

THE VOLUNTARY LANGUAGE MOVEMENT

The heterogeneity of the Irish language voluntary sector and its activities is shown in this section as is the relationship between the sector and the State. Attention is drawn to the range of agents, state, semi-state and voluntary, all operating in the same general field of activity without apparent distinction of either complementarity of roles or rationale for funding sources.

VOLUNTARISM AND THE IRISH LANGUAGE

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

There is a long history of organisational and voluntary endeavours on behalf of Irish. The Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language (SPIL), *Cumann Buan-Choimeáda na Gaeilge*, founded in 1876, has been described as the beginning of the re-institutionalisation of Irish. The Society began many of the actions later continued with such success by *Conradh na Gaeilge*, the Gaelic League: in mobilising on behalf of the language, in political advocacy, in education and in publishing. The cultural and later political influence of *Conradh na Gaeilge*, founded in 1893, led both to native government and to policies for Irish from the State's inception.

THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

At voluntary/community level there exist many organisations serving various purposes, e.g. community, education, drama, religion. The majority are members of *Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge*, the Congress/Council of Voluntary Organisations (established 1943) which provides both a forum for Irish-language interest bodies and a focus for consensus on the policies considered necessary. *An Chomhdháil* is the only voluntary Irish organisation to have been awarded the ISO 9001:2000 (International Standard Organisation), the standard focused on the level of client satisfaction achieved. Several years ago, *An Chomhdháil* began a process of strategic planning for the language. This is gradually being implemented, as much as falls within the remit of *An Chomhdháil* and its members.

The older organisations and activities are generally regarded as community organisations, while the more recently established tend to cater for the needs of specific target groups or to fill a specific gap in Irish-medium provision for Irish speakers. *Conradh na Gaeilge* was responsible for the establishment of several of the required services since its foundation, some of which now function more or less autonomously under the aegis of the League. These later developments by *Conradh na Gaeilge* are listed below by date and by activity.

CONRADH NA GAEILGE – THE GAELIC LEAGUE AND ITS OFFSHOOTS

I Community-oriented activities

- *Conradh na Gaeilge* (Gaelic League) 1893
- *Comhaltas Uladh*—to serve nine counties including NI six counties 1926
- *Comhlucht Gael na Gaillimhe*—company for Irish speakers Galway 1938
- *An Fáinne* (Ring—probably in the sense of ‘a group of people engaged in a shared enterprise’, a more frequent usage, and without derogatory connotations, a hundred years ago)—circular emblem worn as evidence of willingness to speak or support the Irish language, begun in 1916, re-established in the 1960s
- *Seachtain na Gaeilge*—Irish week, re-established as *Lá Mór na Gaeilge* (Irish Day) 1987 to encourage use of Irish on the national day, St. Patrick's Day, extended to week in 1990; incorporated as limited company 2003; now international

II Target group activities

- *Na Teaghlaigh Ghaelacha*—Irish-speaking families c. 1955, now superseded by independent new organisation *Comhluadar* (Company, in social sense) 1994
- *Ógras*—youth organisation 1969 and *ÓgÓgras* for younger members
- *Na Naíonraí Gaelacha*—Irish-medium playgroups 1974; partner now in company *Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta* (Irish Playgroups Development Limited)

III Cultural activities

- *Oireachtas na Gaeilge*—national festival of traditional arts 1897-1924; 1939-present
- *Clódhanna Teoranta*—publications agency; incorporated as limited company 1908
- *Coimisiún na Rincí Gaelacha*—Commission for Irish Dancing 1929

