Stádas na Gaeilge san Aontas
Eorpach - Status of Irish in the EU

On June 13 2005, Irish became the EU’s 21st official and working language, 32 years after Ireland joined the EEC. In its negotiations to join the EEC in 1971, the Irish government decided not to seek full status for the Irish language and Irish was thus granted the status of 'treaty language.'

This meant that all EU treaties were translated into Irish, and it was possible to make written submissions to the EU institutions and receive a reply in Irish, but the EU Official Journal was never translated into Irish.

In November 2004, the Irish government tabled a proposal in Brussels seeking official and working status in the EU for the Irish language. In June 2005, this proposal was adopted. It will come into effect on 1 January 2007, with a partial derogation in place whereby only key legislation must be translated into Irish, i.e. Irish translations will only be carried out for documents covered by co-decision between the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. After a transitional period of four years, this derogation, known as the 'Maltese Derogation', will be reviewed.

From 2007, Irish MEPs will be able to speak in Irish during Parliament debates, and Irish people will also be able to count Irish as a second working language when applying for jobs within the EU institutions.

The EU will pay for the translation costs incurred by this decision, as it does for all official languages, but the Irish government must first provide the necessary training to provide a group of skilled interpreters and translators for recruitment to the EU institutions.

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