

STATUS PLANNING

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*State action in other domains are recounted in this section: media, publishing, the arts and cultural life.
Voluntary activity in areas of social life, religion and sport among them, also figure in this section.*

TELEVISION, RADIO, FILM, MULTI-MEDIA PRODUCTION

LEGISLATION: DOMESTIC

Broadcasting is governed by various pieces of legislation, all of which contain some reference to Irish or to culture. The Wireless Telegraphy Acts 1926 and 1956 were amended and extended by the Broadcasting Authority Act 1960, when a body, *Radio Éireann (sic)*, was established. By 1966 another amendment renamed the Authority *Radio Telefís Éireann (sic)*, popularly known as *RTÉ*. The Broadcasting Authority Act 1960 was for ‘the purpose of providing a national television and sound broadcasting service’. Article 17, (general duty with respect to national aims) lays down that: ‘In performing its functions, the Authority shall bear constantly in mind the national aims of restoring the Irish language and preserving and developing the national culture and shall endeavour to promote the attainment of these aims.’

The Radio and Television Act 1988 established the Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC) charged with developing commercial, independent broadcasting services at national, local and community level. Each license awarded places a fairly minimum statutory obligation on the holder in relation to use of Irish. The 1988 Act required that ‘the Commission shall have regard to the quality, range and type of the programmes in the Irish language and the extent of programmes relating to Irish culture proposed to be provided’. Each licence awarded places a fairly minimum statutory obligation on the holder in relation to use of Irish. It was the function of the IRTC to monitor compliance with this and other obligations, e.g. news duration. The relevant article, 18.3(a), states that the service must have ‘special regard to the elements which distinguish that culture (of the whole island of Ireland) and, in particular, for the Irish language’.

The functions of the IRTC were expanded under the Broadcasting Act 2001 to include the licensing of television stations by various technical modalities as well as the development of codes of programming and of advertising standards for both television and radio services. As a result the IRTC was renamed *Coimisiún Craolacháin na hÉireann*, the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI). This 2001 Act includes the following: ‘In considering the suitability of any applicant for the award of a sound broadcasting contract to provide a sound broadcasting service in respect of an area which includes a *Gaeltacht* area, the Commission shall have particular regard to the preservation as a spoken language of the Irish language’. In collaboration with *Foras na Gaeilge*, the BCI had co-funded a Coordinator for Irish since 2002, *Comhordaitheoir Gaeilge*.

The Broadcasting (Funding) Bill 2003 is intended to enable the BCI to prepare schemes for the funding of grants to support specific types of television and radio programmes, or projects relating to such programming: research, feasibility studies, needs analysis, pilot projects. The funding source for these grants is cited in the Bill as 5% of the net receipts for television licence fees. The programmes funded may only be broadcast on services which are basically free to the public and must be broadcast at peak hours, unless of an educational nature or for children. News and current affairs are specifically excluded. The types of programmes intended to be funded are listed in article 2 (1) (a) – (d). They include Irish culture, language, heritage and experience as well as adult literacy, all of which may be produced in Irish. The objectives of schemes to be funded are listed in article 3 (1) (a) – (f): to develop high quality programmes on the listed topics and to develop them in Irish also; to increase the availability of such programmes and to represent the diversity of Irish culture and heritage; to record aspects under threat or not previously recorded; to develop local and community broadcasting. This proposal, first advertised in August 2004, has financial and programming implications for both *RTÉ* and the Irish-language radio and television services. The BCI sought the views of interested parties on the Draft Scheme which is now known as *Fís agus Fuaime* (Vision and Sound), the Broadcasting (Funding) Scheme. In February 2006, the BCI announced the allocation of €11 million to the year’s first round of funding under the scheme: €10.5 million to thirty-seven television projects and €0.5 million to forty-five radio initiatives. Various programmes in the Irish language accounted for 62% of the budget, €6.5 million.

Two bills relating to broadcasting were introduced in 2006: a Broadcasting Bill and a Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill. The Heads of the Broadcasting Bill led to much interesting debate in the e-consultation process initiated by the relevant *Oireachtas* Committee on the proposals of the Minister for Communications. It was not expected that this Bill would be enacted during the lifetime of the then Coalition Government since elections were to be held in mid 2007. The Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill went through the usual stages and was passed by *Dáil Éireann* on 23 March 2007. It

deals, *inter alia*, with change from analog to digital broadcasting and with services for the Diaspora (outside the island of Ireland); additional functions for existing bodies and to confer power subject to licence on *Teilifís na Gaeilge*. The draft heads of the Broadcasting Bill proposed, *inter alia*, a new inclusive body, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) with its two statutory committees on compliance and contract awards, which would subsume the existing public service and independent sector bodies. It dealt also with *Teilifís na Gaeilge*, RTÉ, and the allocation of funding. These three areas drew most comment with regard to Irish language commitments in the consultation process during which ten representatives of Irish bodies, broadcasting, statutory and voluntary, addressed the *Oireachtas* Joint Committee on Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. These comments included, in relation to Irish: need to strengthen the composition, objectives and functions of the proposed BAI; need to make explicit reference to Irish in the duties of broadcasters and in regard to the competence of all staff; recognition of the principal aim of *Teilifís na Gaeilge* as provider of television and on-line Irish language content and of its role in Northern Ireland. The Irish Film Board (*Bord Scannán na hÉireann*) requested the addition of contemporary Irish cultural expression through the medium of feature film in the discussion on provisions specific to *Teilifís na Gaeilge*. Other provisions in relation to allocation of monies and advertising or sponsorship were welcomed as was the stipulation that RTÉ continue to provide one hour's programming daily to *Teilifís na Gaeilge*. The commercial brand name *TG4* was not used. *Telefís na Gaeilge* is the form used in the original legislation setting up the station.

The results of the considerations, recommendations and conclusions of the Joint Committee (JC) on the General Scheme of the Broadcasting Bill were published in April 2007. They were grouped into eleven general themes, two of which dealt with 'safeguards and guarantees regarding the Irish language' and 'independence and remit of *TG4*'. On the former theme the JC 'noted the contributions throughout the eConsultation process; the Committee agreed 'that additional clarification and explicit recognition that protects and promotes the Irish language must be included as an objective of the BAI. Furthermore, the JC [recommended] that the *Duties, Codes and Responsibilities* of the BAI should be reviewed so as to reflect the need to protect and promote the Irish language and our unique Irish heritage and culture in both the public and the independent broadcast sectors and across both radio and television.' On the latter theme, the JC also agreed 'on the importance of protecting the independence and remit of *Telefís na Gaeilge (TG4)*' and 'noted' that this 'remit is entirely under the jurisdiction of the Minister of the day, even to the point whereby the Minister vests in himself the power to remove the Irish language from that remit. Accordingly, the JC [recommended] that this section of the General Scheme be reviewed.'

A new Broadcasting Bill was introduced in May 2008. While it included some at least of points made in the consultation on the previous bill, Irish speakers were of the view that further amendments were still required.

LEGISLATION: INTERNATIONAL

As the result of interest shown by the High Commissioner for National Minorities at the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), reports were commissioned on both the state of minority language broadcasting and any relevant legislation pertaining to it across the 55 member states. Following these reports, international Guidelines were issued (2004) to ensure cultural and linguistic pluralism across broadcasting services to prevent discrimination of any variety.

MIDAS is the international organisation for newspaper publishing in lesser used languages. It keeps a watching brief on the impact of legislation at European and national levels.

TELEVISION: RTÉ – PUBLIC SERVICE NATIONAL BROADCASTER

The television service was inaugurated in 1961 with one channel. The national television service has now two television channels, *RTÉ1* and *RTÉ2* (formerly Network 2). Currently (late 2007), programming in Irish consists of daily early evening news lasting 7 to 8 minutes at 5.20, followed by news for the deaf until 5.30, as well as a half hour Sunday bilingual current affairs programme (2007), all on one channel only. This output provides a total of something over an hour's programming per week in Irish, allowing for the bilingual nature of the current affairs programme. Irish may figure in children's and in music or cultural programmes. English-language programmes may be titled in Irish. It is to be noted that before the advent of a dedicated Irish channel, the lobbying

had been for consecutive programming at peak times, of two hours daily, on one of the English-language channels.

RTÉ also supply one hour's programming to the Irish-language station *TG4* (365 hours *per annum*). From early 2008, RTÉ intends to transfer its Irish-language news services (*Nuacht RTÉ* and *Nuacht TG4* which RTÉ supplies to *TG4*) to the broadcasting centre of *TG4* in the Galway *Gaeltacht*. This will entail investment in technology of over €2 million. The viewing public for *Nuacht RTÉ* and *Nuacht TG4* are not entirely the same and require different presentation styles. Regional news is fed in from nine local centres.

There used to be a specific post for Head of Irish Programming. This has now merged with other responsibilities. RTÉ maintains that overall its channels are viewed daily by 7 out of 10 viewers. Programmes are either bought in (approximately 50%), or home-produced, many independently commissioned. Irish language programming may benefit from both home produced and commissioned programmes. The services for the Diaspora (radio and television) as yet contain no specific Irish programming, despite the existence of many Irish speakers outside the State, except via satellite or the internet on which *Raidió na Gaeltachta* may be heard. However, a very recent development in early 2008 has been the provision by RTÉ of a new daily multimedia online service of news and current affairs items from *Nuacht RTÉ*, which includes RTÉ television news in Irish and RTÉ *Raidió na Gaeilge*, at www.rte.ie/nuacht. Documentaries from 1997-2002 are also available, dealing especially with stories of the Diaspora, including missionaries, in Africa, the USA and Central America.

TELEVISION: TG4 – HISTORY, BACKGROUND AND CURRENT STATUS

After years of sustained lobbying and agitation, steps were taken in the 1990s by the Department for the Language to begin the process of providing a dedicated television service in Irish. In the years after the establishment of *RnaG*, it was natural for Irish speakers to seek a dedicated television channel. Again the movement began in the west. By 1987 the pressure group was ready to show the feasibility of what a pirate station could do by broadcasting live (if grainy) the *Oireachtas* festival taking place that year in *Ros Muc*. By 1989 the group had become more formalised, *Meitheal Theilifís na Gaeltachta* (Working Party for television for the *Gaeltacht*). The campaign became national and very focused at the next stage when *Feachtas Náisiúnta Teilifíse* (National Television Campaign) got off the ground. It took six more years to reach the desired goal although some debate ensued on who the target audience was for whom programmes would be made: *Gaeltacht* people, the different strands that make up *Pobal na Gaeilge* (including the *Gaeltacht*), all these plus learners. This same argument crops up again and again: language planning on the personality or the territoriality principle or how to integrate both.

The year 1994 saw the establishment of the *Teilifís na Gaeilge* (*TnaG*) Council and the appointment of senior staff (several from within RTÉ). The third new channel finally came on air on 31 October 1996 to provide a national television service in Irish, from a newly built headquarters in the Connemara *Gaeltacht*, with equipment considered among the most sophisticated in Europe, and having an administrative centre in Dublin, while remaining statutorily under the aegis of RTÉ. A third channel of the four national analogue channels available was provided for *Teilifís na Gaeilge* on its establishment, broadcasting then in Irish for 4.5 hours per day, across a range of programming. In early 2006, *TG4* announced Ireland's first television broadband channel on a pilot basis, free of charge WebTV. The decade was commemorated by a major seminar which was jointly mounted by NUIG and DCU in the Autumn of 2006. The seminar examined the influence and effects of *TG4*. Overall, the verdict was very positive. Among the recommendations were less subtitling in English and some use of immigrant languages. The service, however, argues that it would be difficult to select criteria to choose which language from the many spoken. Learners would like Irish subtitles, to read and listen simultaneously, on television preferably and not via teletext. A new generation, *Glúin na Teilifíse*, is now a catchphrase for the influence of *TG4*. But language standards came in for some criticism. The channel set out to provide another viewpoint on the world, *Súil Eile*.

It views its role as:

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- To provide a high quality programming schedule in Irish and other languages.
 - To serve the Irish language audience across all age groups and language ability by providing new and innovative programmes, primarily from the independent sector, to promote creativity and to celebrate Irish storytelling, sport, music, drama and culture.

Since it began, the service has undergone a change of name and moved out from *RTÉ* on 1 April 2007 as an independent station with its own Authority, with some increased funding and with continuance of the services from *RTÉ*. *RTÉ* had been represented on the Project Management Group set up by the Government to ensure full readiness for independence. It is now branded as *TG4*, maintains 75 full time jobs, and over four times that many again through commissioning with the independent sector.

The Broadcasting Bill 2006 set out some of the issues for the future of *TG4* including methods of funding.

The channel broadcasts currently on a twenty-four hour basis with a core service of six hours of Irish-language programming daily and programming also in other languages. A daily schedule in Irish is provided for children and young people. The station offers a range of public service programmes in English including coverage of parliamentary and related events. Subtitling is widely used. Foreign language films and rebroadcasts of noted games are popular with the general viewing public. In early 2006, *TG4* announced Ireland's first television broadband channel on a pilot basis, free of charge WebTV. It has 3% of the national television market and attracts over three quarters of a million viewers at some point on a daily basis, an audience which continues to grow.

[Funding and viewership are the main challenges still facing *TG4* given its cultural and linguistic remit. It operates in a competitive environment and in a changing technical context.](#) As a public service broadcaster, the channel attempts to serve a varied population on an all-Ireland basis. It receives one hour's free programming per day from *RTÉ* calculated at an annual €9–10 million and has access to *RTÉ* archives. Many of its popular programmes are sponsored by various bodies. For 2006, the original estimates published late in 2005 allocated €25.5 million to the station. In February 2006, the Communications Minister added an extra €4 million. At the annual *Ard-Fheis* (Meeting) of his party, the Minister promised an additional €10 million between 2007 and 2011 or €2.5 million per year. Comparisons are made with the funding of the dedicated Welsh channel, S4C, and with the Gaelic channel in Scotland, both of which receive substantially more exchequer funding from Westminster. For 2007, the channel has been allocated €30 million current funding from which it supplies 16 hours of daily programming. In addition, it has income from advertising, sponsorship and sales. [The Budget for 2008, announced in December 2007, increased the grant for *TG4* to €36,580,000.](#)

Many of the programmes broadcast by *TG4*, mostly commissioned programmes from the independent sector, have received awards and distinctions every year since 1997, nationally and internationally, including an UNESCO award, across several categories: animation; short films; documentaries; arts; entertainment. Some programmes have received several awards. Presenters and programme characters have been similarly recognised. Two major awards were gained at Cork Film Festival 2004, produced with the assistance of the programme *Oscail* (Open). This was the third time in six years that a *TG4* short film had taken the Audience Award. The popular soap, *Ros na Rún* (fictional placename), now running for up to ten years, was recently bought in by a Philadelphia station where it will be shown with English subtitles. The series has not flinched from dealing with many difficult social themes: assisted death for the terminally ill; a priest in love; homosexuality; extortion; hiding those on the run. Its sponsorship changes from time to time, most recently from *Foras na Gaeilge* to *Gael-Linn*. For the Film and Television Awards 2007, *TG4* programmes have been nominated side by side with English language programmes across a range of categories: soaps, children, young people, documentaries.

Programmes for the younger audience have a particular niche on *TG4*. Several popular series have been bought in and dubbed: *The Dukes of Hazzard*, *Spongebob Squarepants* and now *South Park*, *Harry Potter* films and *Sesame Street* in 2008.

TG4 and *An Chomhairle Ealaíon* (Arts Council) collaborate in ensuring documentaries on the arts through the funding mechanism *Splanc* (Spark, Flash). Since 1998, twenty documentaries have been produced. In 2006, *TG4* together with *An Chomhairle* and *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge* (Board for books in Irish) launched a series of six half-hour programmes to be broadcast in 2007, *An Litríocht Bheo* (Living Literature), at a cost of €180,000.

Up to 800,000 now tune into the channel at some point each day. In the 2004 survey on Irish radio listenership, it was found that 86% of the population had watched *TG4* at some point; 93% had done so in the *Gaeltacht* and 95% in the mid-West region. Viewers were found across the spectrum of

language ability. While 91% with good ability have tuned in to *TG4*, 85% of respondents assessing their language skills as poor had also accessed the Irish language television station at some stage for some reason. Although *TG4* does broadcast a solid core of Irish language programming, it also operates bilingually. Some viewers who may choose an English language film may stay for news in Irish. Nevertheless, viewers must make an initial choice to opt for *TG4* from among the numerous possibilities now available on cable and satellite services. In July 2005, for Wimbledon tennis with Irish commentary, over a quarter of a million tuned in daily. Between Christmas Eve 2005 and New Year's Day 2006, over 1.25 million people tuned into *TG4* on a daily basis; *TG4* was sixth in channel choice during this highly competitive Christmas period, according to AGB Nielsen Media Research. The first two months of 2006 saw a 30% increase of market viewing share on the same period in 2005.

THE ISSUE OF INDEPENDENCE FOR TG4

Background

Part VI of the Broadcasting Act (2001) foresaw *TG4* as an independent entity functioning under its own separate Authority. Activation was promised in the Programme for Government 2002. This was expected to be in force by 2005. The Minister for Communications began the process in February when a joint committee was established which comprised *RTE*, *TG4*, and the Departments of Finance, Communications and *Gaeltacht*. In April 2005 the elements of an implementation plan were signalled when the Minister for Communications called for applications from consultants to advise on the practicalities of separation of *TG4* from *RTE*. By July, an accountancy and a legal firm had been engaged.

Position of RTE

Throughout the process, there had not been total agreement on the issue between *RTE* and *TG4*. *RTE*, far from being in favour of the move, was against separation except in limited terms, as was explained to the Forum on Broadcasting and at the launch of *RTE*'s Annual Report 2003 when the argument was made that there did not appear to be a need for two national broadcasters. The Foreword to this report states clearly that in the seven years since *TG4* began, neither an appropriate nor adequate funding mechanism had been in place for it. Until this would occur, *TG4* would continue under the aegis of *RTE* with autonomous editorial policy and separate management structure. Interestingly, in the arguments put forward by *RTE* to the Forum on Broadcasting, the two Irish language stations, *Raidió na Gaeltachta* and *TG4*, were considered central to its remit as a public service broadcaster, since language is key to identity and communications and language rights are undermined unless broadcasting plays its part and maintains the trust that must exist between public and broadcaster. In *RTE*'s view, 'Public service broadcasting is Ireland's most significant public arena for the Irish language as a means of communication and as a cultural form. *Nuacht RTE* is a standard for spoken Irish'.

From the inception of the new station, *RTE* had supplied one hour per day of Irish language programming free to *TG4* (365 per annum). In addition, *TG4* had free access to *RTE*'s transmitting system and to its archives. These also constituted practical considerations with regard to a separate existence for *TG4*. It was estimated that *TG4* would need at least an extra €6m annually to function independently. If this were granted, the conditions attaching could include more programming and less repeats. The 2003 *RTE* annual report made specific mention of the partnership between *RTE Nuacht* (news) and *TG4* by which a daily Irish news service was provided for *RTE* radio (including *RTE RnaG*) and television as well as *TG4*.

Further arguments were made by *RTE* to keep *TG4* in the family through a submission by way of discussion paper to the Department for Communications as that Department moved ahead with its plans. Firstly, *TG4* could have a strong degree of autonomy but still be subject to the *RTE* Authority. Secondly, suggestions were made as to how funding might be sought to increase *TG4* revenue from institutional sources (e.g. hospitals). Thirdly, in order to fulfil its language remit, *TG4* would require €20 million extra funding. It could also broadcast *Oireachtas* and EU debates. The losses inherent in separation were also given, including the hour per day free from *RTE*, valued at €73 million since *TG4* began, as well as increased VAT payments for *TG4* after separation. The final arguments from *RTE* saw *TG4* functioning without advertising revenue but with a set income from the existing licence fee. Separation, in *RTE*'s arguments, would serve neither public service broadcasting nor the language. In July, *RTE* defended its position on *TG4* as part of its submission before the *Oireachtas* Joint Committee on Communications. It also opposed further powers for the BCI.

Position of TG4

Reports assumed that these arguments did not meet with approval from *TG4* sources. In November 2005, some critics in the media were of the view that *RTÉ*'s position was basically one of trying to avoid competition, keep all advertising, maintain control, leave the uninteresting aspects of public service broadcasting (of political institutions) to *TG4*, but still use *TG4*'s language remit as an argument for *RTÉ*'s public service remit. In its own submission in May 2005, *TG4* argued for separation and independence as foreseen in legislation. It argued that the cost of this would be in the region of €1 million per annum. An additional sum of €22 million over three years was also required, on top of the existing annual allocation. This additional sum would be required even if no separation took place to allow development of the service. The *TG4* submission also required *RTÉ* to continue providing an hour's free programming per day and *Nuacht TG4* (News) to remain within its existing relationship with *RTÉ*.

Result

The differing perspectives of both *RTÉ* and *TG4*, while clearly and understandably self-interested, cannot have made any easier the task of the experts drafting advice to the Minister. By the end of 2005, no immediate solution was put forward and it appeared that the separation of *TG4* from *RTÉ* with accompanying independence was seeming less attractive politically. The report commissioned by the Minister for Communications from independent consultants engaged in July 2005, a report which was intended to address the multiplicity of factors involved, was put before him in February 2006. By May 2006, it appeared that separation had been accepted as inevitable by *RTÉ*. The internal Corporate Plan for the service assumed that *TG4* would be independent by early 2007 but that the relationship between the two news services would remain in the initial period at any rate.

The next (June 2006) complicating factor in this story of separation was financial: the European Commission, on competition arguments, demanded that Government subsidies could not be made tax free through allowing *RTÉ* and, therefore, at that moment, *TG4*, to have the use of the full licence fee.

Eventually, however, by August 2006 the Government announced that independence was expected to be in operation by April 2007 with increased funding and continuance of the services from *RTÉ*. *RTÉ* was represented on the Project Management Group set up by the Government to ensure readiness by the proposed date.

The Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill 2006, (as well as the draft heads of the Broadcasting Bill 2006), set out some of the technical and other issues for the future. Another group watching the separation issue closely were the suppliers of commissioned programmes, the independent production companies.

Towards the end of February 2008, the European Commission closed its investigation into state aid for public sector broadcasting, *RTÉ* and *TG4*, in view of proposals in the new Broadcasting Bill to set up the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, a body whose remit would include the kinds of supervisory functions required by the Commission.

