



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

**Submission by the Northern Ireland Human
Rights Commission to the Council of Europe
Committee of Experts of the European Charter
for Regional or Minority Languages**

**Mid-cycle report for the sixth periodic
examination of the United Kingdom**

June 2026

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Summary of Recommendations

- 3.10** The Committee of Experts may wish to recommend the Northern Ireland Executive to take urgent action to develop, implement, and monitor a well-resourced Irish Language Strategy, in consultation with the Northern Ireland Irish Language Commissioner, Irish language speakers, and their representative organisations.
- 3.11** The Committee of Experts may wish to recommend the Northern Ireland Executive to take urgent action to develop, implement, and monitor a well-resourced Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy, in consultation with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British tradition, Ulster Scots language speakers and their representative organisations.
- 4.9** The NIHRC welcomes the significant progress made in commencing and implementing the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, particularly the appointment of the Director of the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression, the Irish Language Commissioner, and the Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and Ulster British tradition.
- 4.10** The Committee of Experts may wish to recommend to the Northern Ireland Executive to ensure that the offices of the Irish Language Commissioner and the Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and Ulster British tradition are adequately resourced to fulfil their legal mandates effectively, including the implementation of their respective complaint mechanisms.
- 5.14** The Committee of Experts may wish to seek assurance from the Northern Ireland Executive that adequate resources are allocated to address the pressures facing the Irish-medium teaching sector, while ensuring the prompt development of an Irish-Medium Education Strategy that

includes provisions for Irish-medium Special Education Needs.

- 5.21 The Committee of Experts may wish to request confirmation from the Northern Ireland Executive that appropriate measures and resources are in place to meet the Department of Education's statutory duty to promote and support the use and understanding of Ulster Scots in the education system.**

- 6.7 The Committee of Experts may wish to ask the Northern Ireland Executive what measures it is implementing to address the politicisation of minority language promotion and to foster mutual understanding in Northern Ireland.**

- 6.8 The Committee of Experts may wish to ask the Northern Ireland Executive to clarify how it intends to develop and implement mechanisms for collecting data to assess the effectiveness of the minority language legal framework in promoting and fostering mutual understanding of language issues in Northern Ireland.**

- 7.6 The Committee of Experts may wish to seek confirmation from the UK Government that proposals for a renewed BBC Royal Charter will clearly set out strategies to promote and ensure sustainable funding for Irish and Ulster Scots broadcasting.**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As an A-status National Human Rights Institution in accordance with the Paris Principles and pursuant to Section 69(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) reviews the adequacy and effectiveness of measures undertaken by the United Kingdom (UK) Government and Northern Ireland Executive to promote and protect human rights in Northern Ireland.
- 1.2 The NIHRC welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence on the UK Government and Northern Ireland Executive's progress in complying with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML). In February 2024, the NIHRC submitted a comprehensive [Parallel Report](#) for the Sixth Periodic Report of the UK and Northern Ireland, which can be consulted for further context.¹ In this submission, the NIHRC reports on progress in implementing the immediate action recommendations from the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers (Committee of Ministers) and the Committee of Experts of the ECRML (Committee of Experts), as outlined in the Recommendation CM/RecChL(2024)6 and the Sixth Evaluation Report on the UK and the Isle of Man (UK Sixth Report), regarding Irish and Ulster Scots languages in Northern Ireland.

2.0 Committee of Ministers and Committee of Experts Recommendations for immediate action for the UK

- 2.1 In their Recommendation CM/RecChL(2024)6, the Committee of Ministers recommended the UK to consider all the observations and recommendations from the Committee of Experts and, as a priority:²

¹ Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 'Submission to the Council of Europe Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Parallel Report for the Sixth Periodic Report of the UK and NI' (NIHRC, 2024).

² CM/RecChL(2024)6, 'Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for regional or Minority Languages by the United Kingdom' (CoE, 2024).

- 1. Adopt language strategies for Irish and Ulster Scots without further delay;**
- 2. Take measures to strengthen the teaching and long-term recruitment of teachers for all regional or minority languages;**
- 3. Take measures to promote tolerance towards speakers and awareness of regional or minority languages to promote mutual understanding in society as a whole;**
- 4. Take measures to enhance support for minority language broadcasting and ensure an appropriate regulatory framework to guarantee sustainability.**

2.2 In their UK Sixth Report, the Committee of Experts recommended the UK to take immediate action to:³

- a) Adopt the Irish Language Strategy and allocate the adequate resources to fund its implementation.**
- b) Implement fully the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 without further delay.**
- c) Develop and implement a strategy for the recruitment of teachers in co-operation with speakers, including the training of teachers for children with special needs within the Irish medium education sector.**
- d) Adopt a language strategy to promote Ulster Scots in education, media and other areas of public life.**

3.0 Irish and Ulster Scots Language Strategies

³ CoE Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 'Sixth Evaluation Report on the UK and the Isle of Man' (COMEX, 2024), at para 2.2.2. and 2.5.2.

