

Recommendations for an Irish Language Strategy

Report of the Expert Advisory Panel

February 2022

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Recommendations of the Expert Advisory Panel - Executive Summary

The following recommendations from the Expert Advisory Panel (EAP) set out plans to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language over the next twenty years, taking into account the needs of the Irish language community and international best practice. The EAP recognises in these recommendations that the following measures should be included in any proposed future strategy and that action plans based on these recommendations should be drafted within appropriate government sections and departments and within any agency or other body charged with responsibility for the implementation of Executive policy or any relevant part thereof.

Recommendations in relation to the Key Goals of any future strategy¹

- I. That 500,000 people have knowledge of Irish by 2042, with progress in this respect measured through the census every 10 years.²
- II. That the Irish language is the main language of 20,000 people by 2042, with progress in this respect measured through the census every 10 years and through the household survey annually.³
- III. That the Irish language is the everyday language of {figure to be inserted, based on the 2021 census} people by 2042, with progress in this respect measured through the census every 10 years and through the household survey annually.⁴
- IV. That the Irish-medium education community be developed and that 10% of the wider school population be in Irish-medium education by 2042.

Recommendations in relation to the Aims of any future strategy

The EAP recommends that the following be the key aims of any future strategy:

- I. The strategy should contribute in a systematic and strategic manner to the elimination of any discrimination, exclusion, restriction or discriminatory priority relating to the use of the Irish language which aims to discourage or endanger the preservation or development of the language.

1 These key goals are to be updated, with a goal added to number III, based on the 2021 Census when results become available. As well as including various and/or additional questions in relation to the Irish language in the 2031 Census, it is recommended that the Department for Communities commissions separate expert and independent research on an annual/triennial basis to explore the sociolinguistic trends of the Irish language community. The proposed research is described in the “Research” section.

2 According to the 2011 Census, 184,898 people had knowledge of Irish, equivalent to 10.65% of the population

3 According to the 2011 Census, Irish was the main language of 4,045 people, equivalent to 0.24% of the population

4 This question had not been previously asked in the census before 2021.

- II. To support the acquisition and learning of the Irish language on a high-quality and sustainable basis.
- III. To enhance and protect the status and visibility of the Irish language.
- IV. To deliver high-quality and sustainable Irish language networks and communities.
- V. To promote the Irish language in order to maintain a strong Irish language community.

Recommendations in relation to the objectives of any future strategy⁵

To achieve the aforementioned aims, the EAP recommends that the following objectives be set:

- OBJECTIVE 1: To increase the number of people acquiring the Irish language through Irish-medium education.
- OBJECTIVE 2: To increase the number of people learning the Irish language through the English-medium education system.
- OBJECTIVE 3: To increase the number of people learning the Irish language outside the formal education system.
- OBJECTIVE 4: To provide teachers for all stages of the Irish-medium education sector, including specific competencies for immersion education, as well as education for Irish teachers in English-medium schools.
- OBJECTIVE 5: To increase the number of families raising their children through the Irish language or bilingually and to provide them with the appropriate support to do so.
- OBJECTIVE 6: To comply with all obligations relating to the Irish language as contained in the New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) document, as well as all other legislation relating to the Irish language⁶ including the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.
- OBJECTIVE 7: To implement, within an agreed timeframe, statutory protection for the Irish language, based on proposals published by POBAL in the document *Acht na Gaeilge TÉ Eis II / The Irish Language Act NI, Issue II (2012)*⁷ and in the *Conradh na Gaeilge Discussion Document (2017)*⁸. In any case of contradiction arising between the proposals made in the two documents above mentioned, the strongest proposals shall be adopted on the basis of expert and independent advice. The most important factor is that the legislation is sufficiently robust to achieve the goals of the Expert Advisory Panel's recommendations, which are intended for the strategy for the Irish language.

5 Sound and measurable figures are to be added to objectives 1-5.

6 for example, the Education Order, the St Andrews Agreement, 2006, etc.

7 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602f79a565837b32cc85cebe/t/61767fd5f3b4c74841c07cd/1635155910841/Acht+na+Gaeilge+Eis+2+Edition.pdf>

8 https://cnag.ie/images/Acht_Gaeilge_%C3%B3_Thuaidh/15M%C3%812017_Pl%C3%A9ch%C3%A1ip%C3%A9is_ar_Acht_Gaeilge_%C3%B3_Thuaidh.pdf

- OBJECTIVE 8: To increase access to high-quality Irish language media, including all print, broadcast and social media.
- OBJECTIVE 9: To increase awareness of the economic and social value of the Irish language.
- OBJECTIVE 10: To develop and adequately fund sustainable and high-quality local and community-based Irish language plans and initiatives, in accordance with community needs.
- OBJECTIVE 11: To encourage family, social and community networks and enhance the range of public services available through the medium of Irish, allocating satisfactory funding, in order to provide the widest possible range of people with opportunities to use the Irish language.
- OBJECTIVE 12: To support an increase in the number of people who speak Irish on a daily basis.
- OBJECTIVE 13: To increase positive attitudes towards the Irish language in all sections of the community, including the Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist community.
- OBJECTIVE 14: While recognising the value of working to promote the language on a cross-community basis, the strategy must give priority to the needs and rights of Irish language speakers.
- OBJECTIVE 15: To ensure quarterly core funding for the Irish language voluntary sector in Northern Ireland in order to strengthen the language's infrastructure and promote the development of the Irish language. In addition to providing appropriate resources and support to Irish language organisations in Northern Ireland and to Irish language organisations operating on an all-island basis, the Department for Communities shall detail an ongoing process for encouraging and facilitating input from Irish language groups and the community in relation to developing the strategy, in accordance with needs, over time.
- OBJECTIVE 16: To recognise the importance of independent and expert research in increasing local, national and international knowledge relating to the promotion and protection of the Irish language and minority languages in general, with the Department for Communities seeking to ensure that Departments, Councils and other funders provide appropriate resources for this research.
- OBJECTIVE 17: To tackle bias and intolerance and implement positive language campaigns which will oppose oppressive opinions and policies, in order to promote appropriate international expertise in minority language revitalisation.

The EAP recommends that the following Action Areas be included in any future strategy:

It is recommended that nine action areas benefitting the Irish language be specified. It is recommended that actions be taken in all areas to achieve the objectives of any future strategy. We recommend the following action areas:

1. Irish Language Legislation and Status
2. Public Services
3. Education
4. Irish Language Transmission in the Family – Early Intervention
5. The Irish Language and the Community
6. Young People
7. Media, Publications and Technology
8. Economic Life
9. Research

The EAP makes the following recommendations in relation to the implementation of any future strategy:

The departments shall bring forward the implementation of the strategy in partnership with key stakeholders in the Irish language community, receiving advice, where appropriate, from independent experts.

Expert Advisory Panel Members

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*** Note on this Expert Advisory Panel report:**

Irish was the working language of the panel and the original text was compiled in Irish. The panel agreed that the derived English text was an accurate translation.

Part A: EAP recommendations in relation to Vision and Context

Vision

- A.1 We recommend that any future strategy addresses the revitalisation and consolidation of the Irish language, where 500,000 people have knowledge of Irish, 20,000 people have Irish as their main language and {figure to be inserted, based on the 2021 Census} people use Irish on a daily basis.
- A.2 In 2020, the New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) document stated that ‘the principles and practice of community engagement and co-design will be a key part of the development and delivery of the Programme for Government and its supporting strategies, including the Irish Language Strategy, and civic engagement and public consultation is at the heart of policy-making, recognising the vital role that wider society plays in supporting effective and accountable government’.
- A.3 The NDNA document affirmed the need to respect the freedom of all persons in Northern Ireland to choose, affirm, maintain and develop their national and cultural identity and to celebrate and express that identity in a manner which takes into account the sensitivities of those with different national or cultural identities and respects the rule of law. It affirms the need to encourage and promote reconciliation, tolerance and meaningful dialogue between those of different national and cultural identities in Northern Ireland with a view to promoting parity of esteem, mutual respect, understanding and cooperation. ‘These principles will be reflected in legislation and strategies.’
- A.4 The NDNA document, which was agreed by 5 parties, states that an outcomes-based approach remains ‘the best way to secure sustained improvement in wellbeing and economic growth’ and sets out an aim for the Executive to publish, within 3 months, a comprehensive timetable for the development and implementation of the Irish language strategy to achieve the outcomes in the Programme for Government.
- A.5 We recommend that the future strategy recognises the Irish language as a valuable part of our diverse shared cultural wealth and heritage. Creating an environment of tolerance and dialogue is essential to making our cultural heritage and diversity a source of and factor for the enrichment of society. We, therefore, recommend that the Executive, through any future strategy, seeks to promote a wider understanding of the background of the Irish language in all sections of our community.
- A.6 The subject of identity is a complex concept; it is clear, however, that language matters play a key role in defining who we are and how we achieve a sense of cultural belonging. In the same way that the use of language is an affirmation of our cultural identity, society

as a whole can benefit from linguistic diversity as an attestation of our shared identity. We recommend that the future strategy seeks to protect and enhance the development of the Irish language in our society.

- A.7 The need to protect and promote the Irish language was recognised by the UK Government 21 years ago when it signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2000. In 2006, it promised to introduce an Irish Language Act. Now, 15 years later, it is time to build on the social and attitudinal changes that have occurred since then. The EAP recommendations for any future strategy set out, over a period of 20 years, the core action areas that must be delivered in order to enhance, protect and develop the Irish language. The achievement of these changes shall be pursued through the effective and sustained implementation of policies, according to core action areas in line with our proposals here and through their detailing in any action plan for any future strategy, as we also recommend.

EAP recommendations in relation to the context of any strategy

- A.8 Irish is the oldest literary spoken language in Europe. It has been spoken for around 2000 years and was the language of the majority of the population until around the middle of the 19th century. The Great Famine, however, accelerated the decline caused by political and social turmoil and the increasing dominance of the English language in the world of industry and the economy. The Irish language revitalisation movement began in earnest around 1890 and has continued, in various forms, to this day.
- A.9 Despite centuries of continuous creation and expansion of the social, economic and political circumstances that have forced the public to convert to English from Irish, the Irish language still survives as a living language. For some years now, there has been renewed energy and interest in language revitalisation, especially in Irish-medium education. Three of the many recent examples include the revitalisation of the Belfast Gaeltacht Quarter, the work of Carntogher Community Association and the development of Cultúrlann Aonach Mhacha, which demonstrate an active community interest and commitment to developing the Irish language in a sustainable and high-quality manner. Irish has achieved full status as a modern European language. It was granted official status as a working language of the European Union in January 2007.
- A.10 According to the 2011 NI Census, 184,898 people have some knowledge of the Irish language; higher percentages of Catholics (21%) than Protestants (2%) said that they had some ability in Irish. The 2011 Census also showed that 12-15-year-olds had the highest knowledge of Irish (20%); older people were the most unlikely to have knowledge of Irish. 6% of people over 75 said that they had some knowledge of Irish.
- A.11 The Continuous Household Survey (CHS) 2011/12 also asked questions about knowledge of the Irish language. According to the CHS, just over one in eight people (13%) had some knowledge of Irish. About one in nine (11%) said that they understood spoken Irish and a smaller number said that they could speak, read or write Irish (8%, 6% and 5% respectively).
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Just under a fifth of the population (18%) were interested in learning more about the Irish language. The proportion of Catholics with knowledge of the Irish language was higher than that of Protestants (29% and 2% respectively).

- A.12 The Strategy seeks to increase the learning, use and knowledge of the Irish language among the whole community. It aims to ensure that everyone who wishes to do so can access the language and reap the benefits of bilingualism in both Irish and English. The Strategy also aims to protect and enhance the status of the Irish language.
- A.13 While the place of the Irish language within our education system is a key focus of the strategy, the transmission of Irish as a living language within the family and between generations is also of utmost importance. The EAP recommends that the approach of the strategy should be to create a sustainable support framework and opportunities in which the Irish language can be promoted within families and communities.
- A.14 The future of the Irish language depends on positive choices. The EAP recommends that the strategy creates opportunities for everyone in the community to contribute to this positive future. This is a challenge, and it will be necessary to increase community awareness and tolerance if the Irish language is to be properly enhanced, protected and developed.
- A.15 It is recognised that there are familial, social, resource and economic links between Irish speakers throughout the island of Ireland and the approach envisaged in the Irish Government's 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 has been employed in compiling these recommendations. It is recommended that this strategy should also be viewed in the context of the approach taken in *A Living Language: A Language for Living – Welsh Language Strategy 2012-17* prepared by the Welsh Government and in the *National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-2017* prepared by Bòrd na Gàidhlig. All three documents place emphasis on growing, developing and strengthening the language. That is what is at the heart of the aims and objectives of this strategy.
- A.16 The Department of Education's (DE) *Languages for the Future - Northern Ireland Languages Strategy, 2012*, also emphasises the following: 'language learning is internationally recognised as being increasingly important commercially, culturally, politically and intellectually'. The DE Strategy goes a step further and highlights 'the importance of language learning and the need to improve the uptake of languages in schools and colleges and in the wider community, but also recognises that languages are important for wider economic, social and community reasons, as well as on purely educational grounds'. The scope of the *Languages for the Future Strategy* adds to the emphasis placed in this report on high-quality and sustainable learning, on the acquisition of the Irish language and on the development of high-quality and sustainable Irish language networks and communities.

A.17 There are 6 Lead Organisations operating on an all-island basis, delivering the following strategic priorities:

- Conradh na Gaeilge: awareness raising, language protection and representation (on behalf of the language with state authorities);
- Cumann na bhFiann: development of opportunities to use the Irish language and networks for young people;
- Gael Linn: education in the English-medium sector and for adults;
- Gaeloideachas: Irish-medium education (in the Republic of Ireland)⁹;
- Glór na nGael: language-based community and economic development; and
- Oireachtas na Gaeilge: Opportunities that support the use of the Irish language and the foundation of networks.

They each shall have a variety of roles in aiding the achievement of any future strategy, as shall many other Irish language groups.

EAP recommendations in relation to the benefits of bilingualism

A.18 Bilingualism has many benefits, especially for children. Bilingualism delivers a deeper understanding of the meaning and structure of language and encourages creative, flexible thinking. Employment options are also enhanced, and new career opportunities open up.

A.19 According to the Bilingualism Matters website:¹⁰

‘Research has shown that bilingualism is beneficial for children’s development and their future. Children exposed to different languages become more aware of different cultures, other people and other points of view. But they also tend to be better than monolinguals at ‘multitasking’ and focusing attention, they often are more precocious readers, and generally find it easier to learn other languages. Bilingualism gives children much more than two languages!’

A.20 Knowledge of another language is a gateway to another culture. Idioms, customs, music and local poetry can introduce us to other cultures. Through this cultural awareness, connections can be created between people from different countries, individuals’ self-esteem can be enhanced and, as research has shown, their cultural tolerance can be increased through bilingualism and multilingualism.¹¹

9 Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta have this role in the north

10 www.bilingualism-matters.org.uk

11 Baker, C. (2003). Education as a site of language contact

EAP recommendations in relation to children and young People

A.21 These recommendations for the strategy recognise the vital importance of children and young people in relation to protecting and sustaining the development of the Irish language. The role of young people in the preservation of the Irish language through acquisition and use is set out in the strategy, particularly in terms of education, use of the language in the family and in the community, and media and technology. If the Irish language is to flourish, it will be achieved through success in these areas in particular. The Irish Government's 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 – 2030 emphasises the importance of the use of the Irish language outside the formal education system if it is to grow and prosper. Knowledge and understanding of Irish learned or acquired in the classroom will be greatly enhanced by its use in social settings outside of school. The Irish Government's 20-Year Strategy places great emphasis on the critical role of the acquisition and use of Irish among young people if the Irish language is to flourish - 'Fostering the creation of youth culture and identity, and their appropriate Irish language forms, involves providing opportunities for its natural use and creating ICT mediated networks of speakers'.¹²

¹² Rialtas na hÉireann, Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge, Leathanach 12 | Government of Ireland, 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030, Page 12

Part B: EAP recommendations in relation to the basis of any Irish Language Strategy

Good Friday Agreement 1998

B.1 The Agreement was made with the endorsement of the participants in the all-party negotiations to set out a plan for devolution in Northern Ireland (NI) on a secure and inclusive basis. In Strand Three of the Agreement ('Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity'), the following commitments were made in relation to Economic, Social and Cultural Issues:

3. All participants recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland.

4. In the context of active consideration currently being given to the UK signing the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the British Government will in particular in relation to the Irish language, where appropriate and where people so desire it:

- take resolute action to promote the language;
- facilitate and encourage the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private life where there is appropriate demand;
- seek to remove, where possible, restrictions which would discourage or work against the maintenance or development of the language;
- make provision for liaising with the Irish language community, representing their views to public authorities and investigating complaints;
- place a statutory duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate Irish - medium education in line with current provision for integrated education;
- explore urgently with the relevant British authorities, and in cooperation with the Irish broadcasting authorities, the scope for achieving more widespread availability of *Teilifís na Gaeilge* in Northern Ireland;
- seek more effective ways to encourage and provide financial support for Irish language film and television production in Northern Ireland; and
- encourage the parties to secure agreement that this commitment will be sustained by a new Assembly in a way which takes account of the desires and sensitivities of the community.

The Joint Declaration, 2003

- B.2 In 2003, the British and Irish Governments issued a Joint Declaration as part of the move to restore devolution in NI. The two Governments stated that they wished to fulfil and build on the commitments made in relation to the Irish language in the 1998 Belfast Agreement:

The British Government will continue to discharge all its commitments under the Agreement in respect of the Irish language. Specifically, in relation to broadcasting, the British Government will take all the necessary steps to secure the establishment as soon as possible, following receipt of the final business case in April, of a fund for financial support for Irish language film and television production.... The two Governments will continue to work with the relevant regulators and broadcasting authorities to address the technical and other barriers with a view to increasing substantially the reception of TG4 in Northern Ireland.¹³

The St Andrews Agreement, 2006

- B.3 The St Andrews Agreement, 2006, built on the commitments in the Good Friday Agreement under Strand Three ‘Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity’.

- B.4 The St Andrews Agreement did this by stating the following:

The [British] Government will introduce an Irish Language Act reflecting on the experience of Wales and Ireland and work with the incoming Executive to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language.¹⁴

Consultation Process, 2007

- B.5 The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure published a consultation document on the contents of the Draft Irish Language Bill in 2006, containing 4 legislative models, including the POBAL document entitled *Acht na Gaeilge TÉ* (Irish Language Act NI), in which a rights-based approach is proposed. In the Department’s summary of the findings of the consultation, the Department recognises (DCAL March 2007, p. 6):

Astu siúd a chuir freagra isteach, bhí tromlach thar na bearta (93%) ar son reachtaíocht Ghaeilge a thabhairt isteach; agus bhí mionlach beag daoine nár aontaigh leis an mholadh ar chor ar bith. Luaigh na daoine a bhí ina éadan (7%) cúrsaí costais agus d’aithin siad go mbeadh reachtaíocht ina hábhar deighilte go polaitiúil. (Féach nóta faoin aistriúchán ó leagan Béarla na Roinne)

This reflects a significant level of interest in the issues raised in the paper. Of those who responded, the overwhelming majority (93 percent) favoured the adoption of Irish language legislation; while a small minority of respondents strongly disagreed with the proposal. Those in favour preferred a rights-based approach. Those against (7 per cent) cited cost issues and

¹³ Joint Declaration by the British and Irish Governments, April 2003; Rights, Equality, Identity and Community, Paragraph 30

¹⁴ St Andrews Agreement, 2006; Annex B, Human Rights, Equality, Victims and Other Issues

the perception that legislation would be politically divisive. (Official DCAL English language version, see note on translation to Irish language version) DCAL 13 March 2007, Introduction, p. 6.

NB: The two language versions differ, with the English language version containing two phrases not in the Irish language version: ‘This reflects a significant level of interest in the issues raised in the paper’, and ‘Those in favour preferred a rights-based approach.’

- B.6 The Department initiated a second consultation process in 2007. The responses were counted in a different way from the first consultation. Still, the Department acknowledged that the majority of respondents to the second consultation were again in favour of the proposals from POBAL. (DCAL, OCT 2007).

The Northern Ireland Act 1998

- B.7 Following the St Andrews Agreement, 2006, the British Government passed legislation at Westminster to amend the NI Act 1998. Section 28D of the 1998 Act includes the following:

(1) The Executive Committee shall adopt a Strategy setting out how it intends to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language.

- B.8 The new provisions in the legislation from the ‘New Decade, New Approach’ Agreement (January 2020) shall create a new legislative chapter of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This is stated under Section 27 (h) of the 2020 political agreement.¹⁵

Programme for Government 2011-2015

- B.9 In its Programme for Government 2011-15, published on 12 March 2012, the Executive recognised the importance of setting priorities for the future and seizing the opportunity provided by devolution to build a better shared future for everyone. This is ratified under Priority 4 ‘Building a Strong and Shared Community’ which focuses, *inter alia*, on building relationships between communities and unlocking the potential of the cultural sector as an instrument for positive change. It also includes a strategy for the Irish language as a cornerstone in achieving this priority.

Draft Strategy for Protecting and Enhancing the Development of the Irish Language (DCAL) 2015

- B.10 The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) and the DCAL Minister have published a draft 20-year Strategy for Protecting and Enhancing the Development of the Irish Language (2015-2035). The majority of the recommendations made in that strategy have been included here or have been updated to reflect current circumstances in the sector and some of the changes that have taken place in the area of language revitalisation in the meantime.

¹⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/2020-01-08_a_new_decade__a_new_approach.pdf

B.11 No political agreement was reached in 2015 to implement that draft strategy. In 2016, the Department published a new 'One year on' document which outlined some of the actions taken by the Department.¹⁶

Draft Bill for the Irish Language (DCAL) 2015

B.12 A consultation was held in 2015 on 'Proposals for an Irish Language Bill'¹⁷. In December 2015, the results of that consultation were published. Almost 13,000 responses were received, with 94.7% in favour of legislation for the Irish language¹⁸:

DCAL received 12,911 responses to the consultation, from both organisations and individuals. The consultation attracted overwhelming support for Irish language legislation - 94.7% (12,233) of responses expressed support for the legislation and 5.3% (678) opposed it... (p. 5).

As part of this consultation, the draft bill was subjected to an equality impact assessment (EQIA) and an examination of any implications for good relations. No potential negative impact of this legislation on any section of the community was identified and, in respect of good relations, it was stated that the legislation would have a positive impact:

DCAL's view is that the establishment of legislation will have a positive impact on Irish speakers and, as a result, will have an indirect positive impact on Catholics, nationalists, single people, younger people, people without disabilities and people with dependents. According to DCAL, there will be no discriminatory or detrimental effects... ..DCAL considered that the introduction of an Irish Language Bill has the potential to improve good relations, or increase the equality of the Irish language and provide an accessible platform for all sections of the community. (p. 44)

The Fresh Start Agreement (November 2015)

B.13 In the autumn of 2015, a new political agreement, Fresh Start, was announced. It was specifically stated as part of this agreement that previous agreements made from 1998 onwards would be augmented. There was also a specific commitment, as a key principle of the new agreement, to ensure equality of opportunity and to facilitate inclusion, as well as reconciliation, as an integral and continuous part of the peace process:

Building on the political Agreements reached in the past, the progress made to date - and to ensure it continues - we reiterate the primacy and centrality of peace and the political process to the continued transformation of our society, through democracy, inclusion, reconciliation, equality of opportunity for all and the absence of violence. (FS, p. 14).

