20-YEAR STRATEGY FOR THE IRISH LANGUAGE

Prepared for the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

FIONTAR, DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

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1. PREAMBLE

The promulgation of a 20-year Strategy to support the Irish language is an occasion for celebration. The duration and scope of the Strategy signify that the Irish Government intends to secure the permanent status of Irish as the deepest signifier of the distinctive history and culture of the Irish people.

The present time in history is often described as the age of globalisation. The worldwide interconnectedness of human populations promises both benefits and challenges as vastly different cultural, ideological and economic systems interact more closely. Among the notable changes are the challenges to past certainties such as national belonging and local identities by mass movements of populations, by diminished sovereignty of states, by more deeply enmeshed economic markets and by technological changes which provide instantaneous connections and flows of information to all parts of the globe.

In this context of deep and abiding change the Irish language represents stability and connection for residents and citizens of Ireland, for the descendents of Irish emigrants in all parts of the world and for countless individuals and organisations who admire and appreciate Irish culture. Irish takes its place in the communicative repertoire of the Irish people alongside English. The Irish language links both its speakers and supporters as a sophisticated cosmopolitan and globally oriented nation to a Europe forging closer interaction. Irish makes Ireland unique and remarkable. It provides a bond of social cohesion and social capital identified in recent research as a key advantage to Ireland's economy. In all parts of the world global engagement accompanies an appreciation of the special importance of retaining the distinctive histories and values of peoples, grounded in place and tradition, facilitating rather than precluding engagement with the wider world and the economic, travel, education and social opportunities and prospects that contemporary globalisation makes available.

What is unique about this Strategy is that while the Irish State has always appreciated the crucial importance of the Irish language to the Irish nation, the energetic language revitalisation efforts of many countries and regions across Europe and the world in recent decades now furnish a rich base of experience, understanding and success which is incorporated into the present Strategy. Informed by international research and thinking about language maintenance and revival and the role and nature of bilingualism in the contemporary age, the Strategy proposes a series of measures to energise Irish language learning and use.

In 2006 the Irish Government issued a *"Statement on the Irish Language"*. The Statement identified 13 key objectives in support of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht. The Statement makes it clear that the Irish language requires preservation as well as promotion and development. The Statement proclaimed the Government's continuing belief in the importance of Irish for the citizens and residents of Ireland, but also for the vast and dispersed Irish diaspora in many parts of the world.

All research assessments of the language attitudes of Irish people confirm that the Irish language enjoys immense goodwill as the enduring indicator of the unique, distinctive history and identity of Ireland and its people. Wishing Irish well and setting in place economic, educational, legal and institutional structures and processes to bring this into effect is not the same thing. To this end, the Statement declared that a 20-year strategic plan for the language should be prepared. The task of preparation of the 20-year Strategy was assigned to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, which awarded a competitive, publicly tendered consultancy to an international team coordinated and convened by FIONTAR, DCU. This document is the result of the public consultations, research and deliberations of that FIONTAR, DCU team.

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2. INTRODUCTION

The situation of the Irish language reflects large-scale evolutions that are linked to processes of globalisation.

The conditions that impact on the transmission of the Irish language from one generation to the next, the opportunities to speak, hear, read and write Irish, and people's general attitudes towards Irish – whether they are fluent in it or have only limited command of the language – determine the extent to which Irish is actually used. These factors are in turn influenced by the same forces that shape the wider context.

This means that language policy is an increasingly complex task. The adoption of various policy measures, even if each of them is reasonable in itself, may not be sufficient to protect and promote the language if due account is not taken of this wider context. As a result a systemic approach, incorporating the relationships between language processes and their surrounding political, economic, social and educational environment, as well as the links between various facets of language protection and promotion, has been adopted in the Strategy.

A comprehensive long-term plan implies a broad vision, which necessarily abstracts from some of the complexities of language processes experienced by people in specific situations, and takes account of major forces, and how to influence those forces through policy.

In order to guide our work, we have therefore opted for an approach which stresses the interrelation of policy measures and how these are embedded in wider contexts. We have chosen to consider the challenges to the promotion and protection of Irish as a whole, using a broad analytical framework, rather than starting out from specific cases, (e.g. one particular community, one particular organisation). This ensures that our policy design does not get tied up in the infinite web of complexities that characterise actual patterns of language use.

We have proceeded according to the following four steps.

2.i   Review of Language Revitalisation

We have developed the basis of the Strategy and its recommendations in reference to a systemic perspective on the theory and practice of language revitalisation and use. Extrapolating from a large body of evidence, we have concluded that language maintenance is enhanced when the conjunction of three processes is supportive: the *ability* (or capacity) to use the language; *opportunities* to use it; and *attitudes* towards its use. Ability is nurtured informally in homes and families and other intimate relationships of Irish society as well as formally in the education system. Opportunities become available in social, institutional and economic arrangements that favour and encourage the naturalised use of Irish. Attitudes determine whether the abilities which are forged either informally or formally, and the opportunities which are provided in social, institutional and economic environments, are actually converted into practical use of Irish.

The Strategy is organised around increasing linguistic capacity (C), creating and rewarding opportunities (O) for the use of Irish and fostering positive attitudes towards its use (A). Different policy measures are primarily aimed at one or the other of these dimensions, which taken together ensure that the Strategy can achieve

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its ambitious goals; at the same time, each measure provides, in addition to its primary focus, support for the other two dimensions. Actual language *use* results from the co-presence of capacity, opportunities, and positive attitudes. We have applied this systemic approach as an analytical framework and encourage its adoption by other agencies and personnel so that future language planning for Irish can be maximally effective. The main function of this analytical framework, therefore, was not to generate a sociolinguistic account of language use in Ireland today, but to provide us with a general organising tool with which the various circumstances of actual language processes can be studied and improvements proposed.

2.ii   Review of Irish According to Capacity, Opportunities, Attitudes

We have reviewed the conditions under which Irish is currently taught, learned, used, "made available", supported and encouraged in various domains of everyday life in Ireland. The aim of this review process has been to identify deficiencies or inadequacies in "C", "O" or "A", i.e. in the linguistic capacity available in such domains, in the economic or social opportunities available to speakers of Irish and in the prevailing attitudes among the Irish population to communicating in Irish. It was not our intention to conduct in-depth analysis of the educational, legal, demographic or socio-linguistic situation of the Irish language: a reliable, recent and rich source of data on all these aspects of Irish today is available and has informed the process of review and the preparation of this Strategy.

In addition, public consultations were held with various stakeholders, with government and other public and legal officials, researchers and many others, and these were combined with the professional reflections and judgment of the FIONTAR, DCU team. We are grateful to all those who contributed generously of their time and ideas to support the review. In proposing the measures which make up the body of this Strategy we have paid due attention to the opinions and suggestions of the various contributors.

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2.iii Recommendations for Primary and Secondary Proposed Measures

On the basis of the theoretical position outlined above, and the process of review also reported above, we examined the vision and objectives of the *"Statement on the Irish Language 2006"* and proposed measures according to a dual principle. Primary proposals are measures which introduce essential or radically changed arrangements to correct major deficiencies in the existing support for Irish and which are crucial to achieve the objectives of the 2006 Statement. Secondary proposals are measures that are derived from the former and are logically necessary for the implementation of Primary proposals.

Whether a Primary or a Secondary proposed measure is warranted to correct a particular deficiency or inadequacy was influenced greatly by the views elicited from stakeholders, by the rich data base of recent research and by the professional judgement of the team.

2.iv Integrating Proposed Measures and Theory into a Long-Term Strategy

The various measures were organised in clusters and designed to reinforce the interconnectedness of the overall policy plan with the aim of producing a coherent and ultimately self-sustaining long-term Strategy. Each measure, and the overall Strategy, are directed at substantial improvements in capacity, opportunities and attitudes. The legal and organisational structures needed to deliver them are intended to be mutually reinforcing. It is hoped that these measures will normalise the use of Irish in ever greater domains of daily and routine activity in Ireland.

The chief concern guiding the entire project has been to offer the Government a theoretically well-founded, organisationally coherent and publicly credible long-term Strategy. Occasionally, this has required making recommendations for Primary proposed measures which require deep changes to established practices.