After intensive consultation with branches and members, probably the most momentous change since 1915 in the history of *Conradh na Gaeilge* took place at a special *Ard-Fheis* (Annual Meeting) convened on 12 April 2008 to consider changes in the constitution. These included some internal

administrative changes to the existing structure of the organisation which were intended to bring more clarity to regulations and obligations and the issue of individual membership. However, what was considered to be the most significant change was that in the declared purpose and objectives of the Gaelic League, changes which had begun initially at the historic *Ard-Fheis* of 1915 in Dundalk where the introduction of a more politically inclined statement instead of solely cultural objectives led to the resignation of the then *Uachtarán* (President), *Dúghlas de hÍde* (Douglas Hyde), later first President of Ireland. This statement now reverted to a more linguistic and cultural formulation expressed in a more comprehensive manner. Both the 1915 and the 2008 formulations are to be interpreted in the light of the political backdrop existing at their time. The reformulation was welcomed by the *Ultach* Trust, the cross-community organisation in Northern Ireland.

The previous articles 2 and 4 of the organisation's constitution spoke of *pobal náisiúnta saor Gaelach* or a national community free and Gaelic and *mian chun fuascailte agus saoirse*, desire for deliverance and freedom, which could be satisfied only through attaining *saoirse pholaitiúil, eacnamúil, shóisialta agus chultúir sa chaoi go mbeidh cothrom na Féinne ag cách*, political, economic, social and cultural freedom that would ensure equality for all. The previous article 3 and the current article 2 have in common the advancement of the Irish language. In the previous constitution this is stated in terms of making Irish the usual language of all of the people of Ireland as a function of ensuring what has been described as an *Ireland, not only free but Gaelic as well*. In the current reformulation, the aim of the organisation is the advancement of Irish as the usual language of the people of Ireland, but now with no political overtones to the statement. The new article 3 then outlines how that advancement might be accomplished through ways designed to encourage others to participate in reaching the desired aim. These ways are set down as: to increase the numbers of speakers and Irish-speaking families as well as the number of organisations and bodies (educational, commercial, other) and events functioning through Irish; to ensure the provision of all services and supports required to enable people to use Irish in all aspects of life; to increase the status of Irish at home and abroad, *de jure* and *de facto*; to ensure the predominance of Irish in existing *Gaeltacht* areas and to establish new Irish-speaking communities; to engage in advocacy through representing Irish speakers and to actively communicate the aims and objectives of the organisation. The new article 4 describes the characteristics of *Conradh na Gaeilge* in the following terms: democracy, openness, participation, equality, inclusion or comprehensiveness, the dignity of the person and human rights.

Both formulations, the previous and the new, may, however, as such formulations tend to be, be regarded as fairly aspirational. The current constitution does, nevertheless, provide the basis for a detailed series of future actions, although these would, of necessity, require the involvement of other existing organisations, some having similar expressed aims. The issue of coordination and collaboration towards mutual aims arises. This, in turn, raises the more significant and related issues of the source or instigator of such joint cooperation, within which framework, according to which criteria. It would appear that a defined strategy is required.

Relocation of the Dublin headquarters of *Conradh na Gaeilge* has been mooted at various times. Such a move has already happened in the case of *Glór na nGael* and of *Oireachtas na Gaeilge*. A revised constitution may, perhaps, presage such a move in the future for the Gaelic League.

DIVERSITY OF THE SECTOR

An attempt at an overview of some of the existing organisations for the Republic and NI is given in Table 7.1 and here. The diversity of the sector is shown (in the table) in the information on selected organisations with regard to: dates of inception, source of funding (if applicable), all-Ireland coverage (if applicable), whether listed in the statutory schedule of *Foras na Gaeilge* for funding, and whether member of *An Chomhdháil*. In this section, the aim of a range of organisations is given by activity. Several are registered as companies with charitable status. Dates are given here if the organisation is not otherwise mentioned, whether as having been established by *Conradh na Gaeilge* or being listed in the Table.