TG4 AND COMMISSIONING FROM INDEPENDENT PRODUCTION COMPANIES

In the year 2004, the grant for *TG4* was €25.9m; in the revised Government Estimates 2006 it reached €28m. The station estimated that it spends more than €15m annually buying in material from the independent audiovisual sector and supporting some 350 posts in this way. This independent sector comprises mostly small to medium enterprises, many located in *Gaeltacht* areas, where it is estimated that they ensure employment for up to 400 people on full time and contract work. *TG4* is estimated to deal with up to 70 companies supporting 300 jobs in the independent sector. This sector was then concerned at the move away from *RTÉ* and was hoping that *TG4* would receive more funding and/or a substantial proportion of the television license fee.

The group Screen Producers Ireland (SPI), whose two hundred members also benefit from the existence of *TG4*, presented the station with a birthday cake in advance of its 8th birthday (1 November 2004) with the wish and hope that funding would be increased. However, the results of the independent report on *TG4* funding which Screen Producers Ireland had commissioned, in its concern at the impact on independent producers, were telling. While *TG4* may have been in receipt of almost €26m in the year 2005 for a possible viewing public of 1.7m on Census figures in the Republic and an additional 140,000 in NI, the Welsh station, S4C, was receiving €123m from

various sources for a population under half a million. Of the seventy companies that supply TG4, up to forty are located in *Gaeltacht* areas.

Estimated economic value of employment generated by TG4 (Independent Production Sector)

Jobs	<i>Gaeltacht</i>	Non- <i>Gaeltacht</i>	Total
TG4	68	6	74
Producers; <i>Gaeltacht</i>	154	—	154
Producers; Non- <i>Gaeltacht</i>	—	185	185
Total	222	191	413
Annual Value			
@€25,000 per job	€5.55m	€4.78m	€10.33m
Value to Local Economy	€6.83m	€5.88m	€12.71m

The cumulative value of both jobs and input to economy was calculated also over 10 years. However, the non directly financial benefits of investment in TG4 were also listed. They were primarily three: (i) increased confidence in the language on the part of native speakers and enhanced attractiveness for those of lesser competence; (ii) immeasurable enhancement of community spirit and social development in *Gaeltacht* regions; (iii) new image and increased popularity of the language among young people as a result of innovative programming in new media on a par with anything available in the *genre*.

At that time, the independent sector claimed that it was producing programmes for TG4 at reduced and uneconomic rates. The service was facing the possibility of reducing home produced programmes or increasing the output of dubbed English programmes as cheaper unless funding was improved. The independent report estimated that TG4 would need €44m annually by 2008 to function effectively. The report and its economic implications were raised in the *Dáil*.

The same arguments were made by SPI in relation to RTE at the July 2005 meeting of the *Oireachtas* Joint Committee on Communications. The lack of home produced programming was highlighted. Children's programming by the public service broadcaster consisted of just 6% home produced material, complained the SPI. RTE estimate that 30% of their programming is home produced. However, SPI also criticized RTE for maintaining too many rights on selling on home bought programmes to other countries. Costs are high and commission pricing too low because RTE has no competition since TV3 buy in very little Irish produced material. Small companies are folding or losing staff. The Sound and Vision funding scheme offered by the BCI is open also to RTE itself which reduces opportunities for the independent sector.

Both RTE and TG4 were then in a situation in 2005-2006 where an official policy decision had soon to be made, in the interests of the Irish-language audio-visual sector generally.

At the commemorative seminar on the first ten years of TG4, it was reported that 317 independent producers had produced material for TG4 since 1996. But the point was also made that too many were solely dependent on TG4 and needed to diversify their work base. Some had gone to the wall but the failure rate was not any higher in the sector than pertained in other countries.

TELEVISION: THE INDEPENDENT SECTOR

At its inception, the fourth new independent channel, TV3, despite the legislation, considered itself to have no obligation towards Irish, although it attracted no small number of bilingual staff from *TnaG/TG4*. There is an unfortunate growing perception that *TnaG/TG4* is becoming no more than a training ground for staff to move into posts carrying more exposure, and perhaps even more career opportunities. TV3 maintained that 'there was no language requirement in its license' and that the Irish language would be reflected in the 'broader context of Irish culture', (*Irish Times*, 29.07.1998). This appears to have remained the view as evidenced in its operation. There are instances, however, where it appears to take more of an active interest than RTE in issues relating to Irish language and culture through its English-language news and current affairs. The latest channel on Irish screens is TV6. It appears to display little remit in relation to Irish.

YOUTH AND TELEVISION

Television appears to be a popular medium for youth. Up to 600 young people applied to audition in

August 2004 for a proposed new teenage soap for *TG4* for transmission in Autumn 2005. Over one thousand from all over the country were auditioned for the voice of Harry Potter alone in the dubbed versions of the films planned. Audience figures for children's and young people's programmes on Irish language television are generally strong.

RADIO: PUBLIC SERVICE NATIONAL BROADCASTER

Radio service began in 1926 as Station 2RN. The national broadcaster *RTÉ* now has four national radio stations: Radio 1, Radio 2 FM and Lyric FM as well as the Irish-medium *Raidió na Gaeltachta*. All four stations are prefixed in their titles with *RTÉ*, clearly branding them. Irish-language programming has now (2006–2007) reduced to approximately 40 minutes of news weekly (5 minutes on Sunday and 7 minutes Monday to Friday) with an additional half hour programme on Saturday (an adult quiz programme), a total of less than 70 minutes, all on Radio 1. The news bulletins are broadcast in late evening when the majority have switched to television, although just before programmes with a listener following. News headlines in Irish have been axed. No Irish is heard (unless occasional incidental phrases from a presenter or interviewee) on the prime time programme primarily intended for those driving home from work. During the Summer schedule Irish programme output may be further reduced. *RTÉ* 2 FM supplies popular music and chat while more classical music is found on Lyric FM. Incidental Irish will be heard from presenters across all stations, especially in Irish music programmes. Programmes in English of cultural interest are common. The potential for use of Irish is clearly evident in the increased use of the language during *Seachtain na Gaeilge*, around St. Patrick's Day in March each year.

It is difficult to quantify precise annual output from *RTÉ*. However, the figures for current output in Irish are clearly a fairly minimal percentage of total radio output. The figure of 45 minutes devoted to news only stands in contrast to BBC Ulster which broadcasts half-hour editions Monday to Friday weekly of the programme *Blas* (Taste or, metaphorically, Irish spoken with native-like accent). This programme which may include some English nevertheless covers a range of topical items. BBC Ulster also broadcasts one half-hour programme devoted to Ulster-Scots, *A Kist o Wurds*, after *Blas* on Wednesdays. Both programmes are early evening listening.

RTÉ Radio was (mid 2007) planning six digital stations, five of which are currently broadcasting on a pilot basis on temporary license. It had initially been hoped that one station would be devoted to youth broadcasting or that the Irish language might be represented. While final decisions have not yet been taken, neither appears a firm possibility at the moment.

RADIO: RTÉ RAIDIÓ NA GAELTACHTA

The dedicated Irish language channel, *RTÉ Radio na Gaeltachta*, *RnaG*, opened formally at 3.00 p.m. on Easter Sunday, 2 April 1972 after much agitation by Irish speakers particularly in the west where a pirate radio broadcast for a time. Initially *RnaG* broadcast for some three hours daily. When dedicated Irish language radio began, there were two radio stations; now there are almost sixty taking the national broadcaster and independent sector together. By the late 1990s *RnaG* was broadcasting for 14.5 hours daily (in all dialects). Nowadays it is known as *RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta* and, since the end of 2001, offers a twenty four hour service broadcasting from six in the morning to repeat programming or music from midnight onwards. It is available on the internet and on Sky radio channels. It has studios in the three major *Gaeltacht* regions and Mayo, as well as the use of *RTÉ* facilities in Dublin and around the country. Programmes cover the usual expected range. The station is now available throughout the country, North and South. There is strong contact with Gaelic Radio in Scotland. The bias is local and was considered not to cater for youth's taste in music. However, that changed to some degree on foot of research. At the Celtic Film and Television Festival 2005, *RTÉ RnaG* received the award for Radio Station of the Year.

The Chair of the most recently appointed *Comhairle* (Council) of *RnaG* (late 2006) considers the challenges of the future to lie in locating the station appropriately in the overall broadcasting policy network, as understood both in the political and in the broadcasting spheres. During the tenure of the previous *Comhairle*, *RnaG* had achieved continuous broadcasting 24/7; had begun the new programme directed at young people, *Anocht* FM and had won Station of the Year Award.

Irish language programming from the national broadcaster sometimes appears to get caught in funding arguments with the State.

COMMUNITY AND INDEPENDENT RADIO SECTOR: RAIDIÓ NA LIFE AND OTHERS

The BCI licensed radio stations include the Dublin based Irish language community radio, *Raidió na Life*, begun in 1993. After more restricted broadcasting hours in the early years, *Raidió na Life* now broadcasts for 118.5 hours weekly: live for 62.5 hours weekly with an additional 56 hours of pre-recorded programmes, repeats and other material (Monday to Thursday: live 16.30–24.00, pre-recorded material and some repeats 24.00–03.30, the daily output 03.30–08.00; Friday: live 15.30–24.00, 24.00–08.00 as Monday to Thursday; Saturday and Sunday: live 12.00–24.00, 24.00–08.00 as Monday to Friday). The station receives permission from the licensing authority from time to time to extend its broadcasting hours on a temporary basis. It intends to seek permanent extension from the BCI. In December 2007, the current licence was renewed for ten years until 31.01.2017. The co-operative which began the venture, *Comharchumann Raidió Átha Cliath Teoranta* (Dublin Radio Co-operative Limited) was set up in 1989 on voluntary shares as a non-profit venture. The latest announcement from the station at the beginning of March 2008 is that broadcasting will now take place 20 hours daily, 08.00 to 04.00, seven days a week.

By its license (recently renewed to 2017), the station is allowed to accept sponsorship but not advertisements and receives a core grant from *Foras na Gaeilge*, €110,128 for 2004 increased to €144,031 for 2006 and to €219,136 for 2008. It also offers shares to maintain income as a community radio. It functions with three full-time posts and much voluntary input, up to sixty volunteers. It is aware that it must cater for all tastes and for all abilities and offers a very varied programming schedule. It may sometimes use other languages on an occasional basis to reach its largely urban audience. The organisation *Gael-Linn* provided a lot of the necessary equipment at the beginning. It has received several awards and is now available on the web. A recent innovation at the station is a new bilingual series in Irish and Polish, *Ros Brudno*, intended to share the rich culture of Irish with the Polish immigrant population. The Polish presenter first learned Irish at the University of Lublin in her native land and now works through Irish at *Fiontar* (Dublin City University). Another new addition is for children.

All other independent radio stations must fulfil the statutory obligation for Irish, monitored by the BCI (and Irish speakers!). Community stations are generally generous with the use of Irish, apparently because they are not under any commercial restraints through advertising. In 2006–2007, the independent radio sector comprised 53 stations and one special interest station.

Independent Radio Sector (BCI)

Total	National	Regional	Local	Community*	Hospitals	Special Int*st
54	1	1	26	19	6	1

* incl. Community of interest (of which one is Irish-medium)

The range of provision of Irish language broadcasting across stations is quite uneven. Some stay within the minimum permitted. The majority have a total of an hour or in excess of an hour per week. The station 98FM began a new lively one hour programme on Sunday nights. In Dublin, Spin1038 has 5 hours per week while the station in the College of Education in Limerick broadcasts completely in Irish at weekends. Third level campus radios usually tend to include more Irish-language programmes in their broadcasting as do community stations but much depends on the availability of volunteers. A new mode of assistance to enable the independent radio sector fulfil their statutory obligations in relation to Irish was launched in January 2006 as a joint venture between the BCI and *Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge* (Congress of Voluntary Organisations), the podbroadcasting service entitled *Cogar* (literally ‘whisper’ but conversationally ‘Listen [to me]’ or ‘Tell me’). The independent (recently national) radio station, Newstalk 106, has a regular programme in Irish.

As might be expected from independent commercial radio stations, there exists a degree of wariness in relation to the use of Irish or Irish programmes lest this affect in any way the size of their listenership in a competitive environment. A surprising finding also from an internal report carried out for the BCI in 2005 was the lack of information in the independent radio sector on the existence of *Coiste Comhairleach na Gaeilge* (Advisory Committee) and its support role. Over 40 per cent of stations apparently professed ignorance not only of this but of the wealth of material available, particularly music. Many stations argue also that they lack the requisite language skills to fulfil even their statutory obligations. The ability of a significant proportion of the sector to function as a source

of information to the heterogeneous public they attempt to serve appears somewhat constrained.

A yearly report is compiled for the Board of the Broadcasting Commission on every aspect of the programming of each station, including the use of the Irish language. Where dissatisfaction occurs the Commission and the station work together to improve matters within a specific timeframe.

THE BCI AND IRISH

Committee and Co-ordinator for Irish

In early 1999, the then *Bord na Gaeilge* and then IRTC set up an Irish Language Advisory Committee, *Coiste Comhairleach na Gaeilge*, to monitor and support Irish usage in the independent radio sector and to make recommendations for development. This committee comprises representatives of *Foras na Gaeilge* and BCI, *Gael-Linn* an organisation with long experience and involvement in broadcasting and film, and five independent stations. For Irish, a Coordinator was appointed on contract from 2002. This full-time post was co-funded by *Foras* (formerly *Bord na Gaeilge*) and the BCI (formerly IRTC). These developments led initially to the preparation of a booklet of appropriate phrases in Irish for radio broadcasters which proved very useful for re-activating linguistic skills. It was re-issued in expanded form with accompanying CD-Rom in March 2004. Since it is published in the three major dialects, it has proved a very practical and motivating encouragement to presenters around the country.

At the end of the contract period of the Irish Coordinator in 2005, the BCI took the decision to continue funding the post itself for a further one year contract. [The BCI then sought permission for a permanent post from the Department of Finance which sought a submission on the nature and cost of the post. The Department may have been conscious of the possibility of further such requests from other quarters. This led to an independent evaluation of the post being carried out by the BCI resulting in a reported recommendation that there was no longer need for a full-time post, that the duties could be carried out part-time. This may have been as a result of the structural initiatives already put in place by the post holder.](#) The post is now vacant and the Advisory Committee without that back up. Two grant schemes support Irish language programming (radio and television), *inter alia*, in the independent sector: *Fuaim agus Fís* (Sound and Vision), Broadcasting Act 2003, financed through 5% of the television license; New Adventures in Broadcasting for innovative work.

Support schemes for radio broadcasters

A series of practical support schemes were introduced by the Advisory Committee and the Irish Coordinator. They include 'Top 40 *Oifigiúil na hÉireann*', a two hour popular music programme with information in Irish, and an anthology of '*Giotáí Gaeilge*', short descriptive/narrative pieces less than a minute in length. The Top 40 was broadcast by 12–15 stations. It won a radio award for Specialist Music Programming. A popular annual competition to find the star DJ of the year,

'*Réalt DJ*', aimed at postprimary students, was organised between participating radio stations (6 in 2004; 9 in 2005) and in collaboration with the programme Pop 4 on *TG4*. Training sessions for presenters wishing to use Irish had been introduced, not only to improve skills but to establish a network of Irish language presenters in the independent radio sector. While in some isolated cases, the presenter may also be a member of an Irish language organisation, there exist no *formal* local links between the radio and voluntary sector to support Irish language programming. The majority of stations would wish to include Irish but in a format close to their usual style, lively, modern, and directed at their specific local, regional or national listening public. News headlines and weather in Irish for commercial stations was inaugurated in collaboration with INN (Irish News Network) by *Gael-Linn*, a partner in the Advisory Committee. These are broadcast twice a day on independent stations. *Gael-Linn* had also provided Irish language segments used by a significant number of stations, *Blúiríní Gael-Linn*.

Training, awards and publications

Training and workshops for both presenters and schools form another strand of the support system. CRAOL (Broadcast), founded in 1996, is the representative forum for community radio stations. It is accredited by FETAC (Further Education and Training Accreditation Council) as a training delivery centre and holds an annual Community Radio Training *Féile* (Festival) at which an Irish language workshop has been held. *ÉIST* (Listen) is the Independent Broadcasters Association and is closely

involved in training and course curricula for the sector. One member of the coordinating committee is responsible for ensuring that Irish language presenters are represented at *ÉIST* events and that their training needs are met. Separately, the previous Coordinator held regional meetings to assess needs and subsequently organised courses on Irish language radio presentation skills and development.

Irish language radio workshops were organised for schools, supported by local community or commercial stations, during *Seachtain na Gaeilge* and prizes awarded for the best programme outcomes. In collaboration with the organisation *Gaelscoileanna* and the National Council for Technology in Education (NCTE) *Scéim na Scoile* (School Scheme) was set up. The Irish Language Advisory Committee supply minidisc recorders; the local stations provide training and broadcast the material produced by schools, thereby developing programmes, audience and future presenters simultaneously.

The BCI supports two prizes for Irish-language radio broadcasting through the nationwide competition, *Glór na nGael*, one each of €700 open to commercial stations and to community stations, as well as a second level schools competition for *Gael-Linn*.

The body has also issued documents of public or sectoral interest either in bilingual or in Irish version format: *Cód Fógraíochta do Pháistí* (Children's Advertising Code); *Rialacha Rochtana* (Access Rules) on the steps to be taken by broadcasters to ensure that deaf or hard of hearing persons and persons who are blind or partially sighted may enjoy broadcasting services. The BCI website offers the section dealing with Irish in bilingual format.

GLOBAL LISTENING

Apart from Irish language programming from Ireland available by satellite or through the web, local radio stations in America will include material, or programmes, in Irish on a regular or occasional basis, depending on the regional population of *Gaeltacht* or Irish background. The same may happen in the UK. Bradford Community Radio is one example of a station that chose to broadcast its regular weekly programme in Irish on Easter Sunday 2006, the 90th commemoration of the Easter Rising 1916.

YOUTH BROADCASTING: RADIO

Demands and decisions

The question of providing radio broadcasting, especially in music, that would entice and maintain the interest of young people, particularly Irish speakers, has long been debated and considered. Maintaining the interest of youth was considered crucial, both for the radio service audience and for the language.

The Minister with responsibility for the language was favourable to the concept of a youth service and had announced (May 2004) that he would wish to establish an independent agency to provide pop music programming in Irish. He proposed to co-fund a study on the listening habits and wishes of the age group 15–35 in collaboration with the BCI and *Foras na Gaeilge*. The results would then help to provide a basis for policy. In the event, a telephone survey of a more comprehensive listener sample was conducted by an independent firm at the end of 2004 seeking views and building a picture of listenership, not only of those whose needs were being met but of those who might be potential listeners. The results were published early in 2005.

Research

With regard to Irish language radio listening, the results of the survey were encouraging. Of radio listeners, up to a quarter listen to Irish programming even if only occasionally and of this listening group 14 per cent do so daily. This equates with 3.4% of the population. Interestingly, the majority of these listeners live, not in the *Gaeltacht*, but in the Dublin and Midlands area. They tend to be in the over 35 age groups; no more than one in five of them would be involved in Irish language activities and only slightly over half of them would consider themselves as having good ability in the language.

Eighty per cent or four out of five respondents, particularly those in the younger age groups, supported Government promotion of Irish language radio and policies for such promotion through schools or radio youth services.

Result

However, these conclusions did not immediately lead to the establishment of a dedicated Irish language service for youth. Instead, *Anocht* FM (Tonight) was introduced within *RnaG* from March 2005 directed at the youth audience. Broadcasting between 9.00 pm and 1.00 in the morning, a percentage of music with English lyrics was permitted. Research on listening figures from TNS/MRBI published in April 2006 show that *Anocht* FM has indeed proved very popular with the 15–24 age group. Indeed the new service has helped increase overall listening figures for the station. The newly appointed Head of *RnaG* had been responsible for youth programming changes in her former position. She hoped for new possibilities when digital radio becomes available, although aware of the competitive challenges that come with the digital era. However, among the six digital stations to be launched by *RTÉ* in March 2007, there are no plans as yet for an Irish language station for young people in the preliminary announcement, although younger age groups (2–12) will be targeted in addition to senior citizens, drama and the arts. The Minister with responsibility for the language, nevertheless, would still wish to see such a station in addition to the welcome changes made by *RnaG* to youth broadcasting. The argument continued (November 2007) through a seminar organised by *Conradh na Gaeilge* as part of *Oireachtas na Gaeilge* and plans for a station during *Seachtain na Gaeilge* 2008. This was followed by direct action in March 2008 with the establishment of *Raidió X* (a competition to be held to find a suitable name, suggestions to raidiox.com). In February 2008, in Galway, the first regional all-digital radio station was launched, directed at the age group 15–34. It has a daily bilingual show, *Ar Éileamh*, (On Demand).

PUBLICATIONS ON BROADCASTING

During 2003, two books appeared on Irish-language broadcasting. The first, entitled *Broadcasting in Irish: minority language, radio, television and identity*, was published as part of the *RTÉ* series Broadcasting and Irish Society. The second dealt broadly with the same theme in a comparative study, under the title *Escaping the Global Village: Media, Language and Protest*. In Irish, *Ar an Taifead – fí, fuaim, focal* (On the Record – video, sound, word), appeared in 2007.

FILM

The first widely distributed films in Irish were produced for the organisation *Gael-Linn*, which also produced newsreels in Irish for showing in cinemas. The most well known film from the organisation is probably the historical *Mise Éire* (literally 'I am Ireland' – taken from a poem), drawn from archive and other material, made in 1959, and innovative in its day. The 1967 *Fleadh Cheoil* which showed a local music festival won the Silver Bear at the Berlin Awards and *Páistí ag Obair* (Children at Work) received an Academy Award nomination in 1973. Later films of note were produced by two independent film makers. *Gael-Linn* celebrated its fiftieth birthday with many events, one of which was a day devoted to its film archive, from the early days to 1973. It re-issued *Mise Éire* (1959) and *An Tine Bheo* (Living Flame) from 1966 in CD format in 2006 since they contained much contemporary historical material from the Rising of 1916 and its aftermath.

The organisation also presented a trophy and €3,000 prize at Cork Film Festival 2004 to the Irish-language short film, *An Díog is Faide* (The Longest Ditch), as part of the Olympics international compendium of films from each participant country in its own language. Another Irish language film, *Fluent Dysphasia*, won the Viewers Award. Both short films were commissioned by *TG4* with support from *Bord Scannán na hÉireann* (Irish Film Board). The contribution of Irish film-making to entertainment and to employment was highlighted by the presenter. At the same Film Festival in 2005, the Irish film which won the *Gael-Linn* prize, *An Teanga Rúnda* (The Secret Language), was also the Viewers' choice for the prize in that section.

