

PRESS RELEASE

Minister of State, Dinny McGinley T.D., announces Review of the Official Languages Act 2003

Minister of State for the Gaeltacht, Dinny McGinley T.D., today (3/11/11) announced that the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has commenced a review of the Official Languages Act 2003, in line with the commitment specified in the Programme for Government. The main objective of the Act is to ensure the enhanced provision of public services through Irish.

"I am pleased to announce that the review of the Official Languages Act has begun today," the Minister said, "and I hope that the public and other key stakeholders will use this opportunity to make recommendations on the Act to my Department."

The objectives of the review are to ensure that the Act is an effective mechanism that supports the development of the Irish language in an efficient and cost-effective manner and that the obligations arising from the Act are appropriate to ensure the satisfactory provision of services in Irish by public bodies, in line with public demand. Under the review's terms of reference, a comprehensive review will be undertaken with regard to the application of the Act which will take into consideration suggested amendments in order to ensure that the public services to be provided through Irish are the services most in demand. Best practice relating to the provision of language services in other jurisdictions will also be examined.

The review will be led by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and key stakeholders will be consulted, including the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga, Government Departments and other public bodies, Irish language and Gaeltacht organisations and the general public.

The consultation process consists of two elements, a template for submissions and a survey. The template, which covers the main areas of operation of the Act, will give respondents an opportunity to express their views in a comprehensive manner. The survey aims to gather more concise information with regard to the provision of State services through Irish, on a quantitative and qualitative basis. The terms of reference for the review, the template for submissions and the survey can be found on the Department's website www.ahg.gov.ie.

The closing date for submitting the template and/or the survey to the Department, in either Irish or in English, is 31 January 2012.