public Body</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
1.1	The Good Friday Agreement provided that the British Government would work with the relevant British and Irish broadcasting authorities to make TG4 more “widely available” in Northern Ireland. The Government will continue to work with the relevant British authorities to ensure that this will be achieved in the context of the switchover to digital television by 2012.	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)	DFAT worked with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR), RTÉ, TG4 and other statutory bodies in Ireland and Northern Ireland to ensure TG4 and Raidió na Gaeltachta formed part of the Northern Ireland digital television and radio package.	On 23 October 2012, the switchover from digital to analogue TV signals took place on the island of Ireland. TG4, RTE 1&2 and Raidió na Gaeltachta immediately became available to Northern Ireland viewers on the Freeview system.

## 2. Legislation and Status

	<b>Aims</b>	<b>Public Body</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
2.1	The Government will continue to press for the full implementation of commitments relating to the Irish language, which fall to the British Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, including the introduction of an Irish Language Act and the enhancement, protection and development of the Irish language in Northern Ireland.	DFAT	The Tánaiste and officers of the DFAT work with the Northern Ireland Office, political parties and Irish language groups in Northern Ireland to advance the introduction of an Irish language act and to enhance, protect and develop it in	Ongoing

			<p>Northern Ireland.</p> <p>An Tánaiste has met with Irish language groups and advocates and heard their concerns regarding the promotion of the Irish language, including their views on an Irish Language Act for Northern Ireland.</p>	
2.2	EU Presidency	DFAT, Department of the Taoiseach and Inter- Departmental Administrative Planning Group	<p>The position of Irish as an official and working EU language of the EU is appropriately recognised in the provision of interpretation services, in the Presidency website and in promotional activities and materials aimed at EU delegates/participants in Ireland and Brussels.</p>	