Films originating in Irish nowadays are produced mainly for television by the independent sector and comprise shorts, documentaries, docudramas and material for children and youth. Dubbing into Irish is also done but subtitling is more common, particularly for material bought from other Celtic television stations including 'soaps'. Material for children is deliberately chosen for dubbing from outside the more usual English language examples. Original animation work is also carried out for *TG4*. The characters and adventures from one such series for seven to twelve year olds, *Inis Chúil* (Inis Cool Island) have found their way to The Netherlands, Estonia, Finland, Germany, South America and nearer home to the Gaelic of Scotland. Two companies in the *Gaeltacht* (partially

subvented) carry out much of the technical work. Translation companies supply text. Other bilingual companies also participate, from Dublin particularly.

Short films for television are produced through the *Oscail* (Open – in the imperative form of the verb) programme largely for those beginning their careers as producers/directors. *Oscail* has been running now for over eight years with co-funding from *TG4* and *Bord Scannán na hÉireann* (Irish Film Board). Several of the productions have received awards and one has been added to the Leaving Certificate syllabus for Irish. Most have been produced on very small budgets. Nine of these short films put together on DVD have been circulated to postprimary schools by the Department of Education. The scheme, *Lasair* (Flame, Spark), between *TG4* and FilmBase, has been running with success since 2001. Funding up to €20,000 is available (November 2007) to encourage new young producers. Some 17 shorts have been made as a result. Documentaries or other programmes produced by bilingual companies for English-language television may feature a segment in Irish with English subtitling.

The *Gaeltacht* based company, *Telegael*, is considering dubbing the film, *The Quiet Man*, into Irish while Robert Quinn, director of some of the more successful award winning short films, *Cosa Nite* (Washed Feet), *An Leabhar* (The Book), has directed the film adaptation of the acclaimed prose work, *Cré na Cille* (Earth of the Graveyard), of the Irish language writer, *Máirtín Ó Cadhain*. It was co-funded through the BCI scheme Sound and Vision, from which €650,000 was granted. As a ninety minute film, this is one of the first attempts in this *genre* since *Gael-Linn* in the 1950s and Bob Quinn's films based in the *Gaeltacht* at a later period. It was shown at the 2007 Film Festival in Dublin, shortlisted for the 2007 Shanghai International Film Festival and nominated in the Best Feature Film category for the Irish Film Festival in Boston. *Kings*, a full length film adaptation in Irish (with English subtitles) of the award winning play, *The Kings of the Kilburn Road*, set in London among emigrants from the west of Ireland, was the 2007 winner of the Directors Finders Series screened in Los Angeles in 2007 and was intended for showing to American distributors in September 2007. It was nominated for an Oscar in 2007 in the category for films in languages other than English.

Film festivals or showings are occasionally held to showcase Irish language short films. This may happen at *An tOireachtas* or the Irish Film Institute or elsewhere in Dublin; Cork; Belfast; Tory Island.

Sentences in Irish have been heard from time to time in film material originating in the USA: from Johnny Weissmuller as Tarzan to Kermit the Frog in the Muppet Show, in conversation with Debbie Harry, to the 2004 Hollywood film, *Million Dollar Baby*, where the hero (Clint Eastwood) amuses himself learning Irish and finally uses 'Mo Chuisle' (Darling) to the leading lady (Hilary Swank). She, in turn, used it in referring to him at the Oscars 2005, when receiving the award for best actress, as a boxer.

AWARDS: TELEVISION

Beginning in the second year of transmission, *TG4* (then *TnaG*) began to be associated with prize winning material, particularly through the programmes it commissioned. The weekly soap, *Ros na Rún*, on *TG4* is still very popular and the previous comedy series *CU Burn* (rural undertakers) received one of the first awards and has been sold overseas as have many other programmes. Gabriel Byrne (former teacher with Irish) starred in the early short film *Draíocht*. Many other original short films have since been made. Awards were also received in the early days for a documentary and the comedy series *Barabbas*. *TG4* now collaborates with the Arts Council and with the Irish Film Board to encourage production in the sector. Every year, there are some awards for Irish-produced material, largely broadcast on *TG4* but also on *RTÉ*.

The Irish Film and Television Awards (IFTA) are quite prestigious. In 2003, the presenter of a series on *TG4*, received awards in three different categories for the programme *Amú Amigos-Amazon*. This followed his success in 2002 for the same series. At the same IFTA occasion, a programme on Tory Island (*Oileán Thoraí*), that had been commissioned by *TG4*, received the award for best documentary in a category that was also open to English language programmes. These successes continue.

Short films commissioned by *TG4* (particularly through the *Oscail* and *Lasair* schemes) have done well at international festivals. The bilingual *Yu Ming is Ainm Dom* (My name is Yu Ming) has picked up prizes at more than 14 festivals. At Cork Film Festival 2004, *Fluent Dysphasia* (starring Stephen Rea) and *An Díog is Faide* (The Longest Ditch) were successful. In 2004 the film *An Dúil* (The Desire/Expectation) was chosen for showing at both the Los Angeles and New York festivals. Quality and innovation are the

hallmarks of the current short film industry in Irish.

TG4 runs an annual competition for video films produced by Transition Year (15–16 year olds) students. A recent national winner, *Galar an Ghrá* (The Illness of Love), based on a schoolboy who falls in love with a new teacher, went on to win the overall European prize at the international Ciak festival of films for youth in 2006. The Irish offering also received three other awards, best actor, Spirit of the Festival and Broadcasters' Choice.

Another recent award for the sector was the prestigious Emmy in the Daytime Awards for post-production carried out by the Gaeltacht-based *Telegael* (established 1989) company on the animated series for children, *Tutenstein*. It is currently being shown in America and in Europe and the Irish version was for broadcast on TG4 by the end of 2004. The animation skills of *Telegael* continue to be recognised. By 2006, no less than three of its works were nominated for the Emmy awards in three different categories.

AWARDS: RADIO

As part of its strategy to improve the standard of radio programming, the BCI, in collaboration with Phonographic Performance Ireland (PPI), initiated a scheme of national awards some years ago. These awards are open to all radio stations. In 2003, *Raidió na Gaeltachta* received the two most prestigious awards: National Radio Station of the Year and the trophy for Best Station in the country. Towards the end of 2006, *RnaG* again received three nominations for the PPI awards: drama; documentary; national Station of the Year.

The Belfast Media Group organise yearly awards in different categories, promotion of the Irish language being one of them. In 2003, this award was made to *Raidió na Life*, the Irish language community radio based in Dublin.

Irish language productions have regular success at the Celtic Film and Television Festival also, whether television or radio or personalities. For 2007, *RnaG* received a range of nominations across several categories including Station of the Year.

MULTI-MEDIA PRODUCTION AND THE INTERNET

This is an area which undergoes constant change. It is to be noted, however, that the Irish language has a very distinct place in the field.

The CD Roms produced in Irish deal in general with the Bible, with Irish music and song, liturgical music, with lexicography/terminology, with self-access to learning of Irish, access to educational material and with aspects of culture or material for children. A Gaeltacht company produces CD Roms for children and schools as well as on aspects of culture; on culture one deals with the ancient *Ogham* form of writing. CDs frequently accompany official print material. Irish music is usually available on disc.

A new fund of €150,000 to produce DVDs for children was recently (2007) announced by the Minister with responsibility for the language.

There are a significant number of networks on the internet dealing with the Celtic languages including Irish, as well as specific pages and learning materials for Irish only, and for books in Irish (books are also available from Amazon). Many show where Irish language classes may be accessed across the world. The Institute for Irish-American Studies at New York University recently (2006) launched an interactive website for families rearing children through Irish, www.paistilegaelge.com, on which resources are catalogued and advice available from experts to queries. A monthly internet magazine, *Beo* (live, alive), has been developed with funding from *Foras na Gaeilge* and has been functioning since 2001. Irish language print and radio media can be accessed on the net.

Irish language versions of software and games for computer use have been developed by small companies both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland. *Foras na Gaeilge* has since mid 2004 an information guide to Irish on the internet, gaelge.ie. The majority of government and official websites are available in either Irish or English, in compliance with the Official Languages Act. The American company, www.transparent.com, which already supplies learning materials globally for over 100 languages including Irish, has now produced software for a self-administered test of fluency in Irish. Two recent additions to these resources have been funded by *Foras na Gaeilge* and launched by the Minister with responsibility for the language (Spring 2006). Brief queries from persons seeking a quick solution to some problem on any aspect of lexicon, grammar, or terminology will be supplied

by two experts. This free service, *Freagra* (Reply), may be accessed by calling or texting a mobile phone number (+353 87 7935913), by e-mail to freagra@acmhainn.ie or by using the web address www.acmhainn.ie/freagra. For the public service, a base resource of documents and forms in Irish and English, *Taisce Téaxanna* (The Text Store), is being assembled online to assist public bodies in delivering services to the public under the Official Languages Act. Terminology and translation resources are also available online.

There are few Irish organisations which have not developed their own web site in Irish or in bilingual format, including CONCOS, the co-ordinating group for the majority of the summer colleges. *Gaelport* (*sic*) is the portal set up by *Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge* (Congress/Council of organisations) which received over a million hits during 2007. It also publishes a fortnightly electronic newsletter, in Irish only or in bilingual format, with funding support from *Foras na Gaeilge*. This portal is now one of the most sophisticated sources of instant information on matters relating to Irish as they happen, providing a daily digest of relevant press material. This newsletter is e-mailed to decision makers, among others. In 2003, the Wall Street Journal chose the web site of *Siopa Standún* (shop) in *An Spidéal* (Spiddal) in the Galway *Gaeltacht* as the most effective in a survey undertaken by the Journal. The shop is a showcase of good Irish manufacture. The web site contained an Irish glossary and Irish sayings. The majority of Irish language ventures have their own website. The quality and ease of access for websites is constantly improving. In the annual awards for public sector websites, *TG4* won in the Irish language section. Website design companies now find it worth their while to offer their services in Irish.

The search engine Google offers Irish as a language choice for search. Irish is available on Wikipedia. A search engine aided by *Foras na Gaeilge* is now available in Irish, *gasta.com* (quick, nimble). The best use of the Irish language in blogging was won in a recent mainstream competition by *imeall.blogspot.com*. The blogger himself podcasts some Irish every day and is in constant virtual communication with other Irish-language bloggers around the globe. Other blogging sites in Ireland are taking on Irish speakers as bloggers. In addition, the community radio in the Dublin area, *Raidió na Life* (Liffey river) has begun podcasting its programme on technical issues and Near FM, an English language community radio in north Dublin city, is also podcasting some of its Irish language programming. The community student station in Galway, Flirt FM, now broadcasts the daily fifteen minute Irish programme, *An tImeall* (The Edge), podcast on blogspot.com. This may be the first example of such syndication. Six community radio stations around the country, including *Raidió Fáilte* in Belfast have recently become part of this network.

An Irish company has produced, in Irish, Clarisworks 4.0 (Mac and Windows), MacWrite and Mac OS, an accounting system, games, and several selections of fonts, as well as e-mail. Microsoft, in collaboration with *Foras na Gaeilge*, several universities and two private enterprises, have ensured Irish-language versions of Microsoft's most commonly used computer programmes, Microsoft Office 2003, Windows XP Office 2007 and Windows Vista. This will be of assistance to public bodies in ensuring compliance with the Official Languages Act. A group of voluntary translators working on an Irish version of the free programme, OpenOffice, already available globally in 42 languages, have recently sought (April 2006) others to assist in completion and testing of the project. The software in Irish is available free. It is developed by *Fiontar* at Dublin City University (DCU) and an academic in Missouri with funding from *Foras na Gaeilge*. A spelling and a grammar check for Irish, *GaelSpell* and *Cruinn* (Precise, correct) have been developed by the company *Cruinneog* (Globe; *cruinn*, correct).

The computer sciences conference on Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Science (AICS) of 2004, was organised by University College Dublin (UCD), and the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT). The Governing Authority committee for the promotion of Irish in UCD, *Bord na Gaeilge* (1997), encouraged by the number of computer sciences students on its Irish courses, ensured the presentation of papers through Irish at the conference and offered several prizes to presenters in Irish. The fourteen papers in Irish, which came from both students and academics, were to be published as part of a continuing programme. An instantaneous Irish/English translation service by mobile phone number +353 86 1774625 from anywhere in the world was one of the offerings.

An Irish language version of the examination questions for the teaching package on computer skills, the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), has been produced with assistance from *Foras na Gaeilge*.

A new kind of scrabble game, *Planarity*, was available on the internet in Irish and other languages. The background music for one of the Playstation games, Metal Gear Solid, has been translated into Irish from Japanese and is sung in Irish by a well known *sean-nós* (traditional) singer. A mysterious but modern sound is the result, say the game designers, one that suits the game well. Playstation 2 has a version on Gaelic football (*peil Ghaelach*) that offers Irish as a language choice and which has bilingual commentary. It was made in collaboration with *Cumann Lúthchleas Gael* (Gaelic Athletic Association) with funding from *Foras na Gaeilge*.

Three thousand pupils in schools in NI and in the Republic have been put in touch through an internet messaging system, *Eachtra Chultúrtha* (cultural adventure). It is funded by the EU programmes for Peace and Reconciliation (Peace II) and the organisation Co-operation Ireland.

However, without easy access to infrastructural broadband services progress will inevitably be slower. Wireless access has improved in recent years in the cities. In *Gaeltacht* areas, *Údarás na Gaeltachta* is assisting communities to provide group schemes under the National Development Plan.

SUMMARY ON THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA

There exist dedicated Irish language stations for both radio and television. Irish features also to some extent in the public sector broadcasting services; in the commercial sector; in the community sector, including dedicated Irish language radio services in Dublin and in Belfast. Films in Irish, particularly shorts, have been available since the 1950s. Irish has a distinctive place in all aspects of cyberspace communication. Both the production agencies and the materials produced have received prestigious awards, some in competition with majority language media. While arguments are sometimes made on the type and quality of material overall, or on the quality of Irish used, nevertheless multi-media production in Irish in general is apparently at least on a par with that produced in majority languages and at times surpasses that.

PUBLISHING

NEWSPAPERS; FOINSE AND LÁ NUA

The newspaper *Inniu* (Today) began in the 1940s, first as a monthly, then in 1945 as a weekly. Even then there were plans to make it a daily. These plans did not succeed at that period. Nowadays, one weekend newspaper, *Foinse* (tabloid), is published totally in Irish from a Galway *Gaeltacht* office and distributed throughout the country. It began on 13 October 1996 and recently celebrated its 400th issue. In 1996, it took the place of the existing *Anois* (Now) newspaper through a re-deployment of the contract offered by the then *Bord na Gaeilge*, which had also funded the previous *Amárach* (Tomorrow).

From Belfast is published *Lá* (Day), which developed from a 1 day to a 5 day weekly launched on 28 April 2003 with investment from the company *Nuachtáin* (Newspapers) or the Belfast Media Group. Since January 2006, it is available on the internet also, downloadable in PDF format, and from April 2004 it was the first newspaper to engage in podcasting (instructions on www.nuacht.com). The paper is financed in several ways to ensure continuous production, but largely through official subvention from *Foras na Gaeilge* and through the EU Programme INTERREG (IIIA ROI/NI); shares (some bought in America); subscriptions; advertising; small grant from the NI Arts Council (Arts column). It has offices in Belfast and opened an office in mid-2004 in the Donegal *Gaeltacht*. It is now published in tabloid format, having changed from broadsheet.

The first edition of *Lá* appeared on Monday, 13 August 1984, having been planned the previous weekend by a group of young people with education and skills but no employment who were growing up in the shadow of the NI Troubles but also in the glow of hope engendered by the many Irish-language initiatives centred on the Shaw's Road community of Belfast. **It cost ten old pence and contained four pages on two sheets stapled together. So great was the demand in Dublin that an extra 1,000 copies of that historic first edition, and the news it contained of Belfast, from the Belfast of those days, had to be reprinted on 14 August. While the name *Inniu* (Today) had been considered, to continue the tradition of the 1940s paper, *Lá* (Day) was chosen, the name proposed by *Séamas Mac Seáin*, then manager of the Anderstown News and supporter of the project. In 1999 the Anderstown News acquired the newspaper itself. The theatre company, *Aisling Ghéar*, produced a video to celebrate twenty years of development in August 2004. As a not-for-profit venture, the newspaper was controlled by the company *Preas an Phobail* (the People's Press). The community shares are held by members of the Irish community and by the Anderstown Newsgroup (Belfast Media Group),**

which also provided accountancy and office services in the lean years. With the latest two year contract from *Foras na Gaeilge* assured, *Lá* was relaunched as *Lá Nua* (New Day) on 17 January 2007, still available online with entries on the video site YouTube and via podcasting.

On 10 May 2006, *Lá* published a front page article on a news item prominent at that time, the use of Shannon Airport by what were alleged to be 'CIA flights'. On 18 May, a full page was devoted to the very full reply, in Irish, from the US Ambassador to Ireland.

The Belfast based English-language newspaper, the Irish News, publishes material in Irish. It had plans to expand this production either through an insert or an independent new paper.

FUNDING BY FORAS NA GAEILGE

Both existing Irish-language newspapers are largely subvented by *Foras na Gaeilge*. Their estimated distribution, including discounted copies, is approximately as follows and remains fairly consistent:

Irish language newspapers: estimated distribution

<i>Lá (Nua)</i>	4,404	copies daily
<i>Foinse</i>	6-8,000	copies weekly

The Arts Council of NI also subvents a weekly insert on the Arts in Lá.

In 2005, a three year contract, 2005-2008, worth €1.28 million, was signed between *Foras na Gaeilge* and *Móinéar Teoranta*, the company which publishes *Foinse*. If the annual targets agreed on sales and distribution are kept, €25,000 in addition will be available. At Easter 2006, *Foras na Gaeilge* advertised for expressions of interest in the production of a daily newspaper in Irish. It was assumed that both *Lá* and the Irish News newspaper were the likely applicants. The decision on grant-aid when announced was given to *Lá*.

A monthly broadsheet, *Saol*, is produced by *Foras na Gaeilge* and distributed free or by post. It is financially supported by *An Foras*. It could then be regarded as an 'organisation' or 'semi-State body' publication. It costs in the region of €150,000 annually. Both *Foinse* and *Lá* are sold through commercial outlets and by subscription. They are not free.

Some political developments in the fairly recent past have seen arguments made by Ulster Unionist politicians in the Westminster House of Commons and House of Lords against funding for *Lá*. Efforts were intended to try to have the funding of *Lá* removed on the basis that the public subventions given to *Lá* are not appropriate and should be discontinued. Discrimination was one argument used. Shortly afterwards, the funding from the EU INTERREG programme was suspended by the UK Government. It was intended to support the cross-border Donegal office of *Lá* in a local *Gaeltacht* community facility, *An Chrannóg*, through the EU funding. Two posts in the newspaper were temporarily lost and it appeared likely that the Friday edition would have to go. Further EU auditing took place. *An Foras* extended the *Lá* contract for a further six months, the affair was eventually solved, and the Minister with responsibility for the language in the Republic officially opened the Donegal *Gaeltacht* office.

Since *An Foras Teanga* is jointly funded by the two Governments, Dublin and through the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure in NI, defence of *Lá* was made in the *Dáil*. *Lá* began a petition for its survival (which succeeded). The political context is further complicated, or clarified, by the legislative context of the Charter of the Council of Europe, a Charter which, while encouraging the production of newspapers for linguistic communities, has been differentially accepted by the UK authorities for Irish and Ulster-Scots, applied in cultural terms only for Ulster-Scots.

The Irish-language newspapers cover the full spectrum from politics to sport to human interest, but with emphasis on issues relating to the language and the *Gaeltacht* also. St. Valentine's Day draws a page of messages in Irish in *Lá* while *Foinse* publishes a weekly satirical column with a dedicated following. The daily *Lá Nua* is seeking further funding (2007/2008) to remain viable in the absence of official advertising revenue.

AWARDS BY IRISH-LANGUAGE PRINT MEDIA

Both *Foinse* and *Lá* give awards to people active in the field of Irish language activity who are (s)elected by their readers: *Gradam na hAislinge* (Award/Distinction of the Vision) through the company Belfast Media Group which is advertised and promoted by *Lá*; *Pearsa* (Person) nominated

by readers of *Foinse*. They both also support creative writing in Irish, *Foinse* in collaboration with *CIC*, an Irish-language publisher.

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PRESS

The quality national daily, the *Irish Times*, publishes a weekly column on Wednesdays in addition to two other regular weekly columns. The other national English-language newspapers may have very occasional pieces. The regional press is very vigorous in Ireland. Several have regular small columns in their weekly editions, (e.g. Limerick, Kerry, Cork, Galway, Donegal, Kilkenny) while the majority will have occasional reporting. Since regional contributors may function only for a brief period in some instances, it is difficult to gauge the exact amount of Irish reportage. In NI, the English daily, the *Irish News*, which publishes regular columns in Irish, had plans for a weekly supplement in Irish. The weekly *Leitrim Post* has increased its column to a page; the *Sligo Post* and *Donegal Post* may follow.

One English-language news and commentary review, *Phoenix*, carried a fairly regular item in Irish. It had been planned to have a regular column in or on Irish in the review, *Village*, launched Autumn 2004.

It is of note that obituaries in English or in bilingual format of writers in Irish or musicians are now carried in quality newspapers. Reportage of issues relating to the language will also be covered but usually in English.

The newspaper industry is fairly healthy in Ireland. It has then a potentially important role to play in language planning. In the 2004 survey on radio listenership, 90% of respondents read a newspaper daily, generally either the *Irish Independent* or the *Irish Times*. In the *Gaeltacht*, the *Irish Independent* or the *Star* (edition for Ireland) are apparently more popular than the *Irish Times* or the *Examiner*. A good proportion read the *Sun* (edition for Ireland). The regional press is generally weekly and has a strong local following. The *Irish Daily Star* distributes an attractive bilingual insert magazine for *Seachtain na Gaeilge* with support funding from *Foras na Gaeilge*, *Conradh na Gaeilge*, and advertising from Irish organisations.