EDUCATION

- **Services for teachers of Irish:** *Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge*
- **Support for establishing and maintaining parent-initiated Irish-medium playgroups and schools:** *Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta*, formerly *An Comhchoiste Réamhscolaíochta*

- (Playgroup Development Limited, formerly joint committee for pre-schooling); *Gaelscoileanna Teoranta* (Irish-medium schools Limited); *Gaedhealachas Teoranta*, 1940, (founded two schools outside Cork city)
- **Provision of Summer Colleges:** *Comhchoiste na gColáistí Samhraidh/CONCOS* (umbrella organisation), 1973; *Comharchumann Íde Naofa Teoranta* (Co-operative Limited), 1955; *Cumann na bhFiann Teoranta* (Organisation of Na Fianna Limited).
 - **Support for parents and teachers in Gaeltacht schools:** *Eagraíocht na Scoileanna Gaeltachta*, 1986. *Gaeil Uladh* was established to provide resources in the local dialect for schools in the Donegal *Gaeltacht*. There are also other support groups in the other *Gaeltachtaí*. For *Gaeltacht* preschools the company, *Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta Teoranta* (2004) arose from an existing company entitled *Seirbhísí* (Services).

SPECIFIC TARGET GROUPS

- **For women:** *Parlaimint na mBan* (Women's Parliament, title from a well-known earlier prose text), 1989.
- **For youth:** *Cumann na bhFiann* (runs clubs); *Ógras* (Youth); *Feachtas* (Campaign).
- **Support for families:** *Comhluadar* (Company, in social sense).
- **For clergy and religious matters:** *Cumann na Sagart* (*Gaeltacht* section – *Comhluadar na Sagart Gaeltachta*), Roman Catholic; *Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise*, Protestant churches, 1914.
- **For Catholics:** *An Réalt* (Star) – Legion of Mary, 1942; *Pobal an Aifrinn* (Mass Community), 1973.

BUSINESS-ORIENTED

- *Gael-Linn* (runs several language-oriented initiatives)
- *Gael-Taca* (lobby and support structure), 1986
- *An Foras Gnó* (for practitioners), 1972

CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

- **Drama:** *An Cumann Scoildrámaíochta* promotes drama in schools; *An Comhlachas Náisiúnta Drámaíochta* promotes national amateur drama through Irish.
- **Traditional art forms:** promoted through the annual competition *Oireachtas na Gaeilge*.

GAELTACHT

- **Central body for Gaeltacht Co-operatives:** *Comhlachas na gComharchumann Gaeltachta*. There are also many educational and community initiatives subvented by *Údarás na Gaeltachta*.

CELTIC LANGUAGES

- *An Chomhdháil Cheilteach* (Celtic Congress), Irish branch 1900.
- *An Conradh Ceilteach* (Celtic League), 1961.

GLÓR NA nGAEL – ALL-IRELAND COMPETITION

Glór na nGael is not considered an organisation as such. In 1961, the association for priests, *Cumann na Sagart*, began the all-island competition known as *Glór na nGael* (voice of the Irish – said to have been heard by St. Patrick before his return to Ireland). Organised on the basis of local representative committees, an annual prizegiving ceremony awards those communities which have advanced most in the previous year with regard to local development in the Irish language. Funded by *Foras na Gaeilge*, and having sponsorship for various prizes, including some from the Department with responsibility for the language, *Údarás na Gaeltachta*, and many others, the competition has proved quite efficacious. The difference is clear between areas which have a local *Glór na nGael* group and those without such support and as such its potential for local language planning is clear.

New developments have been put in place in recent years in order to ensure a better understanding of community language planning and a more realistic recognition of the community effort that provides results. These include changes in the adjudication process, in the marking scheme and in the value of the awards.

