

Acht na Gaeilge TÉ
The Irish Language Act NI

Ar aghaidh linn

ag cosaint na teanga, ag forbairt na sochaí

Moving forward, protecting the language, developing society



Fáilte Introduction

Janet Muller, POBAL

Dafydd Iwan

Uachtarán President Plaid Cymru

Neasa Ní Chinnéide

**Cathaoirleach, An Biúró Eorpach do Theangacha Neamhforleathana, Éirinn
Chairperson, The European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages, Rol**



Fáilte Introduction

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Mar is eol dúinn uilig, thug rialtas na Breataine gealltanas i gComhaontú Chill Rímhinn i mí Dheireadh Fómhair 2006, Acht na Gaeilge a achtú i dTÉ, bunaithe ar thairbhí na Breataine Bige agus deisceart na hÉireann. Rinne an Roinn Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta dhá chomhairliúcháin in 2007 ar an Acht Gaeilge. Le linn an chéad chomhairliúcháin, 668 freagairt shubstaineach agus 5000 ainm ar achainí éagsúla a fuarthas. Bhí 93% do na freagraí ar son na reachtaíochta agus ar son na moltaí a d'fhoilsigh POBAL sa doiciméad Acht na Gaeilge TÉ. 625 ar son na reachtaíochta. 45 i gcoinne. Le linn an dara comhairliúcháin, 11,000 freagairt a fuarthas 68% acu i bhfách leis an reachtaíocht, cé go raibh feachtas eagraithe in éadan an Achta ag roinnt do na páirtithe polaitiúla faoin am seo. Sa bhreis ar na freagairtí a chuir an Roinn Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta síos d'eagrais, cuireadh 205 aighneacht uimhrithe aonair ar shuíomh gréasáin na Roinne, gan ainm agus seoladh an rannpháirtí. Rinne mé anailís ghairid ar shampla randamach 20% de fhreagairtí aonair an chéad chomhairliúcháin, a rinneadh de bharr an chéad agus gach cúigiú aighneacht a roghnú de réir mar a cuireadh agus a uimhríodh ar shuíomh gréasáin RCEF iad, dhá fhreagairt agus daichead san iomlán.

As we are all aware, the British government gave a commitment in the St Andrews Agreement in October 2006, to introduce the Irish language Act in the North, based on the experience of Wales and the south of Ireland. The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure held two consultations in 2007 on the Irish Language Act. During the first consultation, 668 substantive submissions and around 5,000 names on various petitions were received. Ninety-three per cent of the substantive replies were in favour of the legislation and the proposals published by POBAL in the document The Irish language Act TÉ. 625 in favour of the legislation. 45 against. During the second consultation, 11,000 responses were received, 68 % of them in favour of the legislation in spite of a concerted campaign against the Irish Language Act from some political parties. In addition to the responses attributed by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to organisations, and placed on the departmental web site under the name of the respondent organisation, 205 numbered individual submissions were also placed on the Departmental web site, with the name and address of the contributor removed by the Department. I have analysed a random 20% sample of the individual responses to the first consultation, made by selecting the first and every fifth submission as placed and numbered on the departmental website, a total of forty two responses categorised by the DCAL as individual submissions.



Den dá fhreagairt agus daichead a triaileadh, 40 a thacaigh le reachtaíocht Ghaeilge. Den 40 aighneacht a thacaigh leis an reachtaíocht, molann 32 acu cur chuige ceartbhunaithe. I naoi gcinn agus fiche de na haighneachtaí luaitear go háirithe a lántacaíocht le feidhmiú mholtaí an scátheagrais, POBAL.

Is cosúil go dtacaíonn an céatadán an-ard den sampla 20% atá fabhrach don reachtaíocht le patrún foriomlán na n-aighneachtaí don chomhairliúchán. Ós ar aighneachtaí ó dhaoine aonair a bunaíodh an sampla, léiríonn sé a mhéad a chuaigh smaointe agus tuiscint den reachtaíocht teanga i bhfeidhm sa mhórphobal. Den chuid is mó, léiríonn na haighneachtaí ardleibhéal indibhidiúlachta a neartaíonn an comhdhearcadh láidir a nochtadh. Is cosúil ar feadh píosa fhada, gur thuig freagróirí bunbhri príonsabal áirithe na samhlacha reachtacha atá faoi chaibidil. Chomh maith leis an ardleibhéal feasachta ar na ceisteanna a bhaineann leis an reachtaíocht mholta, tá tacaíocht thar na bearta do mholtaí POBAL, san áireamh, cur chuige ceartbhunaithe, soláthar craoltóireachta, oideachais, comharthaíochta, sna forais pholaitiúla agus sna cúirteanna, a ndéantar tagairt dhíreach dóibh uilig i líon suntasach de na haighneachtaí, agus ní de réir foirmle. Luaitear i gcuid de na haighneachtaí an tionchar a d'fhéadfadh an reachtaíocht a imirt ar thaithí lá go lá Gaeilgeoirí, páistí agus foghlaimeoirí go háirithe, rud a léiríonn cumas an phobail mhóir leis na coincheapa atá i gceist a fhíorú.

Léiríodh an han-soiléir sna freagairtí ó dhaoine aonair, ó mhóramh na n-eagras, reachtúil agus deonach, Gaeilge agus Béarla an tacaíocht fhorleathan atá ann do shamhail reachtaíochta POBAL. Cuireann an próiseas comhairliúcháin féin ar fáil foinse shaibhir eolais ar dhearcadh an mórfhobal maidir le reachtaíocht don Ghaeilge.

Of the forty two responses sampled, 40 were supportive of Irish language legislation. Of the 40 submissions supporting legislation, 32 propose a rights-based approach. Twenty nine of the submissions make specific reference to their full support for the implementation of the proposals of the umbrella organisation, POBAL

The percentage of individual submissions that are supportive of legislation appears to reflect the overall tone of responses to the consultation. Since this sample is based on submissions from individuals, it shows the extent to which awareness and understanding of the issues has entered into the community. For the most part, the submissions show a high level of individuality which strengthens the consensus view that emerges. Clearly, respondents have had the chance over time to get to grips with the fundamental principles of legislation. In addition to the high level of awareness about the proposed legislation, there is an exceedingly high level of support for the POBAL proposals, including a rights-based approach, services in broadcasting, education, signage, usage in the political institutions and in the courts, all of which are mentioned in a significant number of the submissions in non-formulaic ways. In a number of the submissions, there is reference to the manner in which legislation can influence the day-to-day lives of Irish speakers, of children and learners, especially. This is something which shows the ability of the community to put the concept of legislation into their own experience.