MAGAZINES/JOURNALS/REVUES

Up to six such publications were being published monthly with Departmental subventions until 1996. The Department then decided to hand over all such publishing (including the newspaper) to the then *Bord na Gaeilge*. The *Bord* appointed an Advisory Committee and acted on its recommendations, changing the longstanding regulations, ending some relationships and advertising for new projects. Tenders were sought for a lively new magazine culminating in the shortlived *Cuisle* (Pulse, Heart). *Foras na Gaeilge* (Autumn 2004) sought tenders for another such magazine for the period 2005–2007. This has not yet come to fruition. The weekend newspaper *Foinse* has begun to introduce some magazine type features: cosmetics, health, travel.

The older subvented publications did tend to cater for specific subsections of the Irish-speaking community, with their own reading tastes. The magazine with the largest distribution was in fact a small A5 publication with a largely religious content, *An Timire* (Messenger). None of these publications are free. Their distribution is relatively limited. Only some appear in a few bookshops. None of these magazines can afford full time staff. All exist on part-time and voluntary input. The fees for writers cannot afford to be attractive. Nevertheless, they do provide a platform for certain kinds of *genres*. Whether they cater for a more varied bilingual reading public is another matter. It is clear that more basic planning and funding is needed, to ensure reading material both for specific small interest groups and a wider, perhaps less competent, reading public. No magazine of the ‘pulp’ variety currently is available, nor comics for children. The magazine *An tUltach* (Ulsterman), produced under the aegis of *Comhaltas Uladh* in NI, is also subvented by *Foras na Gaeilge*. The founding dates of each publication are given in Table 5.1.

The former *Bord na Gaeilge* and later *Gael-Linn* produced a magazine, *Mahogany Gaspipie*, published for postprimary pupils 3 times a year, which is now defunct. Up to 3,000 copies were distributed (or bought by schools). Much examination based material is produced for schools.

It was announced in September 2007 that *An Foras* will not be funding the magazine *Comhar* after 2007. The internet appears to be becoming a popular, if not eventually the preferred, medium for Irish-language magazines nowadays. *Beo* (live, living) was the first example. A youth online

magazine, *Nóis** (custom, habit) appeared in March 2008. *Lá Nua* is also available on the web as is *Foinse*.

LOCAL GAELTACHT NEWSLETTERS AND REVIEWS

There are several, some more short lived, examples of local material produced locally by community groups, under one or other of the community development schemes. The Diaspora especially welcome them.

LITERARY AND PUBLISHING ACTIVITY

This can be gauged largely from the activities of two bodies, the *Foras na Gaeilge* subvented distribution agency *Áis*, begun in 1980 by the then *Bord na Gaeilge*, and the Department funded (to end 2007) support agency *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge* (Irish Books Board), established in 1952 with a board of voluntary persons. On average, it is generally reported that over 100 books in Irish are published yearly. At an event in the Cork *Gaeltacht* of *Baile Bhuirne* in September 2007, organised by *An Chomhairle Leabharlanna* (Library Council) and *CLÉ*, the association of publishers in Ireland, the founder of *Cló Iar-Chonnachta* gave the following information. Apart from school texts, there are currently between 2,000 and 3,000 titles in print in Irish; more than 1,000 books in Irish have been published over the last 25 years; currently, up to 130 books may be published annually: 80 for adults and 50 for children. [At its annual pre-Christmas launch, *An Gúm* brought over 40 books to the market in 2007.](#)

ÁIS

Áis now distributes publications from *An Gúm* also, since the latter's incorporation into *Foras na Gaeilge*. The 2003 accounts show sales worth £1,064,177, an increase of 4.57% on 2002. It supplied books to bookshops as follows: Ireland North and South; Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man, Brittany; England; mainland Europe; USA (where the Seattle shop is called *Trádálaithe na Gaillimhe* (Galway Traders); Canada; Australia; New Zealand. By 2006, sales had increased to €1,395,179 and 289,895 units were sold to retail outlets all over the island of Ireland, to 19 outlets in Britain, 5 in Europe and 5 in the USA.

BORD NA LEABHAR GAEILGE (BLG)

Publishing activity

The table illustrates the volume of publishing activity subvented by *BLG* over six years from published reports. Two publishers dominate: *Coiscéim* and *Cló Iar-Chonnachta* (CIC).

BLG: Publishing activity 1997-2002

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Total Number Books	100	89	80	71	77	100
Incl. Re-issues	8	21	6	10	10	15
Incl. Translations	4	1	4	3	8	—
by <i>Coiscéim</i>	41	31	28	22	26	18
by CIC	21	15	17	12	18	17
Total Publishers	17	18	14	14	11	13

The type of material published was recorded until 2000. Poetry seems to head the list every year. The other categories generally show no small variety. They include novels, short stories, drama, criticism, biography, essays/articles, travel as well as history, folklore, lore (*seanchas*), academic research, informative works and classics. More occasional publications are in religion, law, psychology, photography with text, and diaries. Material for children and young people include fables/legends as well as poetry, novels and other age appropriate resources. Novels for adult learners are on the increase. While writing for new reading publics is being encouraged, support for publishing levels remain consistent up to 2006 at *circa* 100 books per year.

Grant-aid

The annual grant had come from the Department with responsibility for the language directly from the National Lottery Fund. The figures before 2001 are given first in Irish pounds with euro

equivalent in brackets. The major portion of the annual grant is expended on publishing houses and on the encouragement of writers. *BLG* also partially grant-aids the literary translation agency *Idirmhalartán Litríocht Éireann* (ILÉ) and *Oireachtas* festival prizes.

***BLG*: Distribution of grant-aid 1997-2001**

(000)	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Budget	£325	£370	£423	£655	€838
Publishers	£310	£329	£343.5	£406	€485
New Schemes/Prizes	—	—	—	£175	€229
ILÉ	£23	£23	£23	£25	€25

The most recent grants indicate the significance attached to the work of *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge* as an instrument of official language planning.

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
€1,055*	€922,240	€950,000	€1,288,000*	€1,205,000

An additional * once-off grant of €175,000 was received in 2002 and an additional €168,000 in 2005 (for market research and publicity).

On 26 October 2007, after a meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council in Armagh, the two Ministers from both jurisdictions with responsibility for linguistic matters and for the all-island body, *Foras na Gaeilge*, announced that future funding for *BLG* would be transferred to *Foras na Gaeilge* in the interests of cohesion with *ÁIS* and with *Foras* funding of other types of publishing in Irish. This decision was greeted with regret and dismay by the board of *BLG* at their meeting during *Oireachtas na Gaeilge*, November 2007. The process and results of the proposed cohesion will be closely observed by publishers and the Irish language community.

Publishing policy

Several significant policy changes took place in *BLG* during 1997 and were still being implemented through a process of constant review up to and after 2004.

1 It was recognised in 1997 (after 45 years) that such a body could no longer function through a group of voluntary Board members and a voluntary secretary who implemented all aspects of Board policy. A permanent office and Administrator were then agreed with the Department. Staff numbers were four by 2002 including an administrator with a new scheme, *Léigh Leat* (Read On), which brought book exhibitions to local Irish schools by van. Staff numbers have, however, been changing in recent years due to several factors. The office moved from Dublin city to the nearby Meath *Gaeltacht* of *Ráth Cairn* in 2000. Staff is currently at two full-time and two part-time persons.

2 A new funding scheme has been in operation since 1999 after consultation with the publishers. The aims are to develop the range and standard of material published; to ensure a stipend for writers; to encourage marketing; to ensure a more coherent and long term viewpoint.

3 The Development Plan begun in 1999 and in operation since 2000 included more than changes in staffing and office location. A Literary Committee with input from extern advisers, including *An Gúm*, examined a support system for writers in Irish, since a support system for publishers was already in train. As a result, four elements were pinpointed for expansion through new schemes: mentoring; commissions; research scholarships; reviewing/critiquing. By 2004, the three schemes on mentoring, commissions and research were worth €80,000 with one of the main emphases on literature for young people, aged 9–12 and 12–15.

4 A more dynamic partnership was sought (1997) with other bodies which have a role in Irish publishing, e.g. *Foras* (then *Bord*) *na Gaeilge* (development of the reading public, including learners' books), the Arts Council (development of creative writing through new types of bursaries; training/workshops; writers-in-residence; advice on editing, marketing or design skills); Higher Education Authority (HEA) (books of academic interest). The HEA has statutory obligations for Irish.

5 Since 1997, *BLG* has been encouraging the use of international Book Fairs, as Frankfurt, to showcase books in Irish, to encourage trade and translation, and to compare variety, standards and quality. Research studies on youth reading patterns have helped shape policy. Both the monetary

awards and the type of categories of writing for the prizes subvented by *BLG* in the annual *Oireachtas na Gaeilge* literary competitions have increased. In 1999, £3,000 was offered for a novel of popular appeal. In 2000, this had increased to a total of £15,000 in three categories: popular novel; youth fiction; reading for the adult learner. By 2001, the prize fund was £18,000 across six categories, narrative prose, discourse in Irish and prose by writers in the age group 20–35 having been added. In 2002, the prize fund reached €30,000, serving the same categories of creative and non-creative prose works. In both these years, 2001 and 2002, *BLG* also subvented half the fees of the judges in the competitions they supported.

The mission statement of *BLG* changed in 2000 to take account of these new departures. Until then it had been (translation from the original Irish) ‘to foster and develop the habit of reading in Irish through the provision of a support system for publishers which caters for the needs of readers in Irish and for the different age groups through a broad range of material, literary and popular’. Now it reads ‘to support writers and publishers in the provision of material which encourages public interest in reading in Irish through various schemes’. For the moment, at any rate, writers appeared to have been placed before publishers. In the 2004 report, the latest in the public domain, the main aim of *BLG* is stated as ‘to support writers and publishers in the provision of material in Irish which will encourage public interest in reading in Irish. This responsibility is met primarily through funding support schemes for publishing companies and for writers who respond to the needs of readers in Irish’. The most recently appointed voluntary board was interested also in multi-media production.

The 2004 report pays particular attention to the greatest and ongoing problem affecting publishing in Irish: the lack of marketing, as an activity much broader and more focused than advertising and publicity. As part of its internal review, *BLG* identified the need for professional marketing services. It also commissioned research on a monthly magazine for girls 12–16 as a niche market. Implementation was left to the incoming board. On the marketing issue, a survey was undertaken (2007) in collaboration with University College Dublin.

For *BLG*, future development of publishing in Irish is considered a duty of bodies other than *BLG* itself alone, particularly in collaboration with the Arts Council. In an effort to encourage reading in Irish, *BLG* initiated its schools visiting programme, *Léigh Leat!* (Read On!). As part of *Seachtain na Gaeilge* (Irish Week) 2005, *Seachtain na Leabhar* (Books Week) was organised around the country by a consortium of the interested parties: *BLG*, Arts Council, *Foras na Gaeilge*, *ÁIS* (the distribution agency), *CLÉ* (Irish publishers association). The major companies involved in publishing in Irish now have very attractive illustrated catalogues. A quarterly guide to new books in Irish, *An Léitheoir* (The Reader), produced by *Foras na Gaeilge* has been redesigned in a very attractive format. Up to forty thousand copies were distributed during the 2005 Irish books event due to demand from libraries. *BLG* collaborated with the body for Irish-medium education (*COGG*) and Teachers Centres in Dublin and *Gaeltacht* regions in a pilot scheme on children’s writing and support for teachers. The magazine *Comhar* produced a series of novellas and translations for adult learners.

The funding allocated to Irish language publishers by *BLG* at the beginning of 2006 elicited a good deal of criticism as did the composition of the new board earlier in the year since no publisher had been appointed nor any representative from NI and the board was considered too large for swift decision making. However, *BLG* contends that it received so many requests for funding that it decided to set up an independent group to make recommendations on allocations at that time. The practical outcomes of the move to *Foras na Gaeilge* in 2008 are not yet clear.

PUBLISHING FOR YOUTH

Publishing in Irish for young readers is largely dependent on grant-aid whether from *BLG* or, occasionally, the Arts Council. Policy changes can then affect output greatly. During 2004, *BLG* encouraged, as a policy aim through its funding schemes, publishing for younger teenagers and adult learners. A workshop held with *Gaeltacht* teenagers on their reading preferences surprised the writers in attendance. The young people in attendance declared that they were tired of material on drugs and other topical or so-called modern subjects with which they were bombarded in both languages on all media. They preferred traditional material and humour, but with a modern aspect, as delivered in traditional *seanchaí* (storyteller) fashion. Whether these participants were typical of their generation is more difficult to assert.

Interesting easy reading of the pulp variety, for teenagers or adult learners, has been published by the magazine in a series of novelettas. Several independent publishers produce original material in Irish for the youth market, among them *Cló Iar-Chonnachta* and *Cló Mhaigh Eo*. The organisation for encouraging Irish as home language, *Comhluadar*, as well as the organisation for pre-schooling, *Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta*, produce their own material for their target groups, as do some Irish-medium primary schools. *An Gúm*, however, whether in original Irish or in translation, produces most material for the younger age groups. The commercial publishing houses produce reading material in Irish for schools.

**LITERARY TRANSLATION – ILÉ / IRELAND LITERATURE EXCHANGE
(IDIRMHALARTÁN LITRÍOCHT ÉIREANN)**

BLG was one of the founder members of the literature translation agency, *ILÉ*, in 1994 which it co-funds on an annual basis, between €20,000 and €25,000. *ILÉ* has several roles:

- 1 to ensure financial support through grants for publishing houses abroad towards the translation of the literature of Ireland, whether in Irish or English, in order to increase recognition and readership;
- 2 to provide a focal information point for publishers, particularly on matters in Ireland;
- 3 to organise events to bring authors and translators together, whether in Europe, China or South America.

Translation to Irish or English of the literature of other countries is also supported. The agency is funded by the Arts Councils North and South, by *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge*, and by the Cultural Relations Committee, formerly of the Department of Foreign Affairs, now located in the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and renamed Culture Ireland, a statutory agency. It maintains a profile at major international bookfairs: Frankfurt, London, Paris, Bologna and Beijing also in 2005 and publishes and distributes the journal *New Writing from Ireland*.

In the ten years since 1994, *ILÉ* reported that it had ensured the translation of almost 600 books into 40 languages in 28 countries. By 2007 it was celebrating its 1,000th title in translation into 43 languages across 38 countries. The full translation fee may be paid to publishers for transmission to the translator. Recently, residential bursaries to fund four weeks in Ireland, on translation, were offered to the then EU applicant states. [The residential translation bursary programme was offered for 2006 to experienced literary translators from a range of countries including the new Eastern and Central European EU States and applicant States plus China. In the latest list of works supported, translations from Irish were approximately one tenth of the total.](#) While all *genres*, including children’s literature, qualify for translation, poetry is popular. Up to 100 volumes or anthologies by 70 poets have been translated, usually in bilingual or trilingual editions. The list of languages include Breton and Catalan. Twelve volumes of poetry in Irish have been translated into Romanian, one into German, and a recent volume into Japanese with accompanying CD.

Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge reports show the variety of translation from Irish literature over the years.

Year	Total	Works	Language
1997	3	novel; short stories	Danish, German; Serbo-Croat
1998	8	poetry, prose	Romanian (4); Albanian; Danish; German; Italian
1999	8	poetry, prose	Romanian (3); Italian (2); Czech; French; Greek; <i>also excerpts in two anthologies</i> ; Norwegian; Italian
2000	4	poetry, prose	Breton; Croat; German; Romanian
2001	6	poetry	Romanian (3); Japanese (2) German to Irish
2002	7	poetry, prose	Romanian (4); Bulgarian; Dutch; Galician
	1	<i>Reality & Justice</i> publisher, Amnesty International	Of translation to 10 languages, Irish was one

In some instances, the same major work in Irish will have been translated into several languages. In 2004, Polish, Nepalese and Scottish Gaelic were added to the growing list.

ILÉ is also part-supporting a new annual multicultural literary festival with strong emphasis on contemporary Irish language writers. The festival, IMRAM, will include other aspects of culture also and readings from some of the poets from other countries in translation. Its main focus will be young people.

SCHOOL OF CELTIC STUDIES AND AN GÚM

The School of Celtic Studies is a constituent school of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies founded in 1940. Its primary function is to conduct research on the Irish language and its manuscript literature and to act as academic publisher in the whole field of Celtic Studies including Hiberno-Latin literature. Its catalogue of academic publications shows approximately 250 items. It is subvented by the State through the Department of Education and Science.

An Gúm, founded in 1926, was the publications branch of the Department of Education and Science. It considers itself 'Ireland's most prolific publisher, ever' in view of having produced well over 2000 books and more than 350 pieces of sheet music since it began. *An Gúm* had been very involved in publishing the results of the State's corpus planning, particularly in the field of lexicography, in collaboration with *An Buanchoiste Téarmaíochta* (Permanent Terminological Committee) of the Department. Both *An Gúm* and *An Buanchoiste Téarmaíochta* were transferred to *Foras na Gaeilge* in 1999 and now form part of that agency's work on lexicography and the provision of educational resources. Since both *Foras na Gaeilge*, *An Gúm* and *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta* (established under the 1998 Education Act) have obligations in relation to ensuring the provision of resources both for Irish in education and for Irish-medium education, *An Gúm* represents *An Foras* on the board of *An Chomhairle*.

An Gúm publishes and advertises, but does not sell, market or distribute its wares. The Government Publications Office and the distribution agency of *Foras na Gaeilge*, *Áis*, carry *An Gúm* publications. A bestseller is the bilingual pocket dictionary, *An Foclóir Póca*. The main areas of *An Gúm* publishing are text books; dictionaries; general reading material, particularly for children; sheet music. There is a degree of co-edition production with other European languages. Several productions have won awards. The catalogues for the various sectors are very attractive. *An Gúm* usually has a launch of their publications at the end of the year. For Christmas 2005, forty books were launched. Some of the strikingly illustrated dust covers of the early publications of *An Gúm* are now on display at Boston College in the USA.

LITERARY AND MEDIA PRIZES/AWARDS AND REVIEWS

The annual Irish language literary awards of the *Oireachtas na Gaeilge* competitions are a source of encouragement. Overall, the prize fund is worth up to €55,000 divided over some thirty eight competitions, the majority of which are sponsored. There is also a small scholarship open to publishers or journalists to attend an Irish course in the *Gaeltacht*. *Oireachtas na Gaeilge* also awards trophies and cheques for the best offerings of the year in the Irish-language media: print, radio, and television, North and South. These *Gradaim* (Awards) are important to recognition of the industry.

Oireachtas awards are made across a wide range: for creative and narrative writing; prose, poetry, drama and script writing, essays, research, journalism for the internet, songs; for differing categories of readers; by different age groups both as focus of the writing and as entrants.

The publishing company, *Cló Iar-Chonnachta*, also runs an annual competition worth several thousand euro while the newspaper *Foinse* has occasional prizes and publishes the winners, as does *Lá*. Local authorities which have national or international literary festivals or competitions, or whose Arts Officer may organise programmes for schools, may include a specific category for Irish. Some of these events may be subvented also by the Arts Council or by *Foras na Gaeilge* or by Irish language organisations. Since the year 2000, Limerick County Council, in conjunction with the Arts Council, runs the annual Michael Hartnett Poetry Award worth over €6,000, in honour of a distinguished local poet who wrote in both Irish and English. In alternate years, the award is for a work in Irish. In 2004, the standard of submissions in Irish was so high that the judges decided that two anthologies deserved the recognition.

In 1988, *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge* (BLG) initiated an award, *Gradam Uí Shúilleabháin*, which recognises the quality of a particular book from one publishing house. Since 1999, the author also receives a cheque. BLG also recognises *Leabhar na Bliana do Dhaoine Óga* (Book of the Year for young

people) in recent years as a crucial area of language promotion. Together, these prizes are worth €25,000 and are awarded through the *Oireachtas* festival. *BLG* also funds several *Oireachtas* competitions in the popular literary sections where the prize fund reaches €18,800 in total. [How the *Oireachtas* prizes from *BLG* may fare in the new arrangements under *Foras na Gaeilge* is not known.](#)

On the issue of more general awards, a strong argument is made on the discrimination faced by authors in Irish (in any *genre*) when submitting their work to selection juries who possess neither the linguistic nor language-specific critical skills to pass an informed judgment on works in Irish. Only recently has that situation begun to improve.

[An Irish-language entry in the annual Bisto awards for children's books received a special award in 2004. The Hennessy Award went to the author of an Irish language anthology of short stories in 1997. However, the Irish Books Award system came in for a good deal of criticism in 2006 when no book in Irish received long listing under any of the three categories: Fiction; non-Fiction; Children.](#)

[In 2002 the ESB \(Electricity Supply Board\) Media Awards in the Republic were reported to have refused to accept the Northern newspaper *Lá* as a participant. This was changed in 2003 and the awards were then opened to all newspapers North and South, including editions for Ireland of British newspapers. The winner in the section for journalism in Irish in 2003, the first year it was included, was the editor of *Foinse*. These awards unfortunately no longer exist.](#)

[No Irish language project submitted to the EU Ariane Programme in the past was refused funding, presumably because of high quality.](#)

Foras na Gaeilge also presents an annual prize to the best student in Irish on the degree course in journalism at the Dublin Institute of Technology. The students taking Irish produced a very attractive annual newspaper/journal entitled *Cumarsáid* (Communication) and now a glossy magazine entitled *Tairseach* (Threshold).

Some debate has followed the issue of translation. It does, however, permit a wider audience to appreciate Irish-language literature as well as allowing wider Irish participation and access with regard to literature in other languages. It is pointed out that there are distinct advantages in avoiding the 'oppressor' languages for such translations. [An Irish work was placed second in 1997 for the prestigious European Aristeon prize. For 1998, of the four nominations from Ireland, three were in Irish. A socio-literary work of critique in Irish was one of the two nominations in the literary section. In the translation section, one work was from German to Irish, the other from Irish to English. Both are poetry. The awards are open to EU states, Norway and Iceland. \(Portugal nominated a translation to Portuguese of Irish Nobel Prizewinner Seamus Heaney's work in English\). This level of international interest continues.](#)

BOOKSHOPS AND LIBRARIES

Due to the promotional efforts of *ÁIS*, the distribution agency for Irish books established by *Bord na Gaeilge* in 1980, the majority of bookshop outlets will have a shelf devoted to publications in Irish, and all libraries will have a display section, particularly for children's books. Signage is often in bilingual format in the larger bookshops, particularly in Dublin. Supply is, however, dependent on public demand and, particularly, on availability of *Áis* staff. Published material does not always reach the shelves quickly following launches and publicity and, as a result, often misses the market. *Conradh na Gaeilge* (the Gaelic League) has a very well stocked bookshop in Dublin. The cultural centre, *An Chultúrlann*, in Belfast includes a bookshop and café as does the *Gaeláras* in Derry, Bray in County Wicklow has *An Cúpla Focal* and *An Daingean* in the Kerry *Gaeltacht* has *An Caiife Liteartha*. These are run almost entirely through Irish.