- 3.1 The Northern Ireland Executive has not yet adopted or implemented language strategies for the Irish or Ulster Scots languages.
- 3.2 In 2025, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended that the UK Government and NI Executive “expedite the establishment of the institutions and policies envisaged for the protection and promotion of the Irish language and Ulster Scots culture and heritage, ensuring meaningful participation of minority language groups and their representative organisations”.⁴
- 3.3 The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement 1998 includes a general provision on minority languages according to which:
- All participants recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland.⁵
- 3.4 The Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006 requires the Northern Ireland Executive to adopt a strategy setting out how it proposes to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language and adopt a strategy setting out how it proposes to enhance and develop the Ulster Scots language, heritage and culture.⁶ In the January 2020 New Decade, New Approach agreement to restore the government in Northern Ireland, all five political parties (who then became Executive members) committed to introducing an Irish Language Strategy and an Ulster Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy.⁷
- 3.5 In 2021, the Northern Ireland Department for Communities convened Expert Advisory Panels to propose recommendations for the Irish and

⁴ E/C.12/GBR/CO/7, ‘UN ICESCR’s Concluding Observations on the Seventh Periodic Report of the UK of Great Britain and NI’, 28 February 2025, at para 58(d).

⁵ Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement 1998, at 19.

⁶ Section 15, Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006. Available at: [Northern Ireland \(St Andrews Agreement\) Act 2006](#).

⁷ NI Office, ‘New Decade, New Approach’ (NIO, 2020), at para 5.21.3; Department for Communities, ‘Development of an Irish Language Strategy and an Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy’. Available at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/development-irish-language-strategy-and-ulster-scots-language-heritage-and-culture-strategy/>.

Ulster Scots Strategies. The recommendations were published in 2022.⁸ The Department for Communities opened a consultation on the recommendations⁹ and established a co-design group for each strategy to consider each Expert Advisory Panel's recommendations.¹⁰

- 3.6 Between 2021 and 2024, the co-design groups met with officials from the Department for Communities to discuss the content of each Strategy.¹¹ The co-design groups completed their work and proposed to the Department for Communities a draft Strategy Action Plan for Irish and Ulster Scots.¹²
- 3.7 The draft Irish Language Strategy and draft Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy must be approved by the Northern Ireland Executive before they can be published for consultation. In March 2026, the Northern Ireland Minister for Communities informed the Northern Ireland Assembly that a cross-departmental working group of senior officials is reviewing the draft Strategies and Action Plans to ensure they are "coherent, costed, and include achievable actions within departmental remits".¹³ He advised that once that work is complete and the necessary departmental approvals are in place, officials will submit both draft Strategies to the Minister for consideration. The Minister will then bring them to the Northern Ireland Executive for approval, after which a public consultation is expected. However, he noted that the detailed timetable is outside his Department's control.¹⁴

⁸ Department for Communities, 'Irish Language Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Recommendation Report'. Available at: [Irish Language Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Recommendation Report | Department for Communities](#); Department for Communities, 'Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy Expert Advisory Panel Recommendation Report'. Available at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/ulster-scots-language-heritage-and-culture-strategy-expert-advisory-panel-recommendation-report>.

⁹ Department for Communities, 'Consultation on the Expert Advisory Panel's Recommendations Report for an Irish Language Strategy'. Available at: [Consultation on the Expert Advisory Panel's Recommendations Report for an Irish Language Strategy | Department for Communities](#); Department for Communities, 'Consultation on the Expert Advisory Panel's Recommendations Report for an Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage & Culture Strategy'. Available at: [Consultation on the Expert Advisory Panel's Recommendations Report for an Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage & Culture Strategy | Department for Communities](#).

¹⁰ Department for Communities, 'Development of an Irish Language Strategy and an Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy'. Available at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/development-irish-language-strategy-and-ulster-scots-language-heritage-and-culture-strategy/>.

¹¹ Meeting of the Irish Language Strategy Co Design Group, 22 July 2024; Meeting of the Ulster-Scots Strategy Co Design Group, 27 June 2024.

¹² Hansard, 'Written Answers: Irish Language Strategy – Mr Colm Gildernew – AQW 22858/22-27', 27 February 2025.

¹³ Northern Ireland Assembly Hansard, 'Written Question: Ulster Scots Strategy – Andy Allen MBE – AQW 42498/22-27, 13 March 2026; Northern Ireland Assembly Hansard, 'Oral Question: Irish Language Strategy– Declan Kearney MLA – AQO 3126/22-27, 13 March 2026.

¹⁴ Hansard, 'Written Answers: Irish Language Strategy – Mr Colm Gildernew – AQW 22858/22-27', 27 February 2025.

