

## Steering Committee

### Policy on Irish-medium Education outside of the Gaeltacht

#### Minutes of Meeting 3

**Date:** Wednesday, 22 February 2023

**Location:** Room G13/14, Department of Education, Marlborough Street

**Time of Meeting:** 2:00p.m. to 4:30p.m.

#### Attendance

Gavan O'Leary (Chair) – *Assistant Secretary, Department of Education*

Lisa Nic Dhoinnléibhe – *Principal Officer, Gaeltacht Education Unit, Department of Education*

Muireann Tóibín, Michael Devane, Finín Ó Murchú and Naoise Ó Faoláin – *Gaeltacht Education Unit (GEU), Department of Education*

Martin Whyte – *Inspectorate, Department of Education*

Toby Wolfe – *Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)*

Aislinn Duffy – *Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)*

Aodán Mac an Mhíle – *Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (DTCAGSM)*

Jacqueline Ní Fhearghusa – *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)*

Edel Ní Chorráin – *Foras na Gaeilge*

Cathy Connolly – *National Council for Special Education (NCSE)*

Ailsa Seoighe – *National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)*

Phil Fox – *The Teaching Council*

#### Attendance (for items 1 and 2 of agenda only):

Pádraig Ó Duibhir, Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin, Cóilín Ó Floinn – *Sealbhú, DCU*

Members of intradepartmental working group on the development of POLG – *Department of Education*

#### Apologies

Arlene Forster – *NCCA*

#### 1. Fáiltiú/Welcome

The Chair welcomed all members to the third meeting of the Steering Committee on the development of a policy on Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht, especially Ailsa Seoighe who was joining for the first time. The chair also welcomed Pádraig Ó Duibhir, Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin and Cóilín Ó Floinn from Sealbhú, DCU. It was noted that a number of the members of the intradepartmental working group (IWG) on the development of the policy would also be joining remotely via Webex for items 1 and 2 of the meeting.

## **2. Interim report on review of research – Sealbhú, DCU**

GO'L invited the attendees from Sealbhú, DCU to present the initial findings of their review of literature and research on minority language education in other jurisdictions. The cases of Basque in Spain, Frisian in the Netherlands, Irish in Northern Ireland, Māori in New Zealand, Breton in France, Scottish Gaelic in Scotland, Welsh in Wales and French in Canada were outlined. Sealbhú, DCU then invited questions and observations.

Questions were asked in relation to:

- research regarding students with special educational needs (SEN) in immersion settings
- the age at which immersion education begins in early learning and care (ELC) settings in other jurisdictions
- initial teacher education (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD), in particular in areas where there had been a rapid increase in demand for education through the medium of the minority language.

Pádraig Ó Duibhir noted that the researchers intend to add two further jurisdictions to the report – Hawaiian in Hawaii and Swedish in Finland. Sealbhú also plan to continue the analysis of the public consultation responses that were obtained from the online questionnaire and from written submissions.

GO'L thanked the researchers from Sealbhú for their work to date and for their presentation at the meeting. The Committee were asked to send any further feedback on the interim report to the secretariat to be collated and shared with Sealbhú to allow for further refinement of the report.

Sealbhú and the members of the intradepartmental working group left the meeting at this point.

## **3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising**

Minutes of meeting 2 of the Steering Committee on the policy on Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht were approved without change. There were no matters arising.

## **4. Update on Phase 1 of public consultation – questionnaire and submissions**

GO'L invited LNicD to give an update on Phase 1 of the public consultation, which included the online questionnaire and written submissions received by the Department of Education. Some initial results from the automatically generated Checkbox report were shared with the group. LNicD stressed that these were preliminary and final results would only be available once Sealbhú had analysed the data.

The deadline for written submissions had passed on 30 January 2023. LNicD reported 161 written submissions had been received.

## **5. Phase 2 of public consultation – focus groups and bilateral meetings**

LNicD presented the draft approach that had been developed for focus groups to capture the voice of primary school children. The approach, as drafted, includes an ice-breaker activity,

a presentation of artefacts by pupils, group discussion and scenario exploration. It is proposed that members of the Inspectorate will act as facilitators for the focus groups at primary level. A research assistant is also available (through Sealbhú) to take notes during focus groups, to analyse the data and to draft a report on themes emerging.

There was a discussion on the size of the focus groups. It was agreed that focus groups sized between 8 and 12 pupils should be piloted at primary level.

The location and geographic spread of the schools where the focus groups would take place was also discussed, as was the question of including English-medium (EM) schools in order to provide valuable alternative perspectives on Irish-medium (IM) education, especially on the question of choosing IM education. The questions and approach to the EM focus groups would be slightly different and those documents would be shared after the meeting.

In terms of focus groups with post-primary students, it was stated that student responses to the online questionnaire would inform preparation and that the draft plans for these focus groups would be shared with the Committee in due course for review and feedback.

A list of potential themes for other focus groups was displayed for the Committee. ENiC made the point that a definition for Aonad would need to be agreed upon if that were to be a theme for exploration. AMaM observed that the inclusion of new parents who had not yet decided whether to choose EM or IM for their children would be a worthwhile addition in the proposed focus groups.

Regarding the bilateral meetings, LNicD stated that the majority of these meetings would take place in May, with a small number taking place before Easter. It was proposed that these would take place face to face.

## **6. Actions and next steps**

LNicD outlined some of the actions arising from the meeting:

- Presentations slides from Sealbhú, DCU and LNicD to be shared with the Steering Committee.
- Auto-generated Checkbox report with questionnaire responses to be circulated to Steering Committee.
- Steering Committee to send any feedback or observations regarding the primary focus group approach and/or Sealbhú's interim report to AOG.
- Post-primary focus group plans to be sent to Steering Committee for review and feedback.

*An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta*

*Department of Education*

*February 2023*