Public libraries in the Republic will stock Irish language books, particularly in the children's section, as a matter of policy. Story-telling sessions, displays, talks from writers, or associated programmes, may also be organised for particular events, especially during *Seachtain na Gaeilge*. These are usually subvented by *Foras na Gaeilge* in both the Republic and in NI. Libraries responded very well to the innovative offer from *BLG*, sent through *An Chomhairle Leabharlanna* (Libraries Council) in late 2005, of €100,000 worth of books in Irish, one library receiving books to the value of €13,000.

Both readers and writers depend on reviews in reputable publications. While Irish language media always carry a review section, English language reviews of Irish language books or programmes on radio or television are relatively infrequent although more common in recent years, particularly in the print media. Irish-medium newspapers and magazines publish regular reviews

but these usually tend to be more descriptive than analytic, a characteristic of relatively small language communities. There are two reviews that contain critical essays also: *An Aimsir Óg* and *Bliainiris*. Critiques of famous Irish writers are published regularly, usually as the result of further degree research. Several women critics have recently published according to the current canons of literary criticism. *TG4* offers an arts programme where writing, as one art form, may be reviewed.

Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge has done much to encourage publishers and writers. However, quantity does not necessarily mean quality. Developmental criticism is a requisite part even of creativity. A very valuable mentoring system has then been developed by *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge* for prose and poetry writers and by *An Comhlachas Náisiúnta Drámaíochta* for aspiring dramatists.

Books in Irish will be on display at major International Book Fairs. Literature in Irish and in English will form part of the annual *Salon du Livre Insulaire*. Irish events as Summer Schools, or the biennial *Tóstal*, or the more general Bookfest associated with the Dublin Writers Festival, will always have a books display from *An Siopa Leabhar (Conradh na Gaeilge, Dublin)* or, in NI, *An Ceathrú Póilí* (Belfast).

In NI, much preparatory work has been accomplished by *Foras na Gaeilge* in collaboration with the Library Boards across a range of initiatives: Irish books stock including learning materials; policy for community languages; welcoming signage; reading visits arranged for local Irish-medium schools. This may be facilitated by existing Irish-speaking staff. There are several contemporary writers based in Belfast and Irish-language publishing has close connections in an all-Ireland context.

Writing workshops, Irish only or bilingual, are organised quite regularly, in various venues around the country.

In Ireland, North and South, there are ‘writer-in-residence’ schemes for third level.

ADVERTISING AND PUBLICITY

In the Republic, advertising by public bodies listed in the Official Languages Act 2003 is intended to be regulated by Part 3, Section 9 (1) of the Act. However, advertising was not included in draft regulations issued for consultation in Autumn 2006 and which were discussed before the relevant Joint Committee of the *Oireachtas*. In the event, the Minister confirmed in July 2007 that advertising would not be covered, which is a significant loss to the public visibility of the language in the opinion of some politicians and the Irish language movement.

Following the *spirit* of the Official Languages Act, all official advertising may be either bilingual or in Irish only depending on where placed. The same practice is upheld by Irish voluntary bodies. Practically all advertising in Irish language print and radio will be in Irish only. *TG4* (Irish-language television) accepts advertising in either Irish or English. Official advertising will generally be in bilingual format in English language media. Private companies will place Irish advertisements depending on their target public. However, the fact that advertising was surprisingly not included in the most recent draft regulation on bilingual public notices, in accordance with the Official Languages Act, drew much unfavourable comment from Irish language organisations.

The Communications section of Dublin City Corporation began a two year marketing and advertising campaign at the end of 2003 to put Dublin City in a more favourable light, nationally and internationally. It is intended to make the campaign as bilingual as possible and to adhere to the rubrics of the Official Languages Act in that respect. Christmas lights had Irish greetings on them in 2006 with funding from the Minister with responsibility for the language. Other towns have followed in 2007.

Television use has heightened awareness of the possibilities of Irish in advertising and some Irish language companies are helping the large mainstream agencies to cater for their clients. *Foras na Gaeilge* co-operated with the Institute of Creative Advertisers and Designers through prizes and seminars. Overall, however, it must be said that although the quantity is improving, the quality is not deeply creative except in rare instances. Too often it is merely a question of over-literal translation from English. The possible linguistic uses of bilingualism have not been explored. But truly bilingual staff would be needed for that. [Nevertheless, both quantity and quality are improving, to the extent that both advertisements and advertising in Irish were the subject of an extensive article in the Sunday Business Post during 2007.](#)

As part of the ten year celebration of *TG4*, *Foras na Gaeilge* organised competitions among the general public to identify the best television advertisement on *TG4* 1996–2006 and among a panel

of experts to find the company best using Irish in a creative way.

Advertising in Irish carries a reduction in cost. This reduction is permitted in Article 20.6 of the 1960 Broadcasting Act: 'charges... may be fixed subject to variations benefiting advertisers who use the Irish language in their advertisements'. The reduction is also offered by TV3 although their own language policy is not at all clear apart from more extensive coverage than the national broadcaster, at times, of Irish language related issues.

MEDIA REPORTING AND COMMENT

While advertising in Irish or in bilingual format will appear in English-language media, particularly in the print media, reporting or publicity in relation to Irish-language events is not always seen in English-language media. Politicians even will complain that if they speak in Irish in the Houses of the *Oireachtas*, the content will go largely unreported except in the Irish-language media. However, to combat this, an Irish language reporter had very recently been appointed to the staff of the Houses of the *Oireachtas*.

Towards the end of 2006 a new Press Council and Draft Press Code were under discussion. A Steering Committee, said to be representative of all print media, was set up to begin the process of establishing the Council. Irish language print media, however, were of the view that consultation was not representation. With regard to the proposed Press Code on the rights and responsibilities of the print media, *Conradh na Gaeilge* requested that Irish speakers be protected under Principle 8 from what was described as 'incitement to hatred' since comments, amounting to racism rather than attempts at satire, are sometimes used by some journalists or columnists. The membership of the Council finally established in mid 2007 included seven independent members and six from the English language media. In answer to some criticism, the Council announced that it would welcome future membership from the Irish language press. The first Press Ombudsman was appointed in July 2007. The Council is under State control and appears to function as both regulatory and statutory body.

[The National Union of Journalists \(NUJ\) made its membership form available in Irish in late 2007 \(with translation assistance from the staff of *Lá Nua*\) and has plans for a possible bilingual press card.](#)

It has been pointed out that the media in English are a vital component of language planning. Their reporting angles may influence both attitudes and information among the general public to a significant degree.

SUMMARY ON PUBLISHING

Publishing appears to be flourishing. All *genres* of writing are available although original drama is scarce and fiction for children in the middle years is only beginning to develop. The 'chick-lit' published is aimed largely at adult learners.

However, the crucial question of who is reading what (apart from buying) and whether that is extending the use of Irish among different publics has yet to be answered. The second issue is whether writers are being nurtured and publishers made independent. Without subvention, the edifice would collapse. It is still almost impossible for either an Irish language publisher or writer to make a career in the field. Ensuring readers, particularly among the younger age groups, appears to be more of a problem than the actual provision of high standard reading material. This, of course, is a universal problem in the era of access to creativity and information through the many forms of modern technology. *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge* decided to make this challenge a priority in its support schemes for 2004. It is of note that there are relatively close ties between the relevant bodies for publishing in the Celtic languages in the UK and Ireland.

New ties have also been forged in very recent times between the various bodies involved in different ways with Irish writing, publishing, promotion, and reading: *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge*, *Foras na Gaeilge* (which includes *An Gúm*), *CLÉ* (Irish Booksellers), *ÁIS* (distribution agency), *An Chomhairle Leabharlanna* (Libraries Council). While a useful collaborative start was made during *Seachtain na Leabhar* (Book Week) 2005, there still remains the need for an integrated policy covering all aspects of the enterprise, sustained marketing in particular, and clear emphases on the different reading publics for Irish, both fluent readers and learners. The weak links at the moment are marketing, building a market, and distribution. There is little the distribution agency of *Foras na Gaeilge*, *ÁIS*, can do with a sole representative to service the entire island, as authors and publishers have pointed out. *An Foras* is currently (2006) considering a different configuration for

its internal elements dealing with aspects of publishing. This is a crucial step since it does control such a large proportion of the support structure. Whether the transfer of *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge* from the Department to *Foras na Gaeilge* will enhance that process is a challenge for the future.

An Chomhairle Ealaíon (Arts Council) is also developing new initiatives to encourage reading in Irish among youth. In 2006, it supported workshops with writers in Irish in one Summer College in the *Gaeltacht*. The publishers *Cló Cois Life*, established ten years ago, are also collaborating in innovative ways to reach and encourage readers.

TG4, *BLG* and *An Chomhairle Ealaíon* are pooling financial resources to produce programmes on the living literature during 2007. In early 2007, *BLG* engaged in research to gauge both their market and the constraints facing readers particularly. Too often, recently published books are not easily or quickly available in general retail outlets and the opportunity for a sale and a reader is lost.

A reasonable supply of reading material then exists for all age groups and for most varieties of taste, as a result of language planning and funding initiatives in the field. What is incontrovertible is the platform and encouragement for writing in Irish provided both by the different publications and the various assistance schemes over the years. It is also too often forgotten, when funding issues are so foregrounded, that – apart from the official body, *An Gúm* – most Irish-language publishing operates on skeleton staffing and quite significant voluntary input. However, two related weaknesses exist also. There is almost a complete lack of marketing and, in turn, it is extremely difficult to judge the extent to which reading actually does take place, even on the part of those who buy print materials in Irish.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES: THEATRE

THE NATIONAL THEATRE

There are few theatre companies, established or recent, with their own theatre or without, that do not receive funding from the Arts Council in the Republic. Only those operating through Irish appear to have a distinctive Irish language policy. The Irish National Theatre, *Amharclann na Mainistreach*, the Abbey, (founded by W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory and John M. Synge and where the first production was in 1904), together with its smaller Peacock Theatre, now have Irish language productions only very rarely if ever, in contrast to the policy even of some 25 years ago. Irish language theatre figured only tangentially in the centennial programme of the Abbey. The last Irish language production mounted by the Abbey outside Dublin was in October 1999 at the *Galway Féile* (Festival). When Irish productions are mounted, they usually appear in the smaller Peacock Theatre of the Abbey. A translation into Irish of a Synge play was mounted in Autumn 2004. The National Theatre does not appear to have an active language policy for Irish theatre; their bilingual policy is very dominantly English. In the late 1990s, the Peacock began a new policy of touring the *Gaeltacht* regions at least every second year with a play in Irish before showing in Dublin. This has now lapsed. This lack of policy may be in part due to the not inconsiderable problems encountered by the Abbey Theatre in recent years. These have led to: total restructuring; a once-off ministerial grant of one million euro; a three year commitment from the Arts Council of €25.7 million in funding; decision on refurbishment of the existing theatre but also future relocation to a new site. In accordance with official policy, there is now more visibility generally for Irish, particularly in signage and in public announcements, in the Abbey Theatre.

AMHARCLANN NÁISIÚNTA NA GAELIGE – AN TAIBHDHEARC

An Taibhdhearc in Galway is the long established (1928) *Amharclann Náisiúnta na Gaeilge*, national Irish language theatre, with its own premises, that has always been State-subsidised. Some years ago, *An Taibhdhearc* reported that it attempts to mount 5 productions in Irish p.a., with an average audience of 40–50 people per night, funding permitting. If funding is available, these productions may be put on tour. In 2004 one tour had to be curtailed and the annual programme reduced because of funding issues. While State funding was set at €300,000, this proved insufficient to mount productions of the required standard using a proportion of professional actors. This is a problem for most Irish-language theatre groups. In 2003, for the 75th anniversary year, *An Taibhdhearc* received special grant aid. *An Taibhdhearc* productions have received nominations twice in recent years in the Irish Times/ESB (Electricity Supply Board) Theatre Awards and a Stewart Parker/BBC award. Towards the end of 2005, a year in which the State subvention was €450,000, *An*

Taibhdhearc set about a restructuring process. The issue caused much media comment, a request for a report from the responsible Minister and a public statement from the Board. However, a successful pantomime, *Áille agus Allta* (Beauty and the Beast), was mounted for the Christmas 2005 season.

In the period immediately preceding these events, the theatre had had a successful season including touring, new playwrights had been encouraged, and two youth projects established, *Dordán* and *Na Crosáin*. However, there had been comment on two areas especially: the balance between amateur and professional actors; the multidimensional nature of some productions. To some, this appeared to be a difference between a more traditional and a more experimental approach as letters of support in the press indicated. In the event, the board of eleven voluntary persons set up three governance subcommittees: finance, practical matters, artistic. The post of *Bainisteoir Stiúrtha* (Managing Director) was advertised and taken up by a native speaker from Aran working with TG4 since its inception and qualified in a range of areas, finance, marketing, tax consultancy. Her immediate concerns were to develop the national aspect of *An Taibhdhearc* and to develop audiences beyond Galway. Artistic development will be assisted by experts on short contracts. For 2006, the board intends to examine the optimum structure for a theatre board in receipt of public funds as is found elsewhere.

OTHER COMPANIES

In the past, *Foras* (previously *Bord*) *na Gaeilge* and the Arts Council co-founded an Irish language theatre, *Amharclann de hÍde*, in Dublin. Eventually, the *Bord* withdrew as it had a policy of not funding activities that it feels ought to be funded from other existing sources. *Amharclann de hÍde* was overseen by a small Committee of eminent people and had an office with manager. Its productions, twice a year, were usually innovative, arising out of commissioning new writers. It did not have a permanent troupe but auditioned for each production. It toured also, if funding permitted, but played usually in Dublin. Audiences averaged 80–100 per night (including school parties).

Other small groups exist also and very successful one person shows. The puppet theatre company, *Fíbín* (2003), was recently nominated for the ESB/Irish Times Awards. The Axis Centre, part of an urban renewal scheme in north Dublin city, works bilingually under its current Director. The new Salamandar company presents original drama and tours if possible. Theatre in education is becoming more popular. The *Branar* company visits schools and *Scleondar* (High Spirits) mounts drama workshops in Irish for schools in the west.

SIAMSA TÍRE – NATIONAL FOLK THEATRE OF IRELAND

Siamsa Tíre, founded in 1974 and based in Tralee, County Kerry, where it has its own theatre, is described as the National Folk Theatre of Ireland. Its performances use traditional song, dance, mime, and movement and draw on both ancient and modern themes. It has performed all over the world and participated in World Expo since 1988.

AMATEUR DRAMA IN IRISH

Amateur drama in Irish has two voluntary organisations, one for schools, *An Cumann Scoildrámaíochta* (1934), which is funded by the Department of Education, and one national organisation, *An Comhlachas Náisiúnta Drámaíochta* (1976). Both are thriving. They supply expert advice, training, and materials. The annual showcase of talent at competitions is of high calibre, both from schools and from third level groups at the *Féile Drámaíochta* (Theatre Festival). The amateur theatre scene generally is very vibrant in Ireland. There are several excellent amateur groups. *Gaeltacht* areas sometimes produce their own material and several writers continue to produce material that draws on both traditional and modern influences. The *Gaeltacht* group *Aisteoirí Ghaoth Dobhair* (Gweedore Actors) recently celebrated 75 years in existence, 1932–2007. The Arts Facilitators in the *Gaeltacht* continue to encourage this type of initiative.

The Fringe Festival of the Dublin Theatre Festival 2004 had seven plays in Irish running at several locations, including the innovative AXIS centre in Ballymun, for audiences both young (with puppets) and old.

Irish language theatre in school and youth theatre is gaining ground with *Na Crosáin* attached to the *Taidhbhearc* and the independent company, *Branar Drámaíocht*. In the Galway *Gaeltacht*, the company *Scleondar* (High Spirits) operates theatre in schools.

SUMMARY ON THE THEATRE

The problems for professional theatre in Irish include: having a permanent premises; finding or commissioning new works or bilingual directors or fluent actors. Television has improved the image, but lessened the pool of available talent. Theatre Space at the Mint in Dublin had been subvented for some years by *Foras na Gaeilge* to ensure a permanent location for Irish plays in the capital. In the past, the Damer theatre had that function. The challenge remains, however, of how best to encourage new playwriting. Some translation takes place but cannot take the place of new original work. Playwrights in Irish are much scarcer than poets or novelists although several writers practise all *genres*. In the meantime, the Irish Theatre Institute and *Foras na Gaeilge* have launched a project, Playography *Gaeilge*, early in 2007. Two editors have been employed to oversee the development of an online catalogue of every play in Irish from the 1920s to the present including translations, and all arranged for staging.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES: MUSIC AND DANCE

PRODUCTION: TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Many of the cassettes and discs produced are of traditional solo singers or instruments. The organisation *Gael-Linn* pioneered the production of traditional music and music in Irish solely. *Seán Ó Riada* revolutionised attitudes towards Irish traditional music, a path followed by his son *Peadar* in the Cork *Gaeltacht*, where the local choir performs his compositions, especially for Church music. *Seán Ó Riada* included all the traditional instruments, fiddle, *bodhrán* (traditional drum made from goatskin), spoons, *uilleann* (elbow) pipes, and the harpsichord in his ensemble.

Gael-Linn first brought the *Ó Riada* music to the wider public through recordings as they have done with many Irish music makers.

Some commercial enterprises, (including the *RTÉ* company, Commercial Enterprises, and *Raidió na Gaeltachta*) may produce material now and again or add one song in Irish to a disc. Choral and liturgical music appears sporadically in a similar fashion. There are regular television programmes on traditional music, song, dance and story telling, often set in a pub.

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann produces a great deal although precise figures are difficult to predict. While some of the vocal or spoken introductory material may be in Irish, the sleeve will often be in English or bilingual. The success of *Comhaltas* may be measured not only in the dedicated audiences it musters but in the network of locally based branches numbering 400, and in the education provided to young traditional musicians. Currently, up to 600 teachers engage in weekly classes with over 1,000 learners. The annual *Fleadh* (Festival) draws huge crowds. *Comhaltas*, like the Gaelic Athletics Association (GAA), has branches abroad also, particularly in Britain and in North America. Much of the music making takes place in pubs, at *seisiúin* (sessions) in a community context. *Comhaltas* released (Autumn 2004) a five year plan valued at €27m which included capital investment in eight new centres, six in the Republic and two in NI. It hoped to double the number of teachers to 1,200. While now enjoying world wide popularity, traditional exponents remember a different media attitude to their music and song in the 1950s when it was seen, by some, as synonymous with poverty and backwardness, as was the language.

Private companies may also produce both programmes and recordings, some in and from the *Gaeltacht*. The annual *Oireachtas* festival ensures coverage for many artists. Music on disc for children is popular in schools especially authentic *Gaeltacht* material. Some individual artists produce their own material from time to time.

The number of individual traditional artists, many of whom are exponents of the style of particular regions, is legion. They are often featured in articles in English in the press. [Between 9 February and 5 March 2007, four long illustrated articles appeared in the Irish Times: an avant-garde composer and a sean-nós singer breaking new ground with a composition entitled *Grá agus Bás* \(Love and Death\); recognition for a fiddle player in the *Sliabh Luachra* \(Kerry\) tradition in the TG4 annual traditional music awards, *Maith Thú* \(colloquially rendered as 'Good on you!'\); the 'unique notation system that revolutionized fiddle playing' of another *Sliabh Luachra* fiddler who died in 1963; participants at *Scoil Cheoil an Earraigh 2007* \(Spring Music School\) in its third year in *Corca Dhuibhne*, County Kerry, receiving with excitement the news that the long lost words to tunes, collected in the area in the latter half of the nineteenth century by a local Protestant canon who later became professor of Irish in TCD, had recently been discovered in England.](#)

POPULAR MUSIC

Pop/rock groups that are bilingual come and go. It is difficult to quantify. Several other pop and popular bilingual groups (past and present) have an Irish language background, e.g. *Hothouse Flowers* from Dublin, *Iarla Ó Lionáird* from the *Cúil Aodha Gaeltacht*, County Cork, or use Irish music/songs, e.g. *Sinéad O'Connor*. A very recent album from Hilary Bow has translations of well known English songs from well known Irish poets. The Gaelic Hit Factory is the result of continuing collaboration between the Irish poet, *Louis de Paor* and the musician John Spillane.

The annual *Seachtain na Gaeilge* (Irish Week) usually issues a popular compendium on disc featuring contemporary artists with vocals either in Irish or in translation. Collaboration between writers and musicians occurs, whether Irish language or bilingual.

Several popular groups over the years write their own music with lyrics in Irish or use translations—*Na Fíréin*, *Kila*, *Bréag*, *Altan*, *Danú*, *Lúnasa*, *Dervish*, *Solas*, *Na Casaidigh*. The groups from an earlier era are Bothy Band and Skara Brae. Well known families are the *Ó Domhnaill*, *Ó Maonaigh* and *Ó Braonáin* musicians.

Popular and traditional is sometimes difficult to clearly distinguish in the repertoire of the majority of these extremely versatile musicians. Donegal musicians have a natural affinity with the music of the *Gaeltacht* in Scotland as the annual Celtic Connections concert shows. The group *Clannad* were given the award for life achievement at the recent Meteor Music Awards.

TRADITIONAL MUSIC SUMMER SCHOOLS

The Willie Clancy Summer School held annually in Milltown Malbay, County Clare, brings musicians in the Irish idiom, on every instrument, from all over the world. Classes are held as well as concerts. Other areas run similar but more locally based events, such as that based on the noted singer Séamas Ennis, in the area in north County Dublin where he lived, or *Gaelfest Cabháin* (Cavan festival) where the modern interpretation of the traditions of Ireland and Scotland meet or the Winter school in memory of Frankie Kennedy, held in the Donegal *Gaeltacht*.

The University of Limerick has hosted its international *Blas* (Taste, Accent) Summer School of Irish traditional music and dance since 1996. The *Ceol* (Music of) Bunting began in 2005 in County Derry in celebration of the collector of the music of the area (1792).

Scoil Cheoil an Earraigh (Spring Music School) in *Corca Dhuibhne* in Kerry has been running for several years.