- 3.8 The delay in advancing the Strategies has led to two legal challenges, in 2017 and again in 2022. In both cases it was held that the Northern Ireland Executive Committee failed to comply with its statutory duty to adopt a strategy to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language.¹⁵ A third legal challenge against the Northern Ireland Executive and the Department for Communities for failing to develop and adopt an Irish Language Strategy is currently before the Northern Ireland High Court.¹⁶
- 3.9 In the ongoing case, the applicant is seeking a court order mandating the publication of a timetable for adoption of the Strategy. The hearing of that application has concluded, and a judgment is awaited. The NIHRC will keep this under review. While it has been announced that some work is underway, the NIHRC notes that work has been underway for nearly two decades, and there is a danger that without immediate action, the delay will continue with an impact on both language communities and on the commitments made in the New Decade New Approach agreement.
- 3.10 **The Committee of Experts may wish to recommend the Northern Ireland Executive to take urgent action to develop, implement, and monitor a well-resourced Irish Language Strategy, in consultation with the Northern Ireland Irish Language Commissioner, Irish language speakers, and their representative organisations.**
- 3.11 **The Committee of Experts may wish to recommend the Northern Ireland Executive to take urgent action to develop, implement, and monitor a well-resourced Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy, in consultation with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British tradition, Ulster Scots language speakers and their representative organisations.**

¹⁵ In the Matter of an Application by Conradh na Gaeilge [2017] NIQB 27; In the Matter of an Application by Conradh na Gaeilge [2022] NIQB 56.

¹⁶ Conradh na Gaeilge, 'Press Release: Conradh na Gaeilge lodge third Judicial Review Proceedings against Executive, including Communities' Minister, on failure to bring forward and adopt Irish Language Strategy', 3 July 2025.

Updates on other non-statutory language policies

- 3.12 In 2018, Belfast City Council adopted a Language Strategy, with the objective of making Belfast “a place where linguistic diversity is celebrated and respected”,¹⁷ and where all those who live, work and visit Belfast can access the city “using languages with which they are familiar and comfortable”.¹⁸ In 2024, Belfast City Council approved a Language Strategy Action Plan that sets out proposals to deliver the objectives of its Language Strategy and commits the Council to taking action on Irish and Ulster Scots, among other languages.¹⁹
- 3.13 In 2025, Belfast City Council approved its first Irish language policy, aimed at promoting and using Irish across its services.²⁰ The policy covers interpretation and translation, it includes key documents and publications and provides for signage for facilities, parks and vehicles, and the Council’s website. It also introduces a bilingual corporate logo and a formal offer of services in Irish.²¹ The Council provides dual-language street names when 15 per cent or more of the surveyed occupiers of a street have indicated that they are in favour of the erection of a second language street sign.²² The policy also refers to ECRML commitments and the Committee of Experts’ recommendations.²³
- 3.14 Belfast City Council’s decision to approve its first Irish language policy in October 2025²⁴ was followed by a ‘call-in’ request seeking reconsideration of the decision, under Section 41 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.²⁵ This gave rise to a dispute concerning the standing orders governing the Council’s decision-making procedures. Judicial review proceedings were issued in November 2025 to challenge the approval of the policy.²⁶ In April 2026, the Northern Ireland High Court dismissed the challenge, holding that the Council’s standing orders were

¹⁷ Belfast City Council, ‘[Language Strategy 2018-2023](#)’. Available at: [Language Strategy 2018-2023](#).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Belfast City Council, ‘Press release: [Belfast City Council approves first ever Irish language policy](#)’, 1 October 2025.

²¹ Belfast City Council, ‘Draft Irish Language Policy’. Available at: [Belfast City Council Draft Irish Language Policy - Background](#).

²² Belfast City Council, ‘Street naming and building numbering’. Available at: [Street naming and building numbering](#).

²³ Belfast City Council, ‘Draft Irish Language Policy’. Available at: [Belfast City Council Draft Irish Language Policy - Draft Irish Language Policy | Appendix 1](#)

²⁴ Belfast City Council, ‘Press release: [Belfast City Council approves first ever Irish language policy](#)’, 1 October 2025.

²⁵ The matter of an application by Ann McClure for leave to apply for judicial review [2026] NIKB 16. Available at: [IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND](#).

²⁶ Ibid.

not unlawful.²⁷ The substance of the Council's Irish language policy, and the decision to approve it, was outside the scope of the High Court proceedings. In June 2026, Belfast City Council decided not to reconsider its decision to adopt its Irish language policy. That policy is therefore in effect.²⁸

- 3.15 Belfast City Council is also developing an Ulster Scots policy, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British tradition.²⁹ According to the Council, the policy will outline strategies to promote and support Ulster-Scots across Council functions. The policy also seeks to support heritage, encourage language development, enhance awareness and visibility in line with the ECRML Part 2 commitments and the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, and build capacity for potential ECRML Part 3 recognition.³⁰ The draft policy is scheduled to be presented to elected members in 2026 for approval, after which a public consultation will be issued.³¹
- 3.16 In May 2026, the Northern Ireland Department for the Economy (DfE) launched a public consultation on its draft Irish language policy.³² The draft policy sets out how the DfE will meet its commitments under the ECRML by enabling services and communications in Irish. It affirms that individuals requesting services in Irish are entitled to the same standard of service as those who request them in English and must not be treated less favourably because of their language choice.³³

²⁷ In the matter of an application by Ann McClure for leave to apply for judicial review [2026] NIKB 16, at para 140 and 150. Available at: [IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND](#). Belfast City Council received a notice of appeal from the applicant in the case. Belfast City Council, 'Reconsideration of a decision in respect of the Irish Language Policy', at 3.1. Available at: [*Council Report - Reconsideration - Irish Language Policy - June 2026 002.pdf](#).

