



*Leabharlann  
Náisiúnta  
na hÉireann*

National Library  
of Ireland

# Irish Language Policy

2024



## 1. Introduction and Background

The *Official Languages Act 2003* provided for the preparation by public bodies of a language scheme detailing the services which they will provide:

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

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

Under Section 11 of the Act, public bodies, including the National Library of Ireland (NLI), were required to prepare a draft language scheme. Guidelines were issued under Section 12 of the Act. In October 2007, an Irish Language Scheme 2008-2011 was submitted to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. (This is noted as a Draft Scheme 1 on the website of An Coimisinéir Teanga.) The NLI has not since prepared a scheme.

The *Language Rights Charter* (published on the website of An Coimisinéir Teanga) notes that ‘Language rights are safeguarded by the Constitution of Ireland, and by various enactments of the Oireachtas, in particular the *Official Languages Act 2003*.’ Among the language rights guaranteed by the Act, and listed in the Charter, are the following, of particular relevance to the NLI:

- The right to receive replies in Irish from state organisations to correspondence in Irish, in writing or by electronic mail.
- The right of access to specific key documents published by state organisations simultaneously in Irish and English, including annual reports, audited accounts, public policy proposals and certain strategic statements.
- The right to expect that information (e.g. mailshots) sent by post or e-mail from state organisations to the public be either in Irish or bilingual (Irish and English).
- The right to expect state organisations to comply with any regulations made under the Act in relation to the use of Irish in signage, stationery, advertising and oral announcements.

On 22 December 2021 the *Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021* (Number 49 of 2021) was enacted. The 2021 Act included a provision to end the language scheme system and replace it with a system of language standards. The language standards have yet to be defined. Among the other provisions of the *Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021* are the following:

- An objective that by 2030 20% of new recruits to the public sector and the Civil Service be proficient in Irish
- A provision to ensure that communications with a public body on social media are answered in the same language
- A provision to ensure that 20% of a public body's annual advertising is in Irish with 5% in Irish Language publications.

This policy has been prepared with the above requirements in mind. The NLI's Customer Charter includes a commitment to provide public services and information through Irish as appropriate.

#### **1.1. Guidelines and preparation of the policy**

We are conscious that the NLI, which collects, preserves and makes available the recorded memory of Ireland, including printed, manuscript and digital material in Irish, has a particular responsibility to support and encourage the use of the Irish language.

We acknowledge the right of the public to interact with the NLI in Irish, the national language and the first official language, and we are committed to offering a high standard of public service through the medium of Irish.

## **2. Overview of the National Library of Ireland**

The National Library of Ireland has a special role to play in Irish culture, learning, and society. We are a memory institution. We care for more than twelve million items about Ireland and the Irish, including books, manuscripts, newspapers, photographs, prints, maps, drawings, ephemera, music, and digital media. We keep these items safe for present and future generations.

### **2.1. Mission**

Our mission is to collect, protect, and make accessible the recorded memory of Ireland. This mission is underpinned by the key objectives outlined in our **Strategic Plan, 2022-2026** and informed by the vision to share the story of Ireland with the world through our unique collections.

### **2.2. Main functions**

Section 12 (1) of the *National Cultural Institutions Act 1997* states that ‘the principal functions of the Board of the Library shall be to conserve, restore, maintain and enlarge the library material in the collection of the Library for the benefit of the public and to establish and maintain a record of library material (including material relating to the Irish language) in relation to Ireland, and to contribute to the provision of access by members of the public to material relating to other countries’.

Under Section 12(2)(h) of the Act, the powers of the Board of the NLI include ‘to foster and promote the Irish language in the course of the performance of its functions’.

## **3. Collections**

The National Library of Ireland is a national cultural institution charged with collecting for and on behalf of the State. The NLI’s collections contain extensive Irish language material. The NLI aims to comprehensively acquire and record the output of Irish publishers, including Irish language publications.

### **3.1. Books published in the Irish language**

In its Collection Development Policy regarding the acquisition of books, the NLI specifies ‘items in the Irish language’. The NLI acquires material by legal deposit, donation, and purchase and acquires Irish language newspapers and serials comprehensively.

Standard letters used for claiming and receipting legal deposit material are available in both Irish and English.

### **3.2. Special Collections**

The NLI has a collection of Gaelic Manuscripts ranging in date from the fourteenth to the twenty-first century and actively acquires Irish language manuscript material.

### **3.3. National Library of Ireland’s Web Archive**

The National Library of Ireland has selectively archived the web since 2011. Web archiving ensures the preservation of Irish websites and social media in the National Collection. The NLI’s Collection Development Policy affirms that ‘through its mandate, the Library will develop its unparalleled record of the Irish language including the diverse digital forms in which it is written and recorded today.’

## **4. Key Services**

The NLI is here to serve anyone who wants or needs to access our collections or services, in person and online. All services currently offered are available bilingually where feasible. We endeavour to provide, where practical, Irish language text content in publicity and informational materials including information on our social media platform.