All the different styles, from all the Celtic countries, and from near neighbours, to the traditional Celtic style such as that of Galicia, may be sampled at the famous L'Orient Festival in Brittany every year. The Pan-Celtic annual competition in Ireland does similar work on a smaller scale.

TRADITION AS ART AND OBJECT OF STUDY

The challenge nowadays may be that of the two schools! One pure tradition, the other with an authentic traditional base but overlaid with personal and global/folk/popular influences. The traditional music lobby is constantly seeking funding to ensure the popular public sessions (*seisiúin*) in collaboration with *Fáilte* Ireland and local tourist interests. An academic lecturer, however, would prefer to see a lesser number of high quality concerts mounted for the same money, to make the point that Irish traditional music is art as well as popular culture, something too easily forgotten, although established by *Seán Ó Riada* and recently in a report for the Arts Council on the traditional arts.

Irish music is available as an academic discipline at three universities at least and is available for public examinations. In the University of Limerick, traditional Irish music is a significant part of the curriculum of the World Music Centre which recently arranged certification for courses in an outreach centre.

The music of the famous blind harpist and composer, *Toirdhealbhach Ó Cearbhalláin* (1670–1738), is probably the best exponent of what may be described as the classical tradition in Irish traditional music. He has been compared to Mozart. He was, of course, an Irish speaker. As a harpist, and a disabled one, he would have depended greatly in his day on patrons. Later on, people such as Charlotte Brooke and Edward Bunting, in different ways, ensured access to his and others' music: Brooke through a famous gathering of harpists; Bunting through his meticulous work in actually notating and publishing the music for subsequent generations.

TRADITIONAL DANCE

Traditional music, song and dance are inextricably linked, haunting slow airs alternating with the almost frenetic final tempo of jigs and hornpipes being danced at a gradually increasing speed. The indigenous *céilí* and (probably) imported set dances are still quite popular as group dances and not only on St. Patrick's Day. The outdoor *Céilí Mór* (Big *Céilí*) in Cork City during the 2005 Year of Culture was enjoyed by no less than eight thousand dancers. The *damhsa* or *rince ar an sean-nós* (traditional dance) is one of the more popular competitions at the annual *Oireachtas* festival. Like the traditional unaccompanied solo singing, the version will be particular to the individual exponent. *Céilí* bands have not entirely lost their following, particularly on RTÉ radio.

CULTURAL CENTRES AND EVENTS

EXHIBITIONS/MUSEUMS/HERITAGE CENTRES

If run by a local authority or under a Government Department, all signage will be bilingual. There is no guarantee that staff will be competent to guide through Irish although this situation is improving and will continue to do so through the effects of the Official Languages Act 2003. A 1999 monitoring report from *Bord na Gaeilge (Analysis of Bilingual Practices in the Promotion of Culture and Heritage in Ireland)* reports 'an interest and willingness to continue to promote bilingualism, although, in this area, perhaps even more than any other, there lies significant scope for improvement'. The report surveyed state and private entities. The Languages Act will ensure implementation of that willingness.

SUMMER SCHOOLS AND OTHER CULTURAL EVENTS

Summer Schools are a constant feature of the season all over the country in either of the two languages, or in bilingual format, and often devoted to cultural issues. The oldest Irish language example is *Daon scoil na Mumhan* (Munster Folk School), held in the long established residential primary school, *Coláiste na Rinne*, in the Waterford *Gaeltacht*. From it came *Cumann Merriman*, whose Winter School, which deals with aspects of language and culture, is conducted through Irish and draws a very substantial gathering. The Merriman Summer School is largely in English, but has an ancillary series of lectures in Irish and conducts classes in Irish for participants as does the well known Willie Clancy Summer School devoted to Irish music and aspects of the traditional culture. Merriman was an eighteenth century Irish poet, author of *Cúirt an Mheán Oíche* (The Midnight Court), Clancy a twentieth century musician.

An tOireachtas is the annual Irish-language week long festival in late Autumn covering all the Irish arts. It has a long history going back to its beginnings in 1897, re-establishment in 1939, and is in the same category as the Welsh *Eisteddfod* and *Gaelic Mod* (with exchange visits of officers). [When the Gaelic League began this event, it was with the intention of bringing language and culture together, of encouraging and developing the practice of both, in the *Gaeltacht* regions and in the rest of the country. The festival functions with a small voluntary central committee, a larger group representative of the various organisations, and a small staff of approximately 2.5 persons \(currently in Dublin although plans to move to a *Gaeltacht* are being mooted\). It moves venue every year and usually there are several offers from various areas. It moves between *Gaeltacht* and outside the *Gaeltacht*.](#) In recent years, the former week long celebration in the Winter has been split in two parts: *Oireachtas na Bealtaine* (May) is held in Dublin or in the regions and the more traditional arts competitions in the Autumn usually at a venue outside the capital which is capable of accommodating the huge following for *sean-nós* singing. The festival is competitive, across a large range of events: an art exhibition (Dublin), temporarily suspended for reasons of cost associated with insurance; literary competitions, now broadly interpreted to include television scripts etc.; choirs, traditional singing and other traditional arts – *scéalaíocht* or story-telling; *dreas cainte* or spontaneous individual speaking to a selected topic; *lúibíní*, also known as *ceapóga*, a form of newly composed verse dialogue accompanied by music between two people; *agallamh beirte* or newly composed discussion/argument between two people in prose or verse format; *scoraíocht* or a cabaret type combination of music, dance, song and speech. But it may also include social events, e.g. official opening, grand dinner or lunch, the *Oireachtas* lecture, youth events, sport, visit to local place of importance. The 1997 *Oireachtas na Gaeilge* made history in the context of Northern Ireland when the official opening was held, through Irish, in the City Hall of Belfast. Derry in NI hosted the 2006 Winter *Oireachtas*.

The annual *Dámhscoil Mhúscraí* since 1924, (Poetry), in the Cork *Gaeltacht* echoes an older tradition of summoning the poets to a gathering where they try to outdo one another in spontaneous rhyming alternate verses. For some ten years, *Conradh na Gaeilge* has organised a popular annual *Tionól* (assembly) in a *Gaeltacht* area for a weekend of lectures, music, and local history. In alternate years, for the last 35 years, there have been reciprocal visits of musicians, singers, writers between Scotland and Ireland, organised by *Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge* (National Assembly of Voluntary Irish language Organisations) and *Comhairle na Leabhraichean* (Gaelic Books Council) in Scotland. The annual *Pléaráca Chonamara* in the Galway *Gaeltacht* began some 15 years ago. The well-established international *Féile Scéalaíochta* (story telling) on the *Gaeltacht* island of Cape Clear places a traditional art form in a global context.

Conradh na Gaeilge began the idea of the national day, St. Patrick's Day, now so popular all over the world, wherever the Diaspora is found. It was 2006, however, before a specific calendar of events through Irish was voluntarily organised in Dublin on the day – by an Irish speaking immigrant from Australia.

An annual event is held in County Roscommon in honour of Douglas Hyde, son of a Protestant rector, gatherer of Irish lore and songs, principal founder of the *Gaelic* League and first President of Ireland.

Local organisations abound as do historical and archeological societies. Many have their own publications and will publish the occasional article in Irish or related material in English. Among them, a typical example is *Cumann Seanchais Thír Chonaill* (Lore Society of *Tír Chonaill*) which was founded in 1946 and continues to produce the journal, *Bliainiris Thír Chonaill*, on a regular basis.

Several organisations conduct courses and activity breaks through Irish for individuals and families on aspects of culture, heritage and the creative arts throughout the year. *Dáil Uladh* offers painting, bird-watching, mountain walking, cookery, and creative crafts in centres around the Donegal *Gaeltacht*. Local authorities may present conferences or competitions. The Irish Officer with Waterford County Council, in collaboration with Waterford Institute of Technology, mounts an annual conference. The subject matter in 2004 was the singing tradition of the local *Gaeltacht na Rinne*. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown (South Dublin) Council run an annual international poetry competition with a category for works in Irish as does the town of Strokestown, County Roscommon. Both offer substantial prizes.

Practitioners of the arts in Irish participate in other annual festivals abroad also: L'Orient in Brittany; the Hebridean Celtic Festival.

The programme of events for *Cork: European City of Culture 2005* featured a selection of events through Irish among the 236 listed, although it did not support the *Oireachtas* festival held in Cork during the year.

In NI, the multi-faceted *Féile Bhéal Feirste* is a very popular event. But local groups mount their own festivals also or lectures or mini-*Gaeltacht* weekends away to give networks of learners and families the opportunity to speak only Irish as a community for a space of time. *Gaelsaoire* is a company in the Galway *Gaeltacht* that arranges holidays and activities in the *Gaeltacht*.

The annual Rose of Tralee competition also includes the *Rós Fódhla* (Rose of *Fódhla*, an ancient name for Ireland) competition organised by Irish organisations.

Some of these types of events, whether in the South or the North, are well founded and a regular feature of the calendar. Others are sporadic and less long lasting.

In the *Gaeltacht*, the longstanding *Pléaráca* festival has been running for fourteen years. It has now expanded to include all art forms, especially the traditional, and extends well outside its first home in the Galway *Gaeltacht*, visiting nursing homes even to include the entire community.

SUMMARY ON CULTURAL EVENTS

Some of these types of events, whether in the South or the North, are well founded and a regular feature of the calendar. Others are sporadic and less long lasting. Nevertheless, all such events have a significant role not only in popularising and normalising aspects of the culture and language, particularly locally, but in ensuring continuity and creative change for traditional community art forms, within a flexible language planning support system. They also provide the appropriate cultural context for language acquisition.

THE ARTS

LEGISLATION

The Arts Act 2003 repealed the Acts of 1951 and 1973 and reduced the number of Arts Council Board members to twelve plus chairperson. While *An Chomhairle Ealaíon* is the official designation in the Act of 1951, the Arts Council has no legal obligation specified in the Act with regard to Irish-related arts, unlike the case of Welsh for the Welsh Arts Council. During the parliamentary debates on the Act of 2003, this was not changed despite amendments. Throughout the Act, *An Chomhairle Ealaíon* is referred to as the 'Council'; even a bilingual designation was not accepted by the Government side. The aim of the Act is 'to promote the development of and participation in the arts'. The new Act is unusual in that it confers a strong policy-making role on the Minister (with responsibility for the Arts), a function which most practitioners of the arts rarely welcome from the State in a field of such individual creativity.

The Act states specifically that:

The Minister shall promote the arts both inside and outside the State. In so doing the Minister may consult with the Council; may give a direction in writing requiring it to comply with such policies of the Minister or of the Government as are specified in the direction; may include a requirement that the Council prepare and submit to the Minister a plan....and the Council shall comply.

The different uses of 'shall' in contradistinction with 'may' are quite clearly directive throughout the Act.

Section 67 of the Local Government Act 2001 requires a local authority to prepare and to implement plans for developing the arts within its functional area and to take account in so doing of the policies of Government. With regard to such public bodies, the Minister may now require a report in writing of the body's performance in the development of the arts. The body 'shall comply' if such a Ministerial requirement is made.

The sole requirements in the Arts Act 2003 in relation to Irish arise from the Official Languages Act 2003. Article 29 (5) states that:

Council shall ensure that such and such number of members of the staff of the Council are sufficiently fluent in both the Irish language and the English language as will enable the Council to perform its functions through the medium of either such language.

This has more to do with the internal functioning of the Council itself. It requires no pro-active integrated policy in relation to the actual arts of Irish. It merely requires the Council to respond bilingually to any external demands made by individual artists or by arts organisations.

The Council does, however, take the requirements of the Official Languages Act seriously. [An Irish Language Policy Committee was established, but only to implement the elements of the Languages Act that apply, not to produce a development plan for the arts of Irish. It conducted an internal audit of staff languages competencies and it tendered for a translation service; the draft scheme of compliance in accordance with the official compliance Guidelines has been issued.](#) The website of the Council is now bilingual, it issues a bilingual newsletter since February 2005, and advertising for staff is bilingual. In addition to these responses, the Council's delivery of public services also include bilingual publication of documents of public interest. The latter includes outline policy for the traditional arts and for the development of the arts in the *Gaeltacht*, in collaboration with *Údarás na Gaeltachta*. In 2005, the Council granted *Ealaín na Gaeltachta Teoranta* a budget of €350,000 for disbursement to local artists and cultural events in the *Gaeltacht*.

The Council itself is currently under the aegis of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. It describes its support role as one for all aspects of the arts, in Irish and in English - architecture, dance, drama, film, literature, music, opera and visual arts.

PLANNING FOR THE ARTS

1990 – 1998

The 1990s were marked by pro-activity and high concentration on communication, planning and collaboration. The Arts Plan 1993-98 had many good ideas on Irish arts, most put forward by a specially constituted internal Advisory Committee. However, not all were realised although the then

new Minister provided the required funding, £26m, for the final year of the overall plan. She also appointed a new Chairman and Council, of which a significant proportion were sympathetic to the three areas put forward for promotion by the Minister (Irish, the regions, the disabled). However, despite the new partnerships with *Bord na Gaeilge* and *Údarás na Gaeltachta* (three Arts Officers in *Gaeltacht* regions), there was not full satisfaction with all eventual outcomes. On the other hand, neither was there produced at the time a more inclusive or attractive alternative to the once proposed quota system, by which a fund was sought for Irish initiatives to be set aside from Council funding, and costed in proportion to the population of Irish speakers, an approach rejected by the Council. While administratively neat, the quota solution begins from finance rather than development, within a coherent policy, although of course there would be projects earmarked for that finance.

Moving into the phase of the next plan, into the millenium, the Council was described by its then Director as more of a development, rather than a mere funding, agency for the arts. It was accepted, however, that changes were necessary and that it was moving forward from a low base in relation to Irish-language arts. It saw its role as promoting excellence, promise (particularly in individual artists) and access (in one way through translation) for artists and audiences in the Irish arts. It intended to articulate its linguistic rationale more clearly in the next Plan. It also wished to foster alliances with the language bodies, so that a climate of opportunity might be created for artists through pump priming that would level the field more in favour of Irish. It accepted that coherence was lacking and that the actual overall effects of arts interventions for Irish (and other areas) needed to be evaluated. (It would not be unfair to say that little or no evaluation of any policies of any entity are evaluated as a basis for further policy decisions. It is an enormous weakness in linguistic and cultural policies for Irish). The notion of a combined Arts Agency for Irish arts (as the Gaelic Arts Agency in Scotland) appeared an idea worth considering, although there are already many free standing subvented organisations for various aspects of the Irish arts, with little or no cohesion. This notion was, however, rejected.

For 1998, the last year of the first plan, the Council estimated that it would spend approximately £1m (3.5% of its budget, *circa*) on Irish arts, bursaries for writers and theatre mainly. Of £6m spent on drama by the Arts Council, *Bord na Gaeilge* protested at that time that only £110,000 went on drama in Irish. There appeared to be an impression that Irish arts were amateur, 'folksy', (despite winning international awards in translation). Subsequent Arts Plans apparently lost favour gradually with the arts community, eventually leading to changes. The proposed Arts Plan for the period 2002 – 2006 was set aside and a new transitional phase began.

Into the millenium

Meanwhile, the new Arts Act was passed in 2003 and a smaller Council of thirteen members appointed, representative of the several art forms and some of whom were involved in bilingual arts activity. A key priority, announced in February 2005, was the flow of information and opinion between the Council and the Arts community towards the Council's new key strategy for supporting the arts, which it was intended to have completed by Summer 2005. Whether this would include a policy for the arts of Irish appeared to depend on both sides of that two-way flow of opinion. During March and April 2005, intensive consultation took place with the aid of independent facilitation, in structured large meetings and small group or one-to-one discussion as well as through written submissions. Up to 139 meetings were organised with almost 1,200 people and 259 written submissions were received as a result of the Council's notice in the press.

Consultation and the Irish language arts

Parallel with this consultation process, background discussion papers on each area of the activity of the Council, twenty in all, were prepared giving key issues and suggesting topics for discussion with the arts community. These papers included the traditional arts and literature (English language), but not Irish language. The Feedback document published arising out of the consultation process did, however, contain a section on Irish literature, including drama, based on references made at meetings. The main points made by respondents in relation to Irish were as follows:

- *research is required on the level of activity in the sector and on the nature of the schemes available*
- *the main organisations need to meet: An Gúm, Foras na Gaeilge, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Arts Council; the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI) should also be targeted; the state bodies*

- responsible for publishing in Irish should meet formally several times a year, Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge, Foras na Gaeilge, Arts Council*
- *more writing workshops would be beneficial and summer writing bursaries for students tenable in the Gaeltacht, in conjunction with third level colleges and Ealaín na Gaeltachta, since few Irish language writers are under 30*
 - *editing, marketing and distribution of books in Irish need immediate support*
 - *Ireland Literature Exchange is concentrating overmuch on translating deceased authors; more translation to English is required to ensure translation to other languages*
 - *to encourage reading in Irish, book clubs should be established and support given to festivals and libraries*
 - *with regard to drama in Irish, scripts published in Ireland are not always easily accessible*

The Feedback document led to a draft strategy for further comment. Summary Policy Papers were compiled. One on Literature (Irish language) contained some proposed responses to the challenges outlined during consultation. These proposals covered most of the points raised and later became part of Council policy. They are given below as published by the Council.

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- A** Support *Seachtain na Leabhar*, a partnership initiative involving *An Chomhairle Ealaíon/The Arts Council, Foras na Gaeilge, ÁIS, CLÉ* (publishers) and *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge* promoting Irish language books.
 - B** Research the needs of writers, from those writing on a full-time basis to those just starting out.
 - C** Increase the number of writers-in-residence schemes in universities and establish a writers-in-residence scheme in a teacher training college.
 - D** Support *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge* in conducting comprehensive market research about Irish language books and reading.
 - E** Commission a survey of the reading habits of first year pupils in *Gaeltacht* and all-Irish postprimary schools.
 - F** Encourage a national Irish language reading initiative involving the broadcast media that would focus mainly on literary titles published in recent years.
 - G** Set about employing reader development workers in *Gaeltacht libraries*, in partnership with *An Chomhairle Leabharlanna* (Libraries Council) and *Údarás na Gaeltachta*, to encourage adult readership in Irish.
 - H** Offer a distinctive bursary allowing a young writer of prose, theatre and other forms of writing, to spend a 3 month summer period in a *Gaeltacht* area writing under the direction of an established writer.
 - I** Support efforts to establish an apprenticeship scheme in literary editing.
 - J** Offer a small award to Irish language writers or publishers enabling them to have an excerpt of work translated into one of the main European languages.
 - K** Work to establish a distinct ISBN number for Irish language literature.
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ARTS STRATEGY 2005 – 2008 AND IRISH ARTS

The entire process culminated in the publication in mid December 2005 of the new arts strategy in two parts, *Partnership for the Arts* outlining strategy, and *Partnership for the Arts in Practice 2006 – 2008*, listing actions across the full range of activity of the Council. Included was a section entitled Literature (Irish language) listing the actions to be taken. The layout and introductory section for each aspect of Council policy is exactly the same in each individual art area, beginning with the goals identified as central to the new strategy and inviting consultation from the sector involved on a range of proposed funding opportunities, some of which were already in train. Drama in Irish is not specifically mentioned. ‘Writing’ and ‘writers’ are presumably inclusive terms. While the ‘priority areas that need to be addressed’ are not exactly the same in the two separate sections on Literature (Irish language) and Literature (English language), the goals highlighted are precisely the same.

- *affirm and promote the value of literature in society*
- *assist writers in realising their artistic ambitions*
- *make it possible for people to extend and enhance their experience of literature*

- *strengthen literature and other arts organisations countrywide so as to secure the basis of a vibrant and stable literature community*
- *ensure the Arts Council works effectively to support literature.*

Literature in Irish

For literature in Irish, the strategy affirms as follows.

We are actively seeking to work together with the literature community and others to achieve these goals. We have identified a number of priority areas that need to be addressed if we are to make progress. These are, the need for: a concerted approach to the promotion of Irish-language books; reliable information on the needs of writers in the Irish language, whether writing on a full-time or part-time basis, whether established or just starting out; and improved and wider support to writers-in-residence programmes within universities and colleges.

It then continues by outlining a series of new funding programmes and initiatives, to include advocacy, during 2006–2008, directed at writers, organisations which support or promote literature in Irish, venues and festivals, ideas for appropriate projects, including translation. [These programmes are given in the next section as published by the Council.](#)

New Funding Programmes

Over the three years 2006, 2007 and 2008, we will establish – on a phased basis – new funding programmes. As these programmes are introduced, we will invite you to come and talk to us about your ideas, about how our funding programmes might support you, and about how you can, in turn, help in achieving these goals. This may be of interest to you if:

You are a writer, who would like support to develop ideas, whether you are working fulltime or part-time, whether you are established or just starting out.

You are working in or with a resource organisation that supports literature in Irish.

You are working in or with a venue or festival that:

- offers opportunities for writers in the Irish language;
- builds audiences for Irish-language literature or has ambitions to do so.

You have ideas for Irish language literature projects, especially those that:

- propose to initiate apprenticeships in literary editing;
- could, on a small scale, enable Irish language writers or publishers to have an excerpt of work translated into one of the main European languages.

Initiatives

Over the next three years – 2006, 2007 and 2008 – we will take initiatives in literature, based on working closely with individuals and organisations with ideas and achievements in these areas. These initiatives will be introduced on a phased basis. As we make progress, we will invite you to discuss ways in which you might help us to:

- Promote Irish language books, through *Seachtain na Leabhar*, a partnership initiative involving *An Chomhairle Ealaíon/The Arts Council*, *Foras na Gaeilge*, *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge*, *ÁIS* and *CLÉ*;
- Support *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge* in conducting comprehensive market research about Irish language books and reading;
- Commission a survey of the reading habits of first year pupils in *Gaeltacht* and all-Irish postprimary schools;
- Encourage the employment of reader development workers in *Gaeltacht* libraries, in partnership with *An Chomhairle Leabharlanna* and *Údarás na Gaeltachta*, to encourage adult readership in Irish;
- Establish a bursary for young or emerging writers of prose or other forms of writing, who would like to spend a three-month summer period in a *Gaeltacht* area working under the direction of an established writer.

Advocacy

Over the next three years, we will seek partners to work with us in advocating for:

- A national Irish language reading initiative involving the broadcast media that focuses mainly on literary titles published in recent years;
- A distinct International Standard Book Number (ISBN) for Irish language literature.