International experts have been invited to participate in the FIONTAR, DCU team which has prepared this Strategy, not only to offer examples of best practice from international experience, but also to help ensure that what is proposed should not necessarily be constrained by existing arrangements and understandings, if change is required to such arrangements. Following on from the *"Statement on the Irish Language 2006"*, the Minister decided to institute a language planning process to increase the number of daily or active users of Irish from the current level of approximately 72,000 to 250,000 in 20 years. The achievement of this ambitious and precise goal has been the overriding consideration of all the deliberations.

3. LIMITS OF THE STRATEGY

This Strategy does not reproduce current data, nor does it present an understanding of the current situation of the Irish language, given that such information has been generated in reliable and impressive research studies over recent years. Instead, this Strategy is devoted to formulating proposed measures, which are required for action over 20 years, applying the logic identified in points (i-iv) in the preceding chapter.

The recommendations are organised under the standard domains of language use as presented in the specialist literature on language planning, and informed by the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. They are also associated and grouped in relation to the thirteen objectives set out in the "*Statement on the Irish Language 2006*". This makes for a deliberately brief document. However, proposed measures have been subjected to the process described in the preceding chapter and are explained and discussed in more detail in the accompanying *Explanatory Report*.

Although building capacity to achieve 250,000 daily users of Irish by 2028 is an important and worthwhile objective, the research baseline of sociolinguistic data to support such a projection does not currently exist. Detailed and regular surveys of language practice and attitudes are a priority for well-informed language planning. Gathering data of this nature was clearly not possible within the scope of this strategic exercise, but should be a priority for *Operation Planning Phase: Year 1* of the Strategy.

In addition, we are mindful of the crucial importance of the Gaeltacht for the future vitality of Irish and, in particular, we are aware of the Government's consideration of the '*Comprehensive Linguistic Study of the Use of Irish in the Gaeltacht*'.[1] It is critical that this important document, and any ensuing process aiming to formulate an overarching Gaeltacht policy, be closely aligned with what is proposed here in the 20-year Strategy as its remit concerns the whole of the Irish state. The team therefore did not consider it appropriate to focus exclusively on issues related to the Gaeltacht while recognising that many of our proposed measures could and should be applied in Gaeltacht regions.

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1   http://www.pobail.ie/en/AnGhaeltacht/LinguisticStudyoftheGaeltacht/

4. FOUNDATION AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STRATEGY

Ireland is constitutionally a bilingual state, with Irish, as the national language, afforded status as the first official language in Article 8 of the Constitution.

Since the establishment of the Irish State successive governments have supported the Irish language and its various communities of users.

This policy commitment has been motivated by a keen awareness of the distinctive role of the Irish language as an indicative marker of the national community, unique to the country and one of the oldest written languages in Europe which still survives as a living vernacular. As such, Irish serves the identity needs of Irish people, whether or not they speak the language. It also has a world role, significant to its vast diaspora, to learners and users of Irish scattered across many parts of the world, to scholars and researchers who in many institutions study the language and read Irish texts, and also to all people, since all human languages contribute to the world's heritage of linguistic and cultural diversity. Languages are more than mere tools of communication. They also code the unique experiences of collectivities of people. Over time through this cultural documentation function, languages come to serve as repositories of experience, interpretations, collected wisdom and culture. In this way, Irish represents an irreplaceable storehouse of the Irish historical experience for people throughout the world.

Aware of this emblematic role of the language, successive governments have reaffirmed their support for the vibrancy of Irish. This longstanding commitment to the Irish language has led to many successes of which the State and its people can be justly proud. These achievements include:

- the successful learning of Irish by many students in English-medium schools and the high standard of all-Irish education in the Gaelscoileanna;

- Irish language programming on RTÉ and the dedicated services of Raidió na Gaeltachta and TG4;

- the considerable body of literature written in Irish;

- the incorporation of Irish in modern information and communications technology platforms;

- the array of professionalised, state and voluntary agencies and institutions focused on language maintenance and promotion;

- the adoption of the Official Languages Act 2003;

- the recognition of Irish as an official and working language of the European Union since January 2007; and

- the teaching of spoken Irish and literature in academic programmes in more than 50 universities worldwide.

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These well established initiatives should not be taken for granted or assumed to be self-sustaining. They all need nurturing and support. However, this Strategy concentrates on new and additional measures which presume the continuance of the above successful initiatives.

Ireland is fortunate to have English, one of the world's most widespread forms of communication, as its other official language. Encouraging the strengthening of Irish in light of the established domestic role of English involves a policy of bilingualism since most Irish people's communicative needs are met by English. Encouraging a wider knowledge and use of Irish offers the potential of bilingual competence throughout the population, which is an important prospect supportive of Ireland's widest social, educational, technological and economic interests. English does not require institutional support and historical evidence of the Irish genius in its use is ample. It has been well documented that two-language proficiency, especially highly skilled bilingualism developed at an early stage, stimulates many cognitive and attitudinal benefits in children. Adding high levels of active knowledge of Irish to English therefore, involves a plan for bilingualism throughout the Irish population offering intellectual, socio-economic and cultural resources and benefits for individuals and ultimately the whole of society.

Irish citizens are more aware, in recent times, of the value of other languages such as those of the European Union and an increasing number of immigrant languages. Supporting Irish also invokes a wider national aim of Ireland's external international relationships and not merely its internal and domestic affairs.

Although the present Strategy and the overall policy of which it is a component focus on Irish because of the language's unique role and urgent needs, the Strategy should be seen as complementary to wider language planning for the development of the communication resources of the Irish people in a multilingual and globalising world. Irish-English bilingualism can also be a productive platform for the acquisition of additional languages, constitute an investment in the human capital of its citizens, support social cohesion and solidarity among its people and provide conditions for a culturally rich and more harmonious society.

The situation of Irish is highly anomalous; many more people know the language than actually use it. The numbers of people who claim ability in the language reached a peak in recent generations in the 2006 census.

Year	1996	2002	2006
Ability to speak Irish	1.43m	1.57m	1.66m

In addition, there are 75,125 speakers of Irish in Northern Ireland (2001 Census). Besides, there are (approx.) 25,000 speakers of Irish residing in the US and a considerable number in the UK.

A projection from a baseline of 72,148 daily speakers can be made to estimate the number of daily users of Irish speakers over the next 20 years, if current trends continue without intervention.

Year	2006	2010	2016	2022	2028
Daily Speakers	72,148	74,978	80,014	84,428	87,279

(Source: Central Statistics Office, 2008).

This projection reveals a considerable shortfall in the ambition of achieving 250,000 active daily users of Irish by 2028 and it is on this basis that the proposed measures in this Strategy are deemed essential. Current policy is committed to increasing the numbers of people for whom Irish is a community language and to widening the contexts and purposes for which Irish is used. The clear goal of education policy has long been to ensure that as many citizens as possible attain bilingual capability in Irish and English, but this has not automatically been converted into actual everyday usage of Irish. The significant gap between those who claim ability to speak and write Irish, and those who actually use it, must be considered the single greatest challenge and opportunity for the nation's language planning.

The Government also wishes to strengthen the Gaeltacht as an Irish-speaking community and to increase the number of families living within the State who use Irish to meet their daily communication needs. These goals are all interrelated and correspond to the framework of capacity, opportunities and attitudes which underlies this Strategy.

The specific objectives set out in the *"Statement on the Irish Language 2006"* and the policy remit given to the FIONTAR, DCU team involve the preparation of a 20-year Strategy specifically aiming to:

■ increase the number of speakers who speak Irish on a daily basis outside the educational system from 72,000 to 250,000;

■ increase the number of speakers who speak Irish on a daily basis in the Gaeltacht as its invigoration will be critical to the overall Strategy; and

■ increase the number of people that can use state services through the Irish language and can access television, radio and print media through the language.

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5. SUCCESS FACTORS AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

What is required to ensure that the Strategy will achieve its goals? The 20-year Strategy will be an agreed Government Plan and will be integrated across the routine operations of the agencies of the State. All sections of civil and public administration and key national and local stakeholders have a role to play in its implementation. For Irish to be used more widely, especially in key domains, will require **'normalització'**[2]. By using this term, we are drawing on the experience of other languages whose roles have been diminished due to circumstances of history. It is only through active awareness of its situation, positive attitudes aimed at reversing its marginalisation, and unselfconscious use of the language for mainstream and routine purposes of communication, that the language will attain a more secure social position. This task requires that all relevant agencies cooperate and accord legitimacy and prominence to the goals and programmes of the Strategy.