²⁸ Belfast City Council, 'Annual Meeting, Council - Monday, 1st June, 2026 6.00 pm: 12 (a) Reconsideration of a decision in respect of the Irish Language Policy'. Available at:

<https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=164&MIId=12409&Ver=4>.

²⁹ Northern Ireland Assembly Hansard, '[Northern Ireland Assembly: Broadcasting: Geoblocking- Caoimhe Archibald MLA](#)', 19 May 2026.

³⁰ Email correspondence from Belfast City Council to Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 19 May 2026.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Department for the Economy, 'Open consultation Comhairliúchán ar Dhréachtbheartas Gaeilge na Roinne Geilleagair. Consultation on Draft Department for the Economy Irish Language Policy'. Available at: [Comhairliúchán ar Dhréachtbheartas Gaeilge na Roinne Geilleagair. Consultation on Draft Department for the Economy Irish Language Policy. | Department for the Economy](#).

³³ Department for the Economy/an Roinn Geilleagair, 'Department for the Economy Irish Language Policy and Guidance 2026' (DfE, 2026).

3.17 In March 2026, students at Queen's University Belfast (QUB) voted in favour of adopting an Irish Language Policy that grants equal status to English and Irish, and that implements a bilingual corporate identity and signage throughout campus.³⁴ The vote is not binding on the University; however, QUB has stated, through the media, that it is engaging with Northern Ireland's Irish and Ulster-Scots Language Commissioners to review their current policies and best practice examples, while assessing the operational and resource implications of any new projects on bilingual signage, which will inform future QUB budget submissions to the Northern Ireland Executive.³⁵

4.0 Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022

4.1 The Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 received Royal Assent on 6 December 2022. The Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022:

- i. Establishes an Office of Identity and Cultural Expression in Northern Ireland (Section 1).
- ii. Provides official recognition of the status of the Irish language in Northern Ireland and establishes an Irish Language Commissioner to protect and enhance the use of the Irish Language by public authorities (Section 2).
- iii. Establishes a Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British tradition to enhance and develop the language, arts and literature associated with the Ulster-Scots and the Ulster British tradition in Northern Ireland (Section 3).

³⁴ According to results published by Queen's University Students' Union (QUBSU), 4,607 students voted in favour of changes to the union and university's signage and Irish language policy, while 407 voted against. A total of 5,088 students voted, with 91.88% supporting the changes. QUB has approximately 25,000 students. QUBSU, 'All-Student Vote'. Available at: [All-Student Vote](#).

³⁵ Brett Campbell, '[QUB to review 'best practice' for dual signage following meeting with Irish language commissioner](#)', *Belfast Telegraph*, 17 May 2026.

- iv. Allows the use of languages other than English in legal proceedings by repealing the Administration of Justice (Language) Act (Ireland) 1737 Act that required English-only proceedings (Section 4).
 - v. Requires the Northern Ireland Department of Education to encourage and facilitate the use and understanding of Ulster Scots in the education system (Section 5).
- 4.2 There have been significant developments in commencing and implementing the provisions of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022.³⁶
- 4.3 In 2025, Sections 4 and 5 of the Act came into force. Section 4 repeals the Administration of Justice (Language) Act (Ireland) 1737,³⁷ while Section 5 places a duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate the use and understanding of Ulster Scots in the education system.³⁸ Implementation of these provisions falls to the Northern Ireland Executive and its respective Departments.
- 4.4 Also in 2025, the Director of the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression, the Irish Language Commissioner, and the Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British tradition were appointed by Northern Ireland's First and Deputy First Ministers.³⁹
- 4.5 While the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is responsible for bringing the legislation to commence the provisions of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, implementation falls to the Northern Ireland Executive.

³⁶ The Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 has been commenced by [The Identity and Language \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2022 \(Commencement\) Regulations 2023](#) (2023/566) of 22 May 2023, [The Identity and Language \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2022 \(Commencement\) Regulations 2025](#) (2025/214) of 25 February 2025, and [The Identity and Language \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2022 \(Commencement No. 3\) Regulations 2026](#) (2026/75) of 28 January 2026.

³⁷ [The Identity and Language \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2022 \(Commencement\) Regulations 2025](#) (2025/214) of 25 February 2025. The 1737 provision made it mandatory that all court proceedings, patents and charters in Ireland were conducted exclusively in the English language.

³⁸ [The Identity and Language \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2022 \(Commencement\) Regulations 2025](#) (2025/214) of 25 February 2025.

³⁹ In 2025, the Northern Ireland First Minister and deputy First Minister announced the appointments of Dr Katy Radford as Director of the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression, Pól Deeds as Irish Language Commissioner, and Lee Reynolds as Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British tradition. The Executive Office, 'Press Release: Language Commissioners and Director of the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression appointed', 28 October 2025.