¹⁶ https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dcal/The%20Irish%20Language%20Strategy%20-%20one%20year%20on%20-%20March%202016_0.pdf

¹⁷ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/consultations/proposals-irish-language-bill>

¹⁸ The responses are available here: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/irish-language-bill-consultation-2015-report-and-responses>

These included new commitments for the Irish language, and the Agreement confirmed, under section 68, the implementation of historic commitments for the Irish language, as well as existing provisions in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages:

The UK Government and the Irish Government, recalling commitments from previous Agreements, and recognising the importance of understanding, tolerance and respect in relation to linguistic diversity, endorse the need for respect for and recognition of the Irish language in Northern Ireland, consistent with the Council of Europe Charter on Regional or Minority Languages. (FS, p. 38).¹⁹

Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021

B.14 The draft Programme for Government 2016-2021 made various commitments in relation to society, diversity, health and public services. These commitments should apply equally to citizens who choose to live life through the medium of English and to those who choose to live life (and pursue education) through the medium of Irish. The key goals included:

We are a shared society that respects diversity

We have a more equal society

We give our children and young people the best start in life (p. 12.)

Key indicators cited to measure the progress of the goals²⁰ included:

12. Reduce educational inequality

13. Improve the quality of education

14. Improve the skills profile of the population

27. Improve cultural participation

31. Increase shared space

35. Increase reconciliation

Draft Goals for the 2021-2026 Programme for Government

B.15 A public consultation was undertaken between January and March 2021 through the Executive Office (TEO) on the key goals of the new Programme for Government (2021 – 2026). In the introduction to the Programme for Government in 2021, specific references were made to a set of cross-departmental strategies, as promised and stated in the New Decade, New Approach agreement (January 2020):

¹⁹ https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/nigov/a-fresh-start-stormont-agreement_0.pdf

²⁰ <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/consultations/draft-programme-government-framework-2016-21-and-questionnaire>

“The Outcomes-based approach means departments think and work outside of their boundaries. They create, or co-design and co-produce, strategies and plans that cut across departments and sectors to tackle societal problems and improve wellbeing for all.”²¹

Irish-medium education flourishing, 50 years on

B.16 The first Irish-medium primary school in Northern Ireland came into existence in 1971 with the founding of Bunscoil Phobal Feirste, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. 50 years on, and with over 7,000 young people attending Irish-medium education, between Irish-medium nursery, primary and secondary schools, there is an urgent need for comprehensive and equitable provision based on the statutory duty introduced by the Good Friday Agreement, under Strand 3:

place a statutory duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate Irish medium education in line with current provision for integrated education;

It is recommended that a vision be set out that caters for this duty and the needs of children who are choosing Irish-medium education as an educational option. Provisions that need to be taken into account include accommodation issues, resources, facilities, teacher supply, special educational needs provision, travel and more. It is widely accepted among the Irish language community that Irish-medium education is the ‘heartbeat of revitalisation’.

It is recommended that, as part of the strategy, the Department for Communities works on an ongoing basis to introduce comprehensive Irish language legislation, including POBAL’s proposals, as contained in the document *Acht na Gaeilge Eis. II /Irish Language Act, Issue II (2012)*²², and those of *Conradh na Gaeilge (2017)*²³ in relation to education. Where any conflict arises between these proposals and/or the NDNA legislation, the most robust proposals, as determined by independent experts, shall be adopted.

It is recommended, as a fundamental principle of the future Irish language legislation and in the implementation of the Strategy, that it be recognised that parents in NI have the right for their children to receive pre-school, primary and post-primary education through the medium of Irish and to have Irish taught to them at all stages of primary and post-primary education.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

B.17 The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (the Charter) is an international convention aimed at protecting and promoting regional and minority languages as a threatened aspect of Europe’s cultural heritage. For this reason, in addition to a non-discrimination section relating to the use of these languages²⁴, there is provision for

21 <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/programme-government-pfg-2021>

22 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602f79a565837b32cc85cebe/t/61767fbd5f3b4c74841c07cd/1635155910841/Acht+na+Gaeilge+Eis+2+Edition.pdf>

23 https://cnag.ie/images/Acht_Gaeilge_%C3%B3_Thuaidh/15M%C3%812017_Pl%C3%A9ch%C3%A1ip%C3%A9is_ar_Acht_Gaeilge_%C3%B3_Thuaidh.pdf

24 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages – Part II, Article 7(2) Objectives and Principles

measures that offer them active support. ‘Only in this way can such languages be compensated, where necessary, for unfavourable conditions in the past and preserved and developed as a living facet of Europe’s cultural identity.’²⁵

- B.18 The Charter promotes a multicultural approach to the languages it protects. Its aims, which have influenced this report, are to create a culture in which regional and minority languages thrive in the company of one another and in the company of the major languages of the State.
- B.19 The Charter establishes a common core of principles, set out in Part II, which apply to all regional or minority languages. Part III of the Charter contains a series of specific provisions concerning the place of regional or minority languages in the various sectors of community life. Under Part III, ‘the individual states are free, within certain limits, to determine which of these provisions will apply to each of the languages spoken within their frontiers’.²⁶
- B.20 The United Kingdom (UK) Government ratified the Charter in March 2001 and adopted obligations to protect and promote the Irish language, which has Part III status. The UK Government has selected thirty-six articles under the Charter to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that the Irish language is used in education and in the media and to allow its use in judicial and administrative contexts, in economic and social life and in cultural activities.
- B.21 The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure chaired, and provided the secretariat for, an Interdepartmental Group for the implementation of the Charter, which oversees the implementation of the Charter by departments and coordinates input into periodic progress reports on implementation with the Council of Europe.
- B.22 The Council of Europe’s Committee of Experts (COMEX) measures progress on the implementation of the Charter every three years. Following their visit in September 2009, the COMEX recommended that UK authorities prioritise ‘the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive Irish language policy, preferably through legislation’.²⁷

²⁵ European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages – Explanatory Note, Paragraph 10

²⁶ European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages – Explanatory Note, Paragraph 22

²⁷ Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers, Recommendation CM/RecChL(2010)4 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the United Kingdom, 21 April 2010

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

B.23 The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1994 and signed by the United Kingdom Government in 1995. The treaty sets out the state's obligations in relation to the development of policies to protect the rights of minorities in both private and public life²⁸. Compliance with the convention is monitored every 5 years; in the latest monitoring report (2017), the following recommendations are made:

- i. The Executive adopt appropriate legislation protecting and promoting the Irish language and take measures to ensure progress on language rights of persons belonging to the Irish minority;
- ii. The UK Government engage in a dialogue to create the political consensus needed for adopting legislation.

Conradh na Gaeilge High Court Action (2017)

B.24 In 2017, 2 years after the publication of the draft Irish Language Strategy by the former DCAL Minister, Carál Ní Chuilín, Conradh na Gaeilge commenced legal proceedings to challenge the delay in the implementation of the Irish language Strategy. The High Court judge ruled in the judicial review that the Executive had failed to meet its obligations under Section 28d of the Northern Ireland Act:

It cannot have been the intention of Parliament that, after nearly 10 years from the coming into force of the Act in 2007, this obligation would remain unfulfilled.

It ruled that the Northern Ireland Executive had contravened Section 28(d) of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) and had failed in its statutory duty to implement an Irish language strategy.

The Committee of Experts' 4th Monitoring Report (2014)

B.25 The Council of Europe monitors compliance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages every 3 years. Following contact with state officers and representatives from the Irish language community during a state visit and taking into account the 4th United Kingdom periodical report, the 4th monitoring report of the Committee of Experts recommended that the UK Government:

Adopt and implement a comprehensive Irish language policy, preferably through the adoption of legislation providing statutory rights for the Irish speakers²⁹

²⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/168007cdac>

²⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806dcc8d>

New Decade, New Approach 2020

B.26 The New Decade, New Approach Agreement committed to the implementation of an Irish Language Strategy within 6 months of the agreement. 100 days were given to:

- i. publish a timetable for the implementation of the strategy; and
- ii. begin the co-design process.

B.27 The Agreement states:

under Section 28D of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the re-established Executive will produce a draft Irish Language Strategy and a draft Ulster Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy for consultations within 6 months. This will include programmes and schemes which will assist in the development of the Irish language and the Ulster Scots language, culture and heritage³⁰

B.28 In addition, the Agreement set out a commitment to the publication of a comprehensive timeline for the strategy. It states:

The parties agree that, within 3 months, a new Executive will publish a comprehensive timetable for the development and delivery of these and other strategies necessary to achieve the outcomes in the Programme for Government.

The Committee of Experts' 5th Monitoring Report (July 2020)

B.29 In July 2020, as part of the Committee of Experts' 5th monitoring report on the application by the UK Government of the Charter in relation to the Irish language, 20 recommendations were published for the fulfilment of all the obligations in the Charter relating to the Irish language. These were as follows:

2.2.2. Recommendations by the Committee of Experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of Irish in the United Kingdom³¹

The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities of the United Kingdom to comply also with all undertakings under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages which are not considered “fulfilled” (see under 2.2.1 above), as well as to continue to comply with those that are fulfilled. The following overview presents the Committee of Experts' recommendations of the previous monitoring cycles which the United Kingdom has not yet implemented and the recommendations of the current monitoring cycle. The recommendations by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the application of the Charter in the United Kingdom [5] remain valid in their own right. Recommendations made in the monitoring procedure of the Charter aim to support the authorities in the implementation process.

30 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/2020-01-08_a_new_decade__a_new_approach.pdf

31 https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680948544

I. Recommendations for immediate action

- a. Adopt a comprehensive law and a strategy on the promotion of Irish in Northern Ireland.
- b. Provide the basic and further training of a sufficient number of teachers teaching in Irish.

II. Further recommendations

- c. Extend the provision of pre-school, primary and secondary education in Irish.
 - d. Eliminate the unjustified exclusion relating to the use of Irish before courts.
 - e. Extend the offer of Irish as a university subject.
 - f. Ensure the teaching of the history and culture reflected by Irish.
 - g. Translate into Irish, and make publicly available, the most important national and Northern Irish statutory texts.
 - h. Ensure that users of Irish may submit oral or written applications in Irish to local branches of the national authorities, the authorities of Northern Ireland, local authorities and public service providers.
 - i. Introduce simultaneous translation facilitating the full use of Irish in the Northern Ireland Assembly and in local councils.
 - j. Ensure that local branches of the national authorities draft documents in Irish.
 - k. Facilitate the adoption and use, by local and regional authorities as well as public service providers, of place names in Irish.
 - l. Take practical measures facilitating the use of family names in Irish in conformity with the Irish spelling.
 - m. Extend the offer of public radio and television broadcasts in Irish.
 - n. Facilitate the broadcasting of private radio programmes in Irish on a regular basis and extend the broadcast radius of Raidió Fáilte.
 - o. Encourage and/or facilitate the creation of at least one newspaper in Irish either in printed form or online.
 - p. Apply existing measures for financial assistance to include audiovisual productions in Irish.
 - q. Take measures to remove technical obstacles to the reception of television broadcasts from the Republic of Ireland.
 - r. Adopt and implement a strategy on cultural production and activities in Irish.
 - s. Make provision, in cultural policy abroad, for Irish and the culture it reflects.
 - t. Promote cross-border exchanges, in the fields covered by the Charter, for the benefit of Irish.
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The Committee of Experts' 5th Monitoring Report - the Committee of Experts' response to the UK (March 2021)

- B.30 The Council of Europe monitors the extent to which the United Kingdom fulfils its responsibilities for the protection and promotion of minority languages in public life. The Committee of Experts monitor the implementation of the Charter every three years.
- B.31 In the 5th report published in March 2021, following responses and submissions received from society and the British Government, the Committee of Experts' Report recommended the protection of the Irish language and stated that an Irish Language Act and Strategy are 'integral to the protection and promotion of Irish in Northern Ireland'. They recommended both of the following:
1. Adopt a comprehensive law and a strategy on the promotion of Irish in Northern Ireland.
 2. Provide the basic and further training of a sufficient number of teachers teaching in Irish.³²
- B.32 In addition, the Committee of Experts recommended in this report (2021) that this strategy should be adopted as soon as possible and that it should contain goals and timelines and actions in relation to education, culture, and public life, along with opportunities for continuous review and monitoring in consultation with the public:
27. Concerning an Irish Language Strategy, the Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to adopt this as swiftly as possible. It notes further that the development of an Irish Language Strategy has been committed to in the past, notably under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the St Andrew's Agreement of 2006, and as such is a domestic legal requirement as well as an obligation under the Charter. In concrete terms, the strategy should contain goals and milestones, and concrete measures in education, culture and other spheres of public life, along with opportunities for review and periodic monitoring in consultation with Irish speakers.

³² <https://rm.coe.int/ukevaliria5-en/1680a287e0>

UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

B.33 In its 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030, the Irish Government set out the international perspectives that underpinned the policy context of its strategy. The following extract from the 2010-2030 Strategy of the Irish Government is relevant to this strategy and has had an influence on same:

The value of linguistic diversity is recognised internationally. Languages are humankind’s principal tools for interacting and for expressing ideas, emotions, knowledge, memories and values. Languages are also primary vehicles of cultural expression and intangible cultural heritage, essential to the identity of individuals and groups. The key role of language in the expression and transmission of cultural heritage is recognised in the UN Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Safeguarding languages such as Irish is thus a crucial task in maintaining cultural diversity worldwide. UNESCO³³ reports that half of the 6,700 languages spoken today are in danger of disappearing before the century ends, a process that can be slowed only if urgent action is taken by Governments and speaker communities³⁴. UNESCO’s Endangered Languages Programme mobilises international cooperation to focus attention on this grave situation and to promote innovative solutions from communities, experts and authorities. The most recent edition of the Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger (UNESCO³⁵) classified Irish as “definitely endangered”. This status has since been improved to “vulnerable”, in the light of information about the measures taken by Government to support the language in recent years.

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage recognises the vital role of language in the expression and transmission of living heritage. All intangible cultural heritage depends on language for its day-to-day vitality and for being passed on to the next generation. In relation to oral traditions, whether it be song, poetry or folklore, language is not only the vehicle that contains the cultural heritage, it is its very essence. As well as analysing the situation of languages under pressure the world over, UNESCO has developed a framework for determining the vitality of a language in order to assist Governments and others in policy development, identification of needs and appropriate safeguarding measures. This framework³⁶ based on the following nine criteria has also informed the development of this Strategy.

33 United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

34 www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/

35 www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap.html

36 UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, Language Vitality and Endangerment (March 2003)

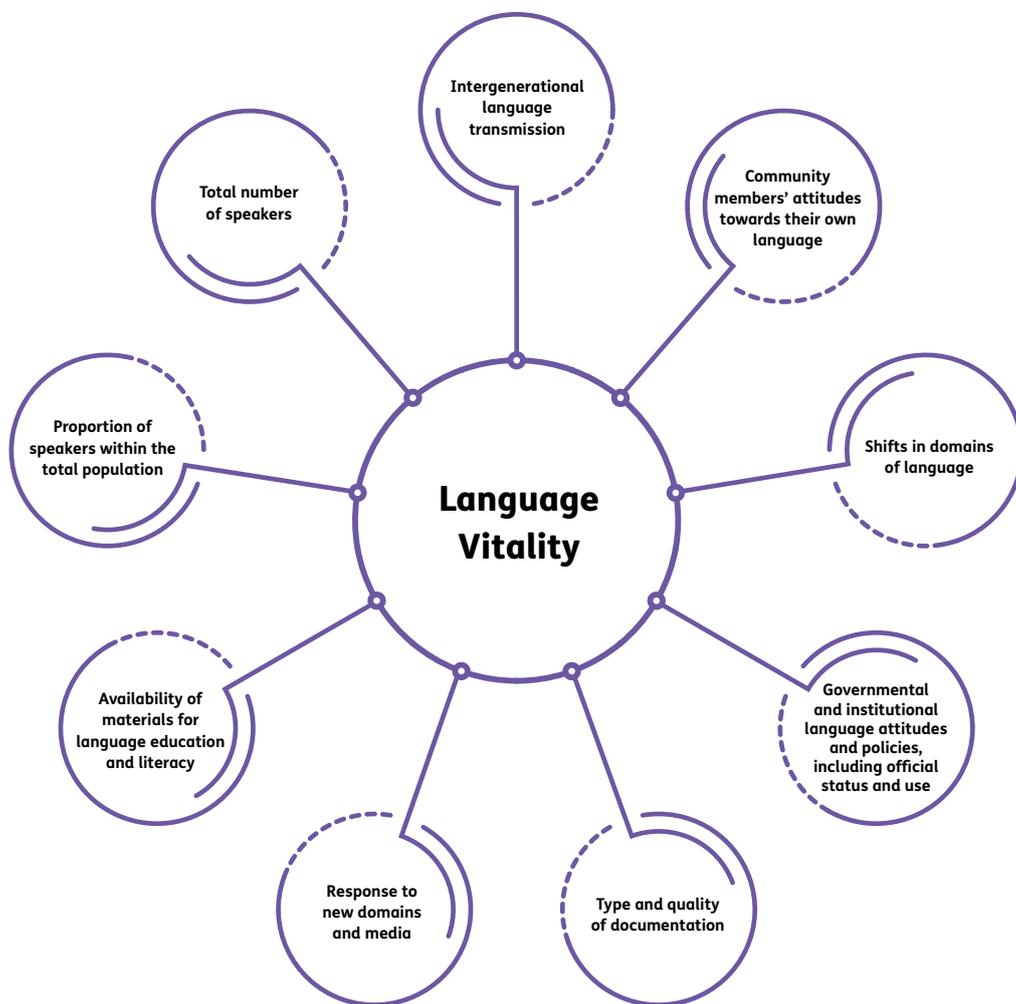


Figure 1: UNESCO Language Vitality

Part C: EAP recommendations in relation to Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Recommendations in relation to the Key Goals of any future strategy³⁷

C.1 We recommend that the key goals of any future strategy are as follows:

- I. That 500,000 people have knowledge of Irish by 2042, with progress in this respect measured through the census every 10 years (according to the 2011 Census, 184,898 people had knowledge of Irish, equivalent to 10.65% of the population).
- II. That the Irish language is the main language of 20,000 people by 2042, with progress in this respect measured through the census every 10 years and through the household survey annually.³⁸
- III. That the Irish language is the everyday language of {figure to be inserted, based on the 2021 Census} people by 2042, with progress in this respect measured through the census every 10 years and through the household survey annually.³⁹
- IV. That the Irish-medium education community be developed and that 10% of the wider school population be in Irish-medium education by 2042.

EAP recommendations in relation to the Aims of any future strategy

C.2 The EAP recommends that the following be the key aims of any future strategy:

- I. As its aim and objective, the Strategy should contribute in a systematic and strategic manner to the elimination of any discrimination, exclusion, restriction or discriminatory priority relating to the use of the Irish language which aims to discourage or endanger the preservation or development of the language.
- II. To support the acquisition and learning of the Irish language on a high-quality and sustainable basis.

³⁷ These key goals are to be updated, with a goal added to number III, based on the 2021 Census when results become available. As well as including various and/or additional questions in relation to the Irish language in the 2031 Census, it is recommended that the Department for Communities commissions separate expert and independent research on an annual/triennial basis to explore the sociolinguistic trends of the Irish language community. The research being proposed is described in the Research section.

³⁸ According to the 2011 Census, Irish was the main language of 4,045 people, equivalent to 0.24% of the population

³⁹ This question has not been previously asked in the census.

- III. To enhance and protect the status and visibility of the Irish language.
- IV. To deliver high-quality and sustainable Irish language networks and communities.
- V. To promote the Irish language in order to maintain a strong Irish language community.

EAP recommendations in relation to the objectives of any future strategy⁴⁰

C.3 To achieve the aforementioned aims, the EAP recommends that the following objectives be set:

AIM 1: To support the acquisition and learning of high-quality and sustainable Irish.

- OBJECTIVE 1: To increase the number of people acquiring the Irish language through Irish-medium education.
- OBJECTIVE 2: To increase the number of people learning the Irish language through the English-medium education system.
- OBJECTIVE 3: To increase the number of people learning the Irish language outside the formal education system.
- OBJECTIVE 4: To provide teachers for all stages of the Irish-medium education sector, including specific competencies for immersion education, as well as education for Irish teachers in English-medium schools.
- OBJECTIVE 5: To increase the number of families raising their children through the Irish language or bilingually and to provide them with the appropriate support to do so.

AIM 2: To enhance and protect the status and visibility of the Irish language

- OBJECTIVE 6: To comply with all obligations relating to the Irish language under the Irish language legislation to be introduced under the NDNA document, as well as all other legislation relating to the Irish language⁴¹ and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.
- OBJECTIVE 7: To implement, within an agreed and reasonable timeframe, legislative protection for the Irish language, based on proposals published by POBAL in the Acht na Gaeilge TÉ, Eis II / The Irish Language Act NI, Issue II (2012)⁴² document and in the Conradh na Gaeilge Discussion Document (2017)⁴³. In the case of any conflict

⁴⁰ Sound and measurable figures are to be added to objectives 1-5.

⁴¹ for example, the Education Order, the St Andrews Agreement, 2006, etc.

⁴² <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602f79a565837b32cc85cebe/t/61767fbd5f3b4c74841c07cd/1635155910841/Acht+na+Gaeilge+Eis+2+Edition.pdf>

⁴³ https://cnag.ie/images/Acht_Gaeilge_%C3%B3_Thuaidh/15M%C3%812017_Pl%C3%A9ch%C3%A1ip%C3%A9is_ar_Acht_Gaeilge_%C3%B3_Thuaidh.pdf

arising between the proposals made in the two documents above mentioned, the strongest proposals shall be adopted on the basis of expert and independent advice. The most important factor is that the legislation is robust enough to achieve the EAP's recommended goals for the Strategy.

- OBJECTIVE 8: To increase access to high-quality Irish language media, including all print, broadcast and social media.
- OBJECTIVE 9: To increase awareness of the economic and social value of the Irish language.

AIM 3: To deliver high-quality and sustainable Irish language networks and communities.

- OBJECTIVE 10: To develop and adequately fund sustainable and high-quality local and community-based Irish language plans and initiatives, in accordance with community needs.
- OBJECTIVE 11: To encourage family, social and community networks and enhance the range of public services available through the medium of Irish, allocating satisfactory funding, in order to provide the widest possible range of people with opportunities to use the Irish language.
- OBJECTIVE 12: To support an increase in the number of people who speak Irish on a daily basis.

AIM 4: To promote the Irish language in ways that will contribute to the maintenance of strong shared communities.