We have divided the Strategy into integrated phases, preceded by a 12-month operational planning phase which we suggest should be set aside by the Government following its adoption of the Strategy. This is to ensure that all the elements for successful implementation, review, monitoring and evaluation are in place prior to full commencement.

Operational Planning Phase: Year 1

This pre-implementation year is to be devoted to the communication of the goals and content of the Strategy and setting up the required organisational and operational structures. In addition, the overall resources required are to be allocated and the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and modification procedures are to be agreed and established. Operational plans are to be required and received from all implementing public agencies. Primary measures are to be established along with a set of timelines that will help to identify the corresponding Secondary measures.

All measures should be articulated in a manner similar to that shown in the illustrative examples relating to (a) Administration, Services and Community and (b) Irish in Business and Commerce, in the Explanatory Report.

In addition to using census data, detailed and regular surveys of language practice and attitudes are to be undertaken to provide a baseline of regular language use.

The evaluation function is critical to the success of the Strategy to ensure a feedback loop into the planning process and to inform funding policy. The most important criteria for successful evaluation include, (i) evaluators to be competent in reviewing the particular field; (ii) evaluation processes to be overarching, independent and perceived to be independent; (iii) a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data to be generated; and (iv) the adoption of deliberation conferences to use data from evaluations in reflective exercises so that civil servants and other key personnel are engaged in the overall aims of the Strategy.

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2 *Normalització: may be translated in English as 'normalisation', but only if its meaning is appropriately explained […]. [it] means […] making the use of a particular language 'normal'. In the Catalan case, this was characterized as required (i) the broadening of the demolinguistic base; (ii) the establishment of a context of language rights and freedoms regarding the possibilities to use the language; and (iii) an increased awareness of the population (majority and minority alike) of the social relevance of the language being protected and promoted. These three objectives are strikingly convergent with our three conditions for the long-term vitality of a language, namely, capacity, opportunity and desire. The concept of normalització can be used to encapsulate them while at the same time stressing the political legitimacy and social relevance of the enterprise".*

Source: Grin, François, (2003): Language Policy Evaluation and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. (pp. 202-203) London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Transparent evaluation criteria and evaluation and reporting processes should be put in place at the start of the strategic process and should subsequently be informed by quantitative data from the national census made available from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and from periodic surveys. The evaluation function might be assigned to *Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla*, subject to assurances that this would not interfere with the independence of that office. Alternatively, the evaluation function could be assigned to an office to be established in the Economic Social Research Institute (ESRI) or in another research institute.

It is important that operational plans at all public sector and non-public sector agency level be informed by principles aimed at increasing linguistic capacity in Irish, providing opportunities in which the language in its written and spoken forms is used naturally, and that they should foster positive attitudes towards spoken and written Irish. The agencies proposed in the Strategy have an obligation to disseminate agency-specific advice and training informed by sound principles of language revitalisation.

As a Governmental National Strategy stretching over 20 years, it should be championed by a permanent cabinet committee.

The strategic planning and monitoring role should be entrusted to a **Programme Office** in the Department of the Taoiseach. Such office would be responsible for: overseeing the strategic planning process; overseeing the development of resources; ensuring cross-departmental implementation of initiatives; providing expert advice; agreeing operational plans as developed by the implementation bodies; and publishing updates and relevant documentation for public consumption.

Within the Department of the Taoiseach responsibility should be assigned to senior management level and reporting to Government. The Programme Office should be headed by an Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Taoiseach charged with the overall implementation of the Strategy. The Programme Office should include a small core of seconded staff with expertise in one of the following: public administration; management; language planning and education, and it should be supported by a committee of high-level officials. The Programme Office should form an Irish Language Advisory Committee to include: staff members; senior civil servants; internationally recognised language planning experts; stakeholders and other specialists. This group should meet at least twice a year and be tasked with offering specialist language planning guidance to the overall process.

The Department of the Gaeltacht should be reconstituted as the Department of the Gaeltacht and Irish Language Affairs.

The Strategy should be delivered primarily by the state apparatus, including government departments and social partners. The competencies required will be delivered by departments and public bodies where those competencies are invested. Additional ad hoc working groups may from time to time be required to (i) draft and propose operational plans to the Programme Office and (ii) implement operational plans within the competence of the Irish Language and Gaeltacht.

The full implementation of the Strategy will require long-term organisational changes and consequently the Government should determine which of the four scenarios below is needed to realise the Strategy.

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Scenario 1

Establish a new independent structure called Údarás na Gaeilge with a remit to implement the Strategy.

Scenario 2

Establish a new office within the reconstituted and restructured Department of Gaeltacht and Irish Language Affairs, with dedicated staff, with a remit to implement the Strategy.

Scenario 3

Assign explicit duties and ring fence funding to Foras na Gaeilge for the implementation of the Strategy.

Scenario 4

Assign explicit duties and ring fence funding to a reconfigured Údarás na Gaeltachta, with competencies extending beyond the Gaeltacht, for the implementation of the Strategy.

The implementation phases are as follows:

Implementation Phase I: Laying the Foundations, Years 2 and 3

During the first two years of the Strategy, all the long-term training measures are to be put in place so that the supply of qualified teachers, Language Advocates (see below), planners and other specialists is available or that the systems for their preparation are in place early in the Strategy. In addition, a considerable number of measures are to be fully implemented in this phase. These are intended to be mostly Secondary measures with the aim of ensuring the feasibility of Primary measures. Subsequent to the publication of new census data and further informed by periodic surveys, the Strategy should be reviewed to align and modify its initiatives with the emerging new data on language abilities and use patterns.

During the first period of this phase, research on public attitudes should be commissioned and this should be complemented by deliberative seminars within key State departments and agencies, involving the main policy makers in the public sector. This should be informed by research on language policy as a form of public policy, and can be informed, for example, by Q methodology[3] research on attitudes. The results of the small deliberation activities should be used in a cross-government deliberative conference on Irish and its role in public life as a critical attitude securing activity to undergird the implementation of the Strategy. All departments and agencies charged with implementing recommended policy measures should arrange a deliberative activity to canvass attitudes and forge an agreed commitment to the goals of the Strategy.

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3   *Q Methodology is a research method used to study people's "subjectivity" – that is, their viewpoint. It was originally developed by William Stephenson (1902-1989). It has been used both in clinical settings for assessing patients, as well as in research settings to examine how people think about a topic.*
    Source: http://www.qmethod.org/about.php

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Phase II: Expanding and Deepening, Year 4 to Year 15

This phase entails: full implementation of all measures discussed below in detail; undertaking rolling evaluations and conducting campaigns for promotion and attitude formation. The evaluations and ongoing monitoring will produce modifications to aspects of the Strategy as it evolves. The first graduates of new teacher preparation programmes will be available to schools and other education institutions.

During this phase, Ireland will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising and this occasion should be linked to the Strategy, showcasing results attained, undertaking a major review of outcomes and generating public activity around the goals, spirit and ideals of the Strategy.