It is shown very clearly in the individual submissions, and in the majority of those from organisations, voluntary and governmental, Irish-language and English-language, the widespread support for the POBAL model of legislation. The consultation process in itself provides a rich source of information on the view of the broad community on legislation for the Irish language.



Dafydd Iwan

Uachtarán President Plaid Cymru

Diolch yn fawr Janet a bore da gyfeillion. Mae'n bleser cael bod yma gyda chi y bore 'ma. Rwy'n ymddiheuro mod i'n methu siarad a^ chi yn eich iaith eich hunai. Thank you very much Janet, and good morning friends. It's a pleasure to be here with you this morning. I apologize that I can't speak to you in your own language.

I didn't realise that I would need a translation headset because I am continually taking part in meetings in Wales where they are in use. I, of course, don't have to use them because I can understand Welsh, but I would emphasize that it's a very, very important part of building a bilingual community and I've been watching some of the debates from the NI Assembly on television and I can't understand why, when they speak Irish in the Assembly here, they have to repeat it in English. I understand that everything is being translated but that they don't provide the headsets. I don't understand that at all. That is a prerequisite to any bilingual society, we must get used to using instantaneous translation.

I'll give you a quick potted history of the Welsh Language and the Welsh experience. I'm not here to tell you what to do, but I think that hearing what has happened in Wales, and it has been a success story despite all the odds, could be inspiring and of help to you in Northern Ireland. Over the centuries, the Celtic languages grew apart, but there are two main branches; the Gaelic branch which includes the Scots Gaelic, Irish Gaelic and Manx, and the Bythronic branch which is quite different. The Welsh, Cornish and Breton languages are an example of Bythronic languages and there is a lot of similarity between the Welsh and the Cornish Languages, for instance in vocabulary we can just about understand the Cornish Language and much of the Breton Language. Cymraeg, the Welsh Language, has been spoken for about 2000 years and the earliest poetry written in the language survives from around the 10th century when the Welsh people inhabited what is now the North of England and the South of Scotland. A poem talks about Catraeth for instance,

which is Catterick today. The census of 1911 showed that for the first time ever the Welsh Language was spoken by a minority of the population of Wales, until then it was the language of the majority and at one time most of the people of Wales spoke the language but by 1911 it had decreased to 43.5%. What is interesting though is that in 1911, 43.5% meant that half a million people spoke Welsh and although the percentage is much less today there's still about half a million speaking Welsh. By 1991 the decline had accelerated very much and the percentage was down to 18.7%, but still around half a million, between 1911 and 1991, there was a huge decline. The 2001 census however for the first time in over a century found that the actual number of Welsh speakers rose significantly, by about 80,000, and the percentage rose by about 20% to between 20.5% to 23.5% of the total population.

The Welsh Language Board was set up as a statutory body following the 1993 Welsh Language Act. We've had quite a few Welsh Language Acts and are expecting another one this year, and the Board saw their existence as justified when in 2001 the census results were released. It showed that the percentage of Welsh speakers had grown to as much as 23.5%. It's difficult to put a number on it but it seems that the number of Welsh speakers rose by between 67,000 and 150,000. The question asked in the census was: Do you understand Welsh, speak Welsh, read Welsh, write Welsh or none of the above, but it is always difficult to get people to answer correctly and tick the boxes.

There were twenty two counties in Wales by 2001 and all of them showed an increase apart from two, Gwynedd and Ceredigion. Gwynedd and Ceredigion are in the west and are the leading Welsh speaking counties, and the decline showed there was due to one factor only and that is the migration of people from England into the beautiful west of Wales. The increase in twenty of the twenty two counties was largely due to the work of schools, because the increase was very much in the lower age range, i.e. children between 3 and 15, the biggest increase



being in the English speaking areas where Welsh medium schools had been set up and where for the first time the children got to learn Welsh in school, and that is reflected in the figures. This is perhaps not appreciated outside Wales. I live in the north west of Wales in the county of Gwynedd and the Welsh Language is very much the lingua franca of the majority of the population. If you walk into a shop or anywhere in Caernarfon you will here Welsh spoken far more than English and its not a new thing, its a traditional language and a modern language, and the language of the young people as well.

The fact that between the 3 and the 15 year olds there was an increase of 13.4% on the 1991 census figure to 37.7% was obviously due to the growth of the Welsh medium schools. The 1944 Education Act permitted local authorities to consider, yes, just to consider, setting up Welsh medium schools. The first public funded primary school was set up in Llanelli, the rugby town, in 1947 and that's probably why they play good rugby as well. The first secondary school was set up in Rhyl, in the north, in 1956. Now there are 54 secondary schools teaching all or most of the subjects through the medium of Welsh. The number of secondary pupils receiving their education mainly or solely through the medium of Welsh as of January 2008 is 40,756. In the primary sector there are 464 Welsh speaking primary schools, there is quite a range of schools included in that number but the pupils in those 464 schools spread throughout the whole of Wales are being taught mainly or solely through the medium of Welsh. In our county, Gwynedd, that would include all the schools barr the Catholic school in Bangor. There are 54,895 primary school pupils being taught mainly or solely through the medium of Welsh. Then there's a further 1000 being taught Welsh as part of the curriculum and 209,000, the majority, being taught Welsh as a second language. Last week a school inspectors report flagged up quite a nasty surprise, in that they pointed out that the teaching of Welsh as a second language is declining in effectiveness and this is really something we have to tackle.