The Minister for the Arts referred to the Estimates published at that time when speaking at the launch of the new Council strategy. He had allocated €72.3 million to the Arts Council for 2006, an increase of 18.5%, in addition to the recent 2005 supplementary funding of €5.23 million. Continuing dialogue with practitioners was promised by the Council and annual action plans as well as advocacy on behalf of the Arts sector and argument for increased funding up to €100 million eventually. The Council had already demonstrated its advocacy skills during 2005 when the artists' tax exemption scheme was under threat from the Department of Finance. It compiled research showing the low average yearly salary of artists, particularly actors.

The Traditional Arts

Article 21 of the Arts Act 2003 allows the Minister to require the Council to establish Special Committees, three for the time being. Perhaps in answer to lobbying and to some manifestation of discontent when the Arts Act was being debated, and to positions being taken through the media on a fairly continuous basis by proponents of differing viewpoints, the first such Special Committee was given the task of reporting on the Traditional Arts. The membership initially met some resistance from the traditional music sector. Submissions were sought in Irish or English and the report was published in bilingual format in September 2004. The brief of the Committee was to review structures, supports, and policy and make recommendations for the future development of the sector.

Key recommendations in the report published by the Arts Council in Autumn 2004, *Towards a Policy for the Traditional Arts*, found sympathy with both the Minister with responsibility for the Arts and with the Arts Council, which adopted them as official policy, in a context described by the Chairperson as 'historic neglect and current underfunding'. As a result, better relationships were encouraged, funding enhanced and the post of Traditional Arts Officer in the Arts Council reinstated. It had been discontinued in the early 1990s.

The *Gaeltacht* and Irish language traditional arts also received attention in the report. However, two members of the Committee submitted a minority report. There was objection to the primary role assigned to the Arts Council and to the re-writing of the section on education. In general, the report was welcomed by practitioners. Full implementation would depend on funding and on State attitudes. No capital investment was foreseen.

From March 2005 a new consulting role of Traditional Arts Specialist was recognised by a new appointment to the Council's staff policy team. By May 2005, the Council had adopted a three year policy (2005-2008) with the intention of prioritising the traditional arts area for a period in order to mainstream these arts into Council activities with an allocation of €3 million for 2006. This policy admitted that the Council's relationship with the sector had been 'patchy and tenuous, with little critical dialogue' due in no small part to 'lack of funding and inflexible application processes'. The Council defined the traditional arts in a quite inclusive manner.

The Irish traditional arts are a collection of indigenous arts practices that reflect our identity, history, and contemporary thinking. They comprise our traditional music, song and dance, and oral arts such as storytelling and agallamh beirte [conversation between two people in verse]. They represent a vitally important expression of our cultural identity. While informed by the past, the traditional arts are contemporary and vibrant.

Before June 2005 was out, the Council had voted €300,000 of its capital budget to *Na Píobairí Uilleann* (Uilleann Pipers—literally 'elbow') for continuing refurbishment of their premises, and had also received a supplemental €500,000 from their Minister for the traditional arts. This sum was expended as revenue funding of €200,000 to five organisations which received grants from €100,000 to €20,000 and the remaining €300,000 on the *Deis* (Opportunity) programme established in September 2005. Under this scheme forty three individuals and organisations received grants between €500 and €20,000 for projects based on ideas, described as 'not fitting comfortably within any of the existing Arts Council funding programmes'. The funding policy is transparent. While all projects fell within the traditional arts category, many were Irish language or *Gaeltacht* based.

THE ARTS COUNCIL AND ARTS IN IRISH: CHANGING POLICY AND APPROACH

In the past, the Council did not have what could be described as a pro-active policy for arts in Irish. Although supporting arts in Irish in different ways, it was very difficult to ascertain the proportion of the Council's budget which was expended in this form. The Council's former approach may be stated in the following terms.

To promote the highest artistic standards while acknowledging the particular constraints which artists, arts organisations and audiences, operating through the medium of Irish, experience both in terms of scale and scope, as a result of the size of the community as well as its being linguistically and geographically dispersed, factors which mitigate against artists being able to sustain themselves as practitioners of Irish language arts.

Whether the aesthetic criteria for promoting such standards were derived from the culture of origin or from other cultural standards was not clear. Neither was the capacity of the Council to adjudicate on the full range of arts in Irish, whether in purely language based art forms in Irish or in those forms particular to the culture of Irish.

Nevertheless, the list of artistic activity in Irish supported by the Council in recent years was diverse. Literature dominated and a Literature Specialist with responsibility for advising on literature in Irish was contracted in 2003. The Literature Officer had, in fact, usually been bilingual. The translation agency, Irish Literature Exchange, as well as the Irish Writers' Centre and Poetry Ireland, and various literature festivals were partially subvented by the Council. All would have included some element of the arts of Irish in their activity. The Council would, however, probably fund them whether this had occurred or not. Irish within schools programmes had been supported as part of other programmes such as writers-in-schools and in conjunction with other agencies as *Údarás na Gaeltachta* or the Irish teachers organisation, *Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge*. Several reviews and journals of creative and critical writing were in receipt of Arts Council grants. The subvented journals, *Poetry Ireland Review* and *Inis* (Tell), on children's literature, reviewed literature in Irish. Irish language publications which were occasionally subvented in this way for the publication of specific issues on literature in Irish include the magazines *Feasta* and *Comhar*, small grants being made available for coverage of contemporary Irish writing. The annual *Bliainiris* was also published with the support of the Council. As a result of the relatively new emphasis of *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge* on editing and marketing, three publishers received assistance in this regard: *Coiscéim/Cosanic Teoranta*, *Cló Iar-Chonnachta* and *Cois Life*. Awards to writers may have been partially subvented in collaboration with other agencies. The Ireland Chair of Poetry and residencies in third level institutions are open to, and have been held by, writers in Irish. Writers in Irish received bursaries and travel grants. In response to demand from the sector, these are now assessed by a separate Irish language peer assessment panel. Irish speaking artists had, of course, always benefited from particular policies or programmes in their particular field of the arts apart from literature, but not as, or because they were, speakers of Irish. The first Irish participant, supported by the Arts Council in 2005, in the new UK Clore Duffield Leadership Fellow programme, was *Fearghus Ó Conchúir*, a dancer and choreographer from the Ring *Gaeltacht*, Waterford.

Some promotion of arts in Irish took place in collaboration with other agencies. A scheme of Arts Officers had been in place with local authorities since 1985. Some of these would have initiated or supported local arts initiatives to do with the Irish language. In collaboration with *TG4*, annual funding was made available to promote short film documentaries in Irish through the initiative *Splanc* (Flash; Spark). Successful discussions took place with regard to some form of collaboration with the annual festival, *Oireachtas na Gaeilge*. The popular and prestigious *Oireachtas* competition and exhibition of painting and sculpture, which had always been of very high artistic standard, had to be dropped in recent years. This was attributed to the high cost of insurance and the lack of appropriate support from the Council. In partnership with *Údarás na Gaeltachta*, the appointment of three Arts Facilitators in the three major *Gaeltacht* areas continues. After several years of this collaborative initiative, *Ealaín na Gaeltachta* (*Gaeltacht Art*), a development plan, was produced for the *Gaeltacht* during 2004 for the period 2004–2008 which included the arts both traditional and contemporary and all relevant agencies in order to ensure the following.

Two main objectives:

- *that the potential contribution of the arts to cultural, social and economic life in the Gaeltacht is fully realised*
- *that the distinctive contribution which can be made by artists and communities within the Gaeltacht to artistic life in Ireland and internationally is supported and recognised.*

In the cultural centre on *Inis Oírr* (Inisheer) on the Aran islands, a symposium was organised in September 2004 attended by practitioners of all the art forms to exhibit and to discuss community and arts issues. This continues on an annual basis. Both *Ealaín na Gaeltachta* and *Foras na Gaeilge* supported a symposium on reading in Irish, in 2002, which led to the successful *Seachtain na Leabhar* (Books Week) or Irish language books promotion in 2005 as part of *Seachtain na Gaeilge*. *Ealaín na Gaeltachta* has been legally incorporated and disbursed almost €250,000 in funding to over forty artists and arts schemes throughout the *Gaeltacht* in 2005, through the three facilitators employed.

While admirable in its way, this scheme of co-projects was largely initiated from agencies outwith the Arts Council. The Council then played only a re-active, if valuable, role. In addition, there had been no coherent plan nor cohesive approach to include all the art forms and to encompass arts practitioners in Irish language and culture throughout the State. The Council's former argument was that its plans and funding decisions were not language specific but rather art form based. Such apparent neutrality was potentially, and perhaps inherently, discriminatory since art forms and culture are inextricably intertwined, as are culture and language. The new dispensation including as it does a specific policy on literature in Irish on the one hand and the traditional arts on the other appears to offer a distinctly new strategy and a potentially more coherent, transparent and supportive approach to the Arts Council's perspective on arts deriving from Irish language and culture.

A new intercultural festival of literature in Irish, *Imram* (from the older literature; 'Adventure/Event' could be a non-literal translation), begun in Autumn 2004, to engage young people, mount book fairs, and ensure entertainment and discussion, is now an annual event. This type of activity may now benefit from the Arts Council's new strategy. In 2004, the Arts Council eventually gave a grant of €10,000 to the annual festival of traditional arts, *An tOireachtas*. Lobbying had been ongoing for almost a decade.

AOS DÁNA (PEOPLE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT)

In 1983 the Arts Council established *Aosdána* (sic), with all designations in Irish, harking back to a Golden Age. The members' committee of ten who regulate the body are *Toscairí* (delegate, deputy) and the Committee is *An Toscaireacht* (delegation, deputation). Up to five members may be elected *Saoi* (wise or eminent one) by their peers. This was increased to seven in 2007. The total number of *Aosdána* members was also increased. A *Saoi* receives a gold *torc* (solid neck cirlet) from the President of Ireland as a symbol of outstanding artistic merit in their field.

The intention of *Aosdána* is to honour artists whose work has made an outstanding contribution to the arts in Ireland. They are elected by their peers. Members are listed under these categories: visual arts, literature, music, together with architecture and choreography which were added in 2004. In the literature section, there are at the moment eight or nine writers in Irish. They include most *genres*: poetry, short story, novel, drama. Several practise more than one genre. Some work bilingually.

In order to encourage members to donate their energies fully to their art, a monetary *cnuas* (store) is available under certain circumstances and a contributory pension scheme. Irish language members have received the *cnuas*.

Of the twelve 2006 additions to *Aosdána*, one is a traditional music composer.

ARTS OFFICERS

The majority of local authorities have Arts and/or Heritage Officers. The Arts Council had a policy of co-funding Arts Officers and arts activities in conjunction with 33 local authorities. Many of these appointees have an active role in promoting aspects of Irish language and culture in the local administrative area, whether through schools, through fixed term plans, or through initiatives, often in collaboration with local Irish-language groups.

One example is the comprehensive Arts Plan 2004 – 2009 for County Cavan. The bilingual section on ‘Links between Irish and the Arts’ is uncompromising in its comments on the difficulties facing such Officers. The situation could be described as having characteristics of the ‘chicken and egg’ dilemma: Irish arts for audiences or audiences for Irish arts, where to begin.

From the outset the Arts Office has no particular duty to revive Irish as a spoken language in County Cavan. The Arts Office could have a policy ... but that policy depends entirely upon a fundamental reality ... 12 people huddled in a corner is not an audience.... As soon as there is an Irish-speaking public in County Cavan all of these programmes will be put in place ... the Arts Office asserts its own enthusiasm for the language...

However, no statistics are given on comparable audience figures for either English-language performances or for other art forms, so often unhelpfully described as of minority interest, which may be presented to the public of County Cavan.

CULTURE IRELAND

The Arts Council is represented on this new statutory agency, Culture Ireland, chaired by Professor *Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin*, of the World Music Centre, University of Limerick. It subsumes the former Cultural Relations Committee (Department of Foreign Affairs). This new agency is charged with helping Irish artists and organisations to bring their work abroad. It is an initiative of the Minister for Arts, Tourism and Sport. The possible links between arts and tourism are clear. Among the possible partners for future action are listed *Foras na Gaeilge, Údarás na Gaeltachta* and the Ulster-Scots Agency.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES: HERITAGE

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta (Heritage Council) was established under the Heritage Act 1995 as an independent State-sponsored body to propose policies and priorities across the full spectrum of that which may be described as heritage. Citizens, both now and in the past, quite often oppose the State through the courts in relation to any development plans as roads and motorways which may detrimentally affect aspects of the heritage. A motorway close to the ancient royal Hill of Tara was one recent example of popular protest which was in part upheld by the petitions committee of the EU Parliament.

Until recently, the National Monuments Act, particularly the Amendment of 1994, was considered the citizens’ protection. The National Monuments Act of 2004, however, in the same way as the Arts Act of 2003, confers many new rights of discretion on the Minister, including the proviso that ‘any matter of policy of the Government, of the Minister, or of any other Minister’ may override the importance of any particular national monument. Such actions of the Minister may now be justified in terms of the ‘social or economic benefit that would accrue to the State or region or immediate area’. The State’s archaeological policy is regarded as an area of legislation requiring review. Such a review was begun in October 2007 by the new Minister for the Environment through a series of discussion seminars which it is hoped will culminate in best international practice and protection for the rich heritage in Ireland.

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta offers a prize each year in the *Glór na nGael* competition to the community which best upholds the heritage principles of *An Chomhairle Oidhreachta*.

SUMMARY ON CULTURAL LIFE

Clearly, language and culture are interlinked and Irish has its own distinctive place in all aspects of artistic endeavour, traditional and modern. However, while these aspects have their own knowledgeable and dedicated following, access for all, while open, may be circumscribed by either lack of widespread publicity (dependent on funding) or a possibly unnecessary belief that only fluent speakers may benefit. This challenge remains in the area of innovative and more inclusive approaches although renewed media coverage has widened interest and participation to some extent.

IRISH IN AREAS OF COMMUNITY LIFE: RELIGION

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH (RC)

Services

There is no official policy for Irish in either the majority Roman Catholic (RC) Church or in other

denominations. Neither is there a specific training in the Theological Colleges or courses. For *Gaeltacht* regions, Roman Catholic (RC) Bishops will endeavour to find Irish-speaking clergy. It is then the local parish clergy who will provide Irish-medium services. During the tourist season, church services may alternate between Irish and English. The language used in the liturgy for christenings, weddings or burials will be at the request of individuals or families. Outside the *Gaeltacht*, it is possible to find one Irish Mass (usually at an early hour) on Sundays in parishes where a section of the local community request it. In Spring 2006 the Dioceses of Dublin announced a policy with regard to Mass in Irish developed by the Pastoral Committee of the dioceses. It was intended to ensure one Mass in Irish in each of the dioceses's thirteen regions every weekend by end 2006. Since children are prepared for the sacraments of Penance, First Communion and Confirmation in school, the development of Irish-medium education has meant a development also in local churches for these services. However, an overall decrease in vocations and therefore in the number of priests available, with accompanying decrease in Irish speakers among them available for parish duties, is a problem.

Thanks to the efforts of individual clergy, working together at times, there are Irish language versions of the Bible and all major faith and liturgy works.

An Irish language leaflet for Mass is produced for every Sunday and distributed through *Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge* (Assembly of Voluntary Organisations). It is paid for by each parish that uses it and also subvented by *Údarás na Gaeltachta*, although questions were raised some years ago by *An tÚdarás* who regarded the production of the leaflet more a church than a language issue. Spiritual retreats, both in Dublin and outside Dublin, and pilgrimages, are held with the co-operation of Irish language voluntary groups and some occasional subvention from *Foras na Gaeilge*. Christmas and Lenten services are available through Irish in several locations in the capital, Dublin.

In Belfast, celebration of the Mass in Irish has long been associated with St. Mary's church.

The Episcopate (RC)

The RC Bishops have a committee, representing several bishops from both *Gaeltacht* and other areas. Although suspended at times, it is now (2006) active again through *Cumann na Sagart* (Association of Irish-speaking Priests). This Episcopal Group used to meet regularly with representatives of the Irish community through the Assembly of Voluntary Organisations to discuss problematic areas. Recently, through this contact, the new Rome Catechism was translated from the original French version and a selection of Irish hymns to suit the year's liturgy were circulated to Diocesan Music Directors through their Bishops. The Bishops' Conference publish material in Irish on matters of faith. A recent attractive brochure issued was entitled *Ag cothú creideamh ár bpaistí* (Nurturing the faith of our children). Print materials for *Gaeltacht* parishes may be published in Irish and diocesan websites may be in bilingual format.

An ongoing problem for *Pobal an Aifrinn*, the voluntary organisation for ensuring RC church services for Irish speakers, is the lack of Irish in pre-ordination preparation or post-ordination pastoral courses.

Cumann na Sagart

The RC priesthood has its own long established organisation (1 February, 1916) for Irish speakers, *Cumann na Sagart*, and a branch for the *Gaeltacht*, *Comhluadar na Sagart Gaeltachta*. This organisation is now under development aided by a new website with funding from the Department with responsibility for the language. They have provided much service to Irish speakers over the years through commitment and through their individual members. These services include translations of the Bible and Liturgy. The most recent is a video of the conduct of some services through Irish, Baptism among them, for new priests and others, and the Mass service in bilingual format. They also produce a regular magazine, *An Sagart*. Through the website, advice and exemplars will be provided to meet all priestly and pastoral needs as well as the Mass leaflet. *Cumann na Sagart* also have plans to provide other forms of linguistic support to priests wishing to use Irish in their services.

Around 1960, through the instigation of Monsignor *Tomás Ó Fiaich*, later Cardinal, a community competition was begun by *Cumann na Sagart* called *Glór na nGael*. This offers support to local groups (North and South) endeavouring to promote the language and there is now a very

impressive annual event where the President of Ireland or a Minister of the Government or another dignitary may present prizes to those areas or towns which have done most in the previous year to advance the use of the language locally.

Religious publishing

In 1956, under the aegis of the Jesuit Order, a publishing group was established for books in Irish on matters of religion and Christian culture, *Foilseacháin Ábhair Spioradálta* (Publications of Spiritual Matter), or FÁS. Over 60 such books were published between 1957 and 1998. Publishing was revived in 2000 and an average of 3 books a year has since been produced over a range of subjects: biographies of religious who have contributed to the language and culture; results of surveys on the contemporary understanding of spirituality; meditations on the psalms. Authors represent all the churches and include lay people.

The first Irish language work to be printed in Dublin was the *Aibidil Gaoidheilge agus Caiticíosma* (Irish Alphabet and Primer of Religion) of *Seán Ó Cearnaigh*, published in 1571. A scholarly edition has been published by the School of Celtic Studies of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

THE PROTESTANT CHURCHES

Services

The Protestant denominations have clergy who are competent Irish speakers who conduct services in Irish. There have been several fluent Irish speaking Church of Ireland bishops in recent times. Regular services are held in Dublin in several venues including Christ Church Cathedral, more occasionally in Belfast, and on special occasions in Armagh, particularly around St. Patrick's Day (17th March). An annual Irish inter-faith service is also held in the Cathedral in Dublin during the week dedicated to Christian Unity.

Services and liturgy in Irish for the Presbyterian Church are organised by its Irish language organisation, *An Tor ar Lasadh* (The Burning Bush).

Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise (Irish Guild of the Church)

Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise (Irish Guild of the Church), which still functions today within the (Protestant) Church of Ireland, was founded in 1914 by people who were members of the Gaelic League and of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). This led to two organisations with the establishment of the shorter lived *Comhluadar Gaodhalach na Fianaise* (Irish Congregation/Company of the Witness) after 1918. For ten years, between 1919 and 1929, *Cumann na hEaglaise* published a journal, *An tEaglaiseach Gaelach* (the Irish Churchman), which provides an interesting historical perspective on those times. Its later publications include a book of hymns, *Leabhar Iomann le Ceol* (1961), and liturgical music for choirs, *Ceol Diaga do Chóracha*. The history of *Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise* and of Irish-speaking Protestants has been told in print and in a recent bilingual film. Publications and events relating to Irish in the Church will usually be spearheaded by *An Cumann*.

From the historical perspective, a series of lectures was given in the Cathedral on members of the Church who had been active in the Gaelic League and in the lead up to the Rising of 1916, before the Easter anniversary of 2006.

A week-long bilingual summer school, *Ceangal dhá Chultúr* (linking two cultures)–*Celtic Revival*, was held in July 2006 beginning in Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin and continuing at *Áras Éanna*, the arts centre on *Inis Oírr*, the smallest of the Aran islands. It looked at the collaborative contribution of both Anglo-Irish and Gaelic-Irish to the revival in art, music, literature, sport and language of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Publications

A Scottish Gaelic choir from Glasgow and *Cór Duibhlinne* (RC) from Dublin participated in the launch in Northern Ireland by the Protestant Church (2004) of the latest Irish language version of the revised Book of Common Prayer, which was subvented by *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge*, during a day of addresses and celebration of the Irish language in the church, entitled *Celtic Worship: Celebrating a Prayerbook*. The conference was organised by the *Ultach* Trust (*Iontaobhas Ultach*) and the Columba Initiative (*Iomairt Cholm Cille*, now *Colmcille*). The last edition of the Book of Common

Prayer, when an Irish-language version had also been produced, had been in 1931. The Alternative Prayer Book of 1984 had been published in Irish too. The translation of the New Testament (latest edition 1985) is a steady seller. The latter was partially subvented by *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge*.

These, of course, are but the latest translations. History reveals much more. *The Bedell Bible in Irish*, although then completed for almost a half century, was finally published in 1685, with the assistance of prominent Protestants, Marsh (of Marsh's Library, Dublin) and Robert Boyle of Lismore, (the scientist, founding member of the Royal Society in London).

The Church of Ireland Gazette carries a regular column in Irish.

OTHER FAITHS

Followers of the Ba'hai faith in Ireland include a number of Irish speakers who have translated Ba'hai materials into Irish. Tentative negotiations have begun for the translation of the Qu'ran.

FAITH SCHOOLS

The number of non-denominational and private schools is relatively minor, particularly at primary level, since the publicly funded schools are largely under denominational patronage. All recognised publicly funded schools will include Irish on the curriculum. Many of the RC religious orders run primary and private postprimary schools which have very positive attitudes to Irish on the whole, as demonstrated in surveys of education results in Irish. The Muslim schools teach Irish as part of the school curriculum.