- 4.6 Most of the legal powers of the Language Commissioners came into force between 2025 and 2026.⁴⁰ However, some provisions of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 are yet to be commenced. These provisions relate to public authorities' obligation to have due regard to Irish language best-practice standards and Ulster Scots and Ulster British tradition guidance, as well as provisions on complaints mechanisms for non-compliance with language duties.⁴¹ The delay in commencing these provisions is intended to give the Language Commissioners sufficient time to develop and publish comprehensive best practice standards and guidance.⁴²
- 4.7 Recently, the Irish Language Commissioner informed the Northern Ireland Assembly that he has commissioned research to support his office's work in developing best practice standards. He expects these standards to go out for public consultation in September 2026 and will then be submitted for the approval of Northern Ireland's First and Deputy First Ministers before the end of 2026.⁴³
- 4.8 Additionally, both the Irish Language Commissioner and the Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British tradition

⁴⁰ [The Identity and Language \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2022 \(Commencement No. 3\) Regulations 2026 \(2026/75\)](#) of 28 January 2026.

⁴¹ The following provisions of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 have yet to be commenced:

Part 7A - Office of Identity and Cultural Expression (OICE)

- **78H(3)(d)**: OICE's power to provide grants to persons with aims similar to its own.
- **78I**: Establishment of the Castlereagh Foundation.

Part 7B - Irish Language Commissioner

- **78J(1)(c)**: The specific requirement for public authorities to have due regard to Irish language best practice standards.
- **78L(2)(b/c)**: Relates to the approval process for best practice standards by the First and deputy First Minister and the investigation of complaints regarding non-compliance with the duty to have regard to best practice standards.
- **78O**: Places a legal duty on public authorities to have due regard to Irish language standards and to publish a compliance plan.
- **78P**: Establishes the complaints mechanism for failures by public authorities to comply with their Irish language duties

Part 7C - Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and the Ulster British tradition

- **78S(2)(c)**: Relates to the investigation of complaints that a public authority has failed to have due regard to guidance published by the Commissioner.
- **78T**: Places a duty on public authorities to have regard to the Ulster Scots and Ulster British tradition Commissioner's guidance.

⁴² Email correspondence between the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 3 June 2026.

⁴³ Northern Ireland Assembly, 'Committee for Communities - Thursday 11 June 2026'. Available at: [Committee for Communities - Thursday 11 June 2026](#).

expressed concerns to the Northern Ireland Assembly that their allocated budgets are insufficient to cover the staffing required to implement the complaints mechanisms under the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, which would undermine their capacity to effectively fulfil their legal mandates. Both Commissioners have raised these concerns with the Northern Ireland Executive Office.⁴⁴

4.9 The NIHRC welcomes the significant progress made in commencing and implementing the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, particularly the appointment of the Director of the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression, the Irish Language Commissioner, and the Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and Ulster British tradition.

4.10 The Committee of Experts may wish to recommend to the Northern Ireland Executive to ensure that the offices of the Irish Language Commissioner and the Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and Ulster British tradition are adequately resourced to fulfil their legal mandates effectively, including the implementation of their respective complaint mechanisms.

5.0 Recruitment and training of teachers

5.1 Under the Education (NI) Order 1998, the Department of Education has a duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish medium education and to encourage and facilitate the use and understanding of Ulster Scots in the education system.⁴⁵

Irish-medium education

5.2 There are currently 30 Irish-medium schools in Northern Ireland, along with a further 10 Irish-medium units attached to English-medium host

⁴⁴ Northern Ireland Assembly, 'Committee for Communities - Thursday 11 June 2026'. Available at: [Committee for Communities - Thursday 11 June 2026](#).

⁴⁵ Sections 89 and 89A, Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.

schools.⁴⁶ In 2025/2026, more than 7,800 pupils were enrolled in funded Irish-medium education, including nearly 6,000 pupils educated in dedicated Irish-medium schools and pre-school settings, and over 1,800 in Irish-medium units attached to English-medium schools.⁴⁷ Enrolment has increased, with numbers rising by nearly 750 pupils since 2020/2021 and by over 200 in the past year.⁴⁸ Statistical reports also indicate an increase of approximately 400 per cent in Irish-medium education over the past 20 years.⁴⁹

- 5.3 In 2024/2025, there were approximately 346 teachers in Irish-medium education in Northern Ireland.⁵⁰ The Department of Education informed the NIHRC that it does not provide data on the number of special-needs teachers in Irish-medium education, nor does it collect any teacher data on Ulster Scots.⁵¹
- 5.4 According to Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta,⁵² Irish-medium Education is one of the fastest-growing sectors in Northern Ireland. As this growth is expected to continue, it has significant implications for teacher training, recruitment, and retention, with demand for Irish-medium teachers likely to increase.⁵³
- 5.5 A research report about teachers' workload in Irish-medium schools found that teachers frequently work beyond their contracted hours and are often required to translate English-language textbooks and teaching materials due to a lack of appropriate Irish-language resources. This

⁴⁶ Department of Education, 'Irish-medium schools'. Available at: [Irish-medium schools | Department of Education](#).

⁴⁷ Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and Department of Education, 'Annual enrolments at schools and in funded pre-school education in Northern Ireland 2025/26', Section 6: Changes in enrolment patterns. Available at: [Annual enrolments at schools and in funded pre-school education in Northern Ireland 2025/26](#).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Department of Education, 'School enrolments - 2005/06 statistical bulletins', at 2 and Department of Education, 'School enrolments - 2025/26 Statistical bulletins', at table 2b. Available at: [School enrolments - overview | Department of Education](#).