There's a good growth in Welsh medium education, a very positive growth, but the teaching of Welsh as a second language is being pushed to the outer limits of the curriculum and its down to half an hour a week in many schools, which is almost pointless, so that's something we have to address. The pupils in the primary sector not receiving any Welsh at all number about 825, those would be mainly private or church schools. It's interesting to note the explosion of Welsh education in Cardiff, the capital. When I was at college there in the sixties Welsh was almost insignificant in Cardiff, but the growth of Welsh medium education since then has been quite phenomenal. There are 5,300 pupils in Welsh medium schools in Cardiff alone today, ten Welsh medium primary schools, two bilingual schools, and two, perhaps even three, actually in the pipeline to be built by Cardiff City Council, but still the demand outstrips the capacity. There's a growing demand, not just from Welsh speaking parents who have moved to Cardiff because of the growth of the Assembly, the BBC and S4C, the Welsh television channel, but non Welsh speaking parents are seeing that they now have a real practical chance of giving their children what they missed themselves, and there's a very positive attitude towards the language amongst the non Welsh speaking population. The schools also tend to be very good schools because the teachers have that extra motivation. They see themselves as part of the campaign to reinvigorate the language and they tend to be very good schools educationally and that helps as well. The Welsh medium schools in Cardiff are big schools ranging from 195 to 444 pupils and secondary schools ranging from between 910 and 1200 pupils, with another one being built.

To run through the legislation, you were talking of an Irish Language Act here in Northern Ireland and its got to happen, it will happen. We've had a series of acts in Wales, we started in 1536 with the Act of Union and this is a sentence from that famous act,



'Henceforth no Person or Persons that use the Welsh Speech or Language shall have or enjoy any manner, office or Fees within this Realm of England, Wales or other the King's Dominion, upon Pain of forfeiting the same offices or Fees, unless he or they use and exercise the English speech or Language.'

There have been many attempts throughout history to eradicate the Welsh Language and it was done mainly because England thought that the Welsh language was holding us back, it was for our own good that they attempted to do away with indigenous languages, not just in Britain of course, but in other countries as well. We've reached a position now in Wales where we have our own elected Assembly and it can legislate with the permission of Westminster, a situation we hope we can grow out of before long, but at the moment we have to go through this rather convoluted process of persuading Westminster that we're good enough and intelligent enough to pass our own laws. We have to go through what they call the legislative competence order, the LCO. The latest language act has just been published this week and it's had a very good response. It hopefully will be translated into quite an effective and strong act which will enshrine rights for Welsh speakers for the first time, but here are a few politicians, especially in Westminster, who probably see this as another chance to throw a spanner in the works and will try to dilute it. Hopefully we'll persuade them otherwise. The Act, hopefully this time, will be quite a strong one; the main points will be that it will encompass much of the private sector as well as the public sector, that is, any company providing a public service and regulated by OFWAT or OFCOM. It won't include every private company. It won't include the supermarkets, for instance. I'm personally not so worried about that because I think the element of customer power and customers persuading supermarkets and other companies that using Welsh is to their benefit as businesses, I think that element is still important, that customer power can influence. Tesco uses Welsh in a lot of their shops in Wales, not because they have to but because they realise that it pleases a lot of their customers and

that is, if it happens, often more effective than forcing somebody to use a language on their signage. So I'm not too worried personally, although we have been criticised because we didn't include every private company, but the Plaid Cymru Party and the Labour Party are in a coalition government and coalitions are a question of compromise and I'm pleased to say that we have been able to influence the Labour Party more than they have influenced us, but don't tell them I said that. The Act will give Welsh speakers a right in law to use Welsh. There was quite a notorious case a few years ago where the Thomas Cook Company said to their workers that they shouldn't speak Welsh in the office in front of their customers and if they do that after this act they will be transgressing and breaking the law, so it enshrines that right to use Welsh and gives Welsh, for the first time, official status on a par with English. It also will lead to the setting up of the post of language commissioner, such as the Children's Commissioner we have in Wales, at arms length from the Government, monitoring the enactment of what is included in the Act and helping people to come to terms with new legislation. This has been achieved as a result of the 'One Wales' agreement between Labour and Plaid Cymru, the coalition government which formed 18 months ago, so we're quite pleased although it has been a long time coming, but because of the LCO arrangement it had to be convoluted. I would argue that it is the culmination of a longer historical process.

In 1925 Plaid Cymru was formed and the Language was very central to our philosophy. Plaid Cymru was formed to bring about self-government for Wales and to instate the Welsh Language as an official language in Wales, so you could say that the movement started from there. In 1942 we had a Welsh Courts Act which for the first time since the act of union gave Welsh some official recognition and allowed it to be used in a limited way in courts of law. In 1944 there was a Welsh Education Act to give local authorities the right to set up Welsh

medium schools. In the 1950's you had sporadic acts by individuals to try to force local authorities, for instance, to use Welsh on rate forms. There was the famous family, the Beasleys in Llanelli, who refused to pay their rates until they had their forms in bilingual form and they lost most of their possessions because bailiffs took them away to pay their fines. That was a sign of the times, and in 1962 Cymdeithas Yr Iaith, the Welsh Language Society was set up and it's been continuous since then. I was very much involved in the 60's and 70's myself. Hundreds of people have been imprisoned as a result of the language campaigns, for instance we had a very successful road signs campaign at the end of the 60's / beginning of the 70's. When everything else had failed we started painting out monolingual English signs, painting them in green, so I became known as a painter of road signs although I hardly painted a road sign myself but I was the chairman of the Welsh Language Society and had a lot of active members. It made us very unpopular but it really was a very decisive campaign. There was a one year moratorium and then we started to take down road signs and I remember the big court case when the leaders of the Society were charged with conspiracy and we each had a year or two suspended sentence, which was very clever of them. I remember the court case in Swansea and the police for hours carrying in huge mounds of broken signs and every time they came in the gallery erupted in applause until it was cleared. It was great fun. We'll never have as much fun as that with language acts. It was a very important part of the changing political face of Wales. We didn't use bombs and we were very much a non-violent organisation but very radical and hundreds of people were imprisoned up to the end of the 80's, mostly young people but older people as well. It did get peoples backs up, it made a lot of people angry, it split a lot of families, but out of that period of anger and debate the politics of Wales changed and the attitude of all the parties has changed towards the language. Before then everybody said, 'of course I'm for the language, we don't want to see the language dying, we're all for the language' but didn't translate it into policies at all, but now, after the troubles, they

have to have a policy, they can't get away with saying 'I love the language, it's the language of heaven, I don't want to see it die', now they have to say what they propose in policy and that is why I believe that all the political parties will be behind this new Welsh Language Act, although it is quite far reaching, because they've decided it's better to be seen being positive to the language in a real effective way rather than to be seen as opposing it, so there has been a big change.