Later in this phase, Ireland will also be celebrating 100 years of self-government and this occasion should also be used to energise commitment to the Strategy.
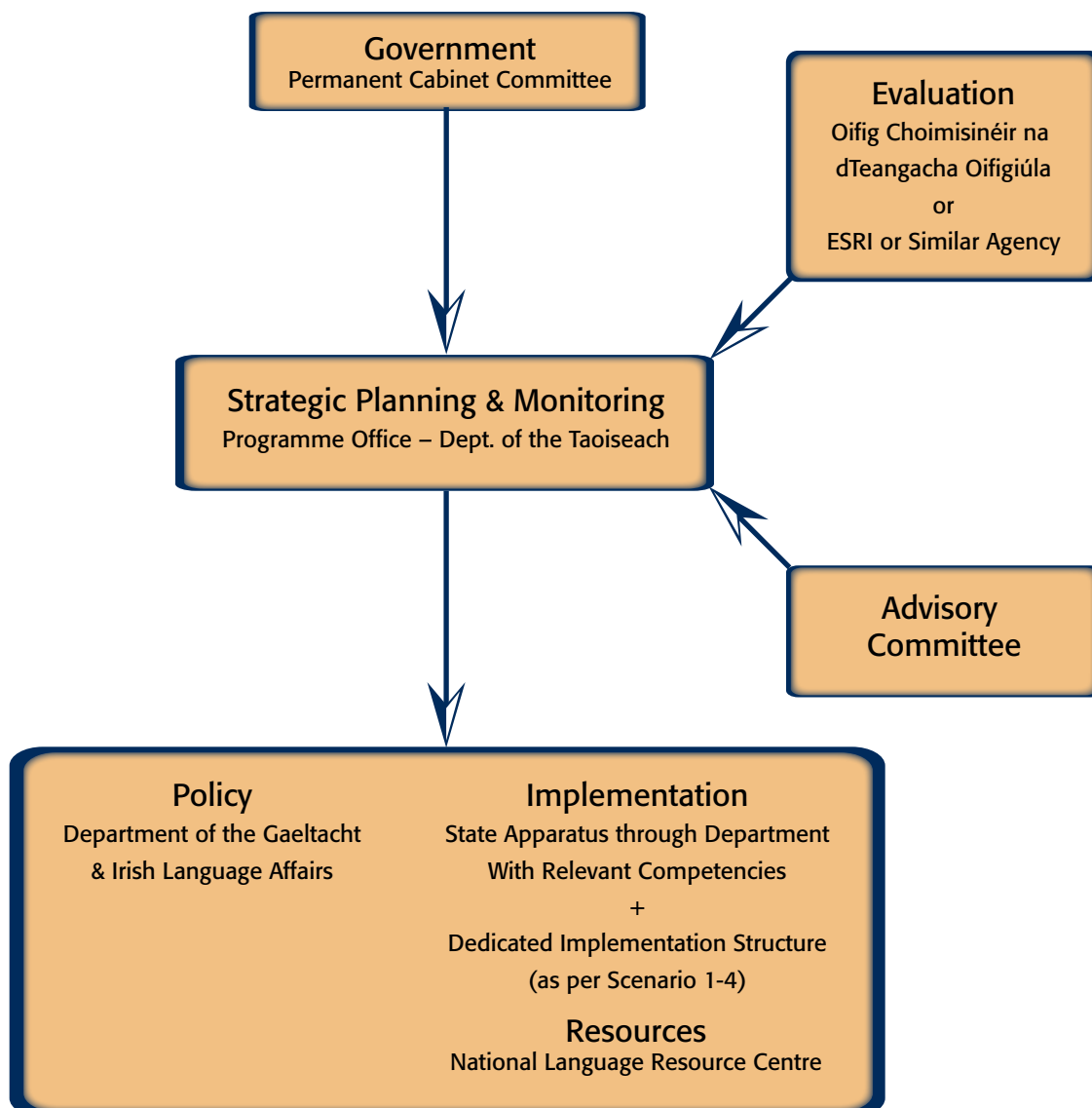
Implementation Phase III: Consolidating, Year 16 to Year 20

In pursuit of increased language abilities in Irish, expanded and normalised opportunities for its use and active encouragement of improved attitudes, the consolidation phase should be directed towards the mainstreaming of all measures. However, this will be determined by the evaluations conducted, and their findings used to ascertain whether an extended period of specialised promotion is warranted.

The effectiveness of Primary and Secondary measures also depends on broad community engagement. All public bodies and organisations which receive public funding should be required to contribute to the elaboration, implementation and refinement of the Strategy and actively support its component programmes and plans. Other organisations that receive public licences to operate should be encouraged and incentivised to contribute to the Strategy.

A summary of our recommendations can be seen on figure 1.

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FIGURE 1: Proposed Planning, Evaluation and Implementation Framework

Government
Permanent Cabinet Committee

Evaluation
Oifig Choimisinéir na
dTeangacha Oifigiúla
or
ESRI or Similar Agency

Strategic Planning & Monitoring
Programme Office – Dept. of the Taoiseach

**Advisory
Committee**

Policy
Department of the Gaeltacht
& Irish Language Affairs

Implementation
State Apparatus through Department
With Relevant Competencies
+
Dedicated Implementation Structure
(as per Scenario 1-4)

Resources
National Language Resource Centre

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6.   DOMAINS AND PROPOSED INITIATIVES

6.i   Education

The actions proposed under the domain of education are designed to achieve the underlying principles of the Strategy: (i) to enhance and extend ability in Irish among larger numbers of people; (ii) to reverse negative attitudes towards Irish language use and foster positive attitudes in their place; (iii) to expand the available opportunities for use of Irish within the education system by extending the use of Irish as a medium of instruction as well as a subject, and by linking school language learning to the informal use of Irish in recreational, cultural and other out-of-school activities.

The *"Statement on the Irish Language 2006"* contains three education objectives:

Objective 5

Irish will be taught as an obligatory subject from primary to Leaving Certificate level. The curriculum will foster oral and written competence in Irish among students and an understanding of its value to us as a people. This will be supported by enhanced investment in professional development and ongoing support for teachers, as well as in provision of textbooks and resources, and in support for innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

Objective 6

A high standard of all-Irish education will be provided to school students whose parents/guardians so wish. Gaelscoileanna will continue to be supported at primary level and all-Irish provision at post-primary level will be developed to meet follow-on demand.

Objective 7

Irish language pre-school education will continue to be supported and third-level education through Irish will be further developed.

These objectives relate to the entire cycle of education, from pre-school to third-level, and seek to embed the learning and teaching of Irish in the entire sequence of educational activities. The three principles relating to capacity, opportunities and attitudes are applied below to Primary actions (continuation of early total immersion in Irish medium schools, and introducing partial and late immersion and language specialisations into English medium schools) and to Secondary actions (expanding and bolstering the special role of the Irish medium schools in generating competence in Irish) and undertaking initiatives to make Irish-medium education more effective.

The education system is the critical engine for generating the linguistic capacity on which the 20-year Strategy is premised. The central goal, therefore, must be the achievement of a more systematic and intensive national focus on successful teaching and learning of Irish.

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The range of issues to be addressed in order to implement the educational aspects of the Strategy is considerable. The table below provides a bird's-eye view of these issues and should be applied to the following levels: pre-school; primary; secondary; and tertiary.

TABLE 1: Education Aspects of the Strategy

Level	Irish-Medium Education	Bilingual Education
CURRICULUM: including pedagogy, didactics, objectives, programmes, thresholds.		
EVALUATION and TESTING: how is testing organised? Who does it? How does it relate to outside criteria (e.g. European common frame of reference)?		
MOTIVATIONS: What do learners achieve in terms of their educational progress? What do they achieve in terms of their career prospects?		
TEACHER TRAINING: plus pedagogical training for secondary level teachers (incl. vocational).		
EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS: textbooks, ICT-based teaching materials, etc.		

The following paragraphs illustrate several of the key issues involved in this endeavour.

Teacher Education

The critical stages in the achievement of a more systematic and intensive national focus on successful teaching and learning of Irish within the educational system are the developments of pre-service and in-service teacher education at primary and post-primary level. These should ensure that teachers attain the necessary high standard of language proficiency and thereby a confidence in their own ability. These developments also offer opportunities to learn the most effective methods and approached to teaching Irish as a first, second or additional language.

Primary Teacher Education

It is essential that:

■ professional Irish (Gaeilge Ghairmiúil) be recognised as a core subject in Colleges of Education for the duration of undergraduate studies;

■ a range of subjects other than Irish is taught through the medium of Irish;

■ knowledge of literature and information about the sociolinguistic position of Irish be included at appropriate levels with the aim of enabling teachers to give effective leadership in the maintenance of Irish;

- Erasmus-type programmes are developed to enable students to follow an extended academic programme of Irish in a Gaeltacht area;

- further Irish-medium components be introduced;

- specialisations in immersion education (early, late and partial) be introduced;

- specialisation in teaching Irish as L1 be introduced;

- initiatives to attract students of high ability in Irish be developed;

- Bachelor of Education programmes taught through Irish be offered; and

- Graduate Programmes in primary education taught through Irish be offered, especially for those with a primary degree in Irish.

