

23 April, 2019 - Minister McHugh announces new project to teach Irish through other subjects including PE

New Steering Group established to progress Content and Language Integrated Learning to promote Irish in schools and early years settings

Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh T.D. has today, 23 April, announced a new project to support the learning of Irish through PE and other subjects.

The three-year pilot, using the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach, will be developed in two phases. It will be open to 22 starter schools and early years settings to take part from September 2019 with the number increasing as the project progresses.

Minister McHugh said: “We have a duty and responsibility to try and make Irish relevant to the next generation. “Seeing young people socialising and playing and having fun in a language is as good a test as there is of how vibrant and alive a language is. Through actions like this we can support our young people to connect with our language and own it.

“In a post Brexit global economy, we need to ensure that young people are engaged in a way that promotes bilingualism or even multilingualism, a skill that will support future economic growth.”

The first phase of the project will be developmental and will run over the 2019/2020 school year. It will include the design of a professional development programme and resources for teachers and early years practitioners. Teachers and practitioners in a range of settings will be invited to participate.

Starter schools and preschools taking part in the early phase will receive considerable support from teacher educators including the Department’s support services. The teachers, practitioners and pupils involved in the first phase will then be ambassadors for the CLIL approach to language learning as the project progresses.

In almost all of the English-medium preschools, primary and post-primary schools involved the project will work exclusively on promoting Irish by learning various curricular areas through our language.

In Irish-medium post-primary schools, the project will exploit the experience of learning through Irish to develop further CLIL learning in Modern Foreign Languages. This will be built upon as the project expands. The second phase of the project which will commence in 2020/2021, will allow the project to be extended to a greater number of schools and settings and will involve larger numbers of teachers and practitioners.

Minister McHugh said: “We should not stop here. Our goal should be to make this new approach a success and see the great potential to extend it to other subjects in schools like music, science, art or maths. “I would encourage stakeholders to attend the upcoming CLIL information event and support teachers and young people in participating in this very important and innovative project.”

CLIL is an educational approach in which the target language, (Irish or a Modern Foreign Language) is used in the teaching and learning of other subjects. For example PE could be taught through Irish in an English medium school, or through French in an Irish or English medium school. While CLIL is not the same as immersion, it offers flexibility and opportunities for a more focused approach to target language learning and teaching.

The Department will host a CLIL information session in the coming weeks to outline the project and the benefits of participation to stakeholders. As part of development work, Minister McHugh has established a new steering group to progress a CLIL pilot project for Irish as provided in the Irish language five-year Action Plan 2018-2022 and for Modern Foreign Languages under the Languages Connect Strategy.

The group comprises representatives from Mary Immaculate College/UL, Institute of Technology Tralee, DCU, Maynooth University, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), the Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) as well as departmental officials and the Inspectorate. The pilot project will work with teachers to develop quality-assured lesson exemplars/materials and resources and ensure focused professional development for teachers. It will build on the learning and insights gained from the work already done by institutions and the Department’s Professional Development Service for Teachers.

Notes to Editors

Content and Language Integrated Learning:

The education-related objectives set out in the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish language 2010-2030 and the associated Action Plan 2018-2022 include the Department’s commitment to explore a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach to implementing partial immersion in Irish in schools and early years’ settings. A similar commitment is contained in the Languages Connect Strategy for Foreign Languages (2017-2026).

CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both language and content. A CLIL approach provides for the delivery of aspects of the curriculum through a language that is not the medium of instruction in the school. While CLIL is not the same as immersion, it offers flexibility and opportunities for a more focused approach to target language learning and teaching by:

increasing the exposure of learners to Irish or other languages by extending its use as a medium of communication and instruction in real contexts beyond discrete language lessons

supporting the development of learner's higher order cognitive and creative competences

exploiting and integrating opportunities for language acquisition and content learning in other curricular areas to support the use of academic language

expanding teachers' pedagogical repertoire in languages and other subjects

extending and promoting the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism

Significant developments have taken place in Irish language curricular provision at primary and post-primary level since the publication of the Government's 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030.

The Primary Language Curriculum (2015) promotes an integrated approach to the learning of English and Irish.

For the first time, separate Irish language specifications were published in 2016 for Junior Cycle Irish in Irish-medium and in English-medium post-primary schools.

Developments have also taken place in terms of the provision of new specifications for subjects and short courses in Modern Foreign Languages at Post-Primary level.

<https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2019-press-releases/PR19-04-23.html>