In 1967 we had the first Welsh Language Act which expanded the use of Welsh in courts and on official forms, in 1988 the Education Act made Welsh a core subject in the national curriculum of Wales and the Tory party was instrumental in that. In 1990 it became a compulsory subject to all pupils up to 14 years old and in 1999 this was extended to 16 year olds, so it is a compulsory subject to everyone in Wales up to the age of 16, but the danger is that those not receiving their education through the medium of Welsh are now just receiving half an hour a week which is not enough. In 1993 the second Welsh Language Act made the public sector obliged to give Welsh and English equality when dealing with the public, full rights for Welsh speakers to use Welsh in the courts and it set up the Welsh Language Board to expedite and monitor the use of Welsh.

So to conclude, some more details included in the language LCO published this week:





- The right of Welsh speakers to speak Welsh together established in law
- All private bodies providing a public service under regulation from OFCOM / OFWAT will have to provide a bilingual service, water, electricity, gas, rail, telecoms, postal services and all public service bodies

Now there's a very interesting argument put forward by one of the leading members of BT in Wales, and BT has become very effectively bilingual, but she, and she comes from a nationalist background, she says that we don't need another language act and that the efforts put into this legislation should be directed at persuading the people of Wales to use the Welsh services already provided. Now that's very similar to saying, 'let's persuade people to use BT rather than Vodafone and Orange.' I don't quite agree with her on that but it's an argument that always is heard when you talk of new legislation, 'isn't it better to change the will of the people and persuade people to use Welsh.' You need to do both, but you can't do it without legislation. Also in the LCO:

- Extend to any body or company receipt of more than £200,000 of public money

This clearly includes banks, making this a very important clause and it may be one of the clauses which some of the politicians really want to try to remove before it becomes an act, but I think its very important, especially with the argument currently going that if you put so much public money into the banks haven't we got a right to expect them to do things that we think are correct by the language. The setting up of the post of Language Commissioner to regulate is important in this regard because the weakness of the 1993 Act is that people have to have language schemes and language schemes are worked on very carefully, are gone through in great detail, approved by the Language Board and very often then put on the shelf and not really put into operation.

- The Language Commissioner will have powers to enforce these language schemes, and the individual has the right to expect service in either language of their choice.



Some argue that it is the will of the people and not legislation that will secure the survival and development of any language. The truth is that we have to do both, it is not a matter of either or. The will of the people influences laws and laws influence the collective will of the people. Laws can kill languages and laws can help to revive them and help them to survive, and a language cannot survive in the modern world without the support of strong legislation and it cannot survive without the support of the people, but we do need both.





Neasa Ní Chinnéide

Cathaoirleach, An Bíúró Eorpach do Theangacha Neamhforleathana, Éirinn
Chairperson, the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages, Rol

Ó Acht to Gníomh.

Ta spléacadh an-mhaith tugtha dúinn ag Daffyd Iwan ar cad is fiú reachtaíocht teanga, agus cé chomh mór is a dhein reachtaíocht teanga na Breataine Bige cuidiú le cúis na teanga sa Bhreatain Bheag. Ní amháin sin, ach tá Acht Teanga na Breataine Bige ina threóir ag Achtanna eile. Tá ár n-Acht teanga ó dheas bunaithe cuid mhór ar an acht sin, cé go raibh Coimisinéir Teanga in san Acht i bPoblacht na hÉireann ó thús.

Ba mhaith liom tagairt a dhéanamh ins an léacht seo do thogra measúnaithe ar Achtanna Teanga atá idir lámha faoi láthair, togra a d'eascair an chéad lá as comhthionól a d'eagraigh Coiste na hÉireann den Bhiúró Eorpach do Theangacha Neamhforleathana i gColáiste na Tríonóide, Baile Atha Cliath, sa bhliain 2005 dár Teideal 'Ó Acht go Gníomh'. D'eascair an smaoineamh ó chomhghuaillíocht oibre idir Choiste na hÉireann agus Coiste na Fionlainne, agus ag an ócáid sin bhí tionól do Airí agus státhsheirbhísigh ón dá thír. I gcás na Fionlainne, bhí leasú á dhéanamh ag an am ar Acht Teanga a cuireadh i bfeidhm sna ficheadaí, agus i gcás na hÉireann bhí Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla dá ullmhú.

I gcás reachtaíocht teanga in Éirinn agus sa Bhreatain Bheag, tá stiúr lánach ón rialtas, nó ó fhoras a bhfuil baint aige leis an rialtas. Ní mar sin a bhíonn sé i ngach tír. Sa bhFionlainn tá an chóras dí-láraithe, agus níl scéimeanna chomh beacht is atá in Éirinn. Aon áit ina bhfuil níos mó ná 5.8% den bpobal in aon limistéir ina gcainteoiri teanga mionlaigh, ceadaíteoir cearta teanga don bpobal sin. Is feidir leis na pobail éileamh a dhéanamh de réir riachtanaisí áitiúla.

Ag féachaint ar ó pheirspectíocht Eorpach nó domhanda, tá an saol athraithe, domhandú tárlaithe, imirce agus eisimirce ag cruthú sochaí nua. Tá fáil ag daoine ar eolas agus ar chumarsáid ar bhealaí nach raibh ann ins an am atá thart. Ta cumas theicneolaíoch taréis féidireachtaí polaitiúla agus sóisialta a éascú, agus chuidigh sé sin leis an athrú dearcadh atá tárlaithe i leith achtanna teanga.

Act to Action

Daffyd Iwan has given us a very good overview of the benefits of language legislation and how beneficial Welsh language legislation was in helping the language issue in Wales. Not only that, of course, but the Welsh Language Act has guided other language acts. Our own language act in the South is based to a large extent on that example, although a language Commissioner was in our own plan from the start.