- OBJECTIVE 13: To increase positive attitudes towards the Irish language in all sections of the community, including the Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist community.
 - OBJECTIVE 14: While recognising the value of working to promote the language on a cross-community basis, the strategy must give priority to the needs and rights of the Irish language community.
 - OBJECTIVE 15: To ensure quarterly core funding for the Irish language voluntary sector in Northern Ireland in order to strengthen the language's infrastructure and promote the development of the Irish language. In addition to providing appropriate resources and support to Irish language organisations in Northern Ireland and to Irish language organisations operating on an all-island basis, the Department for Communities shall detail an ongoing process for encouraging and facilitating input from Irish language groups and the community in relation to developing the strategy, in accordance with needs, over time.
 - OBJECTIVE 16: To recognise the importance of independent and expert research in increasing the local, national and international knowledge of the promotion and
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protection of the Irish language and minority languages in general, with the Department for Communities seeking to ensure that Departments, Councils and other funders provide appropriate resources for this research.

- OBJECTIVE 17: To tackle bias and intolerance and implement positive language campaigns opposing oppressive opinions and policies, in order to promote appropriate international expertise in minority language revitalisation.

EAP recommendations in relation to Strategic Outcomes

- C.4 The Department for Communities shall develop an implementation plan and implement this while continuously assessing progress on the measurable objectives.
- C.5 The delivery of the implementation plan shall be monitored and measured on a regular basis, taking into account the following outcomes in the context of the aforementioned objectives:
- an increased number of people learning and using the Irish language in the formal education system, through the medium of both Irish and English;
 - enhanced opportunities to learn and use the Irish language outside the formal education system;
 - an increased number using the Irish language on a regular basis;
 - an increased number of families using the Irish language;
 - enhanced experiences of accessing public services in the Irish language through the comprehensive implementation of the NDNA legislation, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and other Irish language legislation to be enacted in future;
 - the provision of investment and substantial financial and human resources for the Office of the Irish Language Commissioner;
 - comprehensive Irish language visibility on all media platforms and increased access to additional high-quality Irish language public service broadcasting;
 - enhanced opportunities for businesses providing Irish language services;
 - greater support for sustainable high-quality local communities and networks using the Irish language, including designated Gaeltacht and learning areas, resulting in enhanced use and visibility of the language;
 - actively undertake a comprehensive research programme to support the development of the Irish language in all areas of any future strategy and other strategies where appropriate;
 - ongoing development of legislative protection for the status of the Irish language and effective implementation of the legislation; and
 - more positive attitudes towards the Irish language, especially among the Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist community and, as a result, enhanced cross-community attitudes and understanding.
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Part D: EAP recommendations in relation to Action Areas

D.1 We recommend that any future strategy sets out nine action areas under seven key themes:

1. Irish Language Legislation and Status
2. Public Services
3. Education
4. Irish Language Transmission in the Family – Early Intervention
5. The Irish Language and the Community
6. Young People
7. Media, Publications and Technology
8. Economic Life
9. Research

Part E: EAP recommendations in relation to Implementation

E.1 We recommend that Departments advance the implementation and monitoring of any future strategy with the assistance of a panel of independent experts and stakeholders in the Irish language community. Any strategy will only succeed if a partnership is established between all stakeholders, including the Government and the Irish language community. We recommend that the Department for Communities ensures that the appropriate resources and infrastructure are provided for the full implementation of the Irish Language Strategy.

EAP recommendations in relation to the monitoring of any future strategy

Strategy Delivery Group

- E.2 We recommend the establishment of a Strategy Delivery Group to take overall responsibility for ensuring that the aims of any future strategy are met. We recommend that the Group should be chaired by the Minister for Communities and should include senior officials from the departments, Foras na Gaeilge and representatives (2-3) of the Irish language community.⁴⁴
- E.3 We recommend that Foras na Gaeilge, the body established under the Belfast Agreement to promote the Irish language throughout the island of Ireland, be consulted to ensure that the principles of language planning inform the Strategy implementation process. It shall also ensure that the interests of the Irish language community are communicated.
- E.4 We also recommend that advice be sought on a regular basis from independent national and international experts.
- E.5 The Strategy Delivery Group shall meet at least once each quarter.
- E.6 We recommend that the Strategy Delivery Group should:
- be both a leader and a pillar of the strategy;
 - agree Departmental implementation plans to deliver the strategy;
 - hold regular meetings to monitor the implementation of the strategy;
 - report on strategy progress; and
 - make recommendations on developments in the Irish language sector and suggest amendments in order to cater for new needs that may arise during the lifetime of the Strategy.

⁴⁴ Foras na Gaeilge established the Language Development Forum as part of the review of Irish language core-funded bodies

EAP recommendations in relation to a Strategy Unit

The following actions are recommended:

E.7 A Strategy Unit shall be established in the Department for Communities to ensure that work on the delivery of the Strategy is progressed effectively.

E.8 The Strategy Unit shall:

- support and advise on the work of the Strategy Delivery Group;
- commission and coordinate Departmental input into implementation plans (including agencies and arm's-length bodies) and specify how they shall contribute to delivery in the key action areas;
- regularly consult with Foras na Gaeilge and the six core-funded lead organisations, as appropriate;
- advise Departments on implementation, drawing on the advice of Foras na Gaeilge and the Advisory Forum;
- work closely with Departments and other stakeholders to advance implementation;
- monitor and publish regular updates on the implementation of the Strategy;
- report to the Strategy Delivery Group on the progress of the implementation plans;
- be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, including the secretarial function;
- be responsible for the secretariat and regular management of the Inter-Departmental Group for the Implementation of the European Charter; and
- closely discuss the balanced implementation of the legislation, as well as the Irish Language Strategy, with the Irish Language Commissioner, the Executive Office and other parties.

EAP recommendations in relation to an Advisory Forum

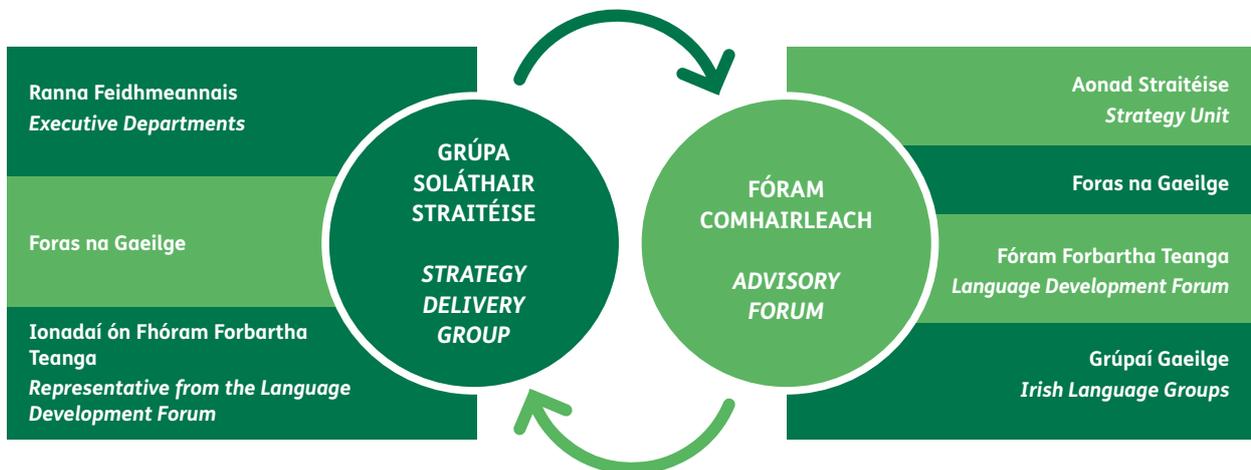
The following actions are recommended:

E.9 An Advisory Forum shall be established, comprising the Strategy Unit, Foras na Gaeilge, representatives responsible for the areas identified under language planning (young people; families; community; education; arts; communications; advocacy/legislation; economic development; early years) and other local Irish language stakeholders.

E.10 The role of the Advisory Forum shall be to advise the Unit. It shall also ensure that the views of the public are communicated.

E.11 Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between the Strategy Delivery Group and the Advisory Group.

E.12 The Advisory Forum shall meet at least three times each year.



Fíor 3: Struchtúr Feidhmiúcháin na Straitéise

Figure 3: Strategy Implementation Structure

EAP recommendations in relation to Implementation Plans

The following actions are recommended:

E.13 A 5-year action plan shall be prepared every five years.

E.14 The departments shall publish implementation plans and monitoring reports setting out how they are delivering on the aims, objectives and action areas of the strategy each year, based on the 5-Year Action Plan.

E.15 The departments shall take responsibility for communicating the aims and objectives of the strategy to their arm’s-length bodies and to other public bodies that they support. Where applicable, the departments shall liaise with other bodies so that they can also contribute to the delivery of the aims and objectives of the strategy.

E.16 The Foras na Gaeilge Corporate Plan shall complement the implementation of the strategy.

EAP recommendations in relation to review and revision

The following actions are recommended:

E.17 A panel independent of the departments of State, State agents and participants of the various groups mentioned in Part 5 above shall prepare a comprehensive report on the implementation of the strategy every five years. The panel shall be represented by Irish speakers and international experts.

E.18 The strategy shall be kept under review and amended or replaced by a new Strategy.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Northern Ireland Act, Section 28D(3)

1. EAP recommendations in relation to Irish Language Legislation and Status

Context of the recommendations

The Irish Language Act

1.1 In relation to Section 75 Equality duties and the Irish language, the 2010 COMEX report states the following:

123. The Committee of Experts on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (COMEX) has been informed of several instances, especially within local councils where it was decided not to promote or use the Irish language within their services on the grounds that it would contravene Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, which states that public authorities should take due regard of the need to promote equality of opportunity, among others between persons of different religious belief or political opinion. The Committee of Experts emphasises that this undertaking states that the adoption of special measures in favour of regional or minority languages aimed at promoting equality between the users of these languages and the rest of the population or which take due account of their specific conditions is not considered to be an act of discrimination against the users of more widely used languages.

1.2 The St Andrews Agreement states:

The [UK] Government will introduce an Irish Language Act reflecting on the experience of Wales and Ireland and work with the incoming Executive to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language.⁴⁶

1.3 This complements COMEX's recommendation that UK authorities should, as a matter of urgency:

adopt and implement a comprehensive Irish language policy, preferably through the adoption of legislation.⁴⁷

It must be acknowledged that, since the UK Government made its commitment in the St Andrews Agreement in 2006, Wales and the Republic of Ireland have made significant progress in their experience of language protection due to the Welsh Language Measure

⁴⁶ St Andrews Agreement, 2006; Annex B, Human Rights, Equality, Victims and Other Issues

⁴⁷ Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers, Recommendation CM/RecChL(2010)4 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the United Kingdom, 21 April 2010

(Wales) 2011 and the reviews carried out on the Official Languages Act in the Republic of Ireland. It is recommended that the developments in the aforementioned jurisdictions since 2006 be taken into account when, as promised in the St Andrews Agreement the UK Government introduces an Irish Language Act based on the experience of Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

- 1.4 In 2017, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers stated that the authorities should:
Adopt a comprehensive law and a strategy on the promotion of Irish in Northern Ireland.
- 1.5 While there are references to language legislation in the NDNA, there is still no comprehensive act in place, and the strategy shall continue to work to enhance and develop the protection and promotion of the Irish language through the introduction of robust rights-based legislation at Westminster or Stormont, as appropriate, within a short timescale.
- 1.6 In 2021, the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts stated in point 26 of the 5th Monitoring Report of the Committee of Experts (2021), that the legislation proposed in the New Decade, New Approach agreement is insufficient:

26. Therefore the Committee of Experts reiterates that an Irish Language Act would provide the basis for comprehensive and structured policy for the promotion of Irish in Northern Ireland, which would enable resolute action on the protection and promotion of Irish, in line with the United Kingdom's undertakings under the Charter. In this context, the Committee of Experts considers that, even once the measures contained in the January 2020 agreement are enacted, there remains a need for a comprehensive Irish Language Act.
- 1.7 In addition, the Committee of Experts (2021) affirms in the same report that both a Strategy and comprehensive Irish language legislation are an integral part of the protection and promotion of the Irish language and that, as a minimum baseline, the strategy and legislation should be representative, at least, of areas of life wider than those mentioned in the proposed legislation in the NDNA:

28. The Committee of Experts maintains its position that an Irish Language Act and a strategy are integral to the protection and promotion of Irish in Northern Ireland. It cannot but reiterate its previous recommendations to this effect. It welcomes that the proposed amendments to the Northern Ireland Act provide official recognition to Irish but is concerned that these amendments have not been adopted, and that their scope is somewhat limited vis-à-vis an Irish Language Act. It asks that further consideration be given, in these amendments, to making express provision for specific language rights, such as in the fields of education, access to public services, public signage and cultural activities.
- 1.8 Speaking at the Partnership for Diversity forum⁴⁸ in Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Scottish Gaelic College based on the Isle of Skye, in June 2006, Professor Robert Dunbar of the University of Edinburgh stated:

⁴⁸ The Partnership for Diversity forum is a project of the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages

Legislation is necessary for minority languages precisely because the environment in which speakers of minority languages exist generally does not tend to be supportive. Institutions which play an important part in daily life of speakers of minority languages tend not to respond to their needs. Even where there is a measure of tolerance and even goodwill towards the linguistic minority, other priorities intrude on the agenda of such institutions, with the result that the needs of users of minority languages tend to be forgotten.⁴⁹

1.9 Fernand De Varennes, UN special rapporteur on minority issues, comments:

Respect for the language of individuals flows from a fundamental right and is not some special concession or privileged treatment. Simply put is the right to be treated equally without discrimination, to which everyone is entitled.⁵⁰

1.10 According to Dr Oszmiańska-Pagett of the Council of Europe (CoE), language legislation is essential:

To have the legislation in place is one of the most important obligations stemming from the [European] charter, from just the legal point of view. But from a practical point of view this is essential because then education, culture and media are not held hostage to political tension.⁵¹

1.11 The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has expressed its concern that:

there is still no protection in respect of the Irish language in Northern Ireland, whereas the Welsh and the Gaelic languages are protected by the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, respectively. The Committee recommends that the State party, or the devolved administration in Northern Ireland, adopt an Irish Language Act, with a view to preserving and promoting minority languages and cultural heritage.⁵²

EAP recommendations:

1.12 It is recommended that, as part of the strategy, the Department for Communities works on an ongoing basis to implement within a reasonable timeframe legislative protection for the Irish language, based on the proposals published by POBAL in 2012 (Acht na Gaeilge TÉ Eis. II / Irish Language Act NI, Issue II (2012)⁵³ and in the Conradh na Gaeilge Discussion Document (2017)⁵⁴ and not already included in the New Decade, New Approach legislation. In the case of any conflict arising between the proposals made in the two documents above mentioned or with the NDNA legislation, the strongest proposals shall be adopted on the basis of expert

49 Dunbar, R. (2006) Implementing Language Legislation: A Comparison, Page 3

50 De Varennes, F., 1996. Language, Minorities and Human Rights (International Studies in Human Rights, v. 45). page: 117

51 BBC, 15/5/2018: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-44116786>

52 UN Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding Observations for Great Britain and Northern Ireland (2009) E/C.12/GBR/CO/5, Paragraph 37

53 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602f79a565837b32cc85cebe/t/61767fbd5f3b4c74841c07cd/1635155910841/Acht+na+Gaeilge+Eis+2+Edition.pdf>

54 https://cnag.ie/images/Acht_Gaeilge_%C3%B3_Thuaidh/15M%C3%812017_Pl%C3%A9ch%C3%A1ip%C3%A9is_ar_Acht_Gaeilge_%C3%B3_Thuaidh.pdf

and independent advice. It is recommended that new and comprehensive rights-based Irish language legislation be enacted within a period of five years from the date of the introduction of the NDNA legislation.

- 1.13 It is recommended that, as part of the aforementioned comprehensive legislation, the POBAL proposals in Acht na Gaeilge T   Eis. II /Irish Language Act NI, Issue II (2012) and those of Conradh na Gaeilge (2017) in relation to education be taken included. It is recommended, as a fundamental principle of the future Irish language legislation and in the implementation of the strategy, that it be recognised that parents in NI have the right for their children to receive pre-school, primary and post-primary education through the medium of Irish and to be taught Irish at all stages of primary and post-primary education.
- 1.14 Under the NDNA legislation, the Irish Language Commissioner shall have a statutory role in regularly monitoring and reviewing any legislation relating to the Irish language. He/she shall coordinate this with input into the monitoring and review processes from the Irish language community and independent experts.
- 1.15 It is recommended that, within five years of the date of entry into force of the Irish language legislation promised in the NDNA Agreement, and every five years thereafter, the Equality Commission reviews its interpretation of the Good Relations duty under Section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to ensure that this interpretation is compatible with the NDNA Irish language legislation, any legislation relating to the Irish language now and in the future, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, and all relevant human rights standards, both domestic and international, in place in Northern Ireland.
- 1.16 It is recommended that, on the entry into force of the NDNA Irish language legislation, the United Kingdom Government conducts a review of all government departments for which it is responsible and requires a review by all Crown bodies it oversees to ensure that no policies of any such departments and bodies unfairly discriminate against the Irish language. Likewise, it is recommended that the Northern Ireland Assembly conducts such a review of all departments in the devolved administration and that it requires such a review from any Crown bodies it oversees.
- 1.17 It is recommended that the commitments of the European Charter relating to the Irish language be adopted into domestic legislation in Northern Ireland and that any commitments of the Charter relating to areas of life under the jurisdiction of Westminster alone be adopted into domestic legislation by the Westminster parliament. It is recommended that this be completed within nine months of the entry into force of the NDNA legislation.
- 1.18 It is recommended that the Department for Communities coordinates with the relevant institutions and other relevant bodies in Wales and Scotland and that the Department negotiates at Westminster level for the adoption, within a reasonable timeframe, of further and more robust clauses contained in the Charter, based on proposals published by POBAL in the document entitled ‘An Chairt Eorpach do Theangacha R  igi  nacha n   Mionlach – P  irt III:

Moltaí i dtreo dhaingniú líon d'ailt níos suntasaí agus níos láidre i leith na Gaeilge' (Proposal for the Ratification of Further Part III Clauses of The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in respect of Irish).⁵⁵

Administration of Justice (Language) Act (Ireland) 1737 - EAP recommendations:

- 1.19 The Administration of Justice (Language) Act (Ireland) 1737, which forbids the use of any language but English in court proceedings, is still in force in Northern Ireland. By the end of the 19th century, relevant such Acts had been repealed in England, Scotland and Wales, and subsequently in the 26 counties of Ireland following the foundation of the State. Legal provisions are now in place regarding the use of Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Irish in the courts of Wales, Scotland and Ireland respectively.
- 1.20 It is recommended that a Bill repealing the Administration of Justice (Language) Act (Ireland) 1737 be presented to the Executive and the Assembly (or Westminster) as soon as possible, should this not have been done before the adoption of this Irish Language Strategy. As part of the ongoing negotiation process for the implementation of appropriate legislation for the Irish language, it is recommended that the Department for Communities and the Department of Justice continue to negotiate the implementation of comprehensive rights-based Irish language legislation within five years of the entry into force of the NDNA legislation. As part of this legislation, as well as a wide range of guaranteed rights in education, political institutions, local councils, media and public services, it is recommended that a person has the right to use the Irish language while speaking before any court or tribunal or any such judicial body in Northern Ireland. It is recommended that he/she also has the right to use the Irish language in any pleading or document relating to such institutions. In the course of judicial proceedings, it is recommended that all courts and tribunals and all such judicial bodies have a duty to ensure that any person appearing before them or giving evidence before them may be heard in Irish, if they so wish, regardless of their ability to speak and / or understand English, and this without any disadvantage to them. Where a person chooses to use the Irish language, it is recommended that he/she be provided with an interpreter free of charge. In addition, it shall be the duty of the court, the tribunal and any such decision-making body to inform any person present and the general public of the right to use the Irish language, as set out in this paragraph.
- 1.21 The use of Irish in the courts is explained in the 'Public Services' / 'Administration of Justice' section of this report. Following the repeal of the 1737 Act, it is proposed that it be ensured that Irish language services are available, advertised and facilitated for those who wish to use them.

55 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602f79a565837b32cc85cebe/t/617c01ee6313891853598580/1635516910474/Part+III+++clauses.pdf>

Legal Texts - EAP recommendation:

- 1.22 Having adopted Article 9(3) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the UK Government is required to provide in the Irish language the most important statutory texts, as well as those relating to users of Irish in particular. Following the fifth monitoring cycle on the implementation of the Charter, the Committee of Experts has noted that no further statutory texts have been provided in the Irish language. It is recommended that the number of legal texts at national and local level provided in the Irish language be increased with the aim of providing all significant legal texts in Irish.

Language Standards and Services - EAP recommendations:

- 1.23 Irish Language Standards will be introduced under the New Decade, New Approach legislation. A system of regulation based on Language Standards has been at the heart of Wales' approach to language protection since 2011. It is recommended that legislative provision and regulation in Northern Ireland reflects best practice in relation to the mechanism of Standards, including (but not limited to) the adoption of 5 different types of standards, all of which are to be specified by the Irish Language Commissioner:
- (1) Service delivery standards
 - (2) Policy making standards
 - (3) Operational standards
 - (4) Promotion standards
 - (5) Record keeping standards
- 1.24 It is recommended that policy making standards be intended to secure one or more of three results. The first is that the policy maker must consider, 'what effects, if any (whether positive or adverse) the policy decision would have on: (a) opportunities for others to use the Irish language, or (b) treating the Irish language no less favourably than the English language'. The second is that the person making the decision must consider 'how the decision could be made so that it has positive effects, or increased positive effects on: (a) opportunities for others to use the Irish language, or (b) treating the Irish language no less favourably than the English language'.
- The third is that the person making the decision must consider 'how the decision could be made so that it does not have adverse effects (direct or indirect) on: (a) opportunities for others to use the Irish language, or (b) treating the Irish language no less favourably than the English language.'
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1.25 Under the NDNA legislation, there is a list of public bodies affected by the legislation, insofar as it relates to the implementation of Language Standards. This list is limited to the Public Services Ombudsman Act (NI) 2016. It is also recommended that the NDNA legislation and, where necessary, legislation at Westminster level must register and make reference to any other public body or Government service specified in the Human Rights Act 1998, in particular the essential public services found at gov.uk, including DVLA, tax/HMRC, passport, health, public utilities such as electricity, gas and water services, as well as the BBC.