Post-Primary Teacher Education

It will be necessary that:

- a selection process be put in place to ensure that only those with a high standard of Irish be admitted to Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programmes;

- PGDE programmes taught through Irish be offered to include the most effective methods and approaches in teaching Irish as a first, second or additional language;

- an Irish language course in the Gaeltacht be an integral component of PGDE programmes; and

- knowledge of literature and information about the sociolinguistic position of Irish be included at appropriate levels with the aim of encouraging both teachers and pupils to become champions of Irish maintenance within the Irish context.

To further assist the realisation of *Objective 5* and *Objective 6*, a **National Centre of Excellence for Irish-Medium Education** should be established. The function of this centre should be aiding and advising the Colleges of Education in preparing teachers for the entire cycle of Irish medium schools through consultancy, in-service training, additional accredited training programmes and resource development. The National Centre would work in conjunction with all established Colleges of Education. Mobility of professional staff between all education providers and systems and the proposed National Centre should be encouraged. The new programmes – **Bachelor of Education, Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary Teaching), Post-Graduate Diploma in Education**; and the establishment of the **National Centre of Excellence for Irish-Medium Education** should be offered for open public competitive tendering among higher education institutes.

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Early Bilingual Education and Partial Immersion

Irish-medium education is a centrepiece of the maintenance of the language and has already achieved notable successes over the years. It is recommended that it be further expanded throughout Ireland.

However, it is important to increase access to education through the medium of Irish to a greater proportion of each cohort, by offering the possibility of receiving bilingual education from pre-school to tertiary-level education.

Partial immersion is among the most proficient means for implementing bilingual education, and it should be made available as widely as possible outside the Gaeltacht. The teaching of mainstream subject matter through the medium of Irish could benefit from the principles of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

Implementing a consistent bilingual education system requires detailed curriculum development with the attendant measures regarding teacher training and creation of appropriate educational materials. These tasks need to be handled with specific consideration of the pedagogical and organisational characteristics of pre-school education and primary schools on the one hand, where teaching is not formally organised by subject matter, and secondary education on the other hand (including vocational training), where teaching is organised around formal subjects. Distinct approaches need to be developed for tertiary education at university level.

Although the foregoing is of particular importance for the setting up of an effective bilingual education system, it is also necessary to revise key aspects of full-time Irish-medium education, with particular consideration for the fact that enrolments in Irish-medium schools already include a significant proportion of children from non-Irish-speaking backgrounds.

The range of issues to be addressed in order to implement the educational aspects of the Strategy is considerable. The table at the beginning of this section provides a bird's-eye view of these issues.

New Curriculum with Achievement Thresholds

A new curriculum for the teaching of the Irish language in general, from primary school to primary degree completion stage at university, should be undertaken. This curriculum must be well-defined and assign specific language proficiency and communicative outcomes at all key stages of the programme.

Proficiency Assessment

Standardised national evaluation of aural and oral competence in Irish should be required at primary and post-primary levels (Junior and Leaving Certificate) for all recognised schools. Innovations in curriculum require the development of appropriate instruments and procedures for the evaluation of learning Irish and of content area mastery. A beneficial linkage can be made with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for defining the linguistic and communicative standards that the instruments and assessment procedures will verify.

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Additional Options

Building on a revised core curriculum that should be followed by all students, a more tailored and challenging syllabus with additional options should be developed to cater for Gaeltacht and other students with higher abilities at Leaving Certificate level. The optional higher syllabus should also be aimed at students who will aspire to work in a professional capacity through the medium of Irish – teachers of Irish, journalists, writers, translators, interpreters, academics, etc.

Consideration should be given, in consultation with stakeholders (teachers, parents and students) to the introduction of two syllabi for Irish at Leaving Certificate level. Both programmes would be taught and examined at ordinary and higher levels and students would not be permitted to study both. One option would focus on development of high level language skills both oral and written, and the study of literature in Irish, and would be directed at students who intend to study Irish at third level and/or who could progress to use the language professionally later on. The second option would focus on oral competence, basic written communication, and modules on Irish-medium culture including literary and media forms, with options to study native singing traditions, drama in Irish, place-names, and modules on the situation and development of languages in the modern world. Well-researched resource materials would be essential for the success of the second option, but this could result in achieving basic competencies in language comprehension and usage and fostering a more positive attitude to Irish than currently exists among many students. The first option would enable Gaeltacht and Irish-speaking students to achieve a high level of competence in the written language. Development of optional syllabi has worked well in subject areas like Home Economics and Latin/Classical Studies, where options are of equal value but cannot be studied together.

Out-of-School Initiatives

Generating the teacher force to achieve the objectives regarding competence in the Irish language is critical. Also critical are links between schools and recreational and youth centres, clubs and activities. A more integrated relationship between the schools and centres for learning Irish and the domains and activities where it is used is central to the achievement of the overall goals of the 20-year Strategy.

This critical need to give life to the language outside the classroom for the young people who study the language in the formal educational system is a widespread conclusion of language revitalisation efforts throughout the world. Fostering the creation of youth culture and identity, and the appropriate Irish language forms for this, involves providing opportunities for its natural use and creating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) mediated networks of speakers. International experience supports the claim that connections between learning in formal educational settings on the one hand, **and usage in recreational and activity-oriented domains** on the other, are productive in encouraging young people to adopt the language. Activities can facilitate the use of forms of language that can target individual learning needs or particular subject fields or learning areas.

Summer Colleges are an important existing dimension of the encouragement of young people to use and apply the Irish they learn in school. As a Secondary measure the effectiveness of the Summer Colleges can be increased substantially with a more coherent and well planned curriculum design process. There should be more emphasis by Summer Colleges on family language learning experiences so that networks of natural use of Irish can be promoted with mechanisms for their continuation post Summer College in families and among friendship groupings.

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Third-Level, Lifelong and Continuous Education

University level and non-University adult programmes in Irish must continue to be supported and developed and professional specialisations provided. Programmes such as, the Fulbright exchange Irish language learning programme with the US and other initiatives championed by the Department of Community, Rural and the Gaeltacht Affairs, should be explored as vehicles to expand the teaching and learning of Irish in universities outside Ireland.

Tertiary education through the medium of Irish needs to be of high quality and delivered in a strategic and coordinated way to ensure:

(i)   diversification in the range of disciplines offered;

(ii)   output of highly qualified candidates with specific skills needed to service the national and EU status of Irish;

(iii)   development of particular specialisation in each college and restriction of duplication of provision in more than one or two locations; and

(iv)   value for money and quality assurance in research and teaching also avoiding duplication or fragmentation.

This sector should be developed and delivered by the Higher Education Authority (HEA). The HEA should put in place a specific programme to strategically develop this sector and establish a dedicated funding programme to fund these developments.

Adult Language Learning

Additional opportunities should be afforded to adults interested in learning the language or in increasing their ability to speak Irish. An accredited adult Irish language learning programme, catering for all levels, should be recognised as the agreed national Irish language learning programme.

Parent Support Programmes

Pre-school and non-formal learning are important dimensions of Irish language revitalisation. International experiences in language revival have found that well-structured, attractive pre-school education, supportive of language acquisition and combining initiatives and training for parents to acquire, use and support their children's language learning, can make a major difference to language abilities. Consequently, we recommend that preschool Irish language education should be provided in all localities.

Parents need to receive active reinforcement of their personal competence in Irish in order to continue to support their children's growing Irish learning in the primary school years. Such training is important for other education and care-giving professionals and should be extended to day-care workers, crèche workers and members of community associations, especially in areas where a high percentage of the population are Irish speakers.

Adult, continuing and life-long education and training activities should to be included in integrated local area activities to extend initiatives in Irish language support from school and community domains into trades training, adult literacy and recreational or vocational preparation programmes.

Language Transmission

Language transmission in homes in the Gaeltacht and in other areas where Irish is used in the home, are also critically important. Whatever manner in which a language is acquired, its conversion to actual usage remains a crucial problem. To facilitate a direct link between learning and usage, schools and families require the support of an extensive range of out-of-school activities operating in Irish. Such activities will contribute to making Irish a normal medium of social interaction. The aim is to normalise Irish[4] and provide patterns of Irish language use with which young people can identify. Language shift to English often occurs because schooled language is not readily transferable to social and recreational domains which function in specialised registers of language. School teachers, youth workers, librarians, language advocates and others may be mobilised to work collaboratively at local level to provide opportunities and foster positive attitudes to all Irish out-of-school activities.