In this talk I want to refer to an evaluation initiative on Language Acts which is taking place at present, an initiative which was the result of an assembly organised by the Irish Committee of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages in Trinity College, Dublin, in 2005, entitled 'Ó Acht go Gníomh'. The idea came from co-operation between the Irish and Finnish committees, and at the event there were ministers and civil servants from both countries.

In the case of Finland, amendments were being made to a Language Act which was implemented in the twenties, and in the case of the south of Ireland, the Official Languages Act was being prepared. In the cases of language legislation in the Republic of Ireland and in Wales, there is central direction from government, or from an institution connected with government. This is not the case in all countries. In Finland, the system is de-centralised, and schemes are not as precise as they are in Ireland. Anywhere where more than 5.8% of the community in any area are minority language speakers, that community are awarded language rights. These communities can make demands according to local needs.

Looking at it from a European or global perspective, life has changed, globalisation has occurred, immigration and emigration have created new societies. Information and correspondence are available to people in ways which weren't available in times gone by. Technological know-how has facilitated political and social possibilities, and that has helped change opinions in terms of language acts.

Mar a deirtear ins an staidéar Euro-Mosaic,

‘The need of the individual’s identity to focus on language, may always be there, regardless of the status of the mother tongue.’

Tá an pointe seo an-thábhachtach; ní bhaineann an scéal leis an gceist, “an mó duine a labhrann do theanga?” amháin. Baineann sé le “cad is fiú do theanga duit?” I gcás mionteanga, cothaíonn sé comhlúadar agus comhtháthú pobail; tugann sé stádas do na daoine a labhrann an teanga ina measc féin, agus cuidíonn sé le scéalta agus seanchas agus tuiscint na ndaoine a chur ó ghlún go glúin.

Cuidíonn na meáin leictreónacha agus na meáin chraolta leis an bpróiseas sa chás go bhfuil fail orthu ins an mionteanga. Téann daoine i ngleic le mionteangacha tríd síos, agus glactar leis gur rud uile-ghabhalach é do theanga a labhairt. I measc buanna na meáin leictreónach i leith mionteangacha, tá an saoirse atá ag an aos óg usáid a bhaint ina dteangacha féin cumarsáid a dhéanamh tré théacs agus an ríomhaire, beag beann ar dhaoine fásta nó na meáin scríofa.

Breathnaímís ar chuid de na straitéisí atá ar fail in Achtanna Teanga, mar shampla Acht Teanga na hÉireann, 2003. Cad iad na buntáistí a thugann sé dúinn? Cead Gaeilge a úsáid sna cúirteanna. Cead cumarsáid le h’eagraisí stait trí Ghaeilge, ríomhphoist san áireamh, agus scéimeanna teanga, bunaithe ar chleachtas na Breataine Bige. Tá béim ar sheirbhísí sa Ghaeltacht. Bhí tréimhse trí bliana ann do na scéimeanna teanga tosaigh sin. D’éirigh conspóidí ó am go chéile, ach ar an mór-dul, ba mhaith ann iad treoracha Achta teanga.

In ainneoin sin is eile, tá dúshlán ó thaobh mionteangacha a chaomhnú agus tá siad coiteann ní hamháin in Éirinn, ach i dtíortha eile. De réir tuairiscí áirithe, alán de na scéimeanna teanga, tá lucht a gcur i bfeidhm imeallach ina n’eagraíochtaí féin, agus is constaic í seo ó thaobh éifeachta.

As stated in the study Euro-Mosaic,

‘The need of the individual’s identity to focus on language, may always be there, regardless of the status of the mother tongue.’

This point is very important; the question is not only; ‘How many people speak your language?’ It is also, ‘What value is your language to you?’ In the case of a minority language, it creates community and social fusion; it gives status to those who speak the language amongst themselves, and it helps to pass stories and heritage from generation to generation.

The electronic and broadcast media help the process where they are available in the minority language. People engage with minority languages thoroughly, and it is accepted that it is an all-inclusive thing to speak your language. Amongst the benefits of electronic media in the case of minority languages, is the freedom of the youth to use their own language in texting or on computers, more so than older people or the printed media.

We will look at some of the strategies available in Language Acts, for example, the Republic of Ireland’s Language Act, 2003. What benefits does it give us? The right to use Irish in the courts. The right to communicate with state departments in Irish, including by e-mail, and language schemes, based on the Welsh model. There is emphasis on services in the Gaeltacht. There was a three year period for those initial schemes. Disputes arose from time to time, but over-all, Language Act guidelines were a good thing.

Despite all that, there are challenges regarding the preservation of minority languages and they are common in other countries, not just in Ireland. According to certain reports, a lot of the language schemes, the lack of their implementation is contained within their own organisations, and that is an obstacle in terms of effectiveness.



Tá cuidiú de dhith ar stát seirbhísigh ó thaobh

- foclóireacht
- oiliúint
- bogearraí
- cabhair aistriúchán.

Rud eile a fheiceann feidhmeanaigh ná go bhfuil cúthail ar an bpobal seirbhís i mionteanga a éileamh. Minic go leór; níl sé de mhuintín acu an chéist a chur as Gaeilge, nó tá eagla orthu nach mbeidh Gaeilge ag an té atá ag freastal orthu. Tá iarracht den 'hang on a minute 'til I get you the one who speaks Irish', i gceist, ach is de réir a chéile a tóghtar na caisleáin, mar a deir an seanfhocal.

Ins an staidéar a rinneadh sa bhliain 2005, is iad na tíortha a bhí i gcéist ná Éire, an Bhreatain Bheag, agus an Fhionlainn, go príomha. Bhí samplaí áirithe ón Spáinn, an Iodáil, an tSlobhaic agus roinnt tíortha eile. Bhí buntastí éagsúla ina gcórais agus ina módhanna oibre.