The premier award was worth up to €40,000 by including the Minister's Award (now €10,000) and the Provincial Award also. The overall prize fund for 2007 is now worth €150,000. Adjudication

now takes place on a more continuous basis and this is reflected in the marking scheme. In addition, emphasis is put on two new aspects of the Committee's work: encouragement of language use within families in the Committee's catchment area and the application of the Official Languages Act (2003) in the Republic or the application of the Charter of the Council of Europe in NI. The competition went international in 2005 with the announcement in August 2005, at the appropriate venue of the annual *Féile* (Festival) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, of the new competition *GlobalGaeilge*. This festival was attended by the President of Ireland, who is Patron of *Glór na nGael*. She welcomed the initiative as a method of recognition by those in Ireland of the efforts of the Diaspora to maintain the language. Eighteen committees in twelve countries took part in the first year and the prize went to 'DIGRM', a committee in Germany. A later meeting took place in Germany of the various committees in European countries. Two new initiatives introduced in 2007 are competitions for schools and for third level student organisations for Irish. There are two prizes in the schools category: €2,000 from the organisation *Gaelscoileanna* for the best plan to advance the language in the local *gaelscoil* community; a similar amount from *COGG (An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta)* directed at the school pupil community in English-medium schools. It is hoped to add prizes for the *Gaeltacht* and Northern Ireland in similar categories. [By 2008, the USA, Canada and Australia were being actively included in *Glór na nGael* activities.](#)

The main award went to NI in 2006, to *An Droichead* (The Bridge), Ormeau Road, Belfast, a community centre maintained on land bought by a community committee. The centre provides pre-school and primary school, services for youth and for the community and several other ventures. The award ceremony was held in the great hall of the seat of government in NI, Stormont, providing an unusually historic occasion.

The office of *Glór na nGael* relocated from Dublin to the Meath *Gaeltacht* in Spring 2007.

ASPECTS OF THE SECTOR

The heterogeneity and yet connectedness of the voluntary sector is illustrated by the outline of some organisations given in Table 7.1 and below.

CONSTITUENT ORGANISATIONS (24) OF COMHDHÁIL NÁISIÚNTA NA GAEILGE

This list demonstrates how representative the forum is of the different strands of the voluntary Irish-language sector. It includes small and large organisations, old and relatively new groups, and a cross section of community and special interest groups.

Education

- *Comhchoiste Náisiúnta na gColáistí Samhraidh* (CONCOS)
- *Comharchumann Íde Naofa Teoranta*
- *Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge Teoranta*
- *Coláiste na bhFiann Teoranta*
- *Eagraíocht na Scoileanna Gaeltachta*
- *Gaedhealachas Teoranta*
- *Gaelscoileanna Teoranta*
- *Na Naíonraí Gaelacha*
- *Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge Teoranta*

Gaeltacht Co-operatives

- *Comhlachas na gComharchumann Gaeltachta*

Community

- *Conradh na Gaeilge*
- *Comhaltas Uladh*

Youth

- *Ógras*
- *Feachtas*
- *Spleodar*

Business-Oriented

- *Gael-Linn Teoranta (as one of its activities)*
- *Gael-Taca*

Traditional Arts and Drama

- *Oireachtas na Gaeilge*
- *An Cumann Scoildrámaíochta*

Women and Family

- *Parlaimint na mBan*
- *Comhluadar*

Religion

- *An Réalt*
- *Cumann na Sagart*
- *Pobal an Aifrinn*

While this outline gives the main focus of each organisation, many will be engaged in more than one activity, whether aspects of education or the arts or the welfare of the community. Those having *Teoranta* (Limited) are now limited companies without share capital having charitable status. Organisations may collaborate towards common ends. A recent practical example is the pack for schools from *Comhluadar* and *Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge*, with aid from *Foras na Gaeilge*, which provides information and activities for students on the general theme of the benefits of bilingualism.

ORGANISATIONS LISTED IN THE SCHEDULE OF THE ACT**ESTABLISHING FORAS NA GAEILGE**

Foras na Gaeilge funds a range of groups, including *Glór na nGael*, *Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge*, *Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta*, *Gaelscoileanna Teoranta*, *Raidió na Life* (Dublin area community radio), and gives a small annual grant to *Parlaimint na mBan* and *Cór Dubhlinne* (Choir). It also funds very many groups and initiatives throughout the island of Ireland. [To these has been added *Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge* from 2008 with funding now transferred from the Department to *An Foras*.](#) However, there are eight organisations which are listed in a schedule which forms part of the Act by which *Foras na Gaeilge* was established and which now fall under the obligations of *Foras na Gaeilge* having been transferred to it from departmental funding.

