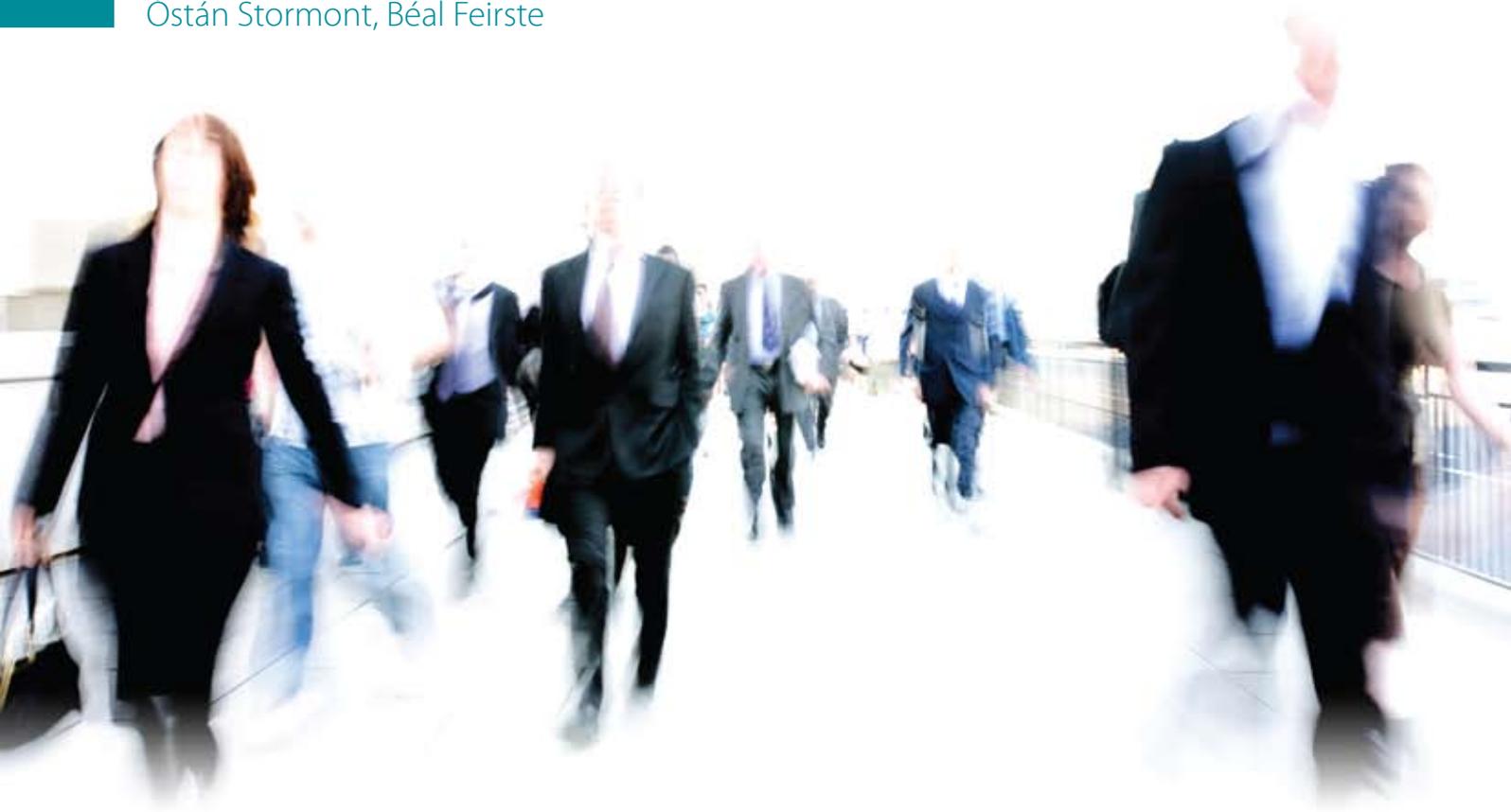


Ag forbairt beartas cuimsitheach agus creat straitéiseach don Ghaeilge i dTuaisceart na hÉireann

Tuairisc ar an chomhdháil

23 Meitheamh 2010

Óstán Stormont, Béal Feirste



Developing a comprehensive policy and strategy framework for Irish in the North of Ireland

Report of the Conference

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Janet Muller

Príomhfheidhmeannach, POBAL

Chief Executive Officer, POBAL

Cúlra an tionscnaimh

Ó d'oscail POBAL a oifigí i 1999, tá obair straitéiseach déanta aige ar stádas agus fhorbairt na Gaeilge, ag díriú ar choinníollacha sainiúla na teanga i ndlínse an Tuaiscirt. Mar chuid den obair seo, rinne muid faireachán agus thug tuairiscí ar ais chuig Comhairle na hEorpa ar fheidhmiú an Chairt Eorpach do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh (CETRM) ó dhaingnigh rialtas na RA i 2000 í. Thacaigh muid fosta le reachtaíocht a chosnódh an Ghaeilge agus a chuirfeadh chun cinn í, agus dá thoradh sin thug rialtas na RA gealltanais, nár comhlíonadh go fóill, i gComhaontú Chill Rímhinn 2006 le reachtaíocht Ghaeilge a achtú. Ag éirí as an Chomhaontú, leagann Acht Chill Rímhinn 2006 dualgas ar Thionól TÉ straitéis a ghabháil a mhéadóidh forbairt na teanga Gaeilge.