2. EAP recommendations in relation to Public Services

Context of the Section on Public Services

- 2.1 As is described in the “Irish Language Legislation and Status” section, the EAP recommends that the strategy work on an ongoing basis to secure comprehensive rights-based Irish language legislation, based on proposals published by POBAL (2012)⁵⁶ and Conradh na Gaeilge (2017).⁵⁷
- 2.2 The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (the Charter) states that allowing the use of regional or minority languages in dealings with public authorities is fundamental to the status of these languages and their development. Language is a means of communication and cannot be limited to the sphere of private relations alone. The Charter further states that if a language is not used or visible in the political, legal or administrative sphere, ‘it will gradually lose all its terminological potential in that field and become a ‘handicapped’ language, incapable of expressing every aspect of community life’.
- 2.3 Under the NDNA legislation, the Irish Language Commissioner shall be responsible for classifying the public authorities, approving the Irish Language Standards and determining the necessary services required to carry them out.
- 2.4 As part of the classification by the Irish Language Commissioner, the Irish language ability of employees and the current state of Irish language services shall be examined. Once determined by the Irish Language Commissioner, the key posts requiring fluency in Irish shall be identified and the public authority shall provide an appropriate training programme. Focus shall be placed on those areas in which sustainable high-quality communities and networks are using the Irish language or in which development is in progress. An action plan shall also be established to ensure service delivery to other areas in accordance with demand.
- 2.5 Upon receipt of notice from the Irish Language Commissioner, any public body, other than a public body listed in the Schedule under the NDNA legislation, shall be required to prepare and present to the Commissioner, no later than six months from the day it receives said notice, a plan for the Irish language setting out the means by which its obligations under the Standards laid down by the Commissioner shall be met. The Irish Language Commissioner may approve such a plan in its current form or may require the public body to make any changes that the Board of the body deems appropriate. Where the public body is requested to make such changes, it must act accordingly and present the plan again within three

56 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602f79a565837b32cc85cebe/t/61767fbd5f3b4c74841c07cd/1635155910841/Acht+na+Gaeilge+Eis+2+Edition.pdf>

57 https://cnag.ie/images/Acht_Gaeilge_%C3%B3_Thuaidh/15M%C3%812017_Pl%C3%A9ch%C3%A1ip%C3%A9is_ar_Acht_Gaeilge_%C3%B3_Thuaidh.pdf

months. Where the Commissioner is of the opinion that the plan has not been changed as requested, he/she may impose a plan subject to such conditions as he/she deems appropriate.

EAP recommendations

- 2.6 It is recommended that Irish language legislation relating to the NDNA document, other legislation (the Education Order, the St Andrews Agreement, 2006, etc.), the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, other relevant international instruments and any Irish language legislation enacted in future be effectively implemented.
 - 2.7 It is recommended that provision be made so that those seeking a service through the medium of Irish are able to conduct their business through the medium of Irish with all political institutions, with Government departments, both central and local, with other public sector bodies and with the legal system. Such a service should be equivalent, in terms of standard, speed and access to information on Irish language services, with existing English language services.
 - 2.8 Under the NDNA legislation, service users wishing to avail of services through the medium of Irish shall be able to access these services as set out by the Irish Language Commissioner in the best practice standards. It is recommended that all information regarding the services available be communicated to the public and that Government departments provide an active offer of both Irish and English language services to the public. Active offer means the offering/provision of the Irish language service without relying on a request from the public. If the public is unaware of the services available from a public body through the medium of Irish, they cannot demand these services or will be reluctant to do so. Active offer creates a positive culture for the public in terms of the Irish language as it is clear to people that speaking Irish is welcome in the body and that services will be available through the medium of Irish where such services are chosen. It is not sufficient to have only basic services available through the medium of Irish where these are not of an equal standard to those available from the same source through the medium of English. Such services must be available to the Irish language and Gaeltacht communities without any additional conditions, time or effort being incurred on their part. As part of the active offer, it is necessary to ensure that the Irish language is visible in public bodies on a par with English. The visibility of the Irish language creates a comfortable atmosphere for people to use their Irish, knowing that they will be dealt with as appropriate.
 - 2.9 It is recommended that all political institutions, as well as all public bodies operating in Northern Ireland, take resolute action to promote the Irish language in their operations. They are recommended, *inter alia*: (a) to seek to use, and promote the use of, the Irish language within their internal work, and (b) to provide services to the public through the medium of Irish to the maximum extent possible.
 - 2.10 It is recommended that departments and public authorities facilitate the use of Irish both orally and in writing with those who are seeking such a service through the medium of Irish.
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In the spirit of the New Decade, New Approach agreement, the visibility of the Irish language in shared public spaces shall be increased in order to enhance the normalisation, tolerance and understanding of the Irish language and respect for the language.

- 2.11 It is recommended that public authorities should be all groups noted under schedule 3 of the Public Services Ombudsman Act. This is specified in the Irish language legislation referred to in the New Decade, New Approach Agreement.
- 2.12 It is recommended that, with guidance from the Irish Language Commissioner or through the Standards, any forms, including online forms, which are widely used in public be provided bilingually (or as separate Irish and English versions, if appropriate) and that it be ensured that forms completed in Irish are dealt with as expeditiously as those in English. Both languages shall be equally authoritative on the forms.
- 2.13 If any person, place, organisation, house, street, area, or townland is named in the Irish language version, it is recommended that this name be of equal validity with its English language equivalent. The absence of any English equivalent shall not detract from the validity of the Irish language version of any name.
- 2.14 In addition, it is recommended that the proper use of the *síneadh fada* (diacritic mark or accent denoting vowel length) be facilitated and promoted through software and administration systems within six months of the introduction of the strategy.
- 2.15 It is recommended that the Central Translation Hub in Stormont be adequately resourced to ensure that the hub can meet the demands and needs of all state bodies in a timely manner.
- 2.16 It is recommended that measures to promote the Irish language be taken in places in which the Executive has permanent representation, for example in Washington and Brussels.
- 2.17 It is recommended that the number of Irish speakers at senior level in the Civil Service be increased (grade 5 and above). Among the policies, it is recommended that a separate staff unit be established within the Department for Communities, headed by a senior officer reporting to the Head of Department, to deal with issues related to funding, the Irish language strategy and funding opportunities for the Irish language community. It is recommended that a permanent infrastructure not dependent on the functioning of the Irish Language Commissioner be created in the Civil Service, comprising staff, resources and the provision of Irish language support.
- 2.18 It is recommended that the Department for Communities organises a comprehensive annual publicity campaign to raise the status of the Irish language and to encourage people to learn and use Irish and to develop mutual understanding for the language. This shall include signage, television programmes, radio programmes and written media and all of these will be suitable for all age groups.

Public Bodies - EAP recommendations:

- 2.19 As under Irish language legislation promised in the NDNA agreement, Irish is an official language in Northern Ireland, all clauses of the NDNA Irish language legislation should be interpreted in a manner consistent with Official Status. As is described in the “Irish Language Legislation and Status” section, the EAP recommends that the strategy work on an ongoing basis to secure comprehensive rights-based Irish language legislation, based on proposals published by POBAL (2012) and Conradh na Gaeilge (2017).
- 2.20 Any right conferred by the NDNA legislation and any future Irish language legislation for a person to use the Irish language shall not be dependent on that person’s ability to speak or understand English.
- 2.21 It is recommended that the following are ensured:
- that the corporate identity of the public body is presented bilingually in all cases, meaning that the name of the body, together with all other information about the body, appears on stationery, business cards or vehicles, and that this information is written in both Irish and English, with the letters of the words being of equal size in both languages;
 - that the name of the body and any information provided on any signage used on the exterior of buildings used by the public body is in Irish and English, with letters of equal size used except in the case of those public bodies whose services are primarily focused on the needs of Irish speakers and that decide to use external signage which gives priority or exclusivity to the Irish language;
 - to the maximum extent possible, that any sign used by the public body inside the building is in both Irish and English, with letters of equal size in both languages used;
 - that the public body’s website maximises the use of the Irish language and provides in Irish all important information about its events/services;
 - that the following documents are published simultaneously, in both print and electronic format, in both Irish and English:
 - any document setting out public policy recommendations, in particular consultation documents on legislation and regulations;
 - any annual report; and
 - any press release or other formal statement issued to the press, radio or television community, as well as online social media.
 - to the maximum extent possible, that any other public document prepared by the public body is written in both Irish and English;
 - that any public documents or any printed or online material prepared by the public body in Irish are updated, republished and widely distributed in the same manner as the English versions so that the Irish language community is not disadvantaged.
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- that appropriate measures are taken, including the provision of simultaneous translation and interpretation, to ensure that the Irish language can be used at any public meeting of the body and that no individual will be disadvantaged if he/she chooses to do so.
- that agents and contractors of any public body comply with the above paragraphs.

Local Councils - EAP recommendations:

- 2.22 As under Irish language legislation promised in the NDNA agreement, Irish is an official language within local authorities in Northern Ireland, all provisions of the NDNA Irish language legislation should be interpreted in a manner consistent with Official Status. As is described in the “Irish Language Legislation and Status” section, the EAP recommends that the strategy work on an ongoing basis to secure comprehensive rights-based Irish language legislation, based on proposals published by POBAL (2012) and Conradh na Gaeilge (2017).
- 2.23 It is recommended that the Department for Communities coordinates an information programme for local councils to ensure that they understand their duties under the NDNA legislation, other legislation relating to the Irish language and any future Irish language legislation, as well as their duties under this Strategy. This shall be done in conjunction with the Irish Language Commissioner, Foras na Gaeilge and the Lead Organisation responsible for advocacy.
- 2.24 It is recommended that any consent conferred by the NDNA legislation and any right created in other future Irish language legislation for a person to use the Irish language should not be dependent on that person’s ability to speak or understand English.
- 2.25 It is recommended that recognition be given to the fact that everyone has the right to use the Irish language in any meeting, debate or other event organised by these authorities or by committees and other bodies. The authorities also have a duty to facilitate the exercise of this right.
- 2.26 It is recommended that, when the Irish language is used, facilities for simultaneous translation/interpretation from Irish to English be provided for the benefit of all participants in the events, the audience, the media and the general public.
- 2.27 It is recommended that, in the official reports of meetings, debates and other proceedings of local authorities, and of their committees and other bodies, everything communicated in Irish be reported in Irish and accompanied by an English translation.
- 2.28 It is recommended that, when developing Community Plans, each local authority must have due regard to the needs and views of Irish speakers living within its administrative area.
- 2.29 It is recommended that local councils ensure:
- that the requirements of the NDNA Irish language legislation, other legislation relating to the Irish language, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and other international instruments and any new legislation enacted in future are fully implemented and that they provide for effective Irish language services;
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- that regressive or discriminatory decisions or differentiation having a negative impact on the Irish language shall not be accepted and that, where such arises, the local authority has a duty to take active measures to combat this oppression or discrimination, including initiating court action, if necessary;
- Language standard applicable to local councils under the NDNA legislation and all measures set out in that language standard are fully complied with. As a local service provider, the local council should be in the highest category of language standards and should, therefore, have a wide range of best-practice services in place;
- to maximise the provision of services in the Irish language in conjunction with stakeholders and the Stormont Central Translation Hub;
- to adopt Irish language policies, strategies and plans and appoint full-time Irish language officers;
- to introduce, or increase the number of, facilities for the use of the Irish language in council or committee meetings;
- to increase the visibility of the Irish language by publicising the availability of their Irish language services, especially on public information leaflets, marketing materials, social media and any other form of advertising;
- to provide an Irish language or bilingual version of their public publications, of official documents relating to services provided to the public and of forms, websites/digital resources/social media accounts in line with the approach of the strategy, the relevant standards and Irish language legislation contained in the NDNA and other documents and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, as well as other international instruments;
- that clear bilingual branding facilitating greater visibility for the Irish language appears on their corporate identity, as well as on internal and external signage and at Council venues and facilities. It is recommended that this be undertaken in accordance with international best practice, as stated on page 25 of the guidance provided by Foras na Gaeilge;⁵⁸
- that, throughout each council area, the use of Irish language placenames, Irish language townland addresses, etc., is preserved and developed and that relevant signage is erected for placenames and townland addresses, ‘welcome’ signs, etc., by creating a proactive and comprehensive policy on townland and street placenames in line with international best practice and a policy on the naming and Irish language names of new housing developments in accordance with locally recognised placenames, and that such a policy is not limited to specific areas or dependent on requests received from the public; and
- to promote a significant number of tourism and cultural initiatives through the medium of Irish.

58 <https://www.forasnagaeilge.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Foras-A4-Council-Guidelines-English-Prf10-1.pdf>

The NI Assembly - EAP recommendations:

- 2.30 As under Irish language legislation promised in the NDNA agreement, Irish is an official language of the Northern Ireland Assembly all provisions of the NDNA Irish language legislation should be interpreted in a manner consistent with Official Status. As is described in the ‘Irish Language Legislation and Status’ section, the EAP recommends that the strategy word on an ongoing basis to secure comprehensive rights-based Irish language legislation, based on proposals published by POBAL (2012) and Conradh na Gaeilge (2017).
- 2.31 Any right conferred by the NDNA legislation and any other future Irish language legislation for a person to use the Irish language shall not be dependent on that person’s ability to speak or understand English.
- 2.32 Regressive or discriminatory decisions or differentiation having a negative impact on the Irish language shall not be accepted and that, where such arises, the council has a duty to take active measures to combat this oppression or discrimination, including initiating court action, if necessary.
- 2.33 Everyone shall have the right to use the Irish language in any debate or any other proceedings of the Assembly, or in the proceedings of committees or other bodies of the Assembly, with the Assembly also having a duty to facilitate the exercise of this right.
- 2.34 When the Irish language is used in the Assembly, a system of simultaneous translation/ interpretation from Irish to English shall be provided for the benefit of all those participating in the proceedings, those present, the media and the general public.
- 2.35 Where the Irish language is used, the official reports of the Assembly’s debates and other proceedings of its committees and other bodies shall include an Irish language account of that speech, with a translation of the speech also published in English and any other language, if necessary.

Administration of Justice - EAP recommendations:

- 2.36 Any person shall have the right to use the Irish language while speaking before any court or tribunal or any such decision-making body in Northern Ireland. He/she shall also have the right to use the Irish language in any pleading or document relating to such bodies. Use of the Irish language version will not affect the validity of any such documentation, even if an English language version of the same documentation is available.
- 2.37 In the course of judicial proceedings, all courts and tribunals and all such decision-making bodies shall have a duty to ensure that any person appearing before them or giving evidence to them may be heard in Irish, if s/he chooses, and regardless of the ability of that person to speak and /or understand English, and that in so being heard will not be placed at a disadvantage by not being heard in English. Where a person chooses to use the Irish language, s/he shall be provided with an interpreter free of charge. In addition, it shall be the duty of the court, the tribunal and any such decision-making body to inform any person present and the general public of the right to use the Irish language.
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2.38 Where the Northern Ireland Assembly, a local authority or any other body is a party to civil proceedings before a court, tribunal or any judicial body in Northern Ireland in which the other party has decided to use the Irish language, it is recommended:

- That the Assembly, the authority or the public body uses the Irish language during the proceedings if the Irish language is chosen;
- That a will and a last will and testament written in the Irish language be accepted and that the Irish version be of equal validity with the English version; and
- That the following documents, along with all application forms for such documents, be provided in the Irish language:
 - (a) Driving licences of all types
 - (b) Passports and visas (under the auspices of the UK)
 - (c) Birth certificates
 - (d) Death certificates, and
 - (e) Marriage and civil partnership certificates

The General Register Office shall be required to provide an Irish language version of marriage and civil partnership certificates, if requested.

EAP recommendations in relation to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

2.39 The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is an important instrument for the delivery of public services in the Irish language and it is, therefore, recommended as essential that all articles relating to the Irish language, as ratified by the British Government, in Parts II and III be fully implemented. In addition, it is recommended that the Department for Communities negotiates with the British Government to secure from it the ratification for the Irish language of a wide range of stronger clauses from Part III of the Charter, based on proposals published by POBAL in the document entitled ‘An Chairt Eorpach do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlach – Páirt III: Moltaí i dtreo dhaigniú líon d’ailt níos suntasaí agus níos láidre i leith na Gaeilge’ (Proposal for the Ratification of Further Part III Clauses of The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in respect of Irish).⁵⁹

2.40 It is recommended that the European Charter must have an applied legal basis in domestic law in Northern Ireland. The Department for Communities could achieve this through the Bill of Rights promised in the Good Friday Agreement, through other specific legislation or through negotiations at Westminster level.

⁵⁹ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602f79a565837b32cc85cebe/t/617c01ee6313891853598580/1635516910474/Part+III++clauses.pdf>

EAP recommendations in relation to the Irish Language Commissioner and the Irish Language Standards

- 2.41 As set out in the “Irish Language Legislation and Status” section at point 1.23, under the NDNA legislation, Irish Language Standards shall be introduced. A system of regulation based on language standards has been at the heart of Wales’ approach to language protection since 2011. It is recommended that the Department for Communities takes resolute action to ensure that the provision of legislation and regulation in Northern Ireland reflects best practice in relation to the mechanisms of standards, including (but not limited to) the adoption of 5 types of standards, all of which are to be specified by the Irish Language Commissioner: (1) Service delivery standards (2) Policy making standards (3) Operational standards (4) Promotion standards (5) Record keeping standards.
- 2.42 Under the NDNA Irish language legislation, the public bodies listed in the Schedule are required to prepare a plan for the Irish language. It is recommended that reference be made to the following in all language plans created:
- (a) details of how the public body shall accommodate those contacting it in the Irish language, including details of the arrangements for responding in Irish to questions from the media;
 - (b) details of documents and other material that the public body shall provide in the Irish language for internal and external use, and information on which of these shall be created in Irish and which shall be translated from English language source material;
 - (c) details of the translation services that the public body shall provide, if requested, in relation to material which it does not usually intend to provide in the Irish language;
 - (d) details of services that shall be provided exclusively to Irish speakers, including learners;
 - (e) details of at least one person in a senior management or staff position who has been designated as a contact for those both inside and outside the body wishing to ask questions in the Irish language or about Irish language matters;
 - (f) details of -
 - (i) the members of staff/department to which the public body shall provide Irish language training and the type of training involved;
 - (ii) the opportunities that the public body shall provide to its staff to learn and use Irish;
 - (g) details of the posts for which the public body shall specify the ability to communicate in the Irish language as an essential qualification; (h) details of how the public body intends to perform any function or duty in relation to the Irish language, where such a case arises from an enactment other than any enactment contained in this NDNA legislation; and details of -
 - (i) the timeframe set by the public body for the implementation of each measure specified in the plan;
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(ii) the timeframe and arrangements intended by the public body for conducting a review of the plan; and

(iii) the predicted level of Irish language use by the public body in the performance of its functions, with an indication of how the public body intends to measure and record such use.

- 2.43 It is recommended that all Irish language plans prepared pursuant to the relevant paragraphs above cover a period of three years and that, at the end of this period, the relevant public body should be responsible for submitting a report to the Irish Language Commissioner on the implementation of the plan and the compliance therewith, as well as on the new plan proposed for the next three-year period. Implementation shall be monitored on an annual basis.
- 2.44 It is recommended that all institutions, including universities, further education colleges, etc., and all accreditation bodies, including professional bodies, that receive notice from the Commissioner prepare a language plan which complies with the principles set out in the paragraphs above and which takes into account all matters specified in these paragraphs by setting out their commitments in relation to the training provided to Irish language service providers receiving training or accreditation from said body or institution. Any such plan shall be ratified by the Commissioner.
- 2.45 It is recommended that the duties specified in these paragraphs apply in general to any successor or assigned institution of any public body covered by the NDNA legislation or future Irish language legislation. If, as a result of any new act of the United Kingdom Parliament or the Northern Ireland Assembly, new boundaries are created for any area currently falling under the remit of existing public bodies (bodies in existence when the NDNA legislation is passed) or if new bodies are created to perform any part of the remit of existing bodies, it must be ensured that these new boundaries do not impede the promotion of the Irish language or the rights and opportunities of Irish speakers under the NDNA legislation or under the strategy. It must also be ensured that the new bodies, if any, are permanently bound by the duties set out in the above paragraphs. In addition, any new act amending the Schedule to this Act must contain a consequential amendment so that it includes each new body serving areas currently falling under the remit of any of the public bodies listed in the Schedule to the NDNA legislation.
- 2.46 All public bodies to which this section applies shall ensure that appropriate measures are taken, including the provision of signage, advertisements and other information on services and communication initiatives with the Irish language community, in order to inform the Irish language community that these services are available in Irish at the request of any member of the Irish language community. They shall also encourage members of the Irish language community to take advantage of the opportunity to avail of services in Irish.
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Monitoring - EAP recommendations

2.47 It shall be the duty of each public body listed in the Schedule to the NDNA legislation to take appropriate measures to monitor compliance with the obligations set out above. The public body must carry out this monitoring each year and submit the monitoring report for consideration by the Irish Language Commissioner on an annual basis.

EAP recommendations in relation to recruitment and training

2.48 Under the NDNA legislation, all public bodies operating in Northern Ireland, including those operating throughout the United Kingdom, shall take resolute action to promote the Irish language in their operations. They must take appropriate measures to recruit Irish-speaking staff to satisfactorily meet demand and needs. These measures should include, *inter alia*:

- advertising all posts bilingually in the media, including a reasonable range of Irish language publications, and ensuring that the Irish language is mentioned as an employment advantage in any post in which it could be used to deal effectively with the public;
- ensuring that an Irish language qualification is accepted as being equivalent to an English language qualification for any post for which an English language qualification is required;

2.49 All public bodies shall send the following information to the Irish Language Commissioner:

- details of at least one person in a senior management or staff position who has been designated as a contact for those both inside and outside the body wishing to ask questions in the Irish language or about Irish language matters;
- details of the members of staff to whom the public body shall provide Irish language training and the type of training involved;
- details of the opportunities that the public body shall provide to its staff to learn and use Irish; and
- details of the posts for which the public body shall specify the ability to communicate in the Irish language as an essential qualification.

2.50 All public bodies shall nominate a senior manager who shall authorise and encourage staff to learn Irish to an appropriate level so that they can carry out their work through the medium of Irish. The public bodies shall provide ongoing Irish language training as part of professional development, providing sufficient financial resources to facilitate same.

2.51 All members of staff shall be facilitated and encouraged to learn how to conduct their own work through the medium of Irish.

- 2.52 Language awareness and training programmes shall be organised and provided in such a way that a sufficient number of public service staff are able to provide services effectively in the Irish language to customers requesting such services. Such programmes shall be adapted to the needs of Irish language users in different areas of the public sector.
- 2.53 Irish language training shall be provided on an ongoing basis as part of staff professional development, and it shall be ensured that sufficient funds are provided to undertake same.
- 2.54 Appropriate steps shall be taken to recruit Irish speakers, including, *inter alia*, advertising all posts bilingually in the media, including a reasonable range of Irish language publications, and ensuring that the Irish language is declared to be an employment advantage in any post in which it could be used to deal effectively with the public.
- 2.55 It shall be ensured that an Irish language qualification is accepted as being equivalent to an English language qualification for any post for which an English language qualification is required.