School and Community Initiatives

A key role of the designated implementation body should be to co-ordinate Irish language plans which comprise learning and usage opportunities across schools and between individual schools and recreational, business, library, and community activities. The language advocates should take an active facilitating role in devising shared Irish language-centred activities that link school language learning to the related fields of cultural, recreational, trade and entrepreneurial/enterprise activity.

Advice and Support Services

It is recommended that information be produced for various categories of school professionals such as speech therapists, guidance counsellors, careers advisers and others, to promote the benefits of bilingualism and especially of Irish language learning. Specific advice should address the following groups:

i)   Children whose first language is Irish and/or children attending Irish-medium schools: it is important that all professional and para-professional staff consistently support the maintenance of Irish. These professional groups should be made aware of the vast literature supporting the intellectual, speech, and career benefits of bilingualism. Specific advice should be offered to support the bilingual needs of children with special needs.

ii)   Children whose first language is English and/or children attending English-medium schools: similarly for such children, school staff concerned with special needs should be provided with information supporting the intellectual, speech, and career benefits of bilingualism, and specifically the advantages of learning and using Irish.

iii)   Immigrant children in Ireland: newly arrived immigrant children in Ireland should also be included in all Irish language activities and particular attention should be paid to their language needs.

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4   In the sense of normalització; see note 2.

6.ii   Administration, Services and Community

The actions proposed under the domain of administration and services are designed to support achievement of capacity, opportunities, and attitudes conducive to the expansion of Irish. The *"Statement on the Irish Language 2006"*, contains six objectives related to administration and public services:

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.

Objective 11

In order to promote Irish nationally and to strengthen it in the Gaeltacht, the work being done by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and by agencies under its aegis, such as Foras na Gaeilge, Údarás na Gaeltachta and Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge will continue to be reinforced.

Objective 12

The use of the Irish language by the Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces will be continued and developed.

Objective 13

The Government recognises the vital role of the Irish language voluntary sector and will continue to support it.

These objectives constitute a strong mandate for an officially sanctioned role and importance of Irish in all public life. We have devised recommendations for Primary and Secondary measures that aim to convert the objectives into mechanisms to expand and develop ability in Irish, to expand and deepen the opportunities for its use and to foster positive and accepting attitudes which aim to encourage the use of Irish in all public life.

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Three distinct types of language communities in the Gaeltacht are identified in the *"Comprehensive Linguistic Study of the Use of Irish in the Gaeltacht"*, (2007) (A = >67% daily Irish speakers; B = 44-66% daily Irish speakers; C = <44% daily Irish speakers), when recommending targeted, appropriate language planning interventions. We recommend that outside the Gaeltacht, a fourth category, category D, be added, which will form the basis for targeted language planning initiatives to develop new language communities/networks. Specific criteria should be developed for Category D to include public attitudes, language capacity, provision of Irish medium education and willingness to actively participate in a language initiative.

Department of Gaeltacht and Irish Language Affairs

The Department of the Gaeltacht should be reconstituted into the Department of Gaeltacht and Irish Language Affairs. This will allow the department to create more synergies between the traditional language communities and new networks of speakers inside and outside the state.

Department of Environment

A Gaeltacht planning unit should be established as an integral part of An Bord Pleanála with appropriate representation to act as the appellate body on planning decisions of the relevant County Councils arising from the Gaeltacht provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and its associated regulations.

Department of Education

A dedicated Minister for State should be appointed to the Department of Education with overall responsibility for Irish–medium education and Irish in the education system generally.

An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta

An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) should be reconstituted as a statutory body with a specific funding vote within The Department of Education budget. An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta should develop a precise and incremental action programme aligned to phases I-III of the 20-year Strategy, specifically addressing the conversion of learners into routine users of the language.

Measures for Irish in Public Service

Language awareness and language training programmes should be strengthened to ensure that a higher proportion of staff are truly functional in Irish. Language awareness training should include basic statutory information about Irish; bilingual development training should deal with administrative procedures and enhanced language competence, while language practice training should deal with practical procedures and work practices, taking account of the interpersonal dimensions of communication and promoting sensitivity to language issues in the workplace. A strategic step forward would be to adopt a policy requirement in favour of competent bilinguals in those departments and agencies which experience a routine demand for Irish medium services.

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The Official Languages Act 2003 has adopted the language scheme as a core instrument by which bilingual services are to be provided. In time such schemes should be consistent across the public service and embedded in the culture of public sector organisations, as they offer great scope for institutionalising both the individual language rights of customers and the bilingual work force covered by the schemes. It is recommended that the language scheme instrument be extended to cover other domains.

The delivery of public services through the medium of Irish is a requirement of the Official Languages Act 2003 and also of the Quality Customer Services Charter of the Department of the Taoiseach (2002). Due to the low level of public sector workers with the capacity to deliver public services through Irish, a rebalancing action is required to ensure an adequate number of staff with competence in the Irish language in the public service. Therefore we recommend the re-introduction of a requirement regarding Irish language skills in the public sector by devising a recruitment policy in favour of competent bilinguals.

Accredited qualification in Irish for the public service should be developed and delivered. A National Diploma in Bilingualism and Language Practice needs to be designed and offered. This diploma should be designed to support the delivery of quality services bilingually to the public.

National Language Resource Centre

We propose that the role of the *National Language Resource Centre (NLRC)* is crucial to the implementation of the Strategy. The NLRC function could be housed in an existing structure. The NLRC should monitor, support and adapt practical language planning activities from other societies; initiate, survey and review materials which facilitate the use of Irish; host a central database of Irish-medium materials, templates and IT applications; prepare guides and materials to assist individuals and voluntary organisations to promote Irish; provide a national public help-line; act as a national information centre and clearing house for translation services and other language-related services; hold a national data base of best practice activities in language planning; and promote the development of language management systems in a variety of contexts. Many of the recommendations which follow depend on the creation of the NLRC and its establishment is to be seen as a Primary measure and a high priority for early implementation.

Language Advocates

Many institutions fail to provide an adequate bilingual service because their core staff has not been trained to deliver such a specialist service. Whether such services are provided by official language schemes or by in-house language plans, they both require professionally trained personnel. We recommend the development of language advocates and mentors with well-defined roles within the implementation of sectoral language plans. These professionals would function at three levels: local, within a county or within a specific industry or occupation, such as the fire service, accountancy or human resources. Language advocates would provide such training or guidance on higher-level training courses. They would be in essence capacity and confidence builders within an organisation. For smaller organisations language advocates could be deployed for limited-life training sessions and once the requisite skills and work practices have been established, such advocates would move on to a different organisation, but their employment contract would remain with the county or the specific occupational sector.

County Language Plans

A high percentage of daily language speakers of Irish reside in the counties of Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry, Cork, Waterford and Meath. These counties should be officially designated by Government as Gaeltacht Counties and county authorities should be required to prepare and implement county language plans. These plans should be viewed, in conjunction with the County Development Plan and contain initiatives to increase the percentage and number of daily Irish speakers on a yearly basis through specific targeted initiatives for that county. The measures agreed in the plan should be delivered by stakeholders and language planning experts at county level. Following an evaluation this approach could be extended to other counties.

Language Plan for Dublin City and County Councils

A substantial number of daily Irish speakers reside in greater Dublin city and in its catchment area. The presence of the Irish language in the capital city is of great symbolic importance both to the people of Ireland and to visitors arriving in Dublin on business or for tourism. A language vision to promote the capital as a modern European bilingual city should be developed by city and county authorities and implemented in the first period of phase II. The key target of this plan should be to increase the proportion of daily Irish speakers yearly by increasing the visibility of the language and by providing opportunities for normal daily use of the language in the city.

Language Initiatives

It is recommended that a nationwide system of Language Initiatives ("LIs"), similar in scope and character to the Welsh 'Mentrau Iaith' (Language Enterprise), be established by the Implementation Body. Their aim would be to empower local communities to strengthen their Irish language networks and activities and to co-ordinate a range of services and actions which would act as a bridge between government services and civil society.