- *Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge*
- *Gael-Linn*
- *Conradh na Gaeilge*
- *An tOireachtas (sic)* more usually *Oireachtas na Gaeilge*
- *An Comhlachas Náisiúnta Drámaíochta*
- *Cumann na bhFiann*
- *Comhluadar*
- and *Iontaobhas Ultach* which had been funded by the authorities in NI until the establishment of the all-Ireland language body and through which funding for some Irish-language initiatives in NI had been, and continue to be, channelled.

FUNDING FOR THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Almost all these voluntary organisations, together with *An Chomhdháil*, are largely State-subsidised by funding which comes initially from the same Department but may be disbursed by either that Department or by *Foras na Gaeilge*. Some exceptions are youth activities, including drama for schools, which come under the Department of Education. This funding for language activities in the Republic now comes largely from Lottery receipts, not from core Departmental sources. In addition, the actual percentage allocated to the voluntary sector appears to be falling in the overall budgetary context.

The overall funding situation is even more complex and has been complicated by several factors. These include: the transfer of some, but not all, organisational funding from the Department to *Foras na Gaeilge* by Act; the continuation of funding by the new *Foras na Gaeilge* for some voluntary education organisations which had previously been funded by *Bord na Gaeilge* but are not mentioned in the Act; the separation of voluntary and *Foras* (previously *Bord*) *na Gaeilge* funding under different subheads (although both largely depend on the Lottery) in Departmental budgetary estimates. In addition, since *Foras na Gaeilge* is an all-Ireland body, a proportion of its funding comes from NI sources. It funds NI initiatives and the one NI-based organisation listed in the schedule of the Act establishing *Foras na Gaeilge*. A recent research study, *Consistence and Persistence: Roles, Relationships and Resources of Irish Language Voluntary Organisations* (2004) commissioned by *An Chomhdháil*, shows, *inter alia*, the competitive context in which *Foras na Gaeilge* and the voluntary agencies both operate, the funder and the funded.

The official budget for 2006 given in the government Book of Estimates is €15,568,000 for *An Foras Teanga*, or 75% from the Department for Community, Rural and *Gaeltacht* Affairs (DCRGA) in the Republic. The other 25% would be provided by the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) in NI, to be divided between *Foras na Gaeilge* and the Agency for Ulster-Scots on a 3:1 ratio, the major part for Irish coming from DCRGA and for Ulster-Scots from DCAL. The remainder of the voluntary sector and other language projects in the Republic (*Ciste na Gaeilge*), not listed in the *Foras* schedule, was down for a total of €731,000.

In the 2007 December Budget announced for 2008, *An Foras Teanga* was again given an increase of no more than 2%, less than inflation at upwards of 3.5%, with €16,038,000 granted by the Dublin Government (75% of total). More had been expected since the body was no longer on a care and maintenance basis only, with the return of the devolved government of NI. Since funding comes from both jurisdictions for the cross-border body and neither may change upwards or downwards except with the consent of the other, the official explanation from Dublin relied on the problem of financial cutbacks in NI, where anticipated aid from the British Exchequer had not materialised. However, DCAL, the responsible NI department had, in fact, over £10m to spare after its initial budgetary allocation. The beneficiary of this situation was in fact *Ciste na Gaeilge*, the budgetary subhead for language groups and projects at the discretion of the Minister in the ROI, which went up 70%, from €4,452,000 to €7,555,000. Nonetheless, that funding by the ROI for *An Foras Teanga* (and those organisations associated with it) should be so constrained by NI was never anticipated and is of no small concern.