3. EAP recommendations in relation to Education

- 3.1 The Department of Education shall prepare a departmental policy that shall appropriately cater for the Irish language in all its schools and fulfil the statutory responsibility to facilitate and encourage Irish-medium education and the Irish Language Strategy. The implementation of the Irish language policy/Irish-medium education policy shall be monitored by the Department of Education and the Education Authority (and by any successor or other authority to which the duties of such bodies are assigned) and by their agencies or contractors performing relevant functions on their behalf. Resolute actions shall be taken to encourage, facilitate and adequately fund the implementation of the following EAP actions.
- 3.2 The Department of Education shall take appropriate steps to provide evidence on a regular basis on the implementation of actions (a)-(j) below:
- a. develop Irish-medium pre-school, primary and secondary education in a way that facilitates widespread access to Irish-medium education at all levels and ensure continuity of provision, in particular between pre-school and primary education, primary and secondary education, and secondary and third-level education;
 - b. provide initial and continuing teacher education to the Irish-medium sector at all stages, including specific core immersion education competencies;
 - c. promote the teaching of Irish as a subject in English-medium primary and secondary schools based on international best practice in indigenous language learning, from the beginning of primary school to the end of secondary school; take appropriate measures to provide Irish as a subject of study for secondary school students who have received all or part of their primary education through the medium of Irish, and ensure continuity of provision, particularly between primary and secondary education, and secondary and third-level education;
 - d. develop and provide an adequate supply of textbooks, software and appropriate audio-visual and internet materials suitable for Irish-medium education, as well as all materials suitable to the needs of children learning Irish in English-medium education;
 - e. support the development of the Áisaonad Lán-Ghaeilge (the Irish-medium Resource Unit) as a resource for the Irish-medium education community catering specifically for Irish-medium needs; develop and provide a full range of support services through the medium of Irish, including, but not limited to, a healthcare and health information service for Irish-medium schools and students being educated through the medium of Irish;
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- f. develop and provide a full range of curricular and educational support services, including, but not limited to, examination and assessment tools and support, catering to the specific needs of Irish-medium students;
 - g. develop and provide a curriculum that meets the specific needs of Irish-medium school students and reflects international best practice in immersion education;
 - h. develop and provide a curriculum that meets the specific needs of students learning Irish in English-medium schools;
 - i. provide, through consultation and coordination with other appropriate bodies, an extra-curricular and youth service for the Irish-medium school sector, and provide, in consultation and coordination with other such bodies as may be appropriate, an adequate extra-curricular and youth service suitable to the needs of students who are not enrolled in Irish-medium education but are being taught Irish; and
 - j. fund and provide research that will ensure that there is a research base for teaching and learning in the sector in relation to the development of Irish-medium education.
- 3.3 Any future strategy shall ensure that the Department of Education, through the Education Authority, makes appropriate travel arrangements (school bus, taxi, public transport pass or cash grant covering the full cost) to bring all students enrolled in an Irish-medium school to their nearest Irish-medium school and back home at no cost to the student, the student's parents or the school.
- 3.4 Any future strategy shall ensure that the Department of Education, through the Education Authority, takes resolute action to encourage, facilitate and appropriately fund the development of Irish-medium pre-school education and to give due regard to the language needs of children learning Irish as a second language.
- 3.5 In accordance with the strategy, the implementation of the Department of Education's statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education shall be monitored. This duty shall be prioritised where there is a conflict with rules not explicitly taking the needs of the Irish-speaking community into account.
- 3.6 Within 6 months of the Strategy being approved, each department shall publish an Irish language policy outlining the steps taken by the department to implement the Irish Language Strategy.
- 3.7 The Department of Education shall take appropriate steps to ensure that all relevant public authorities provide through the medium of Irish to all Irish-medium schools and to all students being educated through the medium of Irish the full range of support services provided through the medium of English to students being educated through the medium of English. In Particular, the Department of Health and the Health & Social Care Trusts In Northern Ireland shall provide healthcare and health provision through the medium of Irish to all Irish-medium schools and to all students being educated through the medium of Irish and shall provide materials and information relating to personal development and health to such schools through the medium of Irish.
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- 3.8 In addition to the above actions, the Department of Education shall take the following into account when designing and preparing its Departmental policy:
- (i) have regard to the proposals published in the document entitled Acht na Gaeilge Eis. II (Irish Language Act, Issue II) (POBAL, 2012)⁶⁰;
 - (ii) publish a draft version of the policy;
 - (iii) consult with any individual or organisation deemed to be an interested party and give due consideration to submissions;
 - (iv) provide evidence of the ways in which it will give effect to its statutory duties in relation to the Irish-medium education system and sector under the Education Order (NI) 1998;
 - (v) develop an appropriate network for provision, ensuring continuity from Irish-medium pre-school to primary education, from Irish-medium primary to second level education and from Irish-medium secondary to third-level education and ensuring continuity in the positive provision made by each internal division or section within the Department itself;
 - (vi) set annual goals for the number of students being taught Irish, for the number taking Irish as a subject at GSCE and A-Level and for the grades obtained; and
 - (vii) demonstrate the ways in which it will develop an appropriate transport system to meet the needs of students enrolled in Irish-medium education at all levels and the needs of the Irish-medium sector as a whole in order to facilitate the development of the sector.
- 3.9 Reference shall be made to the above policy when making decisions under Section 14 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 on the establishment of new Irish-medium schools.
- 3.10 The NI Department of Education shall establish a Development Fund for Irish-medium Education and shall define the manner in which it will rely on the operation of this fund and the additional specialist funding it will provide to ensure that the fund is adequate for the aforementioned objectives.
- 3.11 The NI Department of Education shall establish an Information and Marketing Fund for Irish-medium Education and shall define the manner in which it will rely on the operation of this fund and the additional specialist funding it will provide to ensure that the fund is adequate for the objectives for which it is operated.
- 3.12 It is recommended that appropriate resources be provided to implement the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as an assessment aid in the Irish curriculum. The use of the CEFR would provide Irish with further status as a subject and aid students' employment opportunities (for example, 20% of those recruited in the Republic of Ireland by 2030 will have to be competent in Irish, based on the CEFR).
- 3.13 Irish-medium streams or units should be considered as an intermediate step through which education can, at the community's discretion, be provided through the medium of Irish, with

⁶⁰ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602f79a565837b32cc85cebe/t/61767fbd5f3b4c74841c07cd/1635155910841/Acht+na+Gaeilge+Eis+2+Edition.pdf>

appropriate support provided for the transition to an independent school.

Irish-medium Education

- 3.14 The experience of school leaders is that coherence between different Departments and between subdivisions of the Department of Education itself needs to be strengthened and improved. The school community is often left frustrated when calling on the Department to promote the development of Irish-medium education. Evidence of policy development in relation to the education system in general is reported without due recognition of the difference between equality and fairness and without regard to the needs of Irish-medium education nor to the fulfilment of statutory duties as a matter of priority. For example, if an evidence-based projection shows that an Irish-medium school will achieve viable student numbers that meet the criteria for permanent accommodation, it is appropriate to recognise this and approve the appropriate accommodation. If an Irish-medium school is disadvantaged by a policy designed for the general public, questions arise over how efficiently the duty to promote and encourage Irish-medium education is being implemented.
- 3.15 The Department of Education shall take appropriate steps to provide evidence on a regular basis on the implementation of the following actions:
- a. The goal, as in Wales, shall be to significantly increase the number of students in immersion education. A work plan shall be established under the strategy to increase student numbers in line with the most optimistic projections made by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, based on the existence of favourable conditions and the availability of sufficient resources to support continuous growth. At present, less than 3% of all admissions to primary education are in the Irish-medium primary sector. In implementing the strategy, the Department of Education, in conjunction with other departments, shall have regard to the goal that 10% of the school population will be learning through the medium of Irish by 2042.
 - b. The Department of Education shall draft and publish a departmental policy (and a cross-departmental policy, where appropriate) for Irish-medium education and non-formal learning outside the classroom and shall consult on the policy and its implementation without delay in order to meet each of the various aspects of provision in a comprehensive and coherent manner and fulfil its statutory duty in relation to the development of Irish-medium education. The implementation of the policy shall be evaluated and reported on each year. Policy drafting does not allow for delays in individual actions and progress during the preparation process to create continuity.
 - c. The Department of Education shall examine all policies in relation to its statutory duty in relation to Irish-medium education and non-formal learning outside the classroom and shall ensure that no policy disadvantages Irish-medium education or Irish-medium Youth Services, for example the Sustainable Schools Policy.

- d. The Department of Education and the Department for Communities shall consult on the design of a policy that will ensure Irish-medium school students' access to community and educational resources and the use of the school language as a means of communication, for example museums, planetariums and cultural and educational centres.
- e. The Department of Education shall recognise the specific needs relating to the development of the Irish-medium education sector. The statutory duty shall be fulfilled with no restriction or impediment to its development arising from the implementation of policies, rules and procedures designed without any regard to the needs of Irish-medium education. For example: recognising the specific language needs of schools and allowing Irish-medium schools to form partnerships with Gaeltacht schools as part of projects funded under Shared Education.
- f. The rights of both the parent and the child in relation to Irish-medium education and the learning of the language must be realised by adopting an integrated strategic approach covering all aspects – Special Educational Needs, travel, training, facilities, curricula, etc. Proposals should be established in accordance with the POBAL document entitled *Acht na Gaeilge Eis. II (2012) (Irish Language Act, Issue II (2012))*⁶¹. DE must fully recognise its responsibilities in relation to Irish-medium education and act accordingly. Recognition and resources must be provided to the specialist Irish language organisations providing services. A marketing fund must be established for Irish-medium education.
- g. Appropriate recognition shall be given to the role played by Irish-medium education in the Irish language community and in the promotion of the Irish language. There are 30 independent Irish-medium schools (28 primary and 2 post-primary schools), 7 Irish-medium units at primary level and 3 streams at post-primary level). It is recognised that there is an additional cost associated with resources and the curriculum in an Irish-medium school (Salisbury, 2013). It is recommended that the running costs of primary schools and the provision made in the Common Funding Scheme be reviewed to ensure that the additional costs associated with the provision of Irish-medium education are covered.
- h. The progress made since the publication of the Review of Irish-medium Education report (2009) shall be augmented in order to create a shared future for all based on equality. DE continues to implement the recommendations relating to the Irish-medium education sector at pre-school, primary and post-primary stages. In relation to pre-school provision, for example, Irish-medium education providers with a sufficient number of children can enter the funding programme even if English-medium provision is available in the same area but has not been filled. The outcome of this review has been the provision of support to educators and educational resources to embed Irish-medium education in the education system. Further funding was allocated to provide a range of support for Irish-medium education (curriculum, assessment and qualifications, teacher

⁶¹ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602f79a565837b32cc85cebe/t/61767fbd5f3b4c74841c07cd/1635155910841/Acht+na+-Gaeilge+Eis+2+Edition.pdf>

education, resources) to ensure parity of provision with English-medium education. More comprehensive and enhanced arrangements are now in place for translation and examinations conducted in Irish. In relation to support for Irish-medium educators, funding has continued to be provided, following the review, for initial teacher education in Irish-medium education centres, for teacher and classroom assistant continuing professional development, for pre-school educator development and for Board of Governors training and leadership. DE continues to fund Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) to promote Irish-medium education. In carrying out its role, the main functions and activities of CnaG relate to representation and advocacy, ethos, raising standards, area-based planning, promoting cooperation and liaising with other sectors. Building on this good practice, the Department shall remain vigilant when seeking opportunities for the development of Irish-medium education.

- i. At present, Irish-Medium (IM) schools receive a minimal supplement to their budgets through the Common Funding Scheme. The Department of Education will address this situation and ensure that IM schools are not disadvantaged by having to bear additional costs in relation to resources, staffing and curricular development.

3.16 The Department of Education shall, on an ongoing basis, monitor the implementation of the recommendations made in the Review and the implementation of the statutory duty in relation to the development of Irish-medium education. The Education Authority shall provide bursaries for the professional learning of Irish-medium teachers and classroom assistants, which were withdrawn in 2021.

3.17 The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the *Áisaonad*, funded by Foras na Gaeilge and based in St Mary's University College, provide a range of classroom resources for Irish-medium education. The teaching and learning resources shall be augmented based on teachers' professional aspirations and students' differentiated needs.

3.18 In accordance with the legislation, the Irish language is to be improved, protected and developed. It is important that DE continues to implement the recommendations of the Review of Irish-medium Education Report 2008⁶². DE also intends to have due regard to the findings and recommendations arising from the 2014 Ministerial Advisory Group on Irish-medium Post-Primary Education on how to deliver viable, sustainable and high-quality Irish-medium post-primary education that meets the needs of students and inspires confidence among parents.

62 <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/review-irish-medium-education-report>

EAP recommendations in relation to expanding the Accessibility of Irish-medium Education on a cross-community basis

- 3.19 Strategic planning is required to overcome historical, political and cultural barriers impeding the expansion of Irish as a living language in the wider community and the accessibility of Irish-medium education. DE shall set up a representative task group to explore this issue and draw up a plan. The Development Fund for marketing and publicity, which shall be established in the Department of Education to profile and inform Irish-medium education in general, shall have a role to play in such planning. The Marketing Fund shall not only assist in the recruitment of teachers but shall also disseminate information to the general public on what constitutes immersion education and Irish-medium education.
- 3.20 The importance of building relationships on an all-island, east-west, and international basis to share an understanding of immersion and Irish-medium education and to build a network of best practice shall be recognised. The EAP recommends that the Department provides support for development projects that strengthen relationships.

All-Ireland opportunities for Irish-medium education

- 3.21 As part of the North South Ministerial Council, Ministers shall focus on cooperation on Irish-medium education issues in order to develop the sector, to develop school resources and to build relationships between schools as part of the Irish-medium education community. The body of research reflecting all-Ireland collaboration between researchers and increasing the evidence-based understanding of Irish-medium education shall be enhanced.

Irish-medium pre-school education

- 3.22 The Department of Education shall take appropriate steps to provide evidence on a regular basis on the implementation of the following action:
- Irish-medium pre-school education is recognised as a cornerstone on which primary and post-primary developments in the Irish-medium education system are built.
- 3.23 The factors influencing a successful transition to an Irish-medium primary school are evidenced in the research report commissioned by the Department of Education (Mhic Aoidh et al., 2019) arising from ‘Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning 2013⁶³. The Department has adopted the majority of recommendations published in the report and the progress made since then has been recognised. The Department shall take further steps to comprehensively implement key recommendations contained in the report, including:

63 <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/framework-early-years-education-and-learning-october-2013>

- a. Providing continuing professional learning and support for target language development and early years pedagogy to nursery school staff and balancing the different characteristics of statutory and voluntary nursery schools, where appropriate.
 - b. Increasing the number of statutory nursery schools and facilitating admission to a statutory nursery school as a parental choice. The number of statutory schools grew from 14 to 18 between 2013 and 2019. This meant that the number of statutory schools was still well below the number of voluntary schools, of which there are 29.
 - c. Providing supporting resources and linguistic materials to parents.
- 3.24 The statutory development proposals process is used in cases in which the Department deals with proposals for statutory nursery school education provision. It is appropriate for the Department to respond positively to a development proposal for an Irish-medium statutory nursery school where there is not already a supply link between a primary school and a statutory nursery school.
- 3.25 The teacher/director to child ratio in the Irish-medium nursery school setting shall be reconsidered, taking into account the evidence of the link between this ratio and the acquisition of the target language required for the transition to primary school.
- 3.26 DE shall ensure that developments relating to the Pre-School Education Programme are brought forward in the context of its statutory duty and that account is taken of the fact that two years of pre-school education in the target language is considered to prepare students for the transition to an Irish-medium primary school.
- 3.27 DE shall continue to fulfil the statutory duty to develop Irish-medium education at pre-school level and to provide places in a range of pre-school centres, using the most appropriate mechanism, to ensure that a place in an Irish-medium nursery school is available to all children whose parents choose Irish-medium education.
- 3.28 As set out in Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning 2013, DE shall create Education Support Clusters, one of which may be a specific Irish-medium education cluster. The clusters shall draw on existing expertise and implement collaboration and dissemination of best practice.
- 3.29 To assist in addressing barriers to learning, the Learning to Learn Framework includes measures aimed at refocusing the use of extended schools funding to identify and address underdeveloped social, emotional and communication skills and to set criteria in the Pre-School Programme that are similar to those used in extended schools in voluntary and private centres. Irish-medium pre-school education centres that meet the criteria shall be included.
- 3.30 Learning to Learn also includes a measure to commission research on Irish-medium pre-school education outcomes as set out in the review of Irish-medium education.
- 3.31 The degree of English-medium pre-school education provision shall not impede the opening/development/funding of Irish-medium pre-schools. This is in line with recommendation 2 made in the Review of Irish-medium Education, which states:
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- a. “The existing policy on funded pre-school provision should be revised in light of the unique combination of the obligations arising from the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the recognised benefits of pre-school education and the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium Education, to allow registered, Irish-medium providers with sufficient children to receive funding even where English-medium provision is available in the area.”

Irish-medium Primary Schools

3.32 The Department of Education shall take appropriate steps to provide evidence on a regular basis on the implementation of the following actions:

- a. The Department of Education shall continue with the ongoing work on implementing the recommendations of the Review of Irish-medium Education (2008) and promoting primary education.
- b. DE shall continue to develop sustainable, vibrant and high-quality Irish-medium primary provision in response to parental demand and as an integral part of Area-based Plans. In consultation with stakeholders, the Department shall review the area-based planning approach from the perspective of facilitating and encouraging Irish-medium education.
- c. Appropriate support shall be provided to encourage the development of Irish-medium education, not only in terms of the growth of schools but also in terms of professional goals related to provision: further raising standards; supporting and maintaining the improvement processes being undertaken by individual organisations; and disseminating good practice across the sector, in order to consolidate and further enhance the high-quality consistency of work.
- d. Eligibility thresholds for capital funding, set following the Bain Review, are being implemented on an ongoing basis in the context of the DE Sustainable Schools Policy.⁶⁴ A review is needed on the alignment of this system with the Department’s statutory duty to develop and encourage Irish-medium education. It is clear that barriers are created for small schools located in accommodation which prevents the growth of the school.⁶⁵
- e. One of the biggest challenges for primary school leaders is securing temporary teachers throughout the year. It is appropriate for the Department to build on the work being done to prepare a sufficient number of commencing teachers for the sector.
- f. The Department shall recognise that Irish-medium teachers require specific professional competencies. The Department shall recognise that Irish-medium school practitioners require additional support in relation to understanding immersion education and target language competencies. Funding shall be provided to offer professional courses, recognising that the teaching responsibilities in the Irish-medium education curriculum

⁶⁴ Schools for the Future: Funding, Strategy, Sharing – Report of the Independent Strategic Review of Education (December 2006)

⁶⁵ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602f79a565837b32cc85cebe/t/61767fbd5f3b4c74841c07cd/1635155910841/Acht+na+Gaeilge+Fis+2+Edition.pdf>

are greater than those in English-medium schools.

- g. Support for postgraduate students shall be enhanced and a Gaeltacht period shall be facilitated for commencing students in Irish-medium education during the Bachelor of Education.
- h. The Department shall recognise that teaching and learning have a broader curriculum in Irish-medium primary schools and that learning and classroom assistants play a fundamental role in the immersion programme. It is appropriate to increase the number of funded classroom assistants in nursery and primary school classes from nursery school onwards and to agree a new ratio that would facilitate appropriate support in a target language environment. It is recommended that an Irish-speaking classroom assistant be present in every class throughout primary school.
- i. The Department shall make appropriate arrangements to provide tools and intervention programmes in the Irish language to Irish-medium teachers and to offer such learning programmes to students requiring additional support, including Reclaiming Reading and Reclaiming Mathematics.
- j. The research highlights the link between extra-curricular experiences and target language development. Extra-curricular activities shall be developed in a structured manner to provide opportunities for Irish language use and enrichment among Irish-medium school students.

Irish-medium post-primary education system

3.33 The Department of Education shall take appropriate steps to provide evidence on a regular basis on the implementation of the following actions:

- a. The Department of Education shall decide, in accordance with the above key principles, on any proposals falling under section 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order, 1986, in relation to the establishment of new Irish-medium schools. In addition, neither the Irish language teaching provision nor the existence of additional capacity for Irish language teaching shall in any way influence any decision in relation to the provision of education through the medium of Irish, nor shall any additional capacity in English-medium schools in relation to places or provision or any other material in any way influence any decision in relation to the provision of education through the medium of Irish.
 - b. In line with Irish-medium primary schools, DE shall consider the findings of the public consultation on the Common Funding Scheme to ensure that the Scheme is adequately funded to meet Irish-medium post-primary education needs.
 - c. As is also the case with Irish-medium primary schools, the shortage of qualified teachers at post-primary level in some subjects needs to be addressed. DE shall continue to address both issues, which are of greater concern in post-primary education than primary
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education, through the implementation of the recommendations of the Review of Irish-medium Education.

- d. Currently, there is a shortage of suitable candidates to fill job vacancies - i.e., teachers with a degree in a curricular subject and a high level of Irish. Eight places in the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) are allocated each year and a course in Irish-medium education and Irish language enrichment is conducted concurrently. It is a challenge to fill these places with graduates possessing both a knowledge of a variety of specialist subjects and a high standard of Irish. It is recommended that a model of initial teacher primary education be developed for the post-primary sector and that a PGCE through the medium of Irish as well as a primary school PGCE be provided.
- e. Guidance counsellors in schools should draw students' attention to the benefits of increasing their ability in the Irish language and other languages in conjunction with other subjects at A-Level.
- f. It is appropriate for the Department of Education to implement a publicity campaign to make young people aware of the employment opportunities, including teaching, that are available to Irish speakers. As part of this campaign, opportunities highlighting shortages shall be advertised on a widespread basis, as appropriate.
- g. There is a shortage of Irish-speaking employees available to fill the many different roles in post-primary schools – including administrators, technologists, classroom assistants, etc.
- h. The same challenge is faced by Irish-medium post-primary schools, which hinders the development of primary schools due to unsatisfactory accommodation. It is appropriate for the Department of Education to amend a capital funding policy in order to fulfil its statutory duty.

Further and vocational education

3.34 The Department of Education shall take appropriate steps to provide evidence on a regular basis on the implementation of the following actions:

- a. Any future strategy shall ensure that the Department for the Economy takes resolute action to encourage, facilitate and appropriately fund the development of further and vocational education through the medium of Irish and the teaching of Irish as a subject in further and higher education institutions.
- b. A policy should be developed to support further education (FE) through the medium of Irish in order to provide a high-quality training experience for young people and to ensure that adequate pathways are available to proceed to further study and employment.

3.35 The policy should facilitate:

- a. The sharing of knowledge and expertise between existing providers and those who may wish to develop Irish-medium FE in future.

- b. The development of education and employment pathways for young people educated through the medium of Irish; and
 - c. Ongoing development and support for Irish-medium teachers, headteachers and support staff.
- 3.36 Vocational learning through the medium of Irish should be accommodated, based on local demand. Assessment of vocational qualifications through the medium of Irish should also be facilitated.