Mar chuid dá dtorthaí féin agus i bhfreagairt ar thuarascálacha faireacháin POBAL, i 2007 mhol Coiste na Saineolaithe ar an CETRM (COMEX) gur chóir beartas cuimsitheach a ghabháil don Ghaeilge sa Tuaisceart. I 2008, thionóil POBAL comhdháil a tharraingeodh ar an taithí idirnáisiúnta ar chomhdhéanamh bheartas den chineál sin. Comhordaíodh tuairimí phobal na Gaeilge le linn na comhdhála, i gcuideachta thorthaí na gceardlann a bhí i dtuarascáil na comhdhála ar an imeacht sin. Tá tionchar ag na torthaí seo ar ár gcuid oibre láithreach le straitéis oiriúnach don teanga sa Tuaisceart a fhorbairt. Ar na haoichainteoirí againn i 2008 bhí Leaschathaoirleach COMEX san am sin, Sigve Gramstad; Príomhfheidhmeannach Bhord na Breatnaise, Meirion Prys Jones agus iar-Phríomhfheidhmeannach Chomunn na Gàidhlig, Dòmhnall Martàinn. Edwin Poots, Aire Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta (CEF) an ama sin, a d'oscail an t-imeacht, ag aibhsiú an chinnidh a rinne sé féin gan an reachtaíocht gheallta Gaeilge a achtú agus ag dearbhú gur bh é ab fhearr leis, 'Straitéis a fhorbairt le buntaca CETRM.'

San idirthréimhse beagnach 2½ bliain, thionóil POBAL sraith chruinnithe le hAiri éagsúla, ina measc na hAiri uilig Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta (CEF) go sea, ar a n-áirítear an sealbhóir reatha, Nelson McCausland. Rinne muid láithrithe fosta do Choiste Scrúdain CEF ag an Tionól. Lean muid orainn le linn na tréimhse ag cur aighneachtaí agus torthaí chun tosaigh, bunaithe ar riachtanais straitéiseacha an phobail, chomh maith lenár dtríú tuarascáil fhaireacháin 2009 chuig

Background to the initiative

Since POBAL first opened its offices in 1999, it has carried out strategic work on the status and development of Irish, focussing on the particular circumstances of the language in the Northern jurisdiction. As part of this work, we have monitored and reported back to the Council of Europe on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) since its ratification by the UK government in 2000. We have also advocated legislation to protect and promote the Irish language, resulting in the UK government commitment in the 2006 St Andrews' Agreement to enact Irish language legislation, so far unfulfilled. Arising from the Agreement, the 2006 St Andrews' Act places a duty upon the NI Assembly to adopt a strategy to enhance the development of the Irish language.

As part of its own findings and in response to POBAL's monitoring reports, in 2007 the Committee of Experts (COMEX) on the ECRML recommended that a comprehensive policy should be adopted for the Irish language in the North. In 2008, POBAL held a conference to draw on international experience of what such a policy might comprise. The views of the Irish speaking community were collated during the conference, with the findings of the workshops contained in the conference report of that event. These findings are informing our current work to develop an appropriate strategy for the language in the North. Our guest speakers in 2008 included the then Vice-Chair of the COMEX, Sigve Gramstad; Chief Executive of the Welsh Language Board, Meirion Prys Jones and former Chief Executive of Comunn na Gàidhlig, Dòmhnall Martàinn. Edwin Poots, the then Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure (CAL), opened the event, highlighting his decision not to enact promised Irish language legislation and stating that, 'My preference is to develop a strategy underpinned by the ECMRL.'

In the interim period of almost 2½ years, POBAL has held a series of meetings with various Ministers, including each consecutive Culture, Arts and Leisure (CAL) Minister to date, including the current incumbent, Nelson McCausland. We have also made presentations to the CAL Scrutiny Committee at the Assembly. We have continued to present submissions and findings based on the strategic needs of the community during this time, including presenting in 2009 our third

COMEX a chur i láthair. Breathnaíonn an tuarascáil seo siar thar an tréimhse ó athbhunú an Tionóil chineachta, agus díríonn sí ar chuid de na heochaircheistean a thug muid faoi deara i bhfeidhmiú CETRM sa tréimhse. Is ábhar suntasach imní é gur theip ar rialtas na RA, tar éis mhoill aon mhí dhéag, tuarascáil iomlán dá gcuid féin a sholáthar mar gheall ar iad gan a bheith in ann aontú ar leibhéal Thionól TÉ.

In Aibreán 2010, d'fhoilsigh Saineolaithe na Cairte a dtuarascáil (COMEX, Strasbourg 21 Aibreán 2010). Ar thorthaí ba láidre na tuarascála bhí:

- 'Gríosaíonn Coiste na Saineolaithe údaráis na RA le bonn oiriúnach reachtach a sholáthar do chosaint agus do chur chun cinn na Gaeilge in TÉ.' (COMEX l. 6, parag 15)
- 'Leagann Acht Chomhaontú Chill Rímhinn 2006 dualgas reachtach ar Fheidhmeannas TÉ straitéis a ghabháil leis an teanga Ghaeilge a mhéadú agus a chosaint. Níor gabhadh aon straitéis go sea. Ach, tá rún ag an Aire Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta (RCEF) straitéis amháin dár teideal "Straitéis do Theangacha Réigiúnacha Dúchais nó Mionlaigh", a thabhairt chun tosaigh atá beartaithe a bheith ina haon straitéis don Ghaeilge agus d'Albainis Uladh. Tá imní ar Choiste na Saineolaithe go bhféachfaidh an straitéis i dtreo chothrom idir an dá theanga a bhaint amach agus mar sin, nach ndéanfaidh sí freastal ar riachtanais chainteoirí Gaeilge ná Albainis Uladh agus go gcuirfidh sí cúl ar fhorbairt an dá theanga.' (COMEX, l. 7, parag 20)

I dtuarascáil COMEX tá Moladh,

- 'Molann Coiste na nAíré do na húdaráis..ar bhonn tosaíochta,

Beartas cuimsitheach Gaeilge a ghabháil agus a fheidhmiú, trí ghabháil reachtaíochta go háirithe.'