Local Initiatives would act as a "one stop community shop" to: provide advice to new parents who wish to raise their children bilingual; offer guidance on the range of Irish-medium educational opportunities which are available; assist public and voluntary organisations who wish to increase their use of Irish; and encourage businesses which are eager to offer a bilingual service to their customers. Local Initiatives activities should focus on either providing or enhancing social and learning opportunities for children and young people to use their Irish. Other activities should include: opportunities to use Irish outside the classroom in a range of cultural, social, leisure and sporting activities; undertake short translation work; and provide community-based interpretation and simultaneous translation at meetings.

The long-term regenerative efforts of the LIs would aim to create social conditions to nurture positive attitudes towards Irish and bring about an increase in its general use, normalise the use of Irish as a medium of social and institutional communication, and emphasise the close relationship between language and attitudes which relate to quality of life issues, the environment and local economy.

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Local Action Plans

It is recommended that Local Action Plans be developed and implemented within a limited number of select category D locations. The aim of the Local Action Plan is to draw together local people and public/voluntary groups to facilitate the use of Irish locally. This should be done through the increased co-ordination and public awareness of existing activities. This initiative would map and identify Irish language vitality in the local area and would be supplemented by a regular language audit which should identify ongoing strengths and weaknesses and provide time-series evidence of the impact which language-related policies and reforms would have on actual language use. These plans should be integrated with County Language Plans where applicable and should include the development of social and resource centres.

The Role of the Voluntary Sector

The critical role of the voluntary language sector is recognised and we recommend that the sector be empowered to continue to play its important and unique role in the areas of language protection and promotion. It is important (i) that a national forum exists that is representative of the entire language community, including language organisations and domains, (ii) that the language community be accorded a voice and an opportunity to contribute to policy, and (iii) that support be provided to those organisations and individuals who want to engage with the language at national and local levels in line with the aims and content of this Strategy.

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6.iii Media and Technology

The actions proposed under the domain of media and technology are, like all other fields of action, designed to achieve the underlying principles of the Strategy, namely, to (i) increase the number of speakers who speak Irish on a daily basis outside the educational system from 72,000 to 250, 000; (ii) increase the number of speakers who speak Irish on a daily basis in the Gaeltacht as its invigoration will be critical to the overall Strategy; (iii) increase the number of people who can use state services through the Irish language and can access television, radio and print media through the language.

> *Objective 9*
>
> High quality broadcast services through the medium of Irish will be ensured, especially through the continuous development of RTÉ, Raidió na Gaeltachta and TG4.

The importance of television and radio and key aspects of public service broadcasting is undisputed. Their function is to act to bring audiences together, to provide responsible high quality, varied, innovative and entertaining programming that offers a shared experience. It is also important in the case of Irish-medium media, that its invaluable educational potential as a high prestige promoter of oral culture and as a reliable vehicle of exposure to linguistic variety, in the form of different dialects, registers and terminology, be fully understood and exploited. The convergence of traditional media and Information and Communication Technology should further enhance the potential of this domain.

The Irish language in the 21st century is already charting its course in new directions. The traditional sectors of education, community, arts, and media are no longer discrete domains in which separate individual policies can be formulated and implemented. Languages which were previously disadvantaged by their dispersed community base are now well-positioned to benefit from opportunities for innovation through new communications and media technologies.

Media and technology in their broadest sense have immense potential for resource building in the arts and education and open up new channels for individuals and communities to increase their knowledge and regular use of Irish. Building capacity in reading and writing Irish requires new thinking beyond the limitations of the printed word reproduced on paper. It also involves appreciating that current technological changes are making speech activation technologies storage, retrieval and communication more widespread, efficient and effective.

Future policy must take account of the opportunities for linking developments in the arts, media, technology, and education, as well as building on the traditional models of creating and disseminating content. Opportunities for reading and writing in Irish, which include the production of all print media and literature in the language, and their application in education, culture and leisure, need to be exploited by a combination of traditional and innovative means. This includes those modes of communication which make little use of written language. Production of print media and printed books should also be maintained, but value for money from this investment is clearly dependent on better distribution and marketing arrangements than those achieved to date. New media and technologies should also be employed to increase public participation in reading and writing Irish in new ways and places.

Conventional products like printed newspapers, magazines and books should continue to be produced and supported and increased attention should be paid to the issue of their effective distribution and reasonable sales. Support limited mainly to production of these single-medium materials is ineffective without distribution and marketing networks and a reasonable threshold of public demand. Readily available access to printed materials in Irish is essential in newsagents and bookshops if literature and print journalism are to be sustainable into the future.

Printed products are no longer stand-alone items in the marketplace, and if we continue to produce them on this basis they will increasingly become irrelevant and ignored. It is essential that publishers of these products are supported on the basis that they also exploit in tandem other technologies and new media available including on-line editions, audio-books and video materials, featuring not only the existing printed content, but added value in new features and material. A recent EU directive regarding the tax status of audio-books reflects the shift in perception and definition of the 'book' as product.

The case for subsidising newspapers, magazines and book publishing in Irish should be made and measured against their effectiveness in promoting and developing the actual range of reading and writing in Irish. Renewal of the essential resource of readers and writers in Irish is a well-documented challenge and provides sufficient justification for adopting new approaches. Policies and financial supports for these activities should take account of the fundamental shifts taking place in creation and distribution of content. The high-street marketplace, which narrows its focus continually, aiming 20 per cent of available cultural goods at 80 per cent of the market, increasingly disadvantages both producers and consumers of niche cultural goods. In contrast to this, the 'long-tail' concept where content is produced, individualised and sold over the internet, makes the full range of cultural goods accessible to smaller language communities and to individuals.

As technologies and marketing techniques are continually evolving, the most effective strategy for developing reading and writing in Irish is likely to change significantly in the coming years and will need to be constantly reviewed. Measures to support reading and writing of Irish should include:

- development of literary events and activities in public libraries and guided reading programmes in schools;

- collaboration between distributors, publishers and booksellers to ensure effective distribution and increased visibility of new books in Irish in shops and on-line;

- promotion and development of book clubs; and

- development of a literary promotion brief by TG4, with a key role in literary awards, and book programmes.

Oireachtas na Gaeilge, as the primary national language festival, should be encouraged and supported to allow it to continue to grow. However, development should be carefully managed to ensure that the festival will continue to be a showcase of the Irish language, and its literature and culture.

RTÉ as the national public service broadcaster should normalise the use of Irish and English in their broadcasts, building on the success of current practice during "Seachtain na Gaeilge". RTÉ should continue to support and develop Raidió na Gaeltachta.

Specific initiatives should be put in place to allow young people and the Irish diaspora to access radio and other speech-based modes of communication through the internet and through Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB).

TG4 should be further supported to provide television services through Irish. Subtitling options should be substantially increased in order to offer the option to have subtitles in Irish, English, and Irish and English, thus significantly reinforcing the accessibility of TG4 to learners and non-proficient users of Irish.

Sport plays a huge role in popular culture. Television coverage of sport has proven a huge success in the promotion of minority and lesser-used languages, particularly in Ireland and in Wales. A minor amendment to the existing broadcasting legislation would effect a major impact in associating Irish with major sporting events that take place in Ireland. EU law requires each member state to designate (and regularly review and update) a list of its major sports events and to ensure that the national television audience has free to air access to such events at fair and equitable rates. Under the existing Irish law in this regard, TG4 qualifies as such a broadcaster. The prestige and profile of Irish could be greatly enhanced by ensuring that it has such access at no cost to all designated events.

All-Irish language initiatives with a specific arts remit, including drama and traditional arts, should be planned and developed as part of an integral arts strategy between the Department of the Gaeltacht and Irish Language Affairs and the relevant department responsible for the arts.

Information and Communication Technology

The Irish Government should ensure the inclusion of Irish in all EU development Information and Communication Technology (ICT) programmes. It should also actively engage with major Information Technology suppliers to license and distribute Irish-medium products commissioned by government. An Information Technology strategy would include: IT Terminology and Lexicographical resources; localisation and open source applications; switchability of interface and language attributes; additional content creation aids to supplement spellcheckers and computerised dictionaries, diacritic markers and multilingual web pages; translation and terminology for computer aided translation; multilingual content/document management systems; language technology issues and corpora; speech technology, speech synthesis, speech recognition, adaptive technology and embedding issues; capacity building for end users and technology specialists; E-learning and the Irish language; call centre software; back end databases and bi/multilingualism; mobile devices; optical character recognition and handwriting recognition.