Special educational needs (SEN)

- 3.37 The Department of Education shall take appropriate steps to provide evidence on a regular basis on the implementation of the following actions:
- a. The Department of Education, the Department for Health and the Education Authority have a duty to appropriately accommodate Irish-speaking children with special educational needs, as well as any other children with special educational needs being educated through the medium of Irish, including, in particular, special language needs.
 - b. There is a need to continue with measures aimed at addressing the need for the development of special educational needs provision in Irish-medium education, as specified in Recommendation 17 of the Review of Irish-medium Education report. In relation to this issue, DE has, arising from the review, funded a number of measures aimed at strengthening the identification, assessment and provision of SEN in Irish-medium schools. The understanding of special educational needs in the context of immersion education has evolved in recent years.
 - c. This is an aspect of provision that needs to be improved and for which resources are required to cater appropriately for students at pre-school, primary and post-primary level. It has long been recognised that there are no appropriate tools in the Irish-medium education sector to accurately measure student progress. The current range of curricular and student support services provided in English needs to be provided in the Irish language to the Irish-medium sector, including resources and the provision of expertise offered in specialist units within mainstream schools. It is appropriate to build on the commencement of this service in one primary school and one post-primary school in Belfast.
 - d. The Department of Education and the Department of Health shall engage in the necessary strategic cooperation to ensure that Irish-medium students demonstrating additional needs can access appropriate care in Irish, particularly speech and language services.
 - e. Learning centres shall be provided for Key Stages 3 and 4 in post-primary schools.

Irish-medium education resources

- 3.38 The Department of Education shall take appropriate steps to provide evidence on a regular basis on the implementation of the following actions:
- a. The Review of Irish-medium Education Report highlighted the need to increase the range of Irish-medium curricular resources available. In conjunction with the Irish Department of Education and Skills and the Irish-medium education sector, DE shall explore opportunities for collaboration to increase the range and availability of Irish-medium curricular resources.
 - b. The range of resources available to support SEN shall be developed, particularly at post-primary level.
 - c. At primary level, the selection of reading material shall be enhanced, building on the Sector's Early Reading Programme prepared by the Áisaonad in St Mary's University College, Belfast.
 - d. Current research informs us of the importance of extensive reading for pleasure and of supporting the reading experience based on graded series such as "Step by Step" and "The Early Reading Programme". The Department shall provide funding to add to the major books already published by the Áisaonad and to build on the range of books available in the Irish language to young readers. It is recommended that the Department develops a strategy to ensure that those books required by schools that are no longer in print are available on an ongoing basis.

Teacher Education

- 3.39 The Department of Education shall take appropriate steps to provide evidence on a regular basis on the implementation of the following actions:
- a. Teachers are the most valuable resource in any school and their role as role models in immersion education adds an extra dimension. Significant progress has been made since 1995 with the introduction of teacher education provision for the primary sector. As teacher education programmes (the Bachelor of Education and the primary school PGCE) have developed, schools have continued to grow at a rate that continues to create high demand for qualified teachers.
 - b. Investment shall be made in initial teacher education for the Irish-medium education sector, building on the approach to primary teacher education, to ensure that enough qualified teachers are available at all levels to respond to the needs of schools. Attention shall be paid to the growth of the school network and the need for both permanent and substitute teachers.
 - c. It is recommended that the strategy requires the NI Department of Education to ensure the provision of initial training through the medium of Irish for teachers and of sufficient additional staff suitable for the Irish-medium education sector, as well as those involved
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in the teaching of Irish, and to consider the level of curricular development and support services and the provision of sufficient staffing appropriate to meet the needs of the sector within organisations with specific statutory roles in relation to Irish-medium education and the teaching of Irish.

- d. DE shall provide funding for the planning and delivery of an Irish-medium PGCE for post-primary education.
 - e. One Gaeltacht period shall be facilitated for Bachelor of Education students during the 4 years of the degree course to support the development of language competencies and to foster this best practice as part of the continuing professional learning of the Irish-medium teacher.
 - f. Support shall be provided to design and deliver professional courses for classroom teachers that will ensure the continuation of research-based professional development supporting effective teaching and continuous improvement. These shall include Irish language courses for the Irish-medium teacher, teaching methodologies in the immersion programme, a range of themes that will support learning leaders and language planning for specialist subject teachers in post-primary schools and translation skills in Irish-medium schools.
 - g. Just as they were provided until 2020, bursaries shall be provided to deliver courses for Irish-medium Classroom Assistants, focusing on the target language and professional and support practices in the Irish-medium setting.
 - h. A link shall be created with the Gaeltacht and with Gaeltacht schools, all of whom now have immersion policies in place at primary and secondary level.
- 3.40 Appropriate support shall be provided to educational institutions to ensure that an appropriate number of teachers gain qualifications to cater for the demands of the Irish-medium sector and the teaching of Irish in English-medium schools. This may include:
- providing incentives to encourage students to undertake degrees/courses that would benefit the Irish-medium sector and the teaching of Irish as a subject.
 - providing sufficient time and resources for education students to develop and maintain their fluency and accuracy in the Irish language and to draw attention to the ongoing need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers in Irish-medium schools.
 - creating a support platform for principals/senior teachers/managers so that they can share experience and good practice and develop advanced leadership skills.
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The Irish Language in the English-medium Sector - Introduction

- 3.41 Within three months of the implementation of this Strategy, the NI Department of Education shall prepare an operational plan outlining how the teaching of Irish shall be adequately resourced and promoted in English-medium education in the maintained, controlled and integrated sectors. In preparing this plan, the Department of Education shall examine and refer to the international best practice in second language teaching in schools. The strategy shall include a description of research and development activities to be undertaken in support of the teaching of Irish, as well as a scholarship programme and other financial assistance to support the accommodation of students being taught Irish on Irish courses at Gaeltacht colleges. It is recommended that the plan aims to increase the number of students learning Irish in English-medium primary and post-primary schools by {figure to be inserted prior to publication of the strategy} by 2042.
- 3.42 Any future strategy shall ensure that the Department for the Economy takes resolute action to encourage, facilitate and appropriately fund the development of further and vocational education through the medium of Irish and the teaching of Irish as a subject in further and higher education institutions.
- 3.43 Any future strategy shall ensure that Queen’s University Belfast, its affiliated colleges, and the University of Ulster, take resolute action to encourage, facilitate and appropriately fund the development of higher education through the medium of Irish and the teaching of Irish as a subject in higher education institutions.
- 3.44 With regard to the teaching of Irish in English-medium schools, lifelong learning and third-level education, the needs of the language and the community must be catered for. Detailed proposals and appropriate facilities must be provided. We commend the proposals of POBAL and the Working Group provided in the Strategic Framework for the Irish Language document⁶⁶ and the proposals of POBAL in the document entitled *Acht na Gaeilge TÉ: Eisiúint II (Irish Language Act NI, Issue II)*.⁶⁷
- 3.45 Appropriate provision shall be made for raising awareness of the Irish language in primary/secondary schools in the English-medium sector. A number of initiatives to promote the Irish language in English-medium schools in the past have proven to be very successful. These included the teaching of Irish as a modern language in primary and post-primary schools as well as enrichment courses in year 13. It would be beneficial if this were to be undertaken by a wider range of schools, focusing on different key stages, perhaps under the auspices of cross-community work. Every child has a right to understand the Irish language in the world around them – names, surnames, placenames and the impact of the Irish language on the English language here.

66 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602f79a565837b32cc85cebe/t/61793d81b52a8b6c217b9433/1635335556351/Creat+Strait%C3%A9iseach+++Strategic+Framework+++%C3%89is.pdf>

67 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602f79a565837b32cc85cebe/t/61767fd5f3b4c74841c07cd/1635155910841/Acht+na+Gaeilge+Eis+2+Edition.pdf>

- 3.46 Primary and secondary school students shall be given the opportunity to attend immersion courses in the Gaeltacht. Special emphasis shall be placed on the provision of funding for teenagers to attend summer courses in the Gaeltacht and opportunities shall be created for primary school children to experience Gaeltacht life.
- 3.47 Specific support shall be provided to schools in the English-medium sector to integrate the Irish language into the curriculum – including visiting teachers, training schemes for teachers in the sector and modern facilities enabling schools to teach other subjects (e.g., physical education or crafts) through the medium of Irish.
- 3.48 Celtic festivals (Imbolc, Bealtaine, Lúnasa and Samhain) shall be used to integrate the Irish language into the curriculum and to celebrate the shared heritage of this part of the world.

Primary Schools (English-medium)

- 3.49 The Primary Languages Programme caters for Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 students. By September 2013, 91 schools were learning Irish through this Programme. Key Stage 2 students are being catered for through a 4-year pilot programme involving 10 primary schools in the Derry/North-West area. If the pilot is successful, it should be rolled out on a phased basis to all schools participating in the Primary Languages Programme.
- 3.50 DE has commissioned CCEA to develop a teaching framework for the Irish language in English-medium schools and training and resources shall be developed to support schools wishing to take a coordinated approach to the teaching of Irish in English-medium schools.
- 3.51 In 2012/13, students in 6 of the 772 English-medium schools completed Key Stage 2 assessments in Communicative Irish. 86.8% of these students achieved level 4 or above.
- 3.52 Key goals for English-medium schools, i.e., that Irish be taught in {figure to be inserted prior to publication of the Strategy} schools by 2042.
- 3.53 DE shall continue to support the use of peripatetic teachers to facilitate the learning of Irish in English-medium primary schools.
- 3.54 It is important that the teaching of Irish in the English-medium primary sector grows and develops. The need for an integrated Irish language development programme in English-medium primary education should be considered. On behalf of DE, CCEA carried out a feasibility study to determine the level of interest in providing teaching and learning materials and support in the context of such programmes and has reported its findings to the Department.

Post-primary schools (English-medium)

- 3.55 The Department of Education shall take appropriate steps to provide evidence on a regular basis on the implementation of the following actions:
- a. It is important that the teaching of Irish in the English-medium post-primary sector grows and develops. There has been a significant drop in the number of language candidates in CCEA examinations and there is now a need to review the role of languages in the curriculum in general. Teachers need a suitable platform to discuss specific aspects of the syllabus and the assessment system on a regular basis with CCEA, especially when dealing with a living language.
 - b. A reading scheme for post-primary students is required.
 - c. In 2012/13, there were 1,786 entries for GCSE Irish from 82 English-medium schools.
 - d. In 2012/13, there were 259 A-Level Irish entries from 50 English-medium schools.
 - e. Key goals for English-medium schools, i.e., that Irish be taught in {figure to be inserted prior to publication of the strategy} schools by 2042 and that Irish be undertaken by {figure to be inserted prior to publication of the strategy} students at GCSE and A-level.
 - f. That {figure to be inserted prior to publication of the strategy} students shall receive a Gaeltacht scholarship each year by 2042.

Third-Level Education

- 3.56 Irish language provision must be strengthened and expanded in third-level institutions and courses must be provided at various levels within that system - from undergraduate courses to postgraduate courses. The course options through the medium of Irish shall be expanded, e.g., the development of joint degrees with Irish. Support shall be provided to universities, in the form of bursaries, to provide professionals with opportunities to learn advanced communication skills that they could use in their working lives to ensure that the Irish language is used in sectors other than education alone, contributing to the status of the Irish language in general society. Emphasis shall be placed on the promotion of the Irish language among staff, and students shall be given the opportunity to support staff in developing their Irish language skills through regular classes and awareness sessions during term time. Opportunities shall be created for staff to attend Gaeltacht courses as part of their professional and personal development.
- 3.57 Third-level institutions should be obligated to have a language plan for the Irish language, in line with institutions in Wales and Scotland. These plans promote the language in the curriculum, in publications and in events and make the language visible on a consistent basis. They also promote the language in the daily life and activities of the institution. In relation to recruitment, the institution would be required to appoint people with advanced language skills suitable for the position. The plans should be published and available to both staff and students.
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- 3.58 A third-level institution would have its own ‘Bord Gaeilge/Irish Language Board’ (similar to the model used in University College Cork and other institutions) as part of the institution’s structure, comprising of a full-time officer and a board responsible for the implementation of the institution’s plan in relation to the Irish language. The board would be independent and treated as part of the institution’s governance team. The board would have sufficient capacity to be able to shape policies to develop the promotion of the Irish language in the institutions’ various locations.
- 3.59 Specific support for Gaeltacht immersive living for third-level students is required and funding should be provided for students to spend a semester in the Gaeltacht as part of their degree course.
- 3.60 An Irish-medium environment should be provided for Irish-speaking students (both students of Irish and students undertaking other courses) so that they may enjoy a social and residential learning experience through the medium of Irish. The establishment of a residence for Irish-speaking students in Belfast and Derry is recommended. Creating a vibrant community (cultural events, social events, seminars, etc.) and employing students in cultural venues could be part of their course of study.
- 3.61 It must be ensured that the demand for third-level education through the medium of Irish is appropriately responded to. Irish language programmes for adults, full-time and part-time Irish language courses that complement language development and labour market needs are of vital importance and should continue to be provided through third-level education (e.g., the Department of Irish and the Celtic Studies Department in the University of Ulster and Queen’s University respectively). Such programmes and courses should be incentivised to attract talented students. This would benefit the Irish language community, which would grow as a result.
- 3.62 Appropriate support shall be provided to embed an accurate and rigorous research base, rooted in applied research, which would enhance community engagement and pedagogy in relation to Irish-medium education, and which would underpin the development of Irish language policy and practice at governmental, institutional and societal levels and provide an opportunity for more effective practice and policy. This would foster and strengthen community engagement with Irish language stakeholders through knowledge exchange and impact programmes.
- 3.63 The Executive shall provide an appropriate support and development fund to Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta to ensure that new schools are able to properly work towards achieving sustainability and that new Irish-medium education priorities are properly facilitated at local level.

4. EAP recommendations in relation to Language Transmission in the Family – Early Intervention

Context:

- 4.1 All over the world, it is increasingly being recognised that language transmission is at the heart of the issue and must be explored if lesser-used languages such as Irish are to survive and thrive. Language transmission in the family is an important element in the language planning process and a vital building block in the efforts to increase the number of fluent speakers.⁶⁸

Recommendations

- 4.2 The EAP recommends that advice, guidance and resources be provided to Irish-speaking families to help and enable them to raise their children with Irish or bilingually, especially if only one person speaks the language. The EAP recommends that the experience throughout Ireland (Údarás na Gaeltachta, Glór na nGael and Tuismitheoirí na Gaeltachta), Wales and Scotland should be considered in order to provide information on the use of Irish in the family.
- 4.3 The EAP recommends that a support and awareness package be provided for new parents, focusing on the benefits of bilingualism, of using Irish in the home and of choosing Irish-medium education. The EAP recommends that these packages be provided from the earliest point of intervention by way of an active offer.
- 4.4 The EAP recommends that parents be made aware of the economic, employment and educational benefits of speaking Irish to their children. The EAP recommends that this be achieved by promoting a digital, traditional and creative awareness campaign.
- 4.5 The EAP recommends that a support package be provided to parents who choose to raise their children with Irish from birth, for example a bursary equal to the normal national salary being available to a parent who chooses to stay at home to give language access to their child/children or a bursary being available to parents so that they have the option of placing their children in Irish-medium day care.
- 4.6 The EAP recommends that measures be taken to encourage Irish-speaking parents to speak Irish to their children, including:
- raising awareness among policy makers, public sector employees, parents, aspiring

⁶⁸ Rialtas na hÉireann, Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge, Leathanach 21 | Government of Ireland, 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030, Page 21

parents and the general public of the benefits of bilingualism. For example, providing courses for parents of ‘immersion education’ children and children who are undertaking an Irish language learning programme at school;

- mainstreaming the message of the benefits of bilingualism into the work of all public engagement services, for example the health and social services that provide advice to new parents;
- ensuring that well-trained, properly paid and well-qualified staff are available to early-years care and ‘immersion education’ centres; as well as providing additional crèches and nurseries with official strategic support from the State;
- developing an area-based approach to those areas in which Irish-speaking communities live or are being developed, thereby supporting the transmission of the Irish language in the family. For example, pre-school access to Irish-medium childcare services in those areas in which Irish-speaking communities are established or growing; and ensuring delivery in places in which there may be future demand;
- a special support programme for mothers with new-born babies to assist them in speaking Irish to the baby from birth;
- supporting a change in family language patterns where one parent speaks Irish, so as to increase the number of children who speak both Irish and English at home;
- establishing, funding and sufficiently publicising schemes aimed at helping or supporting families who speak Irish at home or who wish to speak Irish at home, including schemes where only one parent speaks Irish at home or neither parent speaks Irish;
- making greater use of new social media to raise awareness and to facilitate access to all materials and resources relating to the Irish language; and
- carrying out further research on issues of language transmission in the home, e.g., the reasons why some Irish speakers raise their children with the language, but many others do not.

4.7 The EAP recommends that language learning courses be developed to cater for parents who are supporting their children’s learning in Irish-medium education. The Extended Schools Programme supports these schools, through the local Extended Schools cluster groups in which they operate, by providing programmes aimed at increasing the appeal of the Irish language in schools and communities. The main focus of the Programme is on raising standards and developing parents’ Irish language skills so that they can better support their children’s learning.

5. EAP recommendations in relation to the Irish Language and the Community

Context

- 5.1 The key principles and objectives of Part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages include the recognition of regional or minority languages as a means of expressing cultural wealth and the need for resolute action to promote such languages. Part II also recommends the promotion of mutual understanding between all linguistic groups in the country.⁶⁹ It is important that measures be taken to gain support and acceptance for the Irish language in all sections of the community. However, prejudice and intolerance must also be addressed and awareness of the Irish language promoted.
- 5.2 Priority 4 of the Executive's Programme for Government 2011-2015 identifies a Strategy for the Irish Language as a cornerstone of 'building a strong and shared community'. The Programme for Government lists the fostering of relations between communities as a focus in Priority 4 and any future strategy should recognise that the promotion of the Irish language in the Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist (PUL) community poses particular challenges.

⁶⁹ European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Article 7 Objectives and Principles

Recommendations

5.3 The draft Programme for Government 2016-2021 made various commitments in relation to society, diversity, health and public services. The EAP recommends that these commitments should apply equally to citizens who choose to live life through the medium of English and to those who choose to live life (and pursue education) through the medium of Irish.

The key goals included:

We are a shared society that respects diversity

We have a more equal society

We give our children and young people the best start in life (p. 12.)

Key indicators cited to measure the progress of the goals included⁷⁰:

12. Reduce educational inequality

13. Improve the quality of education

14. Improve the skills profile of the population

27. Improve cultural participation

31. Increase shared space

35. Increase reconciliation

5.4 The EAP recommends that all government departments fulfil the tasks and responsibilities associated with the above items and those in the strategy as a whole.

5.5 The EAP recommends that a range of measures, accompanied by appropriate resources, be implemented in order to:

- foster positive attitudes towards the Irish language in all sections of the community, as well as greater tolerance and understanding of, and interaction with, the language;
- gain recognition from a significant number of people from all communities, both religious and political, that the Irish language is an important element of the shared heritage of the entire community;
- reduce negative prejudices and promote understanding and tolerance of the Irish language and its speakers by placing a specific, but not exclusive, focus on the PUL community;
- support initiatives to increase awareness, understanding, tolerance and learning of the Irish language in areas relevant primarily to the PUL community; and
- support new communities, both immigrants and members of long-established ethnic minorities.

⁷⁰ <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/consultations/draft-programme-government-framework-2016-21-and-questionnaire>

- 5.6 The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages states that local authorities should have a duty to address oppression, regressive views and discrimination. The EAP recommends that this strategy be progressed by implementing positive language campaigns opposing discriminatory views and policies, harnessing relevant international expertise in the promotion of minority language revitalisation.
- 5.7 In order to address prejudice and promote tolerance and awareness of the Irish language, the EAP recommends:
- a. Positive action: initiatives to address bias and promote mutual understanding;
 - b. Wider policies: ensuring that responses to the language do not conflict with this goal;
 - c. In conjunction with the Irish Language Commissioner and the Human Rights Commission, the Department for Communities shall investigate within 6 months of the implementation of any future strategy, and on an annual basis thereafter, whether or not the anti-discrimination/anti-sectarianism/anti-racism laws are being implemented in the context of the Irish language.

Planning for the Irish language

- 5.8 It is important that local conditions are created in which the Irish language can thrive as a living language and can be developed as a language of choice by a range of living, vibrant, sustainable and bilingual Irish language communities. While the Irish Government's Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 and the Gaeltacht Act 2012 helped to inform the development of any future strategy. The aim of the Irish language and community Action Area is to focus on what needs to be done to ensure that planning for the Irish language reflects local language needs.
- 5.9 The gradual implementation of the Irish Government's 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 and the Gaeltacht Act 2012 will have a positive impact on improving and developing local Irish language outcomes. For example, the Irish language community networks and local Irish language groups participating in Foras na Gaeilge's community development schemes. The EAP recommends that all of these schemes be satisfactorily developed and funded in accordance with the demands and needs of the local community.
- 5.10 It should be taken into account that, where there is an Irish-medium school, a community also exists. The EAP recommends that planning is required to create language communities around Irish-medium schools through events and networking.
- 5.11 Emphasis is placed on Irish-medium education in the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent agreements. While this is extremely important, one cannot be blind to the fact that thousands of students are learning Irish in the traditional English-medium system. Irish is taught to a high standard in a number of second-level schools. The EAP recommends that a special effort be made to provide services to these students/families and to bring them into a language network.
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5.12 The EAP recommends support for creating a “link” between communities in the north and Gaeltacht communities.

Local Plans for the Irish Language

5.13 The EAP recommends that the aim of the local language plan should be to bring together local people and public/voluntary groups to facilitate the use of the Irish language. This can only be done by increasing coordination and public awareness of current Irish language initiatives and activities.

5.14 The EAP recommends that local Irish language plans:

- Create social conditions in which positive attitudes towards the Irish language are fostered and increase its general use.
- Mainstream the use of the Irish language as a medium of social and institutional Communication.
- Place emphasis on the close connection between the Irish language and attitudes in relation to issues such as quality of life, the environment and the local economy.
- The language plans shall be based on the areas identified under language planning itself. The language plans shall be funded as appropriate over the lifetime of the plan and shall focus on the key goals; to increase the number of local speakers, to increase the number of education, arts and business providers, etc., and to increase the number of opportunities to use the Irish language, etc.
- Appropriate advice and funding shall support local Irish language forums and groups and the Department for Communities shall effectively liaise with them on a regular basis and coordinate with other departments to discuss development opportunities, as well as any gaps.
- The Department for Communities shall create a Provincial forum for local language plans and good practice shall be shared among them. As a result, key Provincial goals shall be set and local plans developed.

5.15 The EAP recommends that the aim of the local language plan should be to bring together local people and public/voluntary groups to facilitate the use of the Irish language. This can only be done by increasing coordination and public awareness of current Irish language initiatives and activities.

5.16 The EAP recommends that the implementation of local Irish language plans should result in outcomes such as growth in the number of local Irish speakers and in the number of families raising their children through Irish, an increase and growth in Irish-medium provision and in the provision of Irish as a subject in other schools and an increase in initiatives and opportunities to use the language. Other findings should reflect the increased use of the Irish language outside of school – in sport and leisure, in the workplace, in libraries, through adult

learning and through other community activities.