Tuigeann POBAL go bhfuil a lán obair mhaith straitéiseach á déanamh, agus tá rún againn inniu cuid de na tionscnaimh sin a scrúdú. Creidimid, áfach, go bhfuil bearna go fóill ann i dtaca le creat straitéiseach iomlán bunaithe ar phrionsabail fhóna sochtheangeolaíochta agus féamhaithe i riachtanais an phobail ó thuaidh. Leis an fholús seo a líonadh, tá POBAL le roinnt míonna ag obair le hionadaithe ó Ollscoil na Banríona, Ollscoil Uladh agus ó Choláiste Ollscoile Naomh Muire leis an eolas atá ann cheana a aithint agus a tharraingt le chéile agus Beartas agus Creat Straitéiseach don teanga Ghaeilge i dTÉ a fhorbairt.

monitoring report to the COMEX. This report looks back over the period since the re-establishment of the devolved Assembly, and pinpoints some of the key issues we have noted in the ECRML application in this period. The inability of the UK government after a delay of eleven months to supply a full report of their own due to a failure to agree at NI Assembly level was met with understandable concern.

In April 2010, the Charter Experts' published their report (COMEX, Strasbourg 21 April 2010). Amongst the very strong findings of the report are the following:

- 'The Committee of Experts urges the UK authorities to provide an appropriate legislative base for the protection and promotion of Irish in NI.' (COMEX p. 6, parag 15)
- 'The St Andrews Agreement Act 2006 places a statutory duty on the NI Executive to adopt a strategy to enhance and protect the Irish language. So far no strategy has been adopted. However, the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) intends to bring forward one strategy entitled "A Strategy for Indigenous or Regional Languages Minority Languages", which is intended to be a single strategy for Irish and Ulster Scots. The Committee of Experts is concerned that the strategy will strive towards parity between the two languages and therefore not serve the needs of either the Irish-speakers or the Ulster-Scots speakers and will hold back the development of both languages.' (COMEX, p. 7, parag 20)

The COMEX report contains a Recommendation,

- 'The Committee of Ministers recommends that the authorities..as a matter of priority,

Adopt and implement a comprehensive Irish language policy, preferably through the adoption of legislation.'

POBAL is aware that much good, strategic work is being carried out, and we intend to examine some of these initiatives today. We believe that there remains a gap however, in terms of a full strategy framework based in sound sociolinguistic principles and grounded in the needs of the community in the North. To fill this vacuum, POBAL has been working for several months with representatives of the Queen's University, the University of Ulster and St Mary's University College to identify and draw together existing information and develop a Policy and Strategic Framework for the Irish Language in the North.



An tOllamh Dónall P. Ó Baoill
Ollscoil na Banríona

Professor
Queen's University Belfast

Straitéis don Ghaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann

Is é is aidhm le hullmhú Straitéise don Ghaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann go ceann 20 bliain creatlach beartais a chur le chéile i gcomhthéacs *Chomhaontú Chill Rímhinn / Cairt na hEorpa do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh / Straitéis na dTeangacha (RO) / Straitéis do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh (RCEF) / Dréachtphlean 20 bliain de chuid Rialtas na hÉireann*. Lena chois sin cuirfear íomhá dhearfach den Ghaeilge chun cinn.

Is mian linn ár seasamh féin a ghlacadh ar an scéal mar go bhfuil cúinsí ar leith ag baint le cás na Gaeilge i dTÉ cé go bhfuil gné uile oileánda ag baint leis. D'éascair straitéis an Deiscirt as bunreacht na tíre agus as beartas de chuid an rialtais féin. Tá Gaeltacht acu sa Deisceart agus an Ghaeilge fite go forleathan sa chóras oideachais rud nach bhfuil fíor faoi TÉ. Caithfear cearta an chainteora a chur i gcomhthéacs a bhfuil ag tarlú i dTÉ – sa Tionól, san AE agus i Westminster. Is léir gur fiú cloí lena bhfuil cheana i nDoiciméad Polasaí POBAL (2008) maidir leis na réimsí seo a leanas (a) Oideachas, (b) Na Meáin, (c) An Timpeallacht, Oidhreacht agus na hEalaíona, (d) Na Cúirteanna, (e) An tSeirbhís Phoiblí agus (f) Oideachas Sláinte

Is iad seo a leanas Téarmaí Tagartha na hoibre:

- (i) Straitéis Chumarsáide a chothú agus a chruthú
- (ii) Comhordú a dhéanamh ar na gnéithe seo – taighde – ag tarraingt le chéile fráma oibre don straitéis – eolas a chur ar fáil ar bhealaí cuí do na páirtithe leasmhara – cáipéisí a dhréachtú – comhairle a thabhairt agus faisnéis a ghlacadh
- (iii) Comhairle a chothú le saineolaithe cuí – ionchur an phobail a shlógadh

An Irish Language Strategy for Northern Ireland

The preparation of a 20 year Irish Language Strategy for Northern Ireland proposes to agree an outline policy for the Irish language in the context of the *St. Andrews Agreement / The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages / the Languages Strategy (DENI) / the Strategy for Regional and Minority Languages (DCAL) / the 20 year Draft Plan for Irish* published at the end of 2009 by the Irish Government. Furthermore, it is our intention to present, promote and cultivate a positive image of the Irish language in society.

Considering the particular circumstances which apply to the Irish language and its use in NI, we propose to develop a strategy that take these circumstances into account, while at the same time taking into consideration the All-Ireland dimension pertaining to the language. The Southern strategy arises from the constitutional position of Irish and has emerged from policies initiated by the government itself. The Gaeltacht dimension and the central role of Irish within all sectors of the educational system in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) do not apply to NI. The rights of Irish speakers must be placed in context and relate specifically to what is happening within NI – in the Assembly, in the EU and in Westminster. Previous work indicates the benefits of adhering to what has been already outlined in POBAL's Policy Document (2008) which addresses a range of domains of usage such (a) Education, (b) the Media (c) Environment, Heritage and the Arts, (d) the Courts, (e) The Public Service and (f) Health Education.

