



Foras na Gaeilge

ADDRESS

63 – 66 SRÁID AMIENS, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 1 D01 H275 /

TEACH AN GHEATA THJAR, 2-4 SRÁID NA BANRÍONA, BÉAL FEIRSTE BT1 6ED

Tel: 01 639 8400

email: eohargain@forasnagaeilge.ie

web address: www.forasnagaeilge.ie

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Submission in relation to the Consultation regarding the Social Enterprise Policy

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Introduction

Foras na Gaeilge welcomes the opportunity to express views relating to the **Consultation regarding the Social Enterprise Policy**.

We welcome the opportunity to participate in this consultation process and in the proposed developments in this area. Foras na Gaeilge wishes to provide a short submission in relation to this consultation regarding the Government's policy on Social Enterprise. The views and recommendations of Foras na Gaeilge in relation to the consultation are laid out in this document.

As a starting point, we wish to congratulate the Department of Rural and Community Development for providing the consultation document in Irish and also wish to welcome the initiative which is the subject of the consultation.

Historical Background of Foras na Gaeilge

Foras na Gaeilge was established in December 1999 as the body responsible for the promotion of the Irish language on the island of Ireland.

Foras na Gaeilge's role relates to advising Government, North and South, and public bodies and other organisations in the public and voluntary sectors on all matters pertaining to the Irish language.

Functions of Foras na Gaeilge:

Under Part 5 of the founding legislation regarding Foras na Gaeilge, the British-Irish Agreement Act, 1999, Foras na Gaeilge has the following functions:

- to promote the Irish language;
- to facilitate and encourage the use of the Irish language in speech and writing in public and private life in the South and, in the context of Part III of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in Northern Ireland where there is appropriate demand;
- to advise the two administrations, public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors;
- to undertake supporting projects and give grant aid to bodies and groups as is thought necessary;
- to undertake research, innovative campaigns, and public relations and media relations;
- to develop terminology and dictionaries;
- support education through Irish and the teaching of Irish.

It is in accordance with the function “**to advise the two administrations, public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors**” that Foras na Gaeilge wishes to present recommendations regarding this consultation about Government policy in relation to Social Enterprise.

A Submission concerning the Consultation regarding the Social Enterprise Policy

Foras na Gaeilge would appreciate the opportunity to be included among its partners by the Department of Rural and Community Development as the Department's policy in regard to Social Enterprise in Ireland is developed. We would appreciate that opportunity for a number of reasons which are outlined below.

Language planning in the community

1. Under the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language and the Gaeltacht Act (2012), a heavy focus will be applied to the development of Irish at a community level and, before the end of 2020, Community Committees will be implementing language plans for their community:
 - in 26 Language Planning Areas;
 - 16 Gaeltacht Service Towns; and
 - between 3 and 6 Irish Language Networks (communities outside the Gaeltacht within which Irish will be developed as the community language).

These community committees offer an opportunity to establish a strong base of social enterprise in 40+ communities nationwide and to link this with community planning relating to the Irish language.

2. As an element of the language plans in the abovementioned areas, services will be developed which are appropriate to the concept of social enterprise and necessary for the delivery of the language plan, for example, childcare enterprises; afterschool enterprises; language centres and cultural centres; theatres, etc.

In addition, another element of the language plans will involve an attempt to develop the economic aspect of the Irish language at a community level. To that end, small business projects will be established which will provide the

committees with a regular income to be reinvested into their efforts and provide Irish language employment (shops offering cultural, linguistic, heritage and artistic ware, bookshops, cafés, etc.).

3. In the 26 Language Planning Areas which are situated in the Gaeltacht, and in some of the language networks, an emphasis will be placed on cultural tourism and on related projects which are extremely well suited to social enterprise. The community committee leading the language plan for the Language Network in the Clondalkin Area provides Irish language guided tours of the Round Tower in Clondalkin as one of the services provided at the heritage centre.

Schemes funded by Foras na Gaeilge

4. At present, many of the schemes funded by Foras na Gaeilge (summer camp scheme; youth events scheme; festivals scheme; drama groups scheme; creche and childcare establishment scheme) are directed towards community committees. To qualify for aid under these schemes, the committees are required to have a formal community committee constitution. In addition, the scheme involving the greatest investment by Foras na Gaeilge is the Irish Language Community Scheme and 22 development officers around the country are employed by community committees under this scheme.

An estimated €1m per annum is spent on the Irish Language Community Scheme. It is our opinion that an opportunity exists, in partnership with the Department of Rural and Community Development, to promote social enterprise through our schemes, on the one hand, in a manner which will greatly advance the promotion of the Irish language among the community and, on the other hand, in a manner which would support the Government's wishes in relation to social enterprise in Ireland.

Sharing Best Practice

5. As a North-South institution, as well as dealing with community committees in the south regarding examples of good practice in this area, Foras na Gaeilge also deals with community committees in the north which could be exemplars of good practice for community committees in the south also, especially in the area of the Irish language. For example, social enterprises have been developed over a number of years by the rural population of Carn in south County Derry, by Aonach Mhacha and by Cairde Teo. in Armagh, and by Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich and Ionad Uíbh Eachach in Belfast. (Although the

last-mentioned and second last-mentioned are urban initiatives, they are exemplary social enterprises).

Capital Investment and Irish Language Centres

6. An important aspect of the National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040 *National Strategic Outcome 3, Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities* is the development of the Irish language and language infrastructure. To this end, The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is developing an Irish Language capital investment fund in order to invest in language centres in the various language planning areas throughout the country. Community committees will be undertaking these centres, in which a wide range of small businesses will be developed during the 10 remaining years of the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language.

Voluntary Irish Language Lead-Organisations

7. Foras na Gaeilge provides nearly €5m per annum as support to 6 Irish Language Lead-organisations (Glór na nGael, Conradh na Gaeilge, Gael Linn, Gaeloideachas, Cumann na bhFiann and Oireachtas na Gaeilge), to support community committees in the development of Irish at a community level. At least 3 of the Lead-Organisations have undertaken social enterprises to date and possibilities exist in the case of the remaining organisations.

One of the functions of Glór na nGael, as a Lead-organisation, is community development and the development of the economic aspect of the Irish language. When Government policies in this have been developed, Foras na Gaeilge will have an opportunity to promote social enterprise among the Lead-organisations and an opportunity to direct them individually to raise awareness of this area at a community level.

Partnership

8. As a partner with the Department of Rural and Community Development, Foras na Gaeilge and interested parties involved in Irish language development at the community level will have the opportunity to promote the concept of social enterprise in the community.

Gaelscoileanna and Gaelcholáistí in the Community

9. There are currently 145 gaelscoileanna and 43 gaelcholáiste in the state which nearly 46,000 children attend. Many of these schools have a solid community base; many were established by local community committees and that continues to influence their boards of management. Foras na Gaeilge, in

conjunction with Gaeloideachas and Glór na nGael (lead-organisations in receipt of funds from Foras na Gaeilge), will have the opportunity to support efforts to satisfy the demand from pupils in relation to careers in the areas of social enterprise and social innovation.

Conclusion

10. Foras na Gaeilge greatly supports the efforts of Government in this area and would welcome the opportunity to meet with officials of the Department of Rural and Community Development as soon as possible to discuss the possibilities involved.