- 5.17 Two of Foras na Gaeilge's lead organisations focus on (i) the development of language-use opportunities and networks, and (ii) language awareness raising, in which they play a specific role in encouraging children and young people to improve their Irish and participate in relevant activities outside the classroom. The EAP recommends that the relevant departments provide sufficient resources to deliver free workshops on the employment, educational and social opportunities that exist with the Irish language, as is currently being undertaken by Conradh na Gaeilge through its roadshow.

Local Irish Language Initiatives

- 5.18 Language plans shall be partially delivered through language initiatives developed to create and foster sustainable Irish language communities and networks. These initiatives shall be held in communities that have achieved critical mass (i.e., where many Irish speakers live, work and use services) to ensure the sustainability of community projects and state support for the Irish language. The EAP recommends that these projects include Irish-medium childcare facilities; Irish-medium units and schools; Irish language youth associations and other relevant Irish language services, e.g., mother and toddler groups.
- 5.19 The EAP recommends that Foras na Gaeilge, in conjunction with the Department for Communities, provides satisfactory and ongoing support for language planning initiatives, such as the Irish Language Networks Scheme and the Irish Language Networks Development Scheme. Resources and support shall be provided to meet the needs and demands of the local community. This work is seen as an integral and necessary part of community-based revitalisation work.
- 5.20 The EAP recommends that Foras na Gaeilge also continues to support Irish language officers within local councils, and it is important that the role of these officers be developed and enhanced; indeed, for those council areas that have not yet appointed Irish language officers, it is important that this be addressed, particularly in the context of the provision of Irish language services following local government reform. The EAP recommends that Foras na Gaeilge ensures that it continues to provide advice and expertise to local authorities on any matter relating to the Irish language or any matter which may have implications for the Irish language. The EAP recommends the establishment of a Forum for Irish Language Officers within local councils and the organisation of joint Irish language cross-consultation events throughout the year between Irish language groups, Irish Language Community Schemes and Irish language networks.
- 5.21 The EAP recommends the establishment of 'one-stop community shops', under the coordination of the Department for Communities to:
- provide advice to new parents that wish to raise their children bilingually;
 - offer advice on the range of Irish-medium education opportunities available;
 - assist public and voluntary bodies that wish to increase their use of Irish; and
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- encourage businesses that wish to offer a bilingual service to their customers, using both Irish and English. Glór na nGael's new 'GRADAIM' scheme should be included here.

5.22 The EAP recommends that local language initiatives target children and young people in particular and provide or enhance learning and social opportunities through which they can use their Irish outside the classroom in a range of cultural, social, leisure and sporting activities.

5.23 The EAP recommends that the relevant Department establishes a public scheme providing financial and advisory support from the Government/Foras na Gaeilge to businesses and entrepreneurs that wish to use the Irish language, such as the Foras na Gaeilge 'Gnó le Gaeilge' scheme. The EAP recommends that the scheme be appropriately publicised, with appropriate funding and ongoing support provided.

5.24 The EAP recommends that effective networks be established for those businesses that speak Irish and that the marketing and publicity of those businesses be supported. The EAP recommends that adequate grants be given to businesses and entrepreneurs with Irish.

Adult Language Learning

5.25 The EAP recommends the need for a coordinated approach to the provision of Irish language courses in the adult language learning sector.

5.26 It has been recognised that an Irish Language Academy could contribute to this process.

Irish Language Academy

5.27 At the end of 2013, DCAL commissioned a feasibility study into the need for an Irish Language Academy and the potential role it could play. The study confirmed that an Academy would be in the best interests of the Irish language and that, for example, it could address issues relating to:

- how adults learn and use the Irish language;
- the development of additional vocational course provision in conjunction with GaelChúrsaí;
- local language planning for the Irish language and the use of Ulster Irish;
- the availability and cost of courses and resources;
- leadership for the Irish language; and
- economic and employment development.

5.28 In 2015, a new scoping study was carried out on behalf of the Department for Communities, which again supported these proposals.

5.29 The EAP recommends that the Department for Communities works to establish an Irish Language Academy.

- 5.30 The EAP recommends the establishment of Irish language courses based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to ensure commonality between awards related to the learning of Irish. This would be the greatest employment benefit to the learner over time.

The Voluntary Sector

- 5.31 The EAP recommends that the local voluntary sector should have a role in the development of high-quality and sustainable local plans and initiatives. Community groups and local cultural and sporting organisations should also be involved. The voluntary sector needs to be given the opportunity to provide input into policies at the relevant level and support should be provided to groups and stakeholders wishing to assist in the enhancement, protection and development of the Irish language on a local basis. The EAP recommends that this be achieved with the creation of a new community forum under the auspices of the Department.

Advocacy in the community

- 5.32 In relation to local planning, emphasis and responsibility is placed only on the Irish language community and volunteers. State services and state responsibilities are not mentioned, and this is a major weakness. Strong advocacy and appropriate coordination shall be required from the lead organisation responsible for advocacy, in conjunction with other organisations in the Irish language voluntary sector. The EAP recommends that appropriate resources be provided to support this advocacy.
- 5.33 While recognition of the excellent work being carried out by the Irish language community throughout Northern Ireland is welcomed, support should not be limited to specific areas. The EAP recommends that Irish language communities be catered for, regardless of where they are located. There are many networks and ‘pockets’ of Irish speakers. In addition, a number of Irish-language speaker networks come into contact with each other in various ways, and a wider outlook would be more beneficial than a purely geographical one.

Resource Centres

- 5.34 The EAP recommends that local areas with a critical mass of Irish speakers be supported and encouraged through the development of specialist Irish language resource centres. Such centres could include theatre space, coffee shops and restaurants, bookshops, offices for Irish language organisations, internet spaces, historical materials, meeting and conference rooms, exhibition venues and research and development project units. The EAP recommends that these centres be created and that appropriate resources be provided for the Irish Language Centres Scheme, the Irish Language Investment Fund and the Irish Language Centres Network.

The Irish Language and the Arts

- 5.35 The Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) has recognised Irish language arts for some time and supports these as living elements of our local cultural heritage. The EAP recommends the provision of support for ACNI activities and a Language Arts Policy, underpinned by an Audit and Needs Analysis of the Arts of Irish and Ulster-Scots (2003) as well as a sectoral consultation report, *The Arts of Irish* (2005). The EAP recommends that ACNI develops a specific Irish language strategy for the arts, literature and creativity in relation to the overall importance of the Irish language. The EAP recommends that appropriate resources be provided to develop same during the implementation of the any future strategy.
- 5.36 The Irish language has a significant history of poetry and prose, and the production of such literature is a sign that it is a vibrant medium that contributes to the learning, creativity and preservation of the Irish language in a globalised world. The EAP recommends that the role of the arts and creativity in the context of poetry, prose, storytelling, drama, music, song and dance in the Irish language be supported and developed. Considering the vital importance of children and young people to the survival of the Irish language, the EAP recommends that emphasis be placed on Irish-medium education arts events and activities at which children and young people are present and in which they are involved.
- 5.37 A recognised gap in the Irish language sector is the need to support individual artists working through the medium of Irish, e.g., writers, musicians and storytellers. The EAP recommends that Foras na Gaeilge promotes the use of the Irish language in the arts and that this be undertaken in conjunction with bodies such as ACNI to determine what can be done to support and promote the work of Irish language artists. The EAP recommends that this be undertaken by carrying out an audit and establishing a new support scheme for individual artists working through the medium of Irish.

6. EAP recommendations in relation to Young People

Use of the Irish Language Outside of School

- 6.1 Despite the importance of the formal education system in enhancing and protecting the development of the Irish language, youth provision outside the classroom is essential if the Irish language is to be revitalised. The Irish Government's 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 recommends, "[that] the critical need to give life to the Irish language outside the classroom for the young people who study it in the formal education system is a widespread conclusion of language revitalisation efforts throughout the world". We recommend that the importance of the youth sector be given due regard in any future strategy.
- 6.2 Fóram na nÓg is a regional youth organisation with expertise in Irish language youth work and recognised by the Department of Education. It has recently completed sectoral research and audited and analysed the services/demands of the youth sector in the North. We recommend that the Department for Communities and the Department of Education consult with Fóram na nÓg regarding the role of any future strategy in improving and developing Irish language youth work in Northern Ireland.
- 6.3 The Department of Education recognises that youth work is an important mechanism through which children and young people can enhance their personal and social skills, allowing them to reach their full potential. "Non-formal education in the form of youth work encourages children and young people to develop their personal and social skills and engage in the learning process." (Priorities for Youth, the Department of Education, 2013). We recommend that, as part of any strategy, Irish language youth work be treated in its own context and not as an addendum to any approach drafted for the wider English language sector.
- 6.4 Irish-medium youth work fulfils another role for those involved in this sector. In addition to the benefits of the youth sector as a whole, youth work through a second language provides an important opportunity for young people to develop their social vocabulary, both for those who have acquired Irish in Irish-medium education and for those for whom Irish is their first language at home. Irish-medium youth work enables young people to use the Irish language outside of an academic environment, which enhances their ability to use it socially among their peers and increases their overall confidence in the language. We recommend that the Department recognises in any future strategy that it is vital that the Irish-medium youth sector has the appropriate capacity to play an active role in the personal, social and linguistic development of young Irish speakers, thereby facilitating the work being undertaken in the Irish-medium education sector.

- 6.5 A report commissioned by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (2008) highlighted the following key conclusion: “Although minority language communities may be successful in increasing the number of children in immersion language education programmes and in developing high standards in written skills, there is a concern that ‘social’ use of the language in out of school contexts is not developing satisfactorily.”
- 6.6 In 2009, the Department of Education published a comprehensive review of all aspects of Irish-medium education. The review made a wide range of recommendations in relation to how the Department of Education should fulfil its statutory duty to ‘encourage and facilitate’ Irish-medium education, including the provision for Irish-medium youth work. Recommendation 18 of the review is as follows: “The Department of Education should encourage and support informal opportunities for learning through the medium of Irish in the youth sector, and through the extended schools approach”. The use of ICT shall be an essential part of the development and delivery of opportunities for learning. This recommendation recognises the important role of the Irish-medium youth sector in acquiring Irish language skills and in ensuring that young people are enabled to take full advantage of immersion education. We recommend that this be reflected in any future strategy.
- 6.7 Irish language awareness initiatives and courses aimed at non-Irish speakers and those with basic knowledge of Irish contribute to the enhancement, protection and development of the language. An example of this is DCAL’s Líofo campaign, which was launched in September 2011 and aimed to promise people fluency in Irish. We recommend that schemes such as Líofo be developed on an ongoing basis with the aim of providing young people with further opportunities to use the Irish language outside of school.
- 6.8 In accordance with the Review of Irish-medium Education, DE encourages and promotes informal learning opportunities through the medium of Irish in the youth sector. The Education Authority and Fóram na nÓg, which is recognised as a regional youth organisation, currently promote youth work through the medium of Irish while providing access to general funding streams and targeted support. We recommend that the recommendations made in the review of Irish-medium education, as far as they relate to youth work in recommendation 18 of that document, be fully implemented.
- 6.9 We recommend that the education sector should continue to work in partnership with relevant agencies such as Foras na Gaeilge and local youth associations to foster the development of Irish language youth services for Irish-medium education students, particularly in conjunction with Fóram na nÓg. We recommend that any future strategy requires the Department of Education, working in cooperation with stakeholders, to prepare and implement a comprehensive plan for Irish language youth work.
- 6.10 The DE policy on youth work in education, Priorities for Youth 16, sets out arrangements for the planning and delivery of youth services funded by DE, including recognition of the need to promote and support informal learning opportunities through the medium of Irish. A Regional Advisory Group has been established to provide advice to Education and Library Boards and the Youth Council for Northern Ireland to inform the development of a regional youth services
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delivery framework. The views of the Irish-medium youth sector are represented in the Group. These developments provide a better opportunity to consider the importance of Irish language-use networks for young people, particularly in support of immersion education. We recommend that this work be made a priority in any proposed strategy.

- 6.11 The importance of children and young people acquiring and using the Irish language is a key priority for one of Foras na Gaeilge's six lead organisations. This organisation focuses on improving, promoting and developing opportunities and awareness of the use of the Irish language among young people. It also encourages children and young people to improve their Irish by participating in relevant youth networks. We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the effectiveness and efficiency of the expenditure on this lead organisation in relation to Irish language youth work in the North be monitored.
- 6.12 We recommend that the following strategic goals be included in any future strategy:
- a. To ensure informal opportunities to learn, consolidate and acquire the Irish language in the youth sector;
 - b. To ensure a mainstream funding framework for Irish language youth work;
 - c. To deliver Irish language youth work in appropriate accommodation; and
 - d. Capital investment.
- 6.13 At present, 100% of youth service provision in the Irish language sector is provided in buildings that are too small, unsuitable or unreliable. There is a current increase of 5% in Irish-medium education. Demand for existing youth services is increasing accordingly. We recommend that any future strategy ensures:
- a. That the needs of the Irish language community be given due regard in policy development in sections, departments and public agencies.
 - b. That language screening be carried out on schemes and policies so that they contribute to the development of the Irish language and the needs of the Irish language minority community.
- 6.14 A flexible phased funding scheme for Irish language youth work:
- While the use of Irish language youth services is increasing year on year, the funding formula is based on practice in the English language sector, in which the number of users is falling year on year. The Education Authority's funding framework is rigid and focused on conditions in the English-medium sector. We recommend that any future strategy:
- initiates a review of this model with the relevant departments and agencies to ensure that funding schemes are comparable to current circumstances in the Irish language youth sector.
- 6.15 Further investment in special educational needs provision in the youth sector and outside the formal education sector:
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The only current provision is Sólas na nÓg, which was launched in 2019 to cater for the specific needs of users of Irish language youth services. The number of students on the ‘Code of Practice’ is increasing and the number of children with a ‘statement of special needs’ is growing year on year. We recommend that any future strategy:

- a. Commissions research on these needs; and
- b. Develops proposals with relevant departments/agencies to prepare an implementation plan to address this challenge.

6.16 A Senior Irish Language Youth Officer:

We recommend that any future strategy recommends and seeks a Senior Irish Language Youth Officer in the Department of Education to ensure representation of the Irish language youth sector at senior level in departments in order to guarantee appropriate opportunities and equality for young Irish speakers.

6.17 We recommend that any future strategy be cross-departmental and ensures that the needs of young Irish speakers are taken into account in all services (e.g., health, mental health, anti-bullying policies and training, research and projects on the negative impact of social media, etc.)

Scholarships

6.18 We recommend that Gaeltacht summer colleges continue to be used as an effective method of learning and using the Irish language and that young people are encouraged to visit the Gaeltacht, where they can use and develop their Irish. An awareness, support and publicity scheme shall be organised in all schools to promote the opportunities provided by Gaeltacht summer colleges and their benefits. This shall be coordinated between the Department of Education, the Department for Communities, Foras na Gaeilge, Gael Linn and Conradh na Gaeilge.

6.19 In order to support the educational aim of any future strategy, we recommend that the amount of money under the Department for Communities’ Gaeltacht Bursary Scheme available for a scholarship scheme be increased to £250,000 to enable those from disadvantaged areas to attend Gaeltacht courses.

7. EAP recommendations in relation to Media, Publications and Technology

The EAP recommends that the following objectives be included in any future strategy:

- To increase access to high-quality Irish language media.
- To provide appropriate support, and to identify funding schemes to make the sector viable.
- To increase the number of Irish language hours on various communication platforms as a whole, in order to bring this number in line with the relevant provision in Scotland and Wales, for example.
- To ensure training schemes for communication teachers.
- To provide a competitive funding scheme, along with a range of online gaming platforms.
- To provide BBC digital in the Irish language.
- To normalise the visibility of the Irish language on the major English-language stations and in marketing, advertising and other materials on an ongoing basis.

Broadcasting

Context

- 7.1 The Council of Europe states that the time and space that regional or minority languages can access in the media is crucial for their protection and that no language can maintain its influence if it is not available in new forms of media.⁷¹
- 7.2 Under the Joint Declaration, the UK Government is committed to taking the appropriate steps to establish a fund for financial support for Irish language film and television production, with two aims: to fund high-quality Irish language content and to foster the independent Irish language production sector.

Recommendations

- 7.3 We recommend that the Department for Communities negotiates, as part of the approach to any future strategy, for the UK government to take resolute action to ensure that Irish language television and radio broadcasting is on a par with Welsh language television and radio broadcasting in Wales and with Scottish Gaelic language television and radio broadcasting in Scotland, which are characterised by dedicated publicly funded television and radio services which broadcast for a significant number of hours, including a significant number of new programmes each day and, in relation to television broadcasting, that such programmes are broadcast at peak viewing times. As is the case in Wales and Scotland, such broadcasting should have a legislative basis, receive adequate funding, require a wide variety of high-quality programming, including news programmes, and be free of charge so that the audience can access it across a range of platforms.
- 7.4 To achieve this, we recommend that the Department for Communities and the Executive as a whole engage with the UK Government to ensure that the UK Government:
 - amends the Communications Act 2003 to include provision for Irish language television and radio broadcasting and ensures that any future legislation which provides for Welsh language and/or Scottish Gaelic language television and/or radio broadcasting also provides for Irish language television and/or radio broadcasting;
 - ensures that Irish language television and radio broadcasting, and other media services, including online services, are referenced in the BBC Royal Charter;
 - ensures that TG4 and Raidió na Gaeltachta are available free of charge to the general public, with a signal of sufficient strength and quality in all parts of Northern Ireland, and makes every effort to ensure, in cooperation with the Irish Government, that a significant amount of programming is produced on both services in Northern Ireland;
 - ensures that, in the financial year in which the NDNA Irish language legislation enters into force, the UK Exchequer provides funding to the Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF), to

⁷¹ European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages – Explanatory Note, Paragraph 107

the extent that it would allow for a significant increase in Irish language programming hours than is currently funded through the ILBF, and, in each subsequent financial year, that the annual funding is increased at least in line with the rate of inflation and in proportion to the role of the ILBF.

- ensures the development of, and free access to, integrated dictionaries and online dictionary tools for all media and consults with relevant bodies in the Republic of Ireland who have committed to the provision of an integrated all-Ireland service in this area;
- ensures that the licence conditions for all radio and television broadcasters, including commercial and community licences, make appropriate provision for the Irish language in scheduling, in news and weather reports and in programmes and advertising, including advertising for the station itself;
- ensures the provision of broadcasting licences and adequate financial support for the establishment of a dedicated Irish-medium radio station and ensures that it has a signal of sufficient strength and clarity to be heard in all parts of Northern Ireland and that it broadcasts Irish language programmes for at least 56 hours each week;
- expands the Raidió Fáilte broadcasting area and grants more stations; and
- ensures, on the advice of practitioners and educators in the Irish-medium education sector and in Irish teaching, the Department of Education and other education providers, the continued free development of, and access to, educational provision and curricular support relating to Irish language learning, as well as learning through the medium of Irish, on television, radio and online.

7.5 It is recommended that Irish language broadcasting on English language and specialist Irish language stations ensures the normalisation of the language and increases its overall visibility.

7.6 In its 3rd monitoring report, the Council of Europe’s Committee of Experts noted that ‘the Irish Language Broadcast Fund faces an uncertain future because it has no settled funding arrangements. This could have serious knock-on consequences for broadcasting in Irish’.⁷² Given the success of the ILBF and in order to achieve sustainability, it is recommended that, as part of any future Irish language strategy, long-term funding support be provided to the ILBF, with an emphasis on the development of Irish language companies as part of the funding. We recommend that this be undertaken in consultation with the ILBF and other recognised participants in order to assess the demand and vision of the community.

7.7 A new audience/market for television and radio programmes and online content has been created due to recent developments in the growth of Irish-medium education. It is recommended that importance be placed on active communication between representatives of Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and organisations such as the ILBF, the BBC Irish Language Unit and Raidió Fáilte to gather information on the areas to be addressed in relation to the production of new television and radio programmes and new

72 Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers, Application of the Charter in the United Kingdom, 3rd Monitoring Cycle, ECRML (2010) 4, Paragraph 424G

online media so that all, or at least some, complement the needs, interests and abilities of young people in Irish-medium schools. We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, an expert group under the auspices of the Department be established to achieve this.

- 7.8 As the responsibility for broadcasting remains with the UK Government, it is vital that the Department for Communities liaises with the responsible Ministers in order to seek cooperation from their departments on the aims and objectives of any future strategy. We recommend the preparation of a specific communications strategy for the Irish language and a development plan for the sector as a whole, the responsibility for which shall lie with the Department for Communities, the ILBF and the Department for Digital, Culture, Sport and Media in Westminster, together with recognised community representatives.
- 7.9 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, emphasis be placed on amending the BBC Royal Charter (2005) to place legal obligations on broadcasters to provide a high-quality local Irish language service on a par with Welsh language services in Wales. This shall include the provision of television, radio, digital and all online and on-demand resources, including BBC Bitesize.
- 7.10 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Department takes action to influence the BBC to consider its approach in Wales and Scotland and to provide a level of funding and service for the Irish language in NI which is proportionate to the level they provide for Scottish Gaelic in Scotland and for Welsh in Wales. This shall include the provision of television, radio, digital and all online and on-demand resources, including BBC Bitesize.
- 7.11 We recommend that engagement be carried out to explore and develop the possibility of a local regional Irish language channel, similar to the specific channels for language needs in Scotland and Wales, by 2025.
- 7.12 We recommend that the Arts Council of NI be obligated to continue to direct resources towards NI Screen, with sufficient funding provided to facilitate Irish language film and broadcasting.
- 7.13 The Department for Communities must ensure, through the North South Ministerial Council, that free Irish language broadcasting from TG4 and Raidió na Gaeltachta is available to the entire population. There should be no geographical distinction in relation to broadcasting rights, particularly those relating to Sport on RTÉ or TG4 with regard to GAA, rugby or any other sport. Fair and continuous access to these services in Northern Ireland shall be guaranteed at all times. Where challenges exist, the provision of an Irish language option shall be ensured through the BBC's television service equivalent in the absence of access to the other channels.
- 7.14 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Department for Communities provides greater support to Irish language radio stations in the context of developing a high-quality and sustainable broadcasting strategy to, *inter alia*, provide high-quality local news and current affairs through the medium of Irish.
- 7.15 We recommend that, in any strategy, recognition is given to the fact that appropriate funding from Foras na Gaeilge and/or the Department for Communities/the ILBF or their equivalent
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for Raidió Fáilte, a community-based organisation broadcasting from Belfast, is required to ensure that the promotion and growth of the station is facilitated. We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, Raidió Fáilte be granted FM status by 2025 so that Raidió Fáilte can continue to broadcast regionally.

- 7.16 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, Foras na Gaeilge should be required to support the creation of a high-quality and sustainable Irish language community radio network for those outside Belfast in areas in which the public wishes to listen to and use the Irish language.