The Terms of Reference can be summarised as follows:

- (i) To create and cultivate a Communication Strategy
- (ii) To co-ordinate the following – research initiatives – a framework for the strategy – informing interested parties through a series of suitable communicative strategies – the drafting of relevant documents – providing advice and gathering information
- (iii) To co-operate with relevant experts and to mobilize public opinion

- (iv) Tuairimí na saineolaithe ar chur i bhfeidhm na Cairte Eorpaí do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh a scrúdú agus a phoibliú
- (v) Íomhá dhearfa don Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn agus beartais chríochnúla a thabhairt chun cinn leis an méid sin a dhéanamh

Tá géarghá na bealaí is éifeachtaí leis na cuspóirí a chur chun cinn a aimsiú agus a thabhairt chun solais. Seo roinnt smaointe ar cheart iad bheith mar ábhar machnaimh againn:

- (a) **Líon beag beartas** a phiocadh agus cloí leo, seachas liosta fada
- (b) **Na beartais is fearr** a bhfuil ag éirí leo a roghnú agus iad a láidriú mar shampla: Oideachas, Na Meáin, Poist Aistriúcháin
- (c) Gluaiseacht chomhordaithe a chothú **dírthe ar spriocanna cinnte** agus **taighde eolgaiseach nuálach a dhéanamh** le húsáid mar thacaíocht le hargóintí le ranna stáit, le polaiteoirí agus le daoine eile
- (d) Díriú ar **chur chun cinn ceantracha** ina bhfuil abhantracha láidre, infhásta agus infhorbartha. Gaeilgeoirí agus frontair a bhaineann léi ag stiúradh na forbartha
- (e) **Comcheangal a dhéanamh leis na páirtithe leasmhara** sa rialtas, sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí, sa Státseirbhís, sna Meáin srl. le comhordú gníomhaíochta a thabhairt i gcrích
- (f) **Feasacht an phobail a mhéadú agus a mhúnlú** ar bhealaí éagsúla atá go fóill le hoibriú amach ina n-iomláine
- (g) **Smaointeoireacht úr nuálach a spreagadh**, a mheallfadh an pobal coiteann sa bhaile agus pobal na Gaeilge thar lear - an diaspóra mar a thugtar orthu
- (h) Dul i **bhfheidhm ar earnáil an 3ú agus an 4ú leibhéal oideachais** beartais taighde ar **leibhéal idirnáisiúnta** ar ghnéithe éagsúla den **dátheangachas agus den ilteangachas** a chur sa tsiúl go leanúnach
- (i) Cuid de **na bearnaí móra cultúrtha, oidhreachta agus idé-eolaíochta** sa phobal a líonadh

- (iv) To examine and publicise expert opinion on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
- (v) To promote a positive image for the Irish language and propose definitive policies to enhance this image

It is imperative that the most efficient methods to promote and achieve our objectives be identified.

The following are matters that need to be considered in light of our proposals:

- (a) To select and adhere to a **finite number of definitive policies**
- (b) To select and strengthen those policies which have had a **better success rate** e.g. Education, The Media, Translation Work etc
- (c) To cultivate a co-ordinated movement directed at **definite outcomes and to instigate innovative and informative research** as a back up for discussion with state bodies, politicians, policy makers, language planners and any other interested parties
- (d) To focus on the promotion of **strong Irish language communities** with promising hinterlands capable of strong growth and development. All developmental and innovative projects should be directed by Irish speakers with the right expertise within such communities
- (e) To **create communicative networks with interested parties** within Government, the Public Service, the Civil Service, the Media etc. in order to co-ordinate activities and bring them to a satisfactory conclusion
- (f) To **increase and modify public awareness and opinion** in different ways through methods still to be decided
- (g) To inspire **new and innovative ways of thinking** in order to attract the attention of the general public at home and Irish diaspora abroad
- (h) To **impact on 3rd and 4th level educational bodies** and to impress upon them the urgency and need for research policies and strategies to address linguistic issues **at international level** with particular relevance to aspects of **bilingualism and multilingualism** in society
- (i) To fill some of the most glaring **gaps relating to cultural, heritage and ideological thinking** among the public at large



Dr Pádraig Ó Laighin
Stádas

Plean 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge de chuid an deiscirt

Díorthaíonn an Straitéis ó stádas bunreachtúil na Gaeilge mar theanga náisiúnta agus mar phríomhtheanga oifigiúil, agus tógann sé ar ráiteas beartais a eisíodh sa bhliain 2006. Ag cur san áireamh staid reatha na teanga agus léargais idirnáisiúnta ar bheocht teangacha, sonraíonn an Straitéis na céimeanna a ghlacfar de réir a chéile chun aidhmeanna bheartas teanga an Rialtais a bhaint amach. I bhfoirm dréachta faoi láthair, tá súil go mbeidh leagan críochnúil den Straitéis ar fáil roimh dheireadh 2010. Ba chóir go n-áiritheodh athbhreithniú fadréimseach parlaiminteach an doiciméid a sheasmhacht fhadtéarmach mar bheartas rialtais.

Is mian leis an Rialtas cur leis an méid teaghlach ar fud na tíre a bhaineann úsáid laethúil as an nGaeilge mar theanga cumarsáide; tacaíocht teanga a sholáthar don Gaeltacht; a chinntiú 'chomh fada agus is féidir' go mbeadh rogha ag saoránaigh Béarla nó Gaeilge a úsáid sa saol poiblí; agus a chinntiú go mbeidh an teanga níos suntasaí sa tsochaí ina foirmeacha labhartha agus scríofa.

Ceanglaítear na haidhmeanna seo le spriocanna oibriúcháin bunaithe ar líon na gcainteoirí de réir Dhaonáireamh an Deiscirt. Is é an sprioc an líon daoine sa chomhthéacs sin le heolas ar an nGaeilge a mhéadú ó 1.7 go 2 mhilliún; líon na gcainteoirí laethúla a mhéadú go 250,000, le béim ar leith curtha ar an nGaeltacht; agus líon na ndaoine a fhaigheann seirbhísí stáit trí mhéan na Gaeilge a mhéadú.

Ag barr na struchtúr feidhmithe bheadh Coiste Comh-Aireachta leis an Taoiseach mar chathaoirleach agus Grúpa Oifigeach Sinsearach mar thaca. Leanfaí den nós Aire sinsearach agus Roinn le freagracht i leith na Gaeilge a bheith ann. Threoródh Aonad Straitéise laistigh den Roinn sin an phleanáil, agus bheadh gníomhaireacht nua náisiúnta, Údarás na Gaeilge, a thíocfadh as athstruchtúru Údarás na Gaeltachta, ina príomhghníomhaireacht fheidhmithe ó lá go lá. Leanfadh Foras na Gaeilge ag seachadadh a fhreagrachtaí reachtúla.