IRISH IN AREAS OF COMMUNITY LIFE: SPORT

CUMANN LÚTHCHLEAS GAEL (GAELIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION – GAA)

In sport, regard for Irish was for long almost exclusively relegated to *Cumann Lúthchleas Gael* (Gaelic Athletic Association), founded on the first of November 1884 initially to promote all indigenous Gaelic games, hurling and camogie, Gaelic football, handball, rounders. [The Basic Aim \(sic\) of the Association is set out in section 2, version 2007, of the Official Guide:](#)

The Association is a National Organisation which has as its basic aim the strengthening of the National Identity (sic) in a 32 County Ireland through the preservation and promotion of Gaelic Games and pastimes.

As a thirty two county association, it functions also in Northern Ireland. The Diaspora has ensured the Association's presence, on an organised basis, in the UK, in the USA, in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and in places on every continent. As far back as the 1880s in the city of Quebec, a by-law forbade hurling in the street. Irish religious orders ensured local versions of the games in their schools in many parts of the world.

Rule 4 of the Association's Official Guide states clearly its additional cultural aims:

The Association shall actively support the Irish language, traditional Irish dancing, music, song and other aspects of Irish culture. It shall foster an awareness and love of the national ideals in the people of Ireland, and assist in promoting a community spirit through its clubs.

Item 7 professes the non-party political and non-sectarian nature of the association.

The Gaelic Athletic Association allies itself unambiguously with the concept of 'nation'; it is 'a means of consolidating our national identity', in the words of the introduction to the Official Guide (2007).

It continues:

Since she has no control over all the national territory, Ireland's claim to nationhood is impaired. It would be still more impaired if she were to lose her language, if she failed to provide a decent livelihood for her people at home, or if she were to forsake her own games and customs in favour of the games and customs of another nation. If pride in the attributes of nationhood dies, something good and distinctive in our race dies with it.'

As a 32 county association, *Cumann Lúthchleas Gael* (Gaelic Athletic Association) has a strong role also in NI. In the context of that jurisdiction, the association's national and cultural philosophy had led to politically based problems for both players and club premises, despite the fact that members of religions other than RC were represented at all levels, although mainly in the Republic and that the

association's aims are national not religious.

Item 8 of the 2007 Guide states that the 'Rules of the Association shall be printed in Irish and in English, and in the event of conflict the Irish version shall prevail'. The Irish flag (National Flag) is flown at GAA matches according to Rule 15 of the association and the National Anthem is played at significant matches irrespective of where held; clubs 'shall not be named after a living person or any existing political or semi-political organisation' and 'must bear a name in the Irish language, which must be used in all correspondence and official documents, otherwise these documents shall be ruled out of order' (Rule 25); affiliation forms allow for the English-language version also. The Belfast grounds are called after Sir Roger Casement. Rule 10 lays down that certain parts of official documents and correspondence shall be in Irish. Lists of full members (and of youth members) shall be submitted annually to the County Secretary in Irish (Rule 18) and likewise in the case of club players at all levels (Rule 19). The Club Manual (2005) contains a section on *Gaeilge ag an gCruinniú* (Irish at meetings) giving a list of appropriate forms of address and useful phrases as well as a section detailing the duties of the Culture and Language Officer to be filled 'by someone who has a working knowledge of *Gaeilge*' (sic). The manual advises that 'Tact and perseverance are vital attributes for success in this position'. The club constitution is available in Irish. The GAA Millennium Plan for the Irish Language 'encourages the acquisition and use of Irish as opposed to knowledge of the language alone. The aim is that increased Irish language usage among members of the GAA who speak the language will result in an increased usage among its supporters'. A very useful Irish Terms Book helps towards this objective.

The relaxation of certain longstanding rules of the association has led to a new situation since 2000. Membership now 'shall be open to the community as a whole, without discrimination' under regulations issued to clubs in the Six Counties and Great Britain by the Central Council of the association on 9 December 2006, as written in the latest edition of the Official Guide – Part I of January 2007. Until the establishment of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Rule 21 had imposed a ban on membership by those in the British Army or in the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). The former Rule 42 (requiring GAA premises to be available for use solely by the GAA) led to much debate at the annual congresses of 2004 and 2005. At the latter the temporary use of Croke Park, the major GAA stadium in Dublin, was allowed to the FAI and to the Irish Rugby Football Union for their international fixtures. This appears as a note in the rules. Over thirty years before, in the early 1970s, the rule forbidding members to play 'foreign games' had been repealed. The current Rules 42 and 44 of the 2007 Guide state as follows.

42 Non-Affiliated Bodies

(a) A member or any unit of the Association shall not participate in games of Gaelic Football, Hurling or Handball promoted by a body not affiliated to Central Council, without the prior sanction of Central Council.

44 Uses of Property

(a) All property including grounds... shall be used only for the purpose of or in connection with the playing of the Games controlled by the Association, and for such other purposes not in conflict with the Aims and Objectives of the Association, that may be sanctioned from time to time by the Central Council.

(b) Grounds controlled by the Association units shall not be used or permitted to be used, for Horse Racing, Greyhound Racing, or for Field Games other than those sanctioned by Central Council.

(Note: Central Council shall have the power to authorize the use of Croke Park for games, other than those controlled by the Association, during a temporary period when Lansdowne Road Football Ground is closed for the proposed development.

Congress has approved that Rules ... shall allow for this for a temporary period, at the end of which all these Rules stated shall revert to their pre-Congress 2005 position.)

The Association does make a very public effort in its publications, at public events, and through its branch clubhouses, many of which either organise or support Irish language events or run Irish classes. Irish is very visible at important matches: counties, teams, players, positions on the team including referee, scores, will be in Irish. The new official journal of the organisation, *High Ball*, carries a column in Irish. The magazine for schools, titled *Cúl4kidz* (bilingual word play: 'cool for' and *cúl*, a goal) has an Irish column and is in collaboration with the *TG4* programme *Cúla4* ('goal number 4'; 4 number of Irish channel). *Coiste Forbartha na gCluichí* (Games Development Committee) produce

bilingual posters and materials for schoolgoers with the aid of commercial sponsorship. The internal structure of the GAA is titled in Irish as are activities: *Scór*, interclub competitions held since 1969 on aspects of culture for adults, *Scór Sinsear*, and for youth, *Scór na nÓg*, *Féile na nGael*, national festival for the under-14s in hurling, camogie and handball; *Féile Peile na nÓg*, a similar festival for the same age group in Gaelic football.

Since it has wide influence throughout the country through its local club structure, its County Boards, and its substantial programmes for youth, it could have a very pervasive role. However, despite some very fluent staff, Irish officers in some Boards, and some policy indications in its most recent strategic plan, no significant community breakthrough has been made as yet. An integrated linguistic and cultural plan for the language at State level might provide a more effective context for the organisation's undoubted efforts. Policy is produced by *Coiste na Gaeilge*, in collaboration with the *Oifigeach Gaeilge* (Officer for Irish) in County Boards, for consideration by the Executive. The community role of the GAA has been given recognition in the fairly substantial public funding it receives for developing its stadia.

The Association's camogie championships (women's hurling) were sponsored until recently by *Foras na Gaeilge*. The stick and ball used in hurling are always known by their Irish names, *camán* and *sliotar*. The hurling stick in women's hurling is the *camóg*, from which the game takes its name, *camógáíocht* (camogie). Hurling (*iománaíocht*) requires many skills, one of which is the *poc fada* (long shot) which is celebrated in the Cooley Mountains each year in August in memory of an ancient saga and the mighty *poc fada* of Setanta (Séadanta) or *Cú Chulainn* (Hound of Culainn) as he later became, when he sent the ball all the way from *Carn an Mhadaidh* in the Cooleys to the court of *Eamhain Macha* itself in Armagh. Setanta Television is a commercial sports channel. [Christy Ring of 'The Glen' in Cork city is considered to have been the best latter day exponent of the game of hurling. Poems in Irish and English have been written of his skill and a film made of these skills in action.](#)

The captain of the winning Kerry team in the all-Ireland Gaelic football final 2004, a native speaker, gave his oration exclusively in Irish from the stand in Croke Park as he received the Sam Maguire Cup. He was not the first. His example was followed by the trilingual captain of the victorious all-Ireland hurling team in 2005, a fluent speaker from Cork who was born in Fiji and brought up in his early youth in Australia before coming back to the land of his father at age eleven.

Comórtas Peile na Gaeltachta (*Gaeltacht* Football Championship) is a high profile and very popular competition the final of which is screened live on *TG4*. Played out over the long Bank Holiday weekend in June, it is now accompanied by a host of other events. [This championship began in 1986 when two student friends at University College Dublin brought together their respective *Gaeltacht* teams from opposite ends of Ireland, *Gaoth Dobhair* \(Gweedore\) in Donegal and *Baile an Fheirtéaraigh* \(\(Ballyferriter\) in Kerry.](#) Recently, the Irish Officer of the Mayo County Board of the GAA attempted to put together a team of Irish speakers from outside the *Gaeltacht* to take part. A similar plan was underway in Dublin by *Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge*—for a team to be called *Peileadóirí Duibhlinne*. The word '*dubh*' means '*black*' and '*linn*' means '*pool*'—the term by which the Vikings described the place known to the native Irish as '*Baile Átha Cliath*', the '*town of the ford of the wattles*', wooden fencing that enabled crossing. However, these developments have yet to be assessed. Agreement has just been reached (early 2007) that Irish-speaking teams from Belfast may participate since they form part of an Irish-speaking sector of the city, *Ceathrú Gaeltachta* (*Gaeltacht* Quarter), unlike the dispersed regional background of the other two teams put forward.

FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND (FAI)

The Football Association of Ireland (FAI) has an evolving policy towards Irish. The organisation has produced a series of training cards in Irish for school players, programmes contain some Irish and players' names may be in bilingual format. The Summer soccer camps scheme conducted through Irish are assisted by the Department with responsibility for the language and the DVD used is bilingual. Irish may appear on the apparel of the captain in international games. There was a possibility that a rousing Irish song learned in school might be the anthem for World Cup 2006, *Óró 'sé do bheatha 'bhaile*. A lobby, *Cúl* (Goal or Back), was formed during 2005 to change Ireland to *Éire* on the shirts of the international team, following the lead of the Welsh team. For the FAI it would mean re-registering with FIFA where registration now is as Republic of Ireland. The proposal was initially rejected but talks continue (2007).

The TG4 broadcast of the Women's Football Final between Galway and Dublin in 2004 was watched by 208,000. Galway had some *Gaeltacht* players and supporters.

Efforts are ongoing to ensure live television coverage through Irish of all important games: GAA, soccer, rugby.

OTHER FORMS OF SPORT

There are, of course. Irish speakers in the teams of the majority of sports, including rugby, a popular game in Munster.

The trainer of the Women's Hockey Under-21 team decided to use instructions in Irish for the international 2004 matches in an effort to fox the opposition.

Foras na Gaeilge has also funded events in other forms of popular sport, e.g. dog and horse racing, but there is no published evaluation of effects. For the Ryder Cup in golf in 2006, *Foras na Gaeilge* produced golf bag stickers and re-issued a card of golf terms in Irish.

A day's random perusal of the press sports pages revealed the following examples of names in Irish for some racing horses.

Mo Chroí (My Heart) – one of the major winners at Dublin Horse Show 2007.

Among the runners in other racing events in Ireland and the UK were *Damhsóir* (Dancer); *Deoraíocht* (Exile); *Naomh Moling* (St. Moling, Irish saint); *Díolta do Dháithí* (Sold to *Dáithí*, David); *Sliabh Bhuí* (Yellow Mountain); *Ceol Loch Aoidh* (Music of Loch Aoidh); *Solas na Gréine* (Light of the Sun); *Fíorscéal* (True Tale); *Garraí Ard* (High Field); *Tobar na Gloc* (*Tobar na gCloch*, Well of the Stones); *Droichead Binéid* (Bennetsbridge/Bennettsbridge, placename); *Caisleán na Deirge* (Castleberg, placename). Another bilingual use of language is found in the name *Cailín Coole* (could be Girl of Coole, placename, or by extension, when pronounced, Cool Girl).

IRISH IN AREAS OF COMMUNITY LIFE: POLITICAL PARTIES

There are ten registered political parties in the Republic, seven of which currently (2007) have representation in the *Dáil*: *Fianna Fáil* 78; *Fine Gael* 51; Labour Party 20; Progressive Democrat Party 2; Green Party 6; *Sinn Féin* 4. There are also 5 Independents, giving a total of 166 seats. The Government, post May 2007 General Election, is a Coalition between *Fianna Fáil*, the Green Party and the Progressive Democrats. There are Irish speakers in every party, among the leadership and membership, and also among the Independents. *Sinn Féin* is currently the only all-Ireland party, having representation also in NI and in Westminster (where they do not take their seats), although *Fianna Fáil* has recently registered officially in Northern Ireland.

The issue of Irish and political parties has two dimensions: whether a party has specific policies in relation to language issues which it promotes in the political domain or whether, as a party, it has a policy with regard to the promotion of Irish within the party. In the late 1980s, when *Bord na Gaeilge* was preparing Action Plans for the language, the major parties all produced a policy document as did the Congress of Trade Unions. Not all of these are currently active documents.

Fianna Fáil produced papers on policies for the *Gaeltacht* and on the status of Irish in advance of the 2002 General Elections. These were incorporated into policy documents from the ensuing Coalition which included the Progressive Democrats. No major deviation occurred in the Programme for Government agreed with the subsequent Coalition after May 2007, a Programme which included the December 2006 Government Statement on the Irish Language. The *Taoiseach* chose an event in May 2006 to celebrate 80 years of the *Fianna Fáil* party to signal that he would be making a major policy statement on the Irish language. This came in December 2006 as a Government Statement on the Irish language. In advance of the next General Election in 2007, *Fine Gael* announced its stance on optional Irish for the Leaving Certificate examination. The Green Party is generally seen on the side of the language as in keeping with their policies on natural and cultural ecosystems. Both the Labour and Socialist parties have individuals who are very committed to language issues. *Sinn Féin* has an active Irish policy. It is of note that all parties and Independents eventually supported the passage of the Official Languages Act (2003) and the resolution to request official working status for Irish in the EU.

Support for policy issues on the language generally comes into focus at election time. These issues have included the Official Languages Act, the status of Irish in the EU, the teaching of the language, Irish-medium schools, Irish in the media—publishing, radio, television, the *Gaeltacht*,

corpus planning, and, naturally, funding, at Budget debates.

Election material in Irish may be made available in *Gaeltacht* areas or to those whose names appear in Irish on local voting registers. Some phrases may appear on the posters of some parties. The address given by party leaders of some parties will usually include a paragraph in Irish or on matters related to the language, not always in the official script. Unless very controversial, it is rarely reported except in the Irish language media. There appears to be no official bilingual policy in any party with regard to written materials publicly distributed. According to Irish language organisations, in general it is difficult to get Irish issues on the political agenda, although two recent exceptions were the Official Languages Act and the question of the status of Irish in the EU.

The use of Irish on the websites of the various parties is extremely variable.

The Referendum Commission is an agency which impartially informs the electorate on issues and implications pertaining to acceptance or rejection of amendments to the constitution. In June 2004, it issued 2.8 million information leaflets with regard to the most recent proposed amendment on citizenship. For the first time, these leaflets were in bilingual format.

IRISH IN AREAS OF COMMUNITY LIFE: SOCIAL LIFE

NATIONAL/CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS AND CENTRES

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, the organisation for traditional music and dance, is somewhat like the Gaelic Athletic Association, with clear public commitment to the Irish language and some fluent staff. Not all their activities are, however, through Irish. They have two very fine cultural centres in Dublin and in Cashel, and quite an influential following abroad, especially in North America and in England, as distinguished from the UK. The annual *Fleadh Cheoil* (Festival of Music) of this organisation is a very big event where traditional music and dance spills over informally on to the street in whichever town is host for the year. The organisation has helped, with others, to revolutionise attitudes to traditional modes of musical expression. Some exponents remember the 1950s when public, as opposed to local, attitudes were very different and extraordinary skills went at the very least unrecognised by a largely unknowing public.

The world Irish dancing championships organised by *An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha* (Commission for Irish Dance) is another major event in the annual calendar of cultural happenings. One of the more recent held in Ennis, County Clare, cost half a million euro to stage. It had up to four thousand competitors aged from under ten years coming from around the world – Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, Europe, UK and Ireland with at least half of them from the United States representing most of the states. While Irish speakers will be involved in the organisation itself, the emphasis is on this aspect of Irish culture not specifically on the language. Although Riverdance has increased the popularity of Irish dancing globally, it had always had an international following. **Nowadays, there is some criticism, not of the standard of dancing which remains extremely high, but of the accompanying highly ornamented and expensive dress and hair code, particularly for girls.**

Bantracht na Tuaithe (Irish Countrywomen's Association-ICA) have an Adult Education Centre, *An Grianán* (The Sunroom, reserved for women, according to early tradition) and up to 1,000 branches around the country, both urban and rural, representing 16,000 members. Their local organisers encourage some use of Irish and have a book of guidelines to encourage such use. Some branches participate in the choral competitions of the annual festival, *Oireachtas na Gaeilge*. In June 2006, the organisation was granted €10,550 by the relevant Department to promote Irish by means of a story-telling competition, locally at first then in a final national round.

Conradh na Gaeilge (The Gaelic League) has a network of centres in cities and towns around the country, some with club and bar facilities. Here all activities are expected to be conducted in Irish. The organisation is also found abroad, in the UK and in the USA especially.

There are cafés in Galway, *An Daingean* (Dingle), Belfast, and Derry, some having a bookshop attached, which are conducted through Irish. There is also a drop-in centre in Dublin offering various facilities, *Ionad Buail Isteach na Gaeilge*. In Bray, County Wicklow, a weekly club is organised, *An Béal Binn* (the sweet mouth). In Clondalkin, a suburb of Dublin, the local Irish community have a fine facility, *Áras Chrónáin* (Residence of *Crónán* – the name of a saint). Closer to the centre of the city, *Muintir Naithí* (people of *Naithí*, another local saint) provide services to the local community. The most recent addition in Dublin city centre area of Temple Bar is *Gaelchultúr*

where events and Irish classes are organised on a regular basis. Members of the organizing group have been contracted by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) to organize course in Irish around the country also for public sector companies and have recently begun an association with the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) towards the same general aim of preparing public servants for a bilingual service. *Sult* (Fun, Pleasure), the regular club held in Dublin, the forerunner of *Gaelchultúr*, is one of a series of similar activities, some having a longer life than others.

Local groups in certain areas also have community centres, particularly in *Gaeltacht* regions. These regions have recently established specific centres for the culture of the area. There are some notable Heritage Centres in or near *Gaeltacht* regions. There are ongoing discussions to provide the Galway *Gaeltacht* with a facility of the same kind as is available in Donegal, *An Chrannóg* (Pulpit; also look-out/crow's nest on ship). The annual meeting of Irish-language practitioners of the various art forms takes place in *Áras Éanna* on *Inis Oírr* of the Aran Islands. There are public halls in Kerry, *Halla na Feothanaí* (placename) and in Meath. In Waterford, the hall of *Scoil na nÓg* is available for events. In Mayo, the local community in *Béal an Mhuirthead* (Belmullet) have begun plans for a facility under publicly available funds. The collaboration between *Údarás na Gaeltachta* and the Arts Council in *Gaeltacht* areas has led to increased interest in permanent facilities.

Heritage centres, run by either local authorities or the Office of Public Works, are very common. They may have bilingual signage and sometimes bilingual or trilingual commentary on tape. That is normally the extent of service through Irish, except in *Gaeltacht* areas.

Some of the activities of these centres are funded in one way or another by the all-Ireland body, *Foras na Gaeilge* or the Arts Council. Their significance in introducing and normalising the use of Irish in country-wide activities is not to be discounted in any language planning exercise. Attitudes will also be formed and ignorance perhaps dispelled. The re-activation of skills acquired in school and hardly used since is another welcome aspect of such promotion.

LOCAL GROUPS

The local partnerships that promote the *Glór na nGael* competition, as well as other local groups and partnerships, (arising in many cases from the co-operative movement in *Gaeltacht* areas), offer –as do the interest groups that form to establish all-Irish schools and playgroups–communal activities for target groups other than members of national or cultural organisations, although much overlap does occur. Several of the more successful *Glór na nGael* and other partnerships, in both the North and South, are now functioning with Development Officers funded by *Foras na Gaeilge* for a defined period. Committees also arise from local Community Groups, which –while not using Irish–promote festivals or some aspect of local tradition related to Irish culture.

Foras na Gaeilge is currently funding several specific local language development projects around the country some of which are managed by local branches of the voluntary organisation, *Conradh na Gaeilge* (Gaelic League), and one of which in NI is under the aegis of *Comhaltas Uladh*.

In recent years there has been a dramatic development in the growth of local history or archeological societies. All affect their local community, particularly by emphasising the context from which the language arose and in which it is still clearly situated. Most publish their findings. Some are scholarly. Some are the reminiscences of an older age group. All have a role to play in contextualising modern language planning initiatives, globally, nationally, locally.

SUMMARY ON COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL LIFE

There is no area of socially organised life where Irish does not have an active presence, however minimal or relegated to certain groups within organisations. The connection between the language and society, while tenuous in some fields, has not been severed. There exists at the very least an understanding of its place in socially organised contexts, even if activated solely at particular times or by specific individuals.

Table 5.1 Funding for Newspapers and Magazines in Irish

Publication	Grants 2004	Grants 2006	Content
<i>Magazines</i>			
An Timire (1911)	€3,044	€3,228	Religious matter
An tUltach (1924)	€ 30,300 (£20,907)	€34,780 (£24,000)	Literary and other material, largely of Ulster interest
Comhar (1942)	€ 53,329	€60,000	Began as the review of <i>An Comhchaidreamh</i> , the organisation for Irish-speaking university students
Feasta (1948)	€42,000	€49,000	Established by <i>Conradh na Gaeilge</i> . Broad range of material, literary and political
An Sagart (1956)	€2,400	€2,546	Publication of <i>Cumann na Sagart</i> (organisation for religious and lay people)
Beo	€60,000	€66,00	Fairly recently established monthly internet magazine
Funding total	€191,073	€215,554	
<i>Newspapers</i>			
Foinse (since 1996)	€234,000	€322,000	Weekend newspaper
Lá (Nua)	€246,377 (£170,000)	€277,300 (£191,337)	Monday to Friday newspaper (since 2003)
Funding total	€480,377	€599,300	
Overall Total	€671,450	€814,854	