The Written Word

- 7.17 Foras na Gaeilge ceased the publication of an Irish language newspaper in the North in December 2008, despite the UK government being legally bound in the UK's ratification instrument for the European Charter by: Article 11 Media, "e) i) to encourage and/or facilitate the creation and/or maintenance of at least one newspaper in the regional or minority languages". We recommend that the Department for Communities reassesses Foras na Gaeilge funding to ensure support for the production of print and online newspapers and magazines for the NI community in order to ensure that this provision is restored.
- 7.18 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, training schemes be established to support new and young writers and authors to improve their skills and publish their work on relevant platforms.
- 7.19 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Department for Communities negotiates with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to provide adequate financial and other support to ensure the publication of at least one daily Irish language newspaper in Northern Ireland.
- 7.20 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland be asked to:
- provide adequate funding to support an Irish language news and online content analysis service which may be made available in print format, depending on demand;
 - provide adequate funding to support an online Irish language magazine containing video and audio content aimed primarily at a young audience; and
 - examine, in conjunction with the relevant authorities in the Republic of Ireland, the funding, resources, agreements and other arrangements necessary to ensure that all Irish language content on all media is available on a comprehensive online portal available to all.

- 7.21 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland be asked to improve access to employment opportunities for Irish speakers in the full range of media by ensuring (but not limited to) the following:
- Adequate funding for the promotion and provision of media studies in the Irish language at all levels of the education system; and
 - Adequate funding for training programmes for a range of employment options, including, but not limited to, employment as journalists, technicians, editors and producers.
- 7.22 As new online technologies, media and marketing techniques continue to evolve, the most effective strategies for developing reading and writing are likely to change significantly in the coming years. We recommend that they be reviewed regularly. We recommend that these items be kept under continuous review with regard to the marketing approach taken in each of the 5-Year Action Plans in relation to the implementation of any future strategy.
- 7.23 We recommend that the service provision of the *Áisaonad*, St Mary's University College, for example *An Seomra Nuachta* and the range of specialist content that it creates, continues to be supported.
- 7.24 Effective planning among the relevant authorities is required. Irish language reading and writing shall be supported by the availability of books, short stories, short videos, blogs, podcasts, CDs, DVDs, audiobooks, print media and other technology and:
- the development of year-round literary events and activities in public libraries – including creative writing, author readings, launches, reading and listening clubs and literary programmes for schools;
 - the effective implementation of language standards, insofar as they relate to library boards;
 - the bodies responsible for ensuring Irish language cultural events having access to competent Irish speakers to organise and deliver their programmes;
 - the provision of guided reading programmes in schools;
 - new Irish language materials being clearly displayed in major designated bookshops, as well as relevant publicity material, stands, bookmarks, publicity events, window displays and the presence of authors (with the cooperation and support of relevant public agencies, if necessary); and
 - competitive schemes to provide appropriate support to publishers of high-quality Irish language books.
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Online and New Media

- 7.25 Due to the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the central role of online services, especially in education, the simultaneous provision of all educational resources and aids (whether they are on the BBC, provided by the Education Authority or otherwise) available through the medium of English and through the medium of Irish shall be ensured in cooperation with local schools and the Áisaonad and in ongoing partnership with Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, particularly insofar as they relate to specific resources for Irish-medium education.
- 7.26 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, activities to raise awareness of the Irish language and Irish-medium education on social media be ensured between the Department for Communities and the Department of Education, and other stakeholders, ensuring greater visibility and normalising the Irish language online on an ongoing basis.
- 7.27 The further development of online technologies and new media facilitates wider access to the Irish language. We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Department for Communities provides a competitive funding scheme to facilitate and expand these services. The aims of this scheme include:
- the development of attractive online shops selling Irish language materials, showcasing titles, authors, reviews, blogs and other new resources that may also be used in schools and adult classes;
 - the development of apps to promote and facilitate the development and use of the Irish language;
 - the development of online gaming platforms;
 - the development of social media as a means of engaging with the Irish language community, especially young people;
 - the promotion and development of Irish language book clubs as a priority in language community initiatives and the provision of appropriate online support to book clubs; and
 - the development of relevant initiatives and training courses to encourage Irish language writing among young people in a range of media – journalism, blogging, creative writing, drama and film scripts; and the promotion of the Irish language internationally, particularly among the diaspora.

8. EAP recommendations in relation to Economic Life

Recommended Objectives:

- To centralise the role of the Irish language in Government economic policies and strategies.
- To increase awareness of the economic and social value of the Irish language.
- To develop community-based, local, sustainable and high-quality plans and initiatives for the Irish language.
- To prepare an investment strategy to promote special development areas and facilitate clustering.
- To decentralise state and public services relating to the Irish language to special Irish language development areas.
- To increase and normalise the visibility and use of the Irish language in the business, economic and tourism sector as a whole.
- To provide appropriate support to Irish language businesses and facilitate and encourage the growth of the Irish language business and enterprise sector.

Context

- 8.1 Languages for the Future – Northern Ireland Languages Strategy, published in 2012, draws attention to the fact that “The value of languages for business and economic growth has long been established. Those with good language skills – the right language complemented by an appropriate area of expertise and a good level of intercultural awareness – are well placed in the job market.” The Irish Government’s 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 recognises the link between the Irish language and the economy and emphasises the importance of initiatives and support to promote the use of the Irish language in economic life.
- 8.2 Article 13 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which refers to economic life, requires those states that have ratified the Charter to facilitate and/or promote the use of regional or minority languages insofar as they relate to economic activities. Economic life and activity should be considered in the context of Article 13 in order to determine how the Charter contributes to the enhancement, protection and development of the economic potential of the Irish language.

Specific recommendations for any future strategy

- 8.3 We recommend that, as part of any strategy, the Department for Communities and the Executive as a whole must make every effort to ensure that everyone, including the private sector, is aware of the importance of the Irish language and its economic and community benefits. We recommend that the Department for Communities requires Foras na Gaeilge to emphasise the importance of these benefits through its lead organisation, which has a strategic focus on community and economic development, particularly insofar as it relates to language planning and capacity building.
- 8.4 Small Irish language businesses were particularly affected by the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Department for the Economy, the Department for Infrastructure and, where relevant, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs must, as part of any future strategy, provide appropriate support and financial schemes to strengthen the Irish language business and enterprise sector.
- 8.5 We recommend that, in any future strategy, emphasis be placed on the need for the Department for the Economy to communicate and engage in training with Companies House, HMRC, the Charity Commission and other business state services, where necessary, to recognise and facilitate the role of the Irish language.
- 8.6 We recommend that, as part of any strategy, the Department for Communities develops an Irish Language Academy as outlined by the former Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure and as announced in the Assembly on 15/3/2016, when the Minister stated, *inter alia*:
- i. “In making this decision, I took due account of the responsibilities to the Irish language under the Belfast Agreement and articles 7 and 8 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Article 7 relates to the need to provide support for the provision of appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study of Irish and the promotion of study and research. Article 8, likewise, relates to professional and technical training in Irish, should there be reasonable demand for it. There is also a statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium education, as pointed out in the 2009 Department of Education review. Irish-medium education should be a continuum, with progression throughout levels of development. The Irish language academy can help to ensure that young people in Irish-medium education have uninterrupted access, from post-primary through to vocational training, through Irish.
 - ii. I asked that a scoping and consultation exercise be carried out on the establishment of an academy. It considered how economic and social development and employment opportunities in relation to the Irish language could be developed, together with adult learning, within the framework of the Irish language academy. I wanted the consultation to scope out the attitude to, and the awareness and perceptions of, an Irish language academy. Irish language development must be sustainable. Therefore, I asked for practical and deliverable recommendations that have Irish language community and stakeholder understanding and buy-in. I also asked that the scoping and consultation exercise build
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upon and update a 2013 feasibility study on the Irish language academy, taking account of many important recent developments.

iii. The scoping exercise consulted a range of organisations and individuals in the sector and was coupled with rigorous interviewing techniques. It built on the previous Irish language feasibility study, which had involved other relevant stakeholders. That maximised the impact and sectoral inclusiveness of the research process. I am very satisfied with the consultation process and the overall approach. It has proven very effective in assessing current provision and in developing robust sustainable recommendations for the Irish language academy. I extend my thanks to everyone who engaged so comprehensively with the consultation. The consultation process found that there are large gaps in current provision, especially in the areas of teaching and learning resources, accreditation structures, vocational courses aimed at ages 16-plus, and adult teacher training and support.”

8.7 We recommend that the Department for Communities takes this forward as part of any future strategy and advances work aimed at:

- promoting the Irish language as an economic asset and creating economic opportunities; and
- developing pathways to employment for Irish speakers.

8.8 In order to properly deliver same, we recommend that the Department for Communities develops a specific business development plan for the Irish language in conjunction with the Department for the Economy and the Department of Finance. This shall be done in consultation with the public and stakeholders.

8.9 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Department for the Economy should be required to examine the current state of the business and careers sector in relation to the range of expertise and skills services that are available/unavailable through the medium of Irish. Where there is a clear shortage and public demand, we recommend that the Department for the Economy develops an action plan to ensure specialist training courses at third level, e.g., Irish and Accounting, Irish and Law. This will ensure that, in the long term, society will be able to deal with language standards on a cross-departmental basis.

Services and Signage

8.10 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Department for the Economy, in conjunction with the Department for Communities, prepares a Communications and Training Plan containing accurate information for state departments and agencies, the Equality Commission, the Human Rights Commission, employers, and businesses, etc., stating that all employees have the right (as defined in the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order (1998) to speak Irish in the course of their work, whether in the workplace or elsewhere. This right shall include oral and written communication with his/her colleagues, customers, clients or members of the general public who speak Irish.

- 8.11 We recommend that the right set out above at 1.10 does not preclude the employer from having the right (as defined in the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998) to choose English, or a language other than Irish or English, as their normal language of business. However, the departments' communications plan shall make it clear that it shall not be permissible to impose any unreasonable restriction on the employee's right to use the Irish language.
- 8.12 Similarly, the departments' communication and training plan would state that it is not permissible to consider, in any circumstances, that an employee speaking or using Irish in the workplace is a breach of the law or is a violation of the civil rights of any other person.
- 8.13 We recommend that departments, councils and other authorities must, as part of any future strategy, implement a plan to ensure that they are able to provide relevant and accurate bilingual signage in all streets (where demand is measured in accordance with the European Charter), districts, villages, towns, cities, areas, etc., within a reasonable timeframe, as set out in the 'Public Services' section of this document.
- 8.14 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, services be delivered proactively and a communications plan developed to ensure that the public is made aware of these services on an ongoing basis.
- 8.15 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Department for the Economy must agree and publish a plan to inform businesses and companies of the economic value of the Irish language as a marketing tool, particularly in relation to the development and delivery of services through the medium of Irish and the use of Irish language or bilingual signage. We recommend that, as part of any strategy, Foras na Gaeilge should be required to improve and develop its 'Gnó means Business' initiative in order to facilitate, fund and encourage businesses and companies to develop services through the medium of Irish and promote the use of Irish language or bilingual signage. Foras na Gaeilge shall continue to support projects that encourage small and medium-sized enterprises to use the Irish language on signage and marketing material. Analysis and monitoring shall be published annually in conjunction with the Irish Language Commissioner to assess same.
- 8.16 We recommend that Foras na Gaeilge should be required to continue to develop initiatives and schemes to support businesses that actively promote bilingualism.
- 8.17 The experience of other minority language speaking regions, particularly in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland, may be a useful source of information for the promotion of the Irish language in our society, e.g., in relation to the economic value and importance of the Irish language or in relation to bilingual signage.

Special Development Areas

- 8.18 We recommend that the Department for Communities invites the British-Irish Council's Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used Languages sector to share its experience of how best to support the indigenous and minority language economy, with the aim of informing the development of a local Irish language economy. We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, an action plan be drafted detailing recommendations for which the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities shall have responsibility for implementing.
- 8.19 The promotion and economic development of the Irish language at local level is of vital importance. We recommend that the Department for Communities contributes to the development of Gaeltacht areas, in both urban and rural settings, in order to support them as generators of local economic development. Examples of these are the Gaeltacht Quarter project in West Belfast and the South Derry rural Gaeltacht in Carntogher. We recommend that these be identified as special development areas. We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, official status must be awarded to sustainable Gaeltacht and Irish language network areas, with incentives linked to such recognition.
- 8.20 The vision of the West Belfast Gaeltacht Quarter is to develop a vibrant, attractive and sustainable quarter in which the unique selling point and economic potential of the Irish language and culture is maximised to achieve social and economic benefits for the area, the city and the region. We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the ongoing availability of appropriate resources and the development and preservation of this and other areas be ensured. We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, a specific investment plan be drafted and implemented in partnership with stakeholders.
- 8.21 Further research is needed into the concept and definition of what constitutes a Gaeltacht in order to cater for local 21st-century needs in relation to participation in economic life. The economic benefits of concepts such as official, school, church, street, home, sports, online and university Gaeltacht areas must be explored as part of any future strategy.
- 8.22 Distinct projects specifically intended for special Irish language development areas such as Laochra Loch Lao, for example, shall receive specific support.

Cultural Tourism

- 8.23 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the benefits and opportunities arising from cultural tourism, in the context of the Irish language cultural economy, be promoted in a more effective manner. We recommend that businesses be provided with encouragement and that the development of cultural tourism strategies with the Irish language at their core be facilitated, particularly in relation to the development and promotion of language heritage-based tourism. To this end, we recommend that, as part of any future strategy, a strategy and implementation plan for cultural tourism for the Irish language be established in conjunction with the Department for Communities, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB),
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the Department for the Economy, Fáilte Ireland, local authorities and local Irish language groups.

- 8.24 The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) supports tourism initiatives that provide tourists with the opportunity to sample unique, authentic and truly fascinating experiences. We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Department for Communities, in consultation with the relevant public agencies, creates and facilitates opportunities to develop such experiences within the context of Irish language experiences. Tourism Ireland is responsible for the promotion of the island of Ireland in British and overseas markets. It engages with the NITB and a wide range of other organisations and agencies to ensure that all aspects of our diverse culture and heritage are strongly reflected in its promotional materials, activities and marketing campaigns for overseas markets.
- 8.25 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Department for Communities and the Department for the Economy, in conjunction with other relevant stakeholders, require the NITB to develop opportunities for collaboration with partners in the Irish language sector in relation to developing the visitor experience and that they consider any initiative that meets the relevant criteria through their open call funding schemes.
- 8.26 Belfast City Council's Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010-2014, developed in conjunction with the NITB, identified the Gaeltacht Quarter as one of the city's best local tourist destinations. We recommend that this should be recognised as part of the future strategy and that the relevant departments require the NITB to promote the tourism initiatives taking place in the Gaeltacht Quarter and recognise it as an important part of the tourist experience in Belfast.
- 8.27 Tourism Ireland is responsible for the promotion of the island of Ireland as a tourist destination in British and overseas markets. Any future strategy encourages it to engage with the NITB and a wide range of other organisations and agencies to ensure that all aspects of our diverse culture and heritage are strongly reflected in its promotional materials, activities and marketing campaigns for overseas markets.
- 8.28 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, the National Trust and agencies responsible for managing areas of outstanding beauty (for example, Northern Ireland Heritage Trust, Mourne Heritage Trust, Slieve Gullion, the Sperrins, etc.) be required to provide Irish language tourism services in all centres and facilities in their care, including, for example, interpretation, tours, signage, interactive facilities, registration and membership forms, etc.
- 8.29 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, regional museums and other tourist and cultural centres, such as Titanic Belfast, be required to provide Irish language tourism services in all centres and facilities in their care, including, for example, interpretation, tours, signage, interactive facilities, registration and membership forms, etc.
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8.30 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, tourism services through the medium of Irish and in relation to the Irish language be developed in National Trust facilities in NI and in other tourist centres containing a recognised area of historical, folklore, archaeological or topographical heritage, for example items on folklore at the Giant’s Causeway.

Entrepreneurship

8.31 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the relevant departments facilitate and encourage Irish language-based entrepreneurship. We recommend that annual research be carried out into ways of effectively promoting entrepreneurship, for example initiatives such as training programmes, business incubation centres and the creation of business networks.

8.32 We also recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Irish language economy should be supported to provide services, including courses, translation, interpreting and language teaching. The ‘incubator’ based in Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin, Derry, is a concept that could be applied to other areas in relation to delivering Irish language film and radio production or a design and production unit in order to provide the previously mentioned Irish language and bilingual signage.

8.33 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, the Department for Communities requires Foras na Gaeilge to invest in supporting Irish language innovation.

8.34 We recommend that, as part of any future strategy, a competitive funding scheme be provided to support publishing companies in publishing Irish language literature of all genres, as well as schemes supporting writers and events promoting Irish language reading.

9. EAP recommendations in relation to Research

Objective

To build on our research and knowledge of the Irish language and Irish speakers as a basis for carrying out ongoing and long-term evaluation of the effectiveness of any future strategy and other policies to promote the language (including legislation) in the development of legislation, strategies and positive policies for the Irish language.

Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Executive provides sufficient human and financial resources for a wide range of research on comprehensive aspects of the implementation of the Irish language strategy, as well as other policies (including legislation) aimed at protecting and promoting the Irish language. It is recommended that this includes a wide range of research, including research conducted by the Executive, departments, academics, community groups, independent researchers, etc., and that the full range of research be supported – including long-term research, geographical research, action research, qualitative research, quantitative research, etc.
- 9.2 It is recommended that all government departments provide sufficient human and financial resources to fulfil their research duties, as set out below, and publish a report on such resources each year.

It is recommended that the Department for Communities must:

- 9.3 Increase the information available on the Irish language community in the census and the Continuous Household Survey. It is recommended that the Department for Communities commissions expert and independent research on an annual/triennial basis and at other intervals as required and in line with best practice, to explore the sociolinguistic trends of the Irish language community by age, frequency of use of Irish, those with whom Irish is being used and the level/standard of spoken and written Irish, to identify barriers to, and opportunities for, development and to submit clear recommendations to the Department on the effective implementation of the legislation and the Irish Language Strategy. It is recommended that the Department for Communities submits comprehensive written and oral reports to the Executive and other departments on the findings of this research on an annual/triennial basis and that the results be made public.

- 9.4 In conjunction with the Irish Language Commissioner, independent experts and the Irish language community, conduct or commission comprehensive long-term research on methods of continuously improving and developing the effectiveness of Irish language legislation, for example the NDNA legislation, the Education Order, the St Andrew's Agreement, 2006, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and other international instruments and any future Irish language legislation, so that the key goals of both the legislation itself and the Irish Language Strategy can be achieved.
- 9.5 Within 3 months of the entry into force of the NDNA legislation, commence a continuous consultation process with specialists and experts in the Irish language community to establish a comprehensive long-term research programme considering all aspects of Irish language needs and international and national key principles and best practice in the area of sociolinguistics.
- 9.6 Upon the entry into force of the NDNA legislation, coordinate all departments in the Executive so that they meet these research needs on an ongoing basis by providing in-house government research and funding sources to facilitate research at an independent, academic and community level.
- 9.7 Influence non-government funders (the National Lottery, the Arts Council, etc.) to recognise the importance of research on the Irish language and to provide funding for same.
- 9.8 Encourage and facilitate coordination between the various groups conducting relevant research on an all-island basis.

EAP recommendations in relation to research on Education

- 9.9 In the first year following the entry into force of the NDNA legislation, focus should be placed on a research programme on education, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following topics:
 - Needs at all levels of Irish-medium education;
 - Special needs;
 - The professional competencies of the Irish-medium teacher;
 - Learning and teaching in the Irish-medium school;
 - The teaching and acquisition of Irish in English-medium schools;
 - Adult education and the teaching of Irish to adults; and
 - Building confidence in the use of the language in the Irish language learning community: students and former students of Irish-medium education at all levels from pre-school to third level and from English-medium schools.

EAP recommendations in relation to Adult Education - Adults

- 9.10 Research from Wales shows that adult learners have a positive effect on language transmission in the family and on raising awareness of the language in the workplace (Defiance within the decline? Revisiting new Welsh speakers' language journeys – Rhian Hodges, 2019, University of Bangor, Wales). Learners often rely on non-traditional methods of acquiring the language, often by way of underfunded Irish language organisations.
- 9.11 It is recommended that the relevant department establishes long-term research to study the outcomes of the educational policies currently available to adults, with a view to contributing to positive and relevant developments and to ascertain the views of learners on their knowledge and fluency in the language; do differences in access to resources affect learner trends – i.e., do learner aspirations and ambitions differ, depending on the options available to them to achieve fluency, and what advisable policies would result from the research?

EAP recommendations in relation to Parents

- 9.12 It is recommended that research be carried out into intergenerational Language Transmission
- What support is required by an Irish-speaking parent or Irish-speaking parents to enable them to raise their children through the medium of Irish?
 - What support is required by an Irish-speaking parent or Irish-speaking parents to enable them to use the language with their children at home?
 - What linguistic support is required by mothers (in particular) when raising babies?
 - What support is required by those families who do not raise their children through the medium of Irish/who do not speak Irish at home – why is this?

EAP recommendations in relation to Young People

- 9.13 Fóram na nÓg is a regional youth organisation with expertise in Irish language youth work and recognised by the Department of Education. It has recently completed sectoral research and audited and analysed the services/demands of the youth sector in Northern Ireland. It is recommended that the Department for Communities and the Department of Education consult with Fóram na nÓg regarding the role of the strategy and Irish language youth work in Northern Ireland.
- 9.14 Research conducted by POBAL in 2018⁷³ shows that practitioners in Irish-medium education and Irish language youth work recognise that young people can sometimes feel that the 'language of school' is not the language of their social life. If true, it is further evidence of the importance of Irish language youth clubs. It is recommended that long-term research is required to explore the ways in which access to youth associations affects this understanding.

73 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/602f79a565837b32cc85cebe/t/61816ac374eff137c709b747/1635871428622/2018+F+%26+H+Education%2C+Training+and+Employment+B%C3%A9arla+Eis.pdf>

In addition, it is recommended that the research, over time, studies the impact of this on the young person's decision to use the Irish language outside of school, and what actions should, therefore, be taken.

EAP recommendations in relation to Economic Life - economic needs and benefits

9.15 It is recommended that a research programme be undertaken within six months of the entry into force of the NDNA legislation, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following:

- the needs of businesses that wish to promote the Irish language in the workplace;
- Irish language tourism; and
- the promotion of Irish language arts and artists.

EAP recommendations in relation to Health Needs

9.16 It is recommended that the Department of Health commences, within 3 months of the entry into force of the NDNA legislation, a comprehensive research programme into the Irish language counselling and support services required in relation to:

- drug, alcohol addiction, etc.;
- mental illness;
- depression, etc.;
- suicide; and
- special health and educational needs.

EAP recommendations in relation to the Monitoring and Review of Research

It is recommended:

- That the above research be categorised by theme and carried out in a thematic cycle.
 - That the various research programmes be updated and developed on an ongoing basis, in line with the different phases of research proposals, and that an action plan be published alongside each research report to implement the recommendations.
 - That the findings and themes be discussed as a standing item with the Strategy Delivery Group, the Strategy Unit and the Advisory Forum.
 - That ongoing consultation be carried out with relevant practitioners and experts in the Irish language community to discuss the development and findings of each piece of research.
 - That seminars and conferences be held on a regular basis to present the research to the Irish language community.
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