Áirítear sna réimsí gnímh oideachas, mar a bhfuil athruithe curaclaim, cláir thacaíochta do thuismitheoirí, agus feabhsuithe in oiliúint múinteoirí geallta; Acht Gaeltachta nua a thabhairt isteach; cláir fheasachta agus oiliúna sa

The South's 20 Year Plan for the Irish Language

The Strategy derives from the constitutional status of Irish as the national and primary official language and develops a policy statement issued in 2006. Taking into consideration the current state of the language and international perspectives on language vitality, the Strategy specifies the graduated steps which will be taken to implement the language policy objectives of the Government. Currently in draft form, the Strategy is expected to be finalised before the end of 2010. The wide-ranging parliamentary review of the document should help to ensure its long-term stability as governmental policy.

The Government aims to increase the number of families throughout the country who use Irish as the daily language of communication; to provide linguistic support for the Gaeltacht; to ensure 'as far as practical' that citizens will have the right to choose Irish or English in public discourse; and to ensure that the language is more noticeable in society, in its spoken and written forms.

These aims are linked to operational objectives based on the number of speakers according to the Southern Census. The goal is to increase the number of people with a knowledge of Irish in that context from 1.7 to 2 million people; the number of daily speakers to 250,000, with special emphasis on the Gaeltacht; and the number of people who use state services through the medium of Irish.

At the top of the implementation structures would be a Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Taoiseach and supported by a Senior Officials Group. There would continue to be a senior Minister and Department with responsibility for Irish. A Strategy Unit within that Department would direct planning, and a new national agency, Údarás na Gaeilge, constituted from a restructured Údarás na Gaeltachta, would be the main implementation agency on a day-to-day basis. Foras na Gaeilge would continue to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.

The main areas for action include education, where curricular changes, support programmes for parents, and improvements to teacher education are promised; the introduction of a new Gaeltacht Act; language awareness and training programmes

tSeirbhís Phoiblí; cultúrlanna; agus tacaíocht do na meáin, do fhoclóireacht, agus d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.

Tá míshástacht curtha in iúl go foirmiúil faoi shocruithe measúnaithe, faoi mharthanacht ról socheacnamaíoch Údarás na Gaeltachta, faoi chomharthaíocht bóithre agus lipéadú agus pacáistiú, faoi nach moltar go gcuirfí deireadh láithreach le maolú Gaeilge an AE, faoi easnaimh maidir le riar an oideachais sa Ghaeltacht, agus faoi easpa bearta cothromaithe earcaíochta sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí. Is féidir go ndíreodh an doiciméad críochnúil ar na hábhair seo agus go ndéanfaí leasuithe áirithe.

Deimhníonn an Straitéis go bhfuil cur chun cinn agus cosaint na Gaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann mar thosaíocht ag an Rialtas. I dtaca leis seo, éilíonn sé go ndéanfaí Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta a chur i bhfeidhm go hiomlán. Go sonrath, de dhroim Chomhaontú Chill Rímhinn agus reachtaíochta gaolmhaire, iarrann Rialtas na hÉireann ar Rialtas na Breataine Acht Teanga don Ghaeilge a achtú, agus iarrann sé ar Fheidhmeannas Thuaisceart Éireann glacadh le straitéis chun forbairt na Gaeilge a neartú agus a chosaint.

in the Public Service; cultural centres; and support for media, lexicography, and the Official Languages Act.

Reservations have been formally expressed concerning evaluation arrangements, the continuance of the socio-economic role of Údarás na Gaeltachta, road signage, labelling and packaging, the failure to propose the immediate ending of the EU Irish derogation and to deal adequately with the administration of education in the Gaeltacht, and the absence of employment equalisation measures in the Public Service. The final document may address and rectify some of these matters.

The Strategy states that the promotion and protection of the Irish language in Northern Ireland is a priority for the Government. In this regard it calls for the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. Specifically, consequent on the St. Andrew's Agreement and related legislation, the Government calls on the British Government to enact an Irish Language Act, and calls on the Northern Executive to adopt a strategy to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language.



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University of Ulster

Straitéis Theangacha Thuaisceart Éireann

As siocair gur Roinn an Oideachais a d'ordaigh an straitéis is ar theangacha sa chóras oideachais is mó atá an bhéim. Ina ainneoin sin, ba léir dúinn dá mbíodh éifeacht le bheith ag an straitéis go mba cheart dúinn dearcadh ar an tsochaí seo ina hiomláine agus gan a bheith ag plé le teangacha na scoile amháin.

Is cuid de bhunfhealsúnacht na straitéise nach folláin an staid í an t-aonteachas, don duine ar leith nó don phobal i gcoitinne

- gur acmhainn shaibhir shóisialta agus eacnamaíochta í an éagsúlacht teangacha
- gur tairbheach agus gur fóinteach an rud don duine teangacha a fhoghlaim
- agus gur chóir gach aon uile teanga sa phobal a chothú agus a chur chun cinn

Cúram measartha fairsing a bhí orainn, mar sin, agus ba léir go mba chóir dúinn a bheith ag plé, ar an cheann chaol de, le teangacha i gcúrsaí oideachais, le teangacha i gcúrsaí gnó agus le teangacha sa tsochaí i gcoitinne. Lena chois sin, ní raibh sé ceilte orainn go gcaithfimis na teangacha seo a leanas a thabhairt san áireamh:

- na teangacha dúchais (An Ghaeilge, Albainis Uladh, Teangacha na Comharthaíochta agus an Béarla mar theanga bhreise)
- teangacha na scoile (Fraincis, Gaeilge, Gearmáinis, Spáinnis srl.)
- teangacha lucht inimirce (Mandairín, Polainnis, Portaingéilis srl.)

