



An Coimisiún um
Rialáil Cumarsáide

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The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES
ACT 2003
LANGUAGE SCHEME

2017 - 2020

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

The Official Languages Act 2003 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

as well as 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.

In accordance with section 14(3) of the Act, 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 Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, whichever is the later.

1.2 Preparation and Content of the Scheme

In the preparation of this scheme, due regard has been given to the Guidelines issued by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. In addition, there has been a comprehensive process of consultation with relevant stakeholders.

The **Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg)** 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 **ComReg's** capacity to develop or access the necessary language capability.

This scheme complements the principles of Quality Customer Service and our Customer Charter. It has been formulated with the intention of ensuring that all relevant obligations under the Official Languages Act will be fully addressed by **ComReg** on an incremental basis, through this and future schemes.

The time and effort put in by all concerned in this process is acknowledged and appreciated.

1.3 Commencement date of the Scheme

This Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. It commences with effect from **20 March 2017** and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years or until a new scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

Chapter 2: The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg)

2.1 Overview

ComReg is the statutory body responsible for the regulation of the electronic communications sector (telecommunications, radio communications and broadcasting transmission) and the postal sector. We are the national regulatory authority for these sectors in accordance with EU law which is subsequently transposed into Irish legislation. **ComReg** was established on 01 December 2002 and is led by a Commission of up to three Commissioners.

Under the Communications Regulation Act 2002, as amended, **ComReg** has a range of functions and objectives in relation to the provision of electronic communications networks, electronic communications services and post.

These include:

- Ensuring compliance by operators with obligations
- Promoting competition
- Contributing to the development of the internal market
- Promoting the interests of users within the European Community
- Ensuring the efficient management and use of the radio frequency spectrum and numbers from the national numbering scheme
- Promoting the development of the postal sector and, in particular, the availability of a universal service
- Protecting the interests of end users of premium rate services

The Commission, with the Leadership Team, is responsible for the strategic and operational management of the organisation. **ComReg** depends on the efforts of all of our staff (including lawyers, economists, engineers, accountants, business analysts and administrative specialists) to deliver on our mission and meet our regulatory objectives.

ComReg operates as a collegiate body, with decisions taken collectively by the Commissioners. We see this as important in fulfilling the spirit of the Communications Regulation Act 2002 (amended), which established the Commission. **ComReg** consists of four Divisions, supported by a General Counsel and a Senior Advisor Economics, Policy and Research. The structure is based on cross-functional teams operating in a multi-disciplinary environment.

2.2 Responsibilities

ComReg is an organisation which has a wide range of responsibilities in telecommunications (or electronic communications services and networks as it is more accurately described), post and spectrum management.

Our objectives are set out in line with both primary and secondary legislation, and this legislative framework continues to evolve. In 2007, **ComReg's** responsibilities and powers, as well as available enforcement measures, were augmented by the Communications Regulation (Amendment) Act 2007. In

particular, **ComReg** was granted Competition Act powers in relation to electronic communications and services. The Communications Regulation (Premium Rate Services & Electronic Communications Infrastructure) Act 2010 transferred responsibility for the regulation of premium rate services to **ComReg** and **ComReg** commenced regulation of this area in July 2010. Postal Regulation is subject to the Communications Regulation (Postal Services) Act 2011, as amended.

In summary, **ComReg** fulfils the following roles for promoting competition, for protecting consumers and for encouraging innovation.

- **Protecting and Informing Consumers**

This role covers both business and residential consumers, as well as major consumer representative organisations, and will span telecommunications, spectrum licensing operations and postal services. It includes all regulatory developments which affect retail consumers, including the application of the consumer protection provisions of the Universal Service and Postal Directives. **ComReg** provides proactive consumer information measures, such as consumer guides and comparative pricing Websites, and implements a consumer care function on behalf of all consumers of electronic communications and services. [**ComReg** also oversees the strategic development of a Licensing Operations function, which deals with more than 16,000 licences per annum.]

- **Promotion of Competition**

This role involves enabling maximum competition in Broadband, Voice and Voice over Internet Protocol through a range of measures, including Local Loop Unbundling, bitstream, wireless broadband (including mobile wireless broadband), cable and alternative infrastructure. It also includes promoting enhanced competition in mobile via Mobile Virtual Network Operators entrants, reviewing and (where appropriate) making adjustments in the fixed network wholesale pricing regime, and overseeing operators' compliance with obligations under the regulatory frameworks for telecoms and spectrum.

- **Encouraging Innovation**

This role covers both regulatory innovations, such as implementation of market reviews under the new European regulatory framework, and technical innovations. The role covers the revision of ComReg's spectrum strategy, new initiatives in the wireless licensing area, and the promotion of Ireland as a test bed for innovative uses of spectrum. It will also cover the development of a forward-looking telecommunications regulatory strategy, taking into account new technical, economic and regulatory trends. The evolution of postal services and the associated regulatory framework will also be covered.