### **4.1. Research and reference services in our reading rooms**

- Communications received in Irish are answered in Irish, e.g. queries received through [info@nli.ie](mailto:info@nli.ie) and [mqueries@nli.ie](mailto:mqueries@nli.ie)
- All reading room forms, notices and information signage are bilingual.
- The NLI Catalogue interface is bilingual.

### **4.2. Family history service**

- The Family History Section of the website is bilingual and new content is translated when feasible.
- The *Catholic Parish Registers at the NLI* website has explanatory text in Irish.

### **4.3. Reprographics & Permission to re-use service**

- All order forms are available in Irish and English.
- The NLI's collections are used by print and broadcast media for Irish language publications and programmes.

## **5. Exhibitions, Learning and Programming**

The NLI will support and promote the use of the Irish language through its exhibitions, learning and programme work. All correspondence received in the Irish language by the Exhibitions, Learning and Programming team is responded to in the Irish language.

### **5.1. Exhibitions**

- Bilingual text is used in all new exhibitions.
- Bilingual text is used on events posters and signs, and on digital signage.
- A selection of all resources, including audio, will be offered in Irish by 2030.

### **5.2. Learning**

- The National Library's Schools' Programme, the Children and Family Programme, and the Community and Lifelong Learning Programme will be offered in the Irish language.

### **5.3. Programming**

- Talks, tours, lectures, and other events (both online and onsite) in Irish or on Irish language topics, are hosted by the NLI.
- It is envisioned that activities organised during *Seachtain na Gaeilge* will continue to be built on over the coming years.
- An active programme of Irish language outreach will engage with agencies which promote the Irish language on an all-island basis.

## **6. Communications**

The NLI is committed to developing our communications across multiple platforms to reveal all the NLI has to offer. Where feasible, and allowing for staff resources we endeavour to provide Irish language text content in publicity and informational materials.

### **6.1. Printed materials/ Publications**

The NLI's reports and policy documents are produced in Irish and English. These are available in hardcopy and in online format on the NLI website [www.nli.ie](http://www.nli.ie)

### **6.2. Recruitment**

All open recruitment competitions are advertised in Irish and English on [www.publicjobs.ie](http://www.publicjobs.ie) and any accompanying information booklets and application forms are provided in both Irish and English. For some posts, applicants may opt to undergo an Irish Language assessment interview as part of the interview process.

### **6.3. Signage**

All permanent signage is bilingual throughout the NLI buildings, and identifies areas of buildings, facilities, visitor guidelines and general information. Facilities are in place for erecting temporary operational bilingual signs or signs in Irish as appropriate.

### **6.4. Social Media**

The NLI is active on social media and regularly posts in Irish. A number of articles about Irish language collections have been published on the NLI blog. Irish language communications to the NLI on social media are answered in the Irish language.

### **6.5. Website**

All standard original text on the website is bilingual. Frequently updated text will be translated within a specified timeframe.

### **6.6. Stationery**

The NLI's stationery is bilingual.

### **6.7. Email correspondence**

The language rights guaranteed by the *Official Languages Act 2003* include 'the right to receive replies in Irish from state organisations to correspondence in Irish, in writing or by electronic mail'. All correspondence received in Irish is answered in Irish.

Where a signature file is used, the relevant department and section names and addresses will be included in both Irish and English.



## **7. Enhancing the provision of Irish language services in the National Library of Ireland**

The NLI will build on our existing service provision, identifying specific areas where improved Irish language service can be provided and putting in place procedures to assist in this achievement. It must be noted that this must take into consideration limited resources and capabilities within the area of competency in Irish.

### **7.1 Proactive approach to Irish language services**

The NLI will continue to adopt a proactive approach to the promotion of the Irish language throughout the organisation and will take every opportunity to promote and publicise the services it provides through Irish. It will inform customers of the option of dealing with the NLI through the medium of Irish.

### **7.2 Improving language capability among staff**

The NLI is committed to improving the knowledge and skills of employees and staff are encouraged to improve their Irish language skills through training and development courses.

- We will increase the number of staff who are capable of conducting business through Irish by offering existing staff the opportunity to attend Irish language classes.
- The Coiste Gaeilge will meet on a quarterly basis and work in tandem with the Leadership Team to promote the Irish language in the NLI.
- *An Ciorcal Comhrá*, an informal Irish language conversation circle, organised and promoted by staff, takes place on a weekly basis.
- Staff will be encouraged to volunteer to provide Irish language services throughout the NLI as Irish language capability develops.
- Irish language awareness will be included as part of the Induction to ensure that staff:
  - understand why we are developing an Irish language policy.
  - understand the context and background to the policy.
  - are fully informed about how the policy will affect their work.

## **8. Implementation, Monitoring and Review**

Responsibility for ensuring implementation of the policy, as well as monitoring and reviewing the policy, will rest ultimately with the Leadership Team. Implementation of the policy will require adequate resourcing. Levels of demand for Irish and the usage of services through Irish will be monitored internally to help inform the delivery of services through the Irish language.

Pending the introduction of Language Standards, the Irish Language Policy will be reviewed every three years.



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