⁵⁰ Email correspondence from the Northern Ireland Department of Education's Statistics and Research Team to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 23 March 2026. The Department of Education reported the 'Headcount' (346) and 'Full-Time Equivalent' (327.99) of teachers in Irish Medium Schools between 2024/2025. These figures do not include teachers in Irish-medium units attached to English-medium schools.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (the Council for Irish-medium Education) was established in 2000 to advise and support the Department of Education and other institutions on their obligations towards Irish-medium education. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 'About'. Available at: [About 4 — Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta](#).

⁵³ Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 'Ensuring Effective Teacher Supply in The Irish Medium Sector: A proposed action plan to address the dearth of teaching staff at primary and post-primary level in the Irish-medium sector' (Gaeloideachas, 2023). Available at: [Ensuring effective teacher supply in the Irish-medium sector | Gaeloideachas](#).

excessive workload is harming teachers' professional and personal lives.⁵⁴ The report recommends introducing an Irish-medium teaching allowance, providing additional time for planning, preparation, and assessment, and significantly increasing Initial Teacher Education places for Irish-medium teachers to address recruitment challenges. It also proposes subsidising Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) teacher training programmes, supporting professional Master's degrees, and offering financial incentives such as bursaries and grants, drawing on examples from Wales and Ireland.⁵⁵ In addition, the report suggests exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to support Irish-medium education. For example, AI tools, including machine translation and large language models, could assist with routine translation and generate initial drafts of teaching materials, allowing teachers to focus more on planning and classroom instruction.⁵⁶

- 5.6 In 2025, the Education Minister introduced a pilot 'Teacher Education (ITE) Bursary Scheme' to tackle teacher shortages in critical subjects.⁵⁷ The scheme will provide financial support to students training to teach in Irish-medium schools by covering tuition fees and, for some, living expenses.⁵⁸
- 5.7 The Education Minister informed the Northern Ireland Assembly that the Department of Education is developing a dedicated Irish-Medium Education Strategy and is currently engaging with stakeholders to produce an accompanying action plan.⁵⁹ The strategy aims to support the sector's growth and long-term sustainability.⁶⁰
- 5.8 In March 2026, the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill was introduced in the Northern Ireland Assembly in the form of a Private Member's Bill. The Bill requires the Department of Education to prepare a

⁵⁴ Noel Purdy, Claire McVeigh, Mark Ballentine and Emilia Symington, 'Teacher Workload in the Irish medium Sector. Evidential Insights' (CREU, 2025). Available at: [\(PDF\) Teacher Workload in the Irish Medium Sector: Evidential Insights](#).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Department of Education, 'Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Bursary Scheme'. Available at: [Initial Teacher Education \(ITE\) Bursary Scheme | Department of Education](#).

⁵⁸ 'Tuition fees teaching bursary welcomed by students', *BBC News*, 23 September 2025.

⁵⁹ Northern Ireland Assembly Hansard, 'Written Question: Irish medium education strategy – Pat Sheehan MLA – [AQW 45885/22-27](#), 12 May 2026; Northern Ireland Assembly Hansard, 'Written Question: Irish medium education – Emma Sheerin MLA – [AQW 33639/22-27](#), 15 October 2025.

⁶⁰ Northern Ireland Assembly Hansard, 'Oral Question: Irish medium education in Belfast – Carál Ní Chuilín MLA – [AQO 2445/22-27](#), 30 September.

workforce plan for Irish-medium education to address staff shortages in the Irish-medium sector.⁶¹

- 5.9 In May 2026, the Department of Education published a new 'NI Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning', which acknowledges ongoing challenges in attracting a broad range of subject teachers to the Irish-medium sector and highlights the need to address this. It commits to undertaking a comprehensive review of Initial Teacher Education provision for the sector to inform future pathways and supports.⁶²
- 5.10 Also in May 2026, the Education Minister announced that AI tools and training would be provided to teachers in Northern Ireland.⁶³ According to the Department of Education, the £10.7 million investment will provide GenAI licences for "all teaching staff in every school across Northern Ireland", with the aim of reducing teacher workload, cutting unnecessary administrative tasks, improving efficiency and wellbeing, and supporting innovation in teaching and learning.⁶⁴
- 5.11 The NIHRC welcomes the Department of Education's recent initiatives to address the training, recruiting and availability of teachers for Irish-medium education. However, we note that these efforts will take time to close the identified gaps, while pupil numbers in Irish-medium education continue to grow. In the short term, Irish-medium teachers are therefore likely to continue to experience significant challenges, including excessive workload. The NIHRC notes the Department's recent announcement on the use of AI to support teachers in Northern Ireland, which may help to alleviate some of these pressures. The impact of this initiative should be kept under review to assess its effectiveness and determine whether additional measures are required to further support the Irish-medium sector.

⁶¹ Northern Ireland Assembly, 'Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill', Clause 1. Available at: [Irish-medium Education \(Workforce Plan\) Bill](#).