Chapter 3: Details of services currently being provided in English only or bilingually

3.1 Consumer Services

ComReg provides proactive consumer information measures, such as consumer guides and comparative pricing calculators, and implements a consumer care function on behalf of all consumers of electronic communications and services. The consumer guides are available bilingually. ComReg will be updating and republishing these consumer guides during the period of the scheme. New guides published will be made available bilingually in both hard and soft copy, simultaneously. Consumer contact information is currently available bilingually on the ComReg website, this information will continue to be available bilingually during the period of the scheme.

3.2 Counter Service

Reception staff at the reception desk in ComRegs head office provide the only counter service as such. Staff are proficient in greeting a visitor in Irish and contacting the designated staff member who can deal with their query in Irish.

3.3 Online Services

Information is currently available bilingually on the ComReg website. Further provision is made in Chapter 4 of this document to extend these services and to create a dedicated e-mail address for people wishing to use services in Irish.

3.4 Queries and Complaints Procedure

A member of staff is available in the consumer services department to deal with all consumer queries and complaints through Irish. This service will continue for the length of the scheme.

Chapter 4: Enhancing the provision of Irish Language Services

The provisions shaded in grey in the table below are mandatory requirements under the Official Languages Act 2003.

Means of communication with the public		Commitment	
Recorded Oral Announcements		<p>The following recorded oral announcements will be in Irish or bilingual:</p> <p>(a) Recorded oral announcements provided on the telephone when the offices of the public body are closed;</p> <p>(b) Recorded oral announcements transmitted by a public address system;</p> <p>(c) Recorded oral announcements created and transmitted by means of a computerised messaging system or a computerised telephone answering system.</p> <p>This provision relates to 'recorded' announcements rather than 'live announcements'.</p> <p>Where a Placenames Order is in force, a public body is required to use the Irish language version of the placename specified in that Order in recorded oral announcements made by it or on its behalf.</p>	Mandatory
	Letters and Electronic Mail	All written communication will be responded to in the official language in which it was received.	Mandatory
Written Communication	Stationery	Headings of stationery, including notepaper, compliment slips, fax cover sheets, file covers and other folders, labels and envelopes are provided in Irish or bilingually.	Mandatory
	Signage	All signage placed by the Commission for Communications Regulation or on its behalf must be in Irish or bilingually, in accordance with the regulations (S.I. No.391/2008).	Mandatory
Publications	Publications	Documents setting out public policy proposals, audited accounts or financial	Mandatory

		statements, annual reports and strategy statements will be published simultaneously in Irish and English.	
	Circulars/Mail shots	Where a public body communicates in writing or by electronic mail with the general public or a class of the general public for the purpose of furnishing information to the public or the class, the body shall ensure that the communication is in the Irish language or in the English and Irish languages.	Mandatory
An Ghaeltacht	Gaeltacht Placenames	The official placenames of Gaeltacht areas will be used by the public body in accordance with the legislation.	Mandatory

Commission for Communications Regulation will also undertake the following lists of actions under each service.

Means of communication with the public		Commitment	Timeline By end Yr 1/ Yr 2 / Yr 3
Oral / Written Communication	Reception	If a member of the public wishes to speak to someone in Irish, our reception staff will contact the appropriate person.	From the commencement of the scheme
	Face to Face/Counter Service	Our only face to face/counter service is provided at reception. A notice is displayed at reception giving the contact names and extensions of staff available to deal with queries through Irish.	From the commencement of the scheme
	Switchboard	Our reception/switchboard staff give the name of the Department in Irish and English. These staff are familiar with the basic greetings in Irish, and can put members of the public in touch without delay with a member of staff with Irish.	From the commencement of the scheme
	Telephone communications with the public	The out-of-hours message on our phone is in Irish and English	Ongoing
	Live announcements	We do not use live announcements however if this becomes a service requirement in the	Ongoing

		future we will ensure that we are in compliance with the legislation	
	Information Leaflets/ Brochures	Brochures and information leaflets for the general public are made available in both languages.	Ongoing
	Application Forms	Any application forms are available bilingually.	Ongoing
	Press Releases	We are committed to translating 20% of press releases in Irish each year and also to ensure that such press releases are published within hours of the English version being published.	5% Year 1 10% Year 2 20% Year 3
Media	Media Spokespersons	An Irish speaking spokesperson/s will be available for interviews with the Irish language media, subject to personnel availability.	From the commencement of the scheme
	Speeches	We will include Irish content in English speeches. Such content shall include opening and closing greetings in Irish, and reference here and there in Irish to the subject matter of any such speeches and/or to the occasion in hand, as a minimum.	From the commencement of the scheme
	Email	As required by the Official Languages Act, we reply in Irish to any emails received in Irish. Our out-of-office messages are automatically bi-lingual.	Ongoing
Information Technology	Websites	The following information will be available bilingually on our website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About Us information • Primary, secondary and tertiary navigation headings • Contact Us information • Consumer Contact information • Access Information 	By end of Year 1 By end of Year 1 By end of Year 1 By end of Year 1 By end of Year 2
	Computer Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An email address will be set up to deal with queries in the Irish language – gaeilge@comreg.ie 	By end of year 1