Such ICT developments need also to be embedded in educational, social and work-related practices to become effective means of enhanced communication.

6.iv   Official Standing

The measures proposed under the domain of Official Standing/Status are designed to achieve the underlying principles of the Strategy of capacity, opportunity, and attitudes improvement. The *"Statement on the Irish Language 2006"* contains three objectives related to legislation:

Objective 1

The special status given to the Irish language in the Constitution and in legislation such as the Official Language Act 2003, the Education Act 1998, the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the Broadcasting Act 2001 will be upheld.

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 10

Every assistance and support will be given to the European Union in implementing the decision to make Irish a working and official language in the EU from 1 January 2007.

Legislation is directed more towards the creation of opportunities for the use of Irish, with a role also in fostering attitudes of acceptance and incorporation of Irish language communication in mainstream administration and governance.

Legal Standing

Provisions for the protection and use of the Irish language have been included in many pieces of legislation enacted by successive Governments since the foundation of the State. The constitutional status of Irish as the national and first official language has been given effect in the Official Languages Act 2003. In 2009 the main provisions of the Act are in force.

Review

It is proposed that the Act be reviewed in 2013, ten years after its enactment, with a view to strengthening the provisions of the legislation. It would also be appropriate to include provisions in relation to the proactive supply of services and core provisions of the initial Language Schemes as new direct obligations under the Act. Provisions to ensure compliance by public bodies may need to be strengthened.

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Role of Government

The Irish Government should exercise a strong leadership role in the 20-year Strategy for the Irish language; it must lead by example. All public service institutions and organisations need to be more aware of the spirit and purpose of the Official Languages Act 2003 and of the Government's Strategy for the language. It is important that all public sector organisations take stock of Government policy on the Irish language and move away from a position where some individuals feel free to develop their own policy according to their own disposition towards the language. This worrying practice causes us to recommend that the Government includes a training programme for all new entrants through orientation programmes in HR departments and that it should marshal political and administrative leadership to transform organisational culture. The Programme Office should develop a programme that will enhance buy-in from the public sector.

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6.v   Economic Life

While the *"Statement on the Irish Language 2006"* does not contain any specific objectives related to economic life, it is important that Irish language speakers achieve their potential in the fields of business, employment and community. Irish language speakers should be encouraged to succeed in business and the use of Irish in the workplace should also be encouraged.

Voluntary Language Scheme

An Irish Language Scheme should be introduced on a voluntary basis into the private sector. The aim should be to encourage private sector companies, who value linguistic diversity in general and the Irish language in particular, to be involved in a national programme to deliver quality customer services in both Irish and English. Exemplary initiatives in Irish language support should be publicly acknowledged and celebrated.

Bilingual Labelling and Packaging

The Government should examine the feasibility of introducing guidelines encouraging bilingual labelling and packaging of goods sold or produced in Ireland. This activity should be used as a mechanism to develop the range of consumer rights available to choose Irish as a language of exchange.

Legislation should also require the use of Irish, to the extent possible, in other aspects of product labelling and packaging, namely product composition, instructions for use and safety warnings. If European Commission directives on packaging and labelling restrict member States' right to enact legislation in this respect, Ireland should cooperate with other member States to ensure that such directives do not impede member States' right to enact legislation supporting multilingualism in business and commerce.

Economic Activity

Increasing the visibility of Irish in economic life also implies encouraging advertising through the medium of Irish. In the current Irish context, we recommend an incentive-based approach in which tax breaks are offered to companies who spend a designated proportion of their advertising budget on Irish-medium advertising.

Further incentive-based policies include tax breaks for companies that offer a measurably equal level of service in Irish and English, particularly (i) in the provision of printed forms (hotel registration forms, bank cheques, etc.); (ii) in the provision of after-sale services (telephone help lines, etc.).

A series of initiatives should be put in place to encourage entrepreneurship and economic activity among the Irish speaking community on a company, sectoral or local basis. The approach should be twofold:

■   encouraging entrepreneurship through training programmes, business incubation, campus companies and the creation of economic networks; and

■   supporting and developing the language industry that can provide the required services to the state and to the EU in areas such as translation, interpretation, language teaching, publishing, language consultancy, project management. Measures should include start-up support, mentoring services, product development, marketing and promotion advice, and management and development services.

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7. CROSS-CUTTING INITIATIVES

A series of initiatives should be undertaken across all domains of activity discussed. These apparently dissimilar measures are linked in being directed at one or other of the principles of the underlying framework, namely, capacity, opportunities and attitudes.

Think Tank

A high-level think tank of creative thinkers and innovators should be constituted on an ad hoc basis, from time to time, to develop, for example, new approaches to language maintenance and promotion, using developments in the ICT sector.

Portal Site

A portal site for Irish should be developed. This should be designed to provide easy open access to all materials and resources for and in Irish, to include e-learning materials, publications, media, terminology, place-names, academic publications, language networks, digitised sources, social networks and professional networks.

Showcase Site

A dedicated showcase physical space in a modern and aesthetic building in the centre of Dublin should be developed to include theatre space, coffee shops and restaurants, bookshops, Irish language organisations, Internet centre, meeting and conference rooms, display areas, research and development start up units.

A network of prominently located language resource centres in Gaeltacht counties should be developed.

EU Role for Irish

The Government should ensure that the Irish language is included, as an official working language, in all EU and domestic research and development programmes in the areas of natural language processing, language learning, and language technologies. The Irish language should also take advantage of platforms already developed through research and development programmes for other languages.

Digitisation Programme

A national programme should be created as part of the celebration of the 1916 Rising to digitise major Irish language works of national importance with a view to making them accessible by publication on the web. This will build on the work already in hand by The Irish Script on Screen and the Digital Humanities Observatory. The Irish language is a source of inspiration for many modern art forms including literature, music and theatre. However, access to many of the most important manuscripts is restricted as they are held in repositories all over the world while many important works of literature are out of print. This programme would allow central access to materials held in archives, repositories, libraries and universities worldwide.

8. CORPUS RESOURCE PLANNING

Corpus planning for Irish is essential to increase language acquisition and facilitate usage. Access to well-presented modern resources in both print and electronic formats is required for education and general use, and complements the status of Irish as a living language. A strategy for corpus planning should include dictionaries, corpora and terminology work. If corpus resources initiatives in various agencies receive funding, it is essential that the Government nominates one body with a supervisory and co-ordinating function, to ensure cohesion, collaboration, and integration of systems, standards and outputs.

Measures should be put in place to ensure:

- development of bilingual dictionaries, in both English-Irish and Irish-English and in other combinations of languages; adequate provision must be made for their periodical updating and revising, for deriving shorter dictionaries from them, and for ensuring their publication in both print and electronic formats;

- development of corpus resources and lexical tools for the development of Irish-language lexicography, supporting both monolingual (historical) and bilingual (contemporary) dictionaries;

- development and dissemination of modern terminology in Irish; and

- periodic revision of the official standard for Irish spelling and grammar.

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9. Conclusion

No stage of human history has experienced change as rapid and profound as the present age. The natural environment which hosts all human population is subject to degradation and deterioration even as we take initiatives to redress the damage. We are witness to an historic and possibly inexorable transfer in the locus of economic power, technological innovation and political control from the 500 year old domination of the West to emergent economies and states in the East. Human communication is transformed by the mediation of information technologies which link dispersed population across vast distances of space and time. The old certainties of nation, religion and tradition are challenged by the unprecedented mobility of the young and the old. Most human communities identify with homeland and localities but increasingly live and interact in diasporas of multicultural settings. In innumerable other ways human societies experience changes for which they are unprepared – disruption of generational links, challenges to institutions, and new economic structures for which there can be little preparation. Against this backdrop of profound change, the preservation and promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity is a concern for human societies at all levels, including that of the European Union where strategies for multilingualism are actively being developed.

Irish is a fully fledged partner in this shared endeavour, in addition to its specific role in the historical context of Ireland. A future Ireland in which the Irish language is vibrant, widely used and appreciated is one of the greatest investments that could be made to secure a just, autonomous, distinctive and permanent role for Irish civilisation in a world experiencing such profound change.

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