Leis an straitéis a chur i gcrích, rinneadh comhoibriú idir Ollscoil na Banríona agus Ollscoil Uladh (is feidir tuilleadh eolais a fháil ar fhoireann na straitéise ar an suíomh idirlín: www.nils.org.uk). Rinneadh beirt chomhairleoirí agus beirt iarchéimithe taighde a fhostú agus bunaíodh Coiste Comhairleach.

Idir 2007 agus 2009, rinne muid cruinnithe comhairle a eagrú in mbailte éagsúla ar fud an tuaiscirt. Tugadh cuireadh

The Northern Ireland Languages Strategy

Having been commissioned by the Department of Education, the emphasis in the strategy is on languages in the Education System. Nevertheless, it was felt that in order to be effective, the strategy should consider languages in society as a whole rather than confining itself to languages taught in schools.

Fundamental to the strategy is the conviction that monolingualism is a state which is healthy neither for the individual nor for society as a whole:

- that linguistic diversity is a rich social and economic asset
- that language learning is beneficial to the individual
- that each language in our society should be fostered and promoted

We had, therefore, a broad remit and it was clear that, at the very least, we should consider languages in education, languages in business, and languages in society in general. It was also clear that we would have to consider the following groups of languages:

- indigenous languages (Irish, Ulster Scots, Sign languages and English as a foreign language)
- languages in school (French, German, Irish, Spanish etc.) immigrant languages (Mandarin, Polish,
- Portugese etc.)

A collaboration was duly established between academics at QUB and UUU (further information relating to the strategy team can be found on the website www.nils.org.uk).

Two consultants and two post-graduate researchers were employed and an advisory board was established.

Over a 2 year period, meetings were organised in various towns throughout Northern Ireland and invitations were

d'eagraíochta teanga agus don phobal i gcoitinne agus bhunaigh muid suíomh idirlín maraon le ceistneoir, arís eile le tuairimí an phobail a sholáthar. Mar thoradh ar ár gcuid comhchomhairle, roinneadh an straitéis ina thrí chuid:

- (a) Languages for Life
(teangacha i gcúrsaí oideachais)
- (b) Languages for Prosperity
(teangacha i gcúrsaí gnó)
- (c) Languages for Understanding
(teangacha sa chomhdhaonnacht)

Léirítear cuid de na ráitis a tháinig chugainn ó na heagraíochta a ndeachaigh muid i gcomhairle leo maraon le tuairimí a tháinig ó na cruinnithe comhairle agus ón cheistneoir ar an idirlíon. Sa chuid den straitéis is mó a raibh mise ag obair air (teangacha sa chomhdhaonnacht) tá na codanna seo a leanas ann:

- fíis uileghabhálach i dtaca le cúrsaí teanga de
- bunphrionsabail a threoraígh muid inár gcuid oibre
- cuid de na dúshláin atá romhainn mar phobal
- cuspóirí straitéiseacha
- moltaí a ba chóir a chur i bhfeidhm leis na cuspóirí sin a bhaint amach

Cuireadh críoch leis an dréacht deireanach den straitéis agus tá sí faoi bhráid Roinn an Oideachais san am i láthair. Mar sin, as siocair í a bheith faoi mheá ag an Roinn, níl sé de chhead agam na moltaí atá ann a phoiblíú nó go ndéanfaidh an Roinn an straitéis ina iomláine a fhoilsiú. Ach is féidir an méid seo a rá: go dtugtar tacaíocht láidir ann do theanga na Gaeilge.

extended to language organisations and to the community in general. A website was also developed hosting a questionnaire which members of the community were invited to complete. As a result of our deliberations, the strategy was divided into 3 sections:

- (a) Languages for life
(languages in education)
- (b) Languages for prosperity
(languages in business)
- (c) Languages for understanding
(languages and social cohesion)

Statements submitted by the organisations we consulted were incorporated into the strategy as were opinions gathered from the consultative meetings and from the questionnaire. The section with which I was mostly concerned (languages for understanding) also includes the following:

- an overarching vision
- a set of guiding principals
- the linguistic challenges we face as a society
- strategic targets
- recommendations which, if implemented, would contribute to the achievement of these targets

The final draft of the strategy has now been completed and its recommendations are currently being considered by the department. This being the case, I am not in a position to divulge its recommendations until such time as the department is in a position to publish the strategy in its entirety. I can, however, say that strong support has been given in the strategy to the promotion of the Irish language.



An tOllamh Vesna Crnić-Grotić

Leas-Chathaoirleach, Coiste na Saineolaithe,
Cairt na hEorpa do Theangacha
Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh,
Comhairle na hEorpa

Professor

Vice-Chair, Committee of Experts,
European Charter for Regional
or Minority Languages,
Council of Europe

Since 1998, Professor Vesna Crnić-Grotić has been a member and the vice-chair of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe.

She graduated at the Faculty of Law in Rijeka, and acquired Master's and Doctorate degree at the University of Zagreb. Since 1985 she has worked at the Faculty of Law, University of Rijeka, first as the assistant and today as the full time professor of International Law and the head of the International Law department. She teaches courses at the graduate and postgraduate level and she has been a visiting professor at the University of Sarajevo, Zagreb and Tetovo.

Her publications include various topics dealing with some basic issues of international law of treaties, law of the sea and humanitarian law, as well as human and minority rights in international and regional context.

The Committee of Experts and the Irish language in the Third Monitoring Cycle for the United Kingdom [1]

The third monitoring cycle for the UK on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages resulted in a number of findings and a specific recommendation made by the Committee of Ministers with regard to the Irish language in Northern Ireland. These have to be looked at as part of the ongoing monitoring of the situation of minority languages spoken in UK and covered by the Charter as well as the continuing dialog between all the relevant players, namely, the committee, the authorities and the representatives of their speakers. It is the dialog that the committee puts emphasis on, since it is through dialog that the situation can be improved.