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-mail disclaimer and contact details will be bilingual on all e-mail signatures 	By end of year 1
	Interactive Services	ComReg does not currently operate any interactive services. Any new interactive services will be introduced simultaneously in both languages where appropriate.	Ongoing
Gaeltacht	Meetings	Meetings held in the Gaeltacht will be conducted bilingually, all associating documentation will be provided bilingually simultaneously.	As required

Chapter 5: Improving Language Capability

5.1 Recruitment

The recruitment of staff with the appropriate level of competence in the Irish language in each area of work of the **Commission for Communications Regulation** will be the primary means of optimising the availability of services through Irish. 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.

All new staff will be briefed on our Irish Language Scheme in their induction training to ensure that they are aware of our commitments under the legislation.

5.2 Training and Development

The **Commission for Communications Regulation**, is committed to making available opportunities for staff to attend appropriately accredited Irish language training courses, as resources permit. All staff will be advised of facilities/opportunities to improve their competency in Irish.

		Commitment	Timeline By end Yr 1/ Yr 2 / Yr 3
Improving Irish Language Capability	Recruitment	ComReg will encourage the employment of new staff in relevant sections (i.e. Consumer service) who have proficiency in Irish. All newly appointed staff will be briefed on our Irish Language Scheme in their induction training to ensure that they are aware of our commitments under the legislation.	Within the period of the scheme
	Training/Provision of resources	ComReg places a great stress on the continuous professional development of our staff including funding courses for current and former staff who wish to upskill. As such: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for staff to develop their Irish language competence will be provided. • A list of current Irish language courses will be made available, on our intranet. • Staff wishing to improve their Irish language proficiency will be supported by the ComReg Professional 	Within the period of the scheme

		<p>Development ethos Learning and Development Plan. The aim being to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ support staff in maintaining and developing their proficiency in the Irish language; ➤ enhance the capacity of staff to meet their Irish language; obligations in the conduct of their duties, and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration Staff will be made aware of language resources such as: www.tearma.ie, www.teanglann.ie www.focloir.ie, www.abair.ie as well as WinGléacht, the electronic version of the Ó Dónaill Irish-English dictionary. Irish Gaeilge package on Microsoft Word will be provided to staff where appropriate. 	
	Participation in language promotion activities	Staff will be encouraged to participate in cultural language activities. Information on activities will be made available on the intranet.	Ongoing
	Other Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga will be displayed in staff canteen and made available to staff on intranet • A staff survey will be conducted to determine their level of Irish language competency, in which they will be allowed to classify themselves as Fluent> Very Good>Good> Reasonable> Poor> As Standard. • Employment application forms will include a question regarding the applicant's competency in Irish. 	Within year 1 on the scheme

5.3 Designated Irish Language Posts

The posts listed below have been designated as having an Irish language competency requirement. It is the intention that holders of these posts will have achieved specified accredited standards in the Irish language, commensurate with the responsibilities of the post. When designating these posts, particular consideration has been given to posts located in Gaeltacht areas and to posts located outside Gaeltacht areas but whose customer base consists largely of Gaeltacht and/or Irish language speaking communities.

Title of Post	Location	Indication of standard of Irish required (choose from basic, intermediate or advanced)
Reception staff	Head office /switch board	Basic
Press Office	Head Office	Advanced
Consumer Services	Head Office	Advanced

Chapter 6: Monitoring and Review

The implementation of the scheme will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by Corporate Services under the management of the Public Affairs Department. The contact person for the scheme will be Sinéad O'Donnell, sinead.odonnell@comreg.ie, +353 (0) 18049799. Feedback, questions and queries on the scheme are welcome and will be used to formulate future Language Schemes ComReg will create.

A formal system for monitoring requests for services through Irish will be available and recorded in our Annual Report.

Chapter 7: Publicising of Agreed Scheme

This scheme will be publicised both internally and externally, through a press release initially. A bilingual version of the scheme will be made available on our website and circulated to all staff and appropriate agencies. Other means to publicise the scheme may also be used.

In addition, we will take every opportunity in our day to day interaction with customers to promote and publicise the services we provide in Irish through the following means:

- directly informing customers on a proactive basis of the option of conducting business with us through Irish, for example, by the display of notices at reception areas indicating the Irish language services that are available;
- prominently listing these services on our website;
- signifying on selected guidelines, leaflets and application forms that these documents are also available in Irish, unless presented bilingually;
- giving equal prominence to Irish and English language materials.

A copy of the agreed scheme will be forwarded to the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.

The English language version of this scheme is the official version.