⁶² Department of Education, 'Leading Together for Excellence: A TransformED NI Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning' (DoE, 2026), at 31. The Department of Education has opened a public consultation on the strategy. Department of Education, 'Open consultation. Consultation on Leading Together for Excellence: A TransformED NI Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning'. Available at: [Consultation on Leading Together for Excellence: A TransformED NI Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning | Department of Education](#).

⁶³ Department of Education, 'Press release: Givan announces roll out of AI tools and training for Northern Ireland teachers', 6 May 2026.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

- 5.12 Provision for Special Educational Needs (SEN) within the Irish-medium education sector remains a significant area of concern. In 2024, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta reported critical shortfalls in SEN provision across Irish-medium education in Northern Ireland.⁶⁵ The report highlights the lack of linguistically appropriate assessment and diagnostic tools, as well as insufficient staffing and resources for dedicated support services, particularly in speech and language, literacy, and behavioural support, which are typically delivered in English.⁶⁶ The report recommends increasing efforts to recruit Irish-speaking SEN teaching and support staff, including educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, and other allied health professionals. It also calls for the development of language-appropriate assessment tools and the provision of Irish-medium pupil support services within the Education Authority services.⁶⁷
- 5.13 The Education Minister informed the Northern Ireland Assembly that the Northern Ireland Education Authority had launched a localised pilot recruitment scheme for classroom assistants to address the recruitment of suitably qualified SEN support staff. According to the Education Minister, this initiative will help with the recruitment of specialised trained support staff, increasing the capacity of Irish-medium schools to meet the needs of all learners.⁶⁸
- 5.14 **The Committee of Experts may wish to seek assurance from the Northern Ireland Executive that adequate resources are allocated to address the pressures facing the Irish-medium teaching sector, while ensuring the prompt development of an Irish-Medium Education Strategy that includes provisions for Irish-medium Special Education Needs.**

⁶⁵ Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 'The Provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Irish-medium Education'. Available at: [The Provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Irish-medium Education November 2024 | Gaeloideachas](#).

⁶⁶ Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 'The Provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Irish-medium Education'. Available at: [The Provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Irish-medium Education November 2024 | Gaeloideachas](#); agendaNi, 'Disparity in SEN provision in Irish-medium education'. Available at: <https://www.agendani.com/disparity-in-sen-provision-in-irish-medium-education/>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Northern Ireland Assembly Hansard, 'Written Question: Irish language – Daniel McCrossan MLA – [AQW 31540/22-27](#), 18 September 2025.

Ulster Scots in education

- 5.15 As of 2025, Section 5 of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 places a duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate the use and understanding of Ulster Scots in the education system.⁶⁹ The NIHRC is not aware of any new initiatives introduced by the Department to fulfil this duty since it came into force.
- 5.16 The Northern Ireland Education Authority does not have a dedicated budget or staff for Ulster Scots. However, it has established an [Ulster-Scots Hub](#) on its website, which provides information, resources, and materials to support the delivery of Ulster Scots learning activities in classrooms, including language resources.⁷⁰ The Education Authority also offers an optional staff training module covering its statutory duties under the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, as well as general information on Ulster Scots, and “encourages schools to engage in programmes with Ulster-Scots and Irish at the core”.⁷¹
- 5.17 The Education Authority has advised the NIHRC that it actively collaborates with the Ulster-Scots Agency and other organisations to deliver educational activities. However, it does not provide funding to the Ulster-Scots Agency for this purpose.⁷²
- 5.18 The Ulster-Scots Agency advised the NIHRC that it has observed a notable shift towards expanding Ulster Scots language-related activities and improving accessibility of the Ulster Scots language. Over the past five years, there has been a sharp increase in demand for Ulster Scots language initiatives. The Agency has responded by publishing a journal to encourage greater use of the written language and by launching six-week language courses, which are gaining momentum.⁷³

⁶⁹ This section was commenced by [The Identity and Language \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2022 \(Commencement\) Regulations 2025](#) (2025/214) of 25 February 2025.

⁷⁰ Northern Ireland Education Authority, ‘Ulster-Scots’. Available at: [Ulster-Scots | Education Authority Northern Ireland](#); Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment, ‘Ulster-Scots for Primary Schools’. Available at: [Language & Literacy resources | CCEA](#).

⁷¹ Email correspondence between the Education Authority and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 22 April 2026. The NIHRC notes that the optional training module has not been updated to reflect the commencement of the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the use and understanding of Ulster Scots within the education system under Section 5 of the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Email correspondence between the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Ulster-Scots Agency, 4 June 2026.