This time, however, this dialogue was incomplete as the Committee never received the "Irish part" of the national report, except for the part which is the sole competence of the UK government. However, in the UK, the responsibility for the practical implementation of the Charter lies within the devolved administrations. Only six Charter's paragraphs that the UK authorities have chosen for Irish come under

the competence of the central authorities, compared to 30 paragraphs belonging to the devolved government responsibility. As you are well aware, after the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland, there was no consensus among the parties sharing power in the Executive on the report. This, of course, was criticized by the Committee as it seriously hampered the monitoring and the previously mentioned dialogue. The Committee of Experts maintained that the UK authorities are ultimately responsible for implementing the Charter including the duty to submit timely and complete periodical reports.

The situation of Irish in Northern Ireland compares necessarily to that of the other languages in the UK covered by the Charter and especially its Part III. The UK chose to give Part III protection to Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Irish in Northern Ireland. Although they are all considered as regional or minority languages with a relevant territorial base Irish is special in that, unlike Welsh and Scottish Gaelic, it has the "kin-state", it has the official status in the Republic of Ireland, regardless of its real position there. In a way, it places that language in a more favourable position in terms of development and sustainment as it can count on the benefit of support from Ireland. At the same time, this situation is different from similar situations in Central and Eastern Europe where many minority languages have been developing for centuries without any contact with their kin-states, resulting in big differences between standard and minority varieties. Such languages can benefit from kin-states in a limited way. In any case, good co-operation between countries where the same or similar languages are spoken is one of the requests of the Charter. That being said, it is also important to emphasize that support from kin-state does not relinquish the state party of its duties to implement and respect the Charter.

There is also an unfortunate attribute of Irish in Northern Ireland – some people connect the language to political turmoil and historical struggles. It is an unacceptable practice, similar in a way to that in the Basque Country in Spain and the Committee of Experts has always condemned it, asking the authorities to promote tolerance and mutual understanding between all linguistic groups in accordance with paragraph 3 of Article 7 of the Charter.

[1] The views expressed are those of the author.

Paragraph 2 of the same article lays down the principle of non-discrimination:

The Parties undertake to eliminate, if they have not yet done so, any unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference relating to the use of a regional or minority language and intended to discourage or endanger the maintenance or development of it. 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.

As any other non-discrimination provision, it rests on two basic principles: equals should be treated equally; different should not be treated equally, unless such treatment can be objectively justified. We can agree that regional and minority languages spoken in the UK are different – they are different in size of communities using them, in level of their development, in their traditions, but also with respect to their needs and objective potentials. When ratifying the Charter the UK authorities recognized these differences: some languages are protected only by Part II of the Charter, such as Scots and Ulster Scots. Selection of undertakings for Part III languages show that, for example, Welsh is covered by 52 paragraphs as compared to 36 for Irish. This does not constitute an “unjustified distinction” that would be contrary to the Charter. Quite the contrary, the UK ratification instrument respects the distinct features of all languages.

On the other hand, the Committee of Experts learned about inappropriate claims for parity of treatment between Irish and Ulster Scots. While both languages deserve assistance and support, it had to be appropriate to particular needs of each of them. However, according to the information made available to the Committee, this claim for parity “in a number of instances led to the result that no measures were taken for either language, since it was not practically possible to apply the measures to Ulster Scots”. Even more, in this monitoring round, the opinion was even presented to the Committee of Experts that before any further steps were taken to promote Irish, the Ulster Scots language should be brought to the same position. This approach is, in the Committee’s view, unacceptable. The Charter is based on treating each regional or minority language in accordance with its specific situation. The situation of these two languages is quite different and language measures specifically directed towards each language are needed. That is the only way that both languages can be protected and promoted according to their specific needs. Nevertheless, “A Strategy for Indigenous

or Regional Minority Languages” that is apparently being prepared by the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure seems to be based on this parity. The committee is afraid that this will put on hold the development of the Irish language and not necessarily help Ulster Scots and its speakers.

The need to adopt a separate strategy for Irish is the object of the recommendation made by the Committee of Ministers:

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

The Committee reminded the authorities that the St. Andrews Agreement Act of 2006 placed a statutory duty on the Northern Ireland Executive to adopt a strategy to enhance and protect the Irish Language. It also requires the adoption of a strategy to enhance and develop Ulster Scots. Even though it is a separate legal document from the Charter, in this case its objectives coincide with those of the Charter so the committee’s reference to it is only to emphasize the duties of the Executive. Nevertheless, the duty to protect and promote these two minority languages stems also from the Charter and the UK ratification.

One of the aspects of a “comprehensive language policy” belongs to the necessary language planning. It is necessary to assess the needs and potentials of the language and to develop measures needed to address them. Good practice examples can be found in the UK. Welsh and partly Scottish Gaelic have developed strategies and institutions, with adequate support from the authorities, which over time contributed to a wider use of, especially, the Welsh language. The Welsh Language Board is such a key institution. It helped develop the language; it initiated the Welsh Language Schemes according to which public and private institutions and businesses have to develop their own plans for the use of Welsh; it monitors their implementation and it co-ordinates the efforts to make the use of Welsh more normal and regular. Education in Welsh makes the key element of the overall strategy. The Wales government continues to implement the *Iaith Pawb* plan (a national action plan for a bilingual Wales) in addition to the new coalition agreement ‘One Wales: A progressive agenda for the government of Wales’. The authorities want to have more legislative competence transferred from the National Parliament of the UK to the National Assembly for Wales in several fields, including regarding the Welsh language.

What is common to both Welsh and Scottish Gaelic is the existence of language legislation. The committee established that the Welsh Language Act had been vital in the positive development of Welsh. It seems that the Gaelic Language Act is doing the same for Scottish Gaelic. Although

separate language legislation is not always an indispensable prerequisite for the protection and promotion of regional and minority languages it seems to be necessary in the UK context. One could even argue that the Charter is not about statutory personal rights of minority language speakers, since its main objective is the preservation of regional and minority languages as a cultural heritage. Nevertheless, the appropriate legislation sets rules for all sides, the authorities and the speakers. While the authorities are aware of their duties, the speakers can learn about their rights and request adequate services. In most states parties to the Charter there is either a special law on minority languages or on minority rights, for example the Sami Act in Norway or the Minority Languages Act in Croatia. These acts also help implement the Charter. In Germany, however, there is no separate legislation and in practice many authorities are not at all aware that there are minority languages spoken in Germany, let alone of their duties towards their speakers.