A Department-commissioned Report on the voluntary sector (1996: *Treo 2000*), which pre-dated the all-Ireland language arrangement, had indicated a different organisational plan. In fact, the most salient point officially implemented from this report was the separation of core (or administrative) and project funding for those voluntary organisations either historically funded or later named in the schedule of *Foras na Gaeilge*. There are other organisations which function largely on membership fees which are ploughed back to fund some events for members. These may, or may not, receive funding, from *Foras na Gaeilge* in particular, for specific projects or publications. However, the lack of clear objective criteria for what constitutes effectiveness in the delivery of different community language services has resulted in undue emphasis being placed on the more easily accessible standard efficiency norms of accountancy.

With the advent of the new arrangements in the context of North-South structures for Irish and a more organised voluntary sector in Northern Ireland, there is currently much scope for discussion on these and related issues. The structural weaknesses and lack of clarity with regard to the aims and operational arena of the different agents in the language field, State, semi-State and voluntary sector, are highlighted once analysis begins. It is hoped that a more coherent approach will result both from the Forum established by the responsible Minister to examine planning for the language and from the new funding criteria introduced by *Foras na Gaeilge*. Criteria within a coherent plan for all expenditure by both the State and *Foras na Gaeilge* would be helpful.

PROFESSIONALISM AND THE FUTURE

One of the most striking aspects of the Irish language voluntary sector is not its scope and diversity, but its overall professionalism, particularly in terms of its highly educated work force. Whether this is taking the place of, or remains integrated with, old-fashioned passion, idealism and

voluntarism is crucial for the future.

Research conducted (2004) for *An Chomhdháil* by the Centre for Nonprofit Management in Trinity College, Dublin, and funded by *Foras na Gaeilge*, emphasised the dependency of the sector on public funding, although finding that the younger NI organisations had greater funding than organisations in the Republic. While leadership, service provision, and community building were listed by all organisations among their perception of their role, the emphases were different between the two jurisdictions. It is hardly surprising that services and local community building are very much linked in NI, given the political history of the language there. Language and identity are bound together for language activists in both jurisdictions, but the local in NI is superseded by the national in the Republic.

Legitimacy for the aims and activities of the voluntary language sector in a rapidly changing society is seen as a major challenge as is the need to participate in decision making in national fora [towards more integrated planning rather than parallel or even similar activities being undertaken by different groups and agencies](#). These important issues had been highlighted also in other recent publications and in research theses by individuals working in the sector, at the chalk face.

THE CONCEPTS OF URBAN AND VIRTUAL GAELTACHT

The *Gaeltacht* constitutes the sole regions where Irish is still community language. Outside those regions, in the rest of the country, Irish speakers are found in dispersed networks rather than being territorially based. Many are involved in the voluntary language movement. Over the years, this has led to plans for setting up housing schemes for Irish speakers, a *Baile Gaelach* (Irish town) as one plan described it. This use of the term is, in fact, ironic, since *Irishtown* or *Baile Bocht* (Poor Town) was used in the past to describe parts of cities or towns, usually the poorer areas, to which the native Irish speakers had retreated or were concentrated. In fact both terms, *Irishtown* and *Baile Bocht* (Ballybough in the anglicised form) are found in Dublin city.

Shaw's Road in West Belfast is probably the best known and most enduring of these planned schemes of a new age, to the point where local development is at a stage where *Gaeltacht* status as a *Gaeltacht* Quarter was seriously sought, and has now been seriously considered and accepted by the relevant authorities in NI, on criteria of social regeneration and potential for tourism. [Arising from the community development and employment work of the group *Forbairt Feirste* \(Development of *Feirste* – *Béal Feirste* means mouth of the river named *Feirste*\), a report prepared by an expert on urban regeneration was published in December 2004. This report fully supported the concept of a *Gaeltacht* Quarter and recommended, *inter alia*, the establishment of a steering group representative of state and voluntary interests. By the end of 2005, two events took place. The responsible department, DCAL, had its own independent report prepared which also recommended a representative group as the previous report had done. *Forbairt Feirste* began to lose patience, however, when the new official development plan for Belfast city, with significant funding from the British Exchequer, contained reference to a Titanic Quarter but no mention of the *Gaeltacht* Quarter nor of any funding for such a development in West Belfast. By the end of 2006, however, the plan had come to fruition.](#)