- 5.19 Despite this progress, the Ulster-Scots Agency reports ongoing challenges, including scepticism in some sections of the community regarding the status of Ulster Scots as a protected minority language, a sentiment they have also observed within the public sector. The Agency considers that the statutory educational duty set out in the Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 will be essential in addressing this issue. However, it reports being under significant pressure, as most educational activities in schools, including workshops and teaching resources, are developed and delivered by them on their own budget, without financial support from the Education Authority.⁷⁴
- 5.20 The NIHRC welcomes the close collaboration between the Department of Education and the Ulster Scots sector in delivering educational activities. However, the Department also has a distinct statutory obligation to encourage and facilitate the use and understanding of Ulster Scots within the education system. The NIHRC is concerned about the effective fulfilment of this obligation in the absence of adequate, dedicated resources to develop and implement initiatives that promote the use of Ulster Scots in education.
- 5.21 **The Committee of Experts may wish to request confirmation from the Northern Ireland Executive that appropriate measures and resources are in place to meet the Department of Education’s statutory duty to promote and support the use and understanding of Ulster Scots in the education system.**

6.0 Promotion of tolerance and awareness of minority languages for mutual understanding

- 6.1 The Committee of Ministers recommended that, as a matter of priority, the UK take measures to promote tolerance towards speakers and awareness of regional or minority languages to promote mutual understanding in

⁷⁴ Ibid.

society as a whole.⁷⁵ The Committee of Experts urged UK authorities to promote Irish and Ulster Scots languages in a depoliticised manner.⁷⁶

6.2 The Human Rights Act 1998 places an obligation on public authorities to act in accordance with the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).⁷⁷ This includes Article 14 ECHR, which prohibits discrimination, on grounds including language, in the enjoyment of other Convention rights, and Article 10 ECHR, which protects freedom of expression, including the right to receive and impart information. The European Court of Human Rights has held that

where a religious or any other community becomes divided, it considers that this is one of the unavoidable consequences of pluralism. The role of the authorities in such circumstances is not to remove the cause of tension by eliminating pluralism, but to ensure that the competing groups tolerate each other.⁷⁸

6.3 Article 7(3) of the ECRML establishes a positive obligation on States to promote, by appropriate measures, mutual understanding between all the linguistic groups of the country and to have regard to the objective of respect, understanding and tolerance of minority languages.

6.4 Language issues remain highly politicised and contentious in Northern Ireland. Public authorities frequently face legal challenges regarding the adoption of language policies and dual-language signage.⁷⁹ Dual-language street signs are particularly controversial and have been damaged.

⁷⁵ CM/RecChL(2024)6, 'Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for regional or Minority Languages by the United Kingdom' (CoE, 2024).

⁷⁶ CoE Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 'Sixth Evaluation Report on the UK and the Isle of Man' (COMEX, 2024), at para 2.2.2. and 2.5.2.

⁷⁷ [Section 6](#), Human Rights Act 1998.

⁷⁸ *AGGA v Greece*, applications Nos 50776/99 and 52912/99, judgment of 17 October 2002, at para 60.

⁷⁹ In the Matter of an Application by Conradh na Gaeilge [2017] NIQB 27; In the Matter of an Application by Conradh na Gaeilge [2022] NIQB 56; Conradh na Gaeilge, 'Press Release: Conradh na Gaeilge lodge third Judicial Review Proceedings against Executive, including Communities' Minister, on failure to bring forward and adopt Irish Language Strategy', 3 July 2025; In the matter of an application by Ann McClure for leave to apply for judicial review [2026] NIKB 16. Available at: [IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND](#); Phoenix Law, 'Press release: [Resident of Portadown street celebrates dual-language sign as 2-year High-Court legal battle comes to an end](#)', 19 March 2026; Department for Infrastructure, 'Press release: [Irish Language to feature at Belfast Grand Central Station](#)', 24 March 2025 and Conradh na Gaeilge, 'Press Release: [Conradh na Gaeilge welcomes Court proposal to seek guidance and expertise from Irish Language Commissioner in Grand Central Dual-language Signage Decision](#)', 11 September 2025; [Conradh Na Gaeilge v Information Commissioner & Anor \[2024\] UKFTT 97](#).

Language issues also continue to generate political tensions, including between political parties in Northern Ireland.⁸⁰

- 6.5 The NIHRC notes that the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, together with the appointment of new Commissioners, establishes a new legal framework intended to advance language rights in Northern Ireland. The expected introduction of Irish and Ulster Scots Language Strategies may further reinforce this framework. However, the implementation of this framework remains in its early stages, and its practical effects have yet to be fully demonstrated. Consequently, no official data have been published evaluating the framework's effectiveness in promoting awareness and tolerance of regional or minority languages. The NIHRC is not aware of any systematic mechanism within the Northern Ireland Executive for collecting data to assess the impact of these measures but would encourage that such a mechanism be established in the near future.
- 6.6 Recently published research on public attitudes to social issues in Northern Ireland showed robust and positive public support for both Irish language and Ulster Scots as a way of enriching life in Northern Ireland.⁸¹
- 6.7 **The Committee of Experts may wish to ask the Northern Ireland Executive what measures it is implementing to address the politicisation of minority language promotion and to foster mutual understanding in Northern Ireland.**
- 6.8 **The Committee of Experts may wish to ask the Northern Ireland Executive to clarify how it intends to develop and implement mechanisms for collecting data to assess the effectiveness of the**

⁸⁰ See for example Northern Ireland Assembly Hansard, '[Northern Ireland Assembly: Irish and Ulster-Scots Language Strategies