The Committee observed that in Northern Ireland, with its background of political conflict, a legislative basis is even more important, as a means of achieving reconciliation. The Committee of Experts made note in that respect of similar recommendations that had been made by the UN Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee and the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. At present, there is no comprehensive statutory basis for the protection and promotion of Irish in Northern Ireland. Even more, it seems that chances for its adoption are rather slim with the political division in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Committee, therefore, encouraged the UK Parliament to adopt legislation on the protection and promotion of the Irish language under its parallel legislative competence.

No law by itself can solve all problems, but it can lay down solid foundations for further development. Statutory rights can prove important especially in fields like education, but also in judicial and administrative fields where people will feel less vulnerable in front of a judge or a bureaucrat trying to realize their language rights. Additional measures of encouragement will also be necessary. It is the experience of the committee that some fields are more difficult “to surmount” than others. Education is usually easier while in official settings, like courts or state administration, minority language speakers are usually very reluctant to use their language.

Education remains one of the main fields for the preservation and promotion of regional and minority languages. Its availability and its quality are basic and committee looks for both elements. The options chosen by the UK with respect

to Irish allow for a choice to be made between various measures spanning from education in Irish to teaching of Irish “as an integral part of the curriculum”. This choice will depend on the number and concentration of pupils whose parents want to have such education and the authorities have a duty to provide a sufficient number of teachers and appropriate teaching materials. It is also essential that continuity of teaching is ensured through various levels of education. Vocational education may be a challenge in terms of the variety of subjects that have to be taught in Irish and obtaining accreditation.

In the previous monitoring round the Committee of Experts found that measures were needed “to meet the increasing demand for Irish-medium education”. In this round it was established that “some progress had been made” although certain deficiencies remain at all levels. The committee took into account the recommendations adopted by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, many of which addressed the concerns expressed by the Committee of Experts in previous reports.

Recommendations include that the Department of Education in Northern Ireland should ensure that Irish-medium education is considered systematically throughout policy development, and that the Education and Skills Authority should address the needs of Irish-medium education in a fully integrated way. A standing group within the Department of Education has been established, chaired at director level, to ensure that policies are progressed. The Committee of Experts expressed its hopes that the result will be a coherent strategy for education in Irish, across all stages of education and result in positive measures to implement it. Nevertheless, we have to be aware that, according to some information, even with all measures being implemented over a long period of time, the number of real speakers sometimes stagnates – young people who learn the language in schools rarely have an opportunity or even need to use it in every day contacts.

The Committee will often refer to the need of co-operation between the authorities and the speakers of regional and minority languages. It is our experience that in such way the best solutions are found in many fields covered by the Charter. The role of NGOs working in the field of language promotion will be a key one. It is up to the enthusiasts like you to promote the use of Irish with the help of the Committee of Experts and the national authorities in the common dialogue.

Aguisín / Appendix

Líosta na daoine a bhí i láthair / List of those attending

Ann Perry (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure)

Kevin Hamill (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure)

Tim Laverty (Department of Regional Development)

Daniel Holder (Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission)

Barra Mac Giolla Duibh (Cathaoirleach / Chair Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee)

Gearóid Trimble (Foras na Gaeilge)

Hazel Francey (Belfast City Council)

Conor Murphy (Minister, Department for Regional Development)

Sharon Fitchie (Department of Agriculture and Rural Development)

Seán Ó Coinn (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta)

Déaglán Ó Doibhlin (Irish language Officer, Magherafelt Council)

Kevin Goodwin (Irish language Officer, Omagh Council)

Ursula Mhic an tSaoir (Irish language Officer, Newry and Mourne Council)

Micheál Ó Duibh (Cathaoirleach / Chair POBAL)

Mary Hanna (Policy & Diversity Officer, Armagh City and District Council)

Melissa Murray (The Public Interest Litigation Project)

Éamonn Ó Gribín (Irish language Committee, Newry and Mourne Council)

Caoimhín Ó Peatáin (Cathaoirleach / Chair, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta)

Áine Walsh (Irish Language Broadcast Fund)

Dónall Ó Baoill (Queen's University Belfast)

Fionntán de Brún (University of Ulster)

Ailbhe Ó Corráin (University of Ulster)

Jim Mc Auley (An Droichead)

Robert McMillen (Irish News)

Lucinda Glynn (BBC)

Tomái Ó Connghaile (Nuacht 24)

Pádraig Mag Fhearraigh (POBAL)

Mark Higgins (Dept of Justice)

Marcas Mac Ruairí (Glór na nGael)

Antaine Ó Donnaile (BBC)

P Ní Dhroighneáin (Dlíodóir)

Billy Crawford (Department of Social Development)

Gabrielle Ní Uidhir (Ollscoil Coláiste Mhuire)

Niall Ó Catháin (Coiste Forbartha Charn Tóchar)

Mary Magilligan (Department of Finance and Personnel)

Tarlach Ó Branagáin (Forbairt Feirste)

Lorcán Mac Gabhan (Glór na nGael)

Feargal Ó Cuilinn (Comhlúadar)

Daithí de Buitléir (Glór na nGael)

Dominic Ó Brolacháin (SDLP)

Proinsias Ó Mianáin (Cearta Gael / Ceoltóirí Cholm Cille)

Stephan McGlade (Department for Regional Development)

Dónall Mac Murchaidh (Raidió Fáilte)

Pádraig Mac Cathail (Coláiste Feirste)

Pádraigín Ní Chiaráin (dálta – Coláiste Feirste)

Clár Ní Dhornáin (dálta – Coláiste Feirste)

Aisling Nic Giolla Rua (dálta – Coláiste Feirste)

Colm Ó Scolláin (dálta – Coláiste Feirste)

Conor Mac Corsain (dálta – Coláiste Feirste)

Séanna Breatnach (Sinn Féin)



Foras na Gaeilge



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