In NI, a similar plan existed in Altmore, County Tyrone, where a site of over 50 acres had been earmarked to provide 20 homes and an education *cum* culture centre. Joint funding of £1.8m sterling was being sought to develop the site from the Northern Ireland Office and the Department of Community, Rural and *Gaeltacht* Affairs in the Republic. This plan did not reach fruition.

Of approximately the same age as the Shaw's Road venture is the enclave of houses for Irish speakers in *Gleann Maghair* (Glanmire), outside Cork City. This did not, however, develop to provide a larger community with a full range of public amenities, although there is Irish-medium education in the vicinity. A smaller enclave still exists at *Ráth Oiscair* outside *Nás na Rí* (Naas) in County Kildare. Several attempts were made to establish a scheme in the Dublin area, the latest in the mid 1990s as part of a larger housing scheme. None, however, attracted the requisite level of support. This was not totally unexpected, given the possible logistical problems in a city environment. The latest attempts (2004) have been a proposed development near the town of *An Uaimh* (Navan), County Meath, where the intention was to provide the amenities from the beginning and a renewed attempt by the group *Baile* (Home, Town) to set up an Irish language housing settlement within commuting distance of Dublin in the east of the country.

With the decline in the *fíor-Ghaeltacht* (true *Gaeltacht*–heartland) and rise in fluent second language speakers outwith the *Gaeltacht*, two viewpoints are emerging: the need for integrated

language planning as demonstrated in the Minister's decision to bring together two separate groups which he established for *Gaeltacht* planning and as Language Forum; the growing realisation that language maintenance may depend more and more on urban or other speakers and therefore for a redefinition of what *Gaeltacht* or Irish language community really means. The author (Reg Hindley) of a controversial monograph on the *Death of the Irish Language* (1990), which correctly predicted the precarious state of the *Gaeltacht*, while not changing his viewpoint on the *Gaeltacht*, has revised his views in recent times on the death of the language to life for the language outside the *Gaeltacht*. He had called his initial work 'a qualified obituary'.

This possibility, while hopeful, carries many corollaries for policy, both for community planning and planning for the nature of the language itself.

Another response to the retrenching *Gaeltacht* and to the possibility of redrawn boundaries has been the suggestion of a virtual global *Gaeltacht* that has no boundaries, being constantly redrawn in terms of interactive networks. While this may mean a continued future for the language in cyberspace, the idea has not grabbed the collective imagination of Irish speakers as a substitute for the reality, however fractured, that they already possess. While they use the internet for linguistic purposes, that is the extent of their commitment to date.

The crucial importance of the *Gaeltacht* (as territorial language community) to the language, and of the continued vitality of the language (both within the *Gaeltacht* and elsewhere) to the concept of the *Gaeltacht*, are inextricably linked in a mutual life or death existence. One without the other appears unimaginable to the majority of Irish speakers, whether they are conscious of their own vital role in the process or not. Other concepts of *Gaeltacht*, while helpful to the regional reality, are not substitutes for it.

SUMMARY ON THE STATE AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Language planning or language management is dependent on both a top down and a bottom up involvement. Arguments are currently being made by some in the sector on the nature of the relationship between State, statutory agencies and voluntary organisations in a participative democracy. The need for partnership towards co-planning is the thrust of the argument, particularly since there are so many different agencies functioning in the field: State, semi-State, voluntary (but largely State-funded). The majority function simultaneously as both pressure or advocacy groups and State agents, delivering linguistic services financed by the State. At the same time, these organisations try to defend that independence which permits them not only to speak on behalf of the Irish-speaking community and its well-wishers, but to criticise State action or inaction, if appropriate.