Tá fadhbanna difriúla i dtíortha éagsúla; níl seasamh oifigiúil ag teangacha áirithe, go mórmhór nuair atá an-chuid teangacha, mar atá sa tSlobhaic agus san Ungáir. In san bFhreaslainn (san Isealtír) táthar ag féachaint ar oideachas i dtíortha a bheith ar fáil do pháistí ón mbunscoil ar aghaidh (Freaslainnis, Ollanais, agus Béarla.) Tá an múnla oibre seo á chur i bhfeidhm i Mercator Education, foras oideachais sa bFhreaslainn, le tacaíocht on Aontas Eorpach. Feicfeam amach anseo conas a oibríonn a leithéid de chur-chuige. Tá tíortha ann ar nós Lucsamburg ina bhfuil oiliúint tré-theangach ina chleachtas coiteann, ach i gcás teangacha mionlaigh nach teangacha oifigiúla stáit iad, ní minic a bhíonn siad á múineadh go forleathan ins an gcóras scoile seachas faoi fhorálacha rialacha aontaithe idir phobail teanga agus rialtais i limistéirí tíreolaíocha roghnaithe.

Do réir an réamh - eolais atá ar fáil go dtí seo ón togra Acht go Gníomh, tá na módhanna chun aiseolas a aistriú go cleachtas níos fearr lag, minic go leor. Tá an-tábhacht le ceannasaíocht

Civil servants need help in terms of

- terminology
- training
- software
- help in translation

Another thing which officials see is that the community is reluctant to seek services in the minority language. Often, they are not confident to ask the question in Irish, or they are afraid that the person serving them will not have Irish. There is the chance of 'hang on a minute 'til I get you the one who speaks Irish, but these things take time.

In the study conducted in 2005, the countries in question were Ireland, Wales, and Finland, primarily. There were examples from Spain, Italy, Slovakia, and a few other countries. There were various advantages in their systems and work methods.

Different countries have different problems; some languages don't have official status, especially where there are many languages, as in Slovakia and in Hungary. In Friesland (in the Netherlands) they are looking at tri-lingual education being available to children from Primary school onwards (Friesian, Dutch and English). This work model is being implemented by Mercator Education, an educational institute in Friesland, with support from the European Union. We will see how this type of initiative works. Countries such as Luxembourg already have tri-lingual education as the norm, but in the case of minority languages which are not official state languages, they are rarely taught in the school system through provision agreed between language communities and governments within selected geographic areas.

According to initial information available from the Ó Acht go Gníomh initiative, the methods by which information is converted to practice are very weak. Cutting-edge leadership is vital. If standards aren't clear and aims very clear, it doesn't matter what legislation is in place, it won't be implemented to the benefit of the community.

ceannródaíoch. Muna bhfuil caighdeáin soiléire agus spriocanna an-soiléir, is cuma cé'n reachtaíocht atá ann ní cuirfear i bhfeidhm í chun leasa an phobail. Cothaíonn deá-reachtaíocht atmaisféar níos sláintiúla i leith forbairt teanga. Tuigtear go bhfuil rialacha tré-dhearcaha ann agus go bhfuil na cúinsí faoina bhfuil éilimh teanga dá lorg soiléir agus réasúnta. Ba chomhair go gcuideódh Acht Teanga le sochaí a chruthú ina dtuigtear gur féidir gnáth-riachtanaisí a chur ar fáil do phobal teanga, ach bíonn teorainneacha leis na réimsí ina bhfuil an soláthar phoiblí ar fáil. I dtaca le hoideachas, an réimse is mó ar a raibh béim ó thús, tá dul chun cinn le feiceáil ar thuiscint pobail teanga, cé go bhfuil ceisteanna spéisiúla a thagann chun cinn nuair atá pobail ag fás is ag forbairt agus imircigh ó thíortha nó daoine o phobail eile ag cur fúthu ionnta. Feictear go bhfuil caonfhulaingt fiór thábhachtach mar thréith ins na cásanna seo, imeasc gach aicme scoile agus sa sochaí mórthimpeall.

Is léir ó ghnáth - thaithí pobail na Gaeltachta go bhfuil gá le dul chun cinn níos uileghabhaháí i leith lucht leighis agus teiripe teanga agus i réimsí eile. Tá sé éasca go leor cóip a dhéanamh den Acht teanga atá ag do chomharsa, ach b'fhéidir nach ndíríonn an acht sin go sonrath ar na fadhbanna atá ag do phobal teanga féin.

Ceann de na réimsí is mó ina bhfuil an Bhéarla ag teacht chun cinn ar domhan ná in Oideachas tríú leibhéal. Tá an Eoraip ag féachaint tríd síos ar cad é an tionchar atá ag Béarla in oideachas tríú leibhéal, ní h'amháin ar na teangacha mionlaigh, ach ar na teangacha dúchasacha tríd síos. Caoga, seasca bliain ó shin, bhéadh 60% de na tráchtas dochtúireachta eolaíochta á scríobh i nGearmáinis. Inniu tá forlámhas ag an mBéarla - an buntáiste nó a mhalairt atá anseo? Nil mórán trácht in Achtanna Teanga ar a leithéid, ní nach ionnadh, mar nach réiteach ar gach fadhb Acht Teanga. Seans go bhfuil muid ag teacht anois go dtí an bpointe gur féidir ceist teanga a láimhseáil go sibhialta, éifeachtach, tré mheán Achtanna Teanga, bíodh gur mionteanga nó mórtheanga atá i gcéist.

Good legislation encourages a healthy atmosphere in terms of language development. It is understood that there are transparent rules and that the conditions under which language rights are sought are clear and reasonable. A Language Act should help create a society in which it is understood that every-day demands can be provided for a language community, but there are limits to the areas where public supply is available. Regarding education, the area most emphasised from the start, development can be seen regarding understanding of language communities, although there are interesting questions which arise when a community is growing and developing and immigrants from other countries or communities come to live in their midst. Tolerance is recognised as a vital trait in these cases, both in the schools and in the community at large.

It is clear from the experiences of the Gaeltacht community that there is a need for more comprehensive approach regarding the medical profession, language therapy and in other areas. It is easy to copy your neighbour's language act, but that act may not address the particular problems of your language community.

One of the areas in which English has come forward is in third Level Education. Europe is seeing the influence of English all through third level education, not only on minority languages, but on the indigenous languages as well. Fifty, sixty years ago, 60% of Doctorate theses in science were written in German. Today, the majority are in English - is this an advantage or not? There is not much mention in language acts about this, unsurprisingly, as a language act is not the solution to every problem. Perhaps we are now reaching the point where the language question can be dealt with civilly, effectively, through the medium of language acts, whether regarding a minority or indigenous language. In the south, it is an aim to have 250,000 Irish speakers within a generation. It is recognised that Irish cannot be left as a rural language.



Tá sé de sprioc go mbeadh 250,000 cainteoir Gaeilge againn i bPoblacht na hÉireann le linn saol- ré an chéad glún eile. Aithnítear nach féidir an Ghaeilge a fhágaint mar theanga tuaithe amháin. aithfidimid a bheith inár lucht labhartha Gaeilge idir uirbeach agus tuaithe, agus bheith muiníneach asainn féin go bhfuil sí díreach chomh tábhachtach le haon teanga eile. Chuige sin, tá ról ar leith ag Achtanna Teanga atá deá-chumtha. Beidh an taighde uileghabhálach ón togra Act go Gníomh ar fáil amach anseo. Ba chomhair gur díol spéise na moltaí a thiochfadh as do phobail teanga.

Mar fhocal scoir, is léir go bhfuil ceisteanna an-tábhachtach agus leochaileacha ag éirí as éilimh cearta teanga. Tá sé de bhuntáiste againn go bhfuil taighde á dhéanamh ar bhonn Eorpach atá ag díriú ar an gceist. Is beag na comhluadair atá ann inniu nach bhfuil meascán de chiníocha iontu; an dúshlán atá romhainn ar fad ná conas deá-smaointe ó Achtanna Teanga éagsúla a chur i bhfeidhm le stuaim agus le comh-mheas ar ár gcomharsain.

Ó Acht go Gníomh, Seiminéar ar Fheidhmiú Achtanna Teanga, Coiste na hÉireann de BETN, Coláiste na Tríonóide, BAC, 2004.

Foilseachán de chuid an Aontais Eorpaigh, EUROMOSAIC 1994. Osradharc 1996 ISBN 92-827 5512

Le foilsiú 2009, Siv Sandberg (Abo Akademi) agus údair eile.

We must be urban and rural Irish speakers, and be confident that it is as important as any other language. Towards that, well-comprised language acts have a particular role. The comprehensive research from Ó Acht go Gníomh will be available soon. It should be interesting what suggestions come from your language community.

As a final word, it is clear that very important and delicate questions are arising from language rights demands. It is advantageous to us that research is being carried out at a European level which is focussing on the issue. It is a rare community today which does not have a mix of races in it; the challenge before us is how to bring forward and implement the good ideas from various language acts in a level-headed way, and with respect for our neighbours.

Ó Acht go Gníomh, Seminar on the Implementation of Language Acts, Irish Committee or EBLUL, Trinity College, Dublin, 2004

European Union Publication, Euromosaic 1994. Overview 1996 ISBN 92-827 5512

To be published 2009, Siv Sandberg (Abo Akademi) and other authors

Dafydd Iwan

Focal scoir / Summing up

It's always interesting to hear about experiences from elsewhere and there are so many facets to it, legislation is just the framework and the foundation but how do you go about popularising and teaching the language, not only in schools but to adults also. That is crucial, making it accessible, easy and not too expensive. It is also important to stress that the language must be taken out of its confines. The Welsh language was confined to a few things like chapels, eisteddfodau and a few other activities. We had to break out of those confines and make it a modern language and that is why entertainment is so important; television, radio, record industry, book and magazine publican, and also giving it status, in a sense, by linking it to prominent people. Shane Williams has been voted the best rugby player in the world and he is a Welsh speaker and this helps, Bryn Terfel is probably one of the greatest opera singers in the world and he is so keen to show the world that he speaks Welsh and he says that a lot of his success is down to the fact that he is bilingual. Germans refuse to accept that he is not German because his German diction is so perfect and he puts this down to the fact that he is bilingual and that the Welsh language is a phonetic language which he says helps with his diction in other languages. I think that it's so important that so many prominent rugby players in the successful team we have at the moment are Welsh speakers and the great stars of the past, Gareth Edwards, Barry John and Gerald Davies were all Welsh speakers and proud of the fact. We have a few Welsh speakers making their names as film stars in Hollywood, Ioan Gruffudd, Matthew Rhys and Rhys Ifans are all a product of Welsh medium education and Welsh theatre, they've acted in Welsh and English and then branched out. Super Furry Animals are one of the best rock groups in Wales and they're all Welsh speaking. All this

helps because there is a tendency, and this is probably true of all minority languages, for it to be confined to some activities, usually traditional, usually involving mostly older people. It's got to be shown to be a modern language, a young language linked to all sorts of activities. People, however, have to be able to access and learn the language easily in schools and a difficulty we have in Wales is the continuity of Welsh medium education right through from nursery to university, and as you know, it's probably true of Ireland as well, going up the ladder is linked to money and money is linked to numbers and their expanding often at the expense of teaching through the medium of Welsh and Irish.

It's so important to make it viable for students to see the continuity of learning through the Welsh language because very often after going through A levels at secondary schools they have to change to English medium because the course is not available in their subject in the university of their choice. So all these factors are so important, the fact that they lock together, and the money argument always raises its head, but it's political will really, if the political will is there then you allocate the money to make the difference where it counts.

I think that the story in Wales is largely one of success but we are very much concerned with the problem areas and the weaknesses and where we have to improve. What we've done recently with adult education through Welsh is to have five main centres throughout Wales running classes in those areas. What we must avoid at all costs is to be too bureaucratic, too inflexible, too restrictive, producing more and more forms and making things too complicated. People are not going to learn a language if it means having to jump through a lot of hoops. We have to facilitate and take it to the people and popularise it, in that sense as well. There is a tendency in government these days to dream up schemes which make it difficult for people to fill in forms and to go through various stages before they



actually get what they are looking for, you have to think of the customer throughout this. Widening the scope of the language and the links of the language is so important in making it modern and viable.