At an exhibition in May 2006 in the Mansion House in Dublin to celebrate eighty years of the *Fianna Fáil* political party, the *Taoiseach* – speaking in Irish – referred to a statement that would be made before long on the state's view of, attitude towards, and hopes for the Irish language in Ireland. The Government Statement on the Irish language in late December 2006, the first major official statement in many years, may provide the overall context in which top down and bottom up integrated planning may operate, develop and prosper, a fruitful confluence of political and popular will.

The *Coiste Comhairleach* (Advisory Committee), now *Fóram na Gaeilge*, lately combined with the Committee set up to advise the Minister on the implementation of the recommendations of *Coiste Comhairleach na Gaeltachta*, is fairly representative of all these operators or agents. Its remit now is advice to the Minister with responsibility for the language on the 20 year strategy towards a functional bilingual society. While the task appears straightforward, the implications could prove daunting since Committee members will presumably be acting for the common, or greater, rather than solely organisational, good. However, the very act itself of establishment of such a representative group is another advance in language management by the State in the Republic. There is as yet no broadly similar official body in NI although NI representatives sit on *Fóram na Gaeilge*.

Table 7.1 Voluntary Sector: Aspects of Irish

Organisation	Funding				
	Dept. for Language	Foras na Gaeilge	DES	Self-Financing	Other
Comhdáil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge (1943)	—	Yes	—	—	—
Conradh na Gaeilge (1893)	—	Yes	—	—	—
Gael-Linn (1953)	—	Yes	—	Partly	—
Comhluadar (1994)	—	Yes	—	—	—
Cumann na bhFiann (1968)	—	Yes	—	—	—
Ógras (1969)	—	—	Yes	—	—
Feachtas (1980)	—	—	Yes	—	—
Oireachtas na Gaeilge (1897)	—	Yes	—	—	Arts Council /Sponsors
Comhlachas Drámaíochta (1976)	—	Yes	—	—	—
Cumann Scoildrámaíochta (1934)	Yes	—	—	—	—
Seachtain na Gaeilge (1977 – reborn)	—	Yes	—	—	—
Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge (1964)	—	Yes	Occasional	—	M'ship and/or resources
CCR / FNT (1978)	—	Yes	—	—	Government Programmes
Gaelscoileanna (1973)	—	Yes	Occasional	—	M'ship and/or resources
Glór na nGael: competition (1961)	Prize	Yes	—	—	Sponsors
Cumann na Sagart (1916)	Resources	—	—	—	Membership

*Comhchoiste Réamhscolaíochta/Forbairt Náionraí Teoranta

Organisation	Remit		Foras Act	Comhdháil
	All-Ireland	Republic of Ireland	Cited	Member
Comhdáil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge (1943)	Yes	—	Yes	—
Conradh na Gaeilge (1893)	Yes	—	Yes	Yes
Gael-Linn (1953)	Yes	—	Yes	Yes
Comhluadar (1994)	Yes	—	Yes	Yes
Cumann na bhFiann (1968)	—	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ógras (1969)	—	Yes	—	Yes
Feachtas (1980)	—	Yes	—	Yes
Oireachtas na Gaeilge (1897)	Yes	—	Yes	Yes
Comhlachas Drámaíochta (1976)	Yes	—	Yes	—
Cumann Scoildrámaíochta (1934)	—	Yes	—	Yes
Seachtain na Gaeilge (1977 – reborn)	Yes	—	—	—
Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge (1964)	Yes	—	—	Yes
CCR / FNT (1978)	Yes	—	—	—
Gaelscoileanna (1973)	Yes	—	—	Yes
Glór na nGael: competition (1961)	Yes	—	—	—
Cumann na Sagart (1916)	Yes	—	—	Yes