Modern technology can help, in a paradoxical way, with things that tend to be linked with globalisation, and e-mail and the internet adapt to any language, that is the beauty of it. There is a downside in that this generation of people now talk to each other in texts and code, so strange things are happening in all languages, including the minority languages and perhaps you have to adjust to that and accept that spelling is going out of the window. It's quite interesting in Wales because one of the unique points of the Welsh language is that we have a system of poetry which has a very intricate series of rules which we call Cynghanedd, where consonants are answered in two parts of every line of poetry in the same order, it sounds absurd but it's terrific if it's done well but perhaps all these changes in spelling is making it difficult. Neasa Ní Chinnéide

Neasa Ní Chinnéide

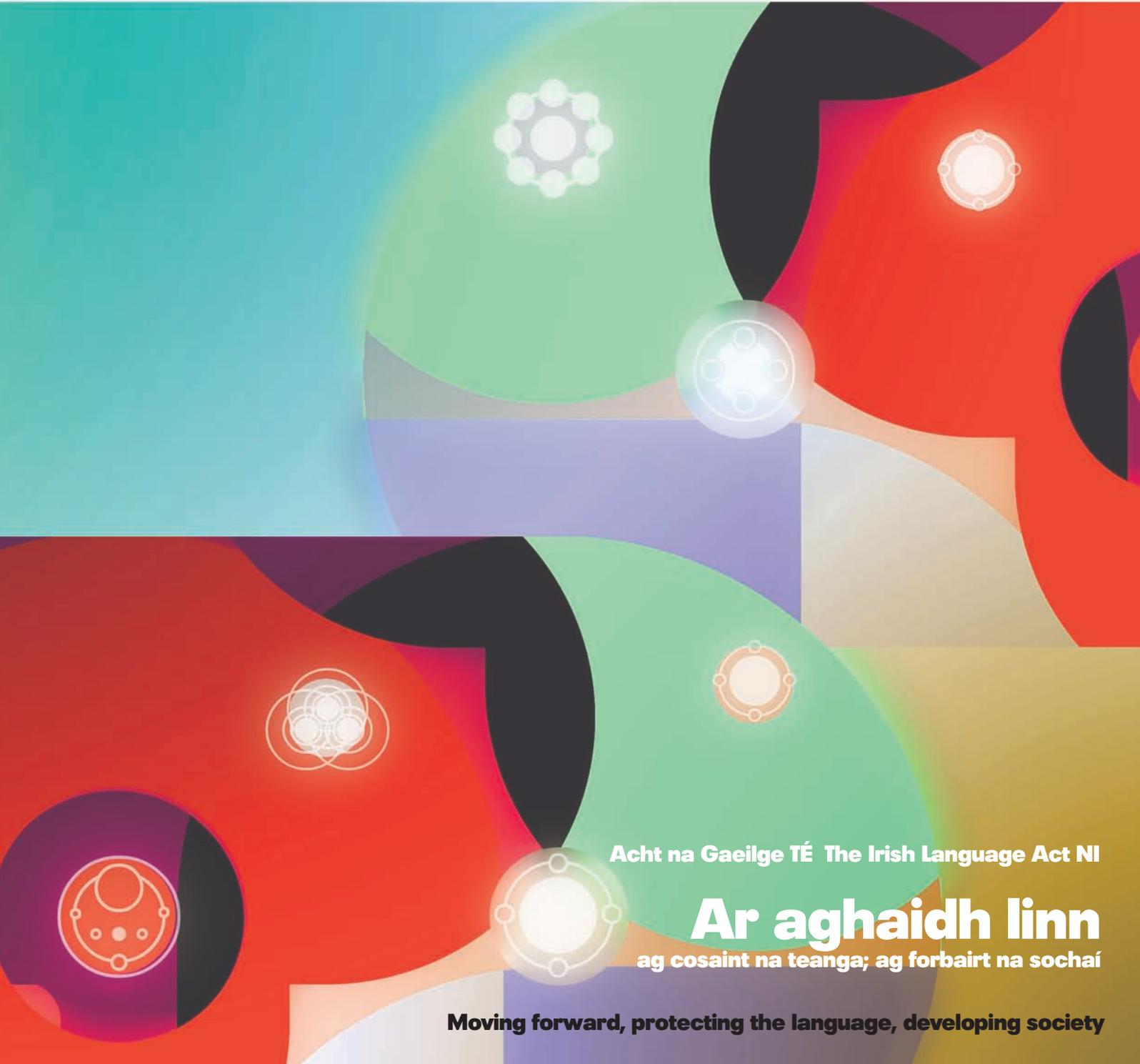
Focal scoir / Summing up

One thing that I think is interesting now is that the whole concept of learning has changed, it used to be that you learned when you were young and carried on with that for the rest of your life, but now learning is becoming a far more constant thing as we go through life. There will be a lot more need for it, it would seem, given the horrendous downturn in the global economy at the moment. There is going to be a huge need for people to go back to relearn things and what may come out of that is that you can approach the relearning of things including language, for example, as you retrain yourself for whatever strange new world we have facing us. So the idea of learning through your life is certainly conducive to learning what you want in your life and language can certainly be a part of that and if, as

may be the case, markets that were global shrink then niche markets that were targeted on language groups will be one of the markets that will arise. It is a very, very interesting time and let's hope it doesn't get a great deal worse or we could be going back to much more micro-approaches to things and that might be a way in which people will return to local markets, local languages, whatever opportunities are there to sell goods and so on. Apart from that I think that the whole technology thing is huge but at the end of the day our children will decide; it's really hard to know what they will do. I am on the steering committee of the joint NPLD, a great network with colleagues from Wales and so on, and one of the questions we are asking is why do children drop a minority language in their late teens and are they going to revisit it when they raise the next generation. These are the questions and I think from my own point of view, having been asked today to speak about language acts, I think all of the experts whose work I refer to, and myself, would really hope that the day will come when these crutches that are being given to us at the moment in the form of language acts because they're needed right now may be superseded by a time when, sometime in the future, they are not needed because the linguistic respect and the recognition of the importance of languages will have established itself and there will be no need for civil servants to tear their hair out wondering how they are going to administer these things.



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Acht na Gaeilge TÉ The Irish Language Act NI

Ar aghaidh linn

ag cosaint na teanga; ag forbairt na sochaí

Moving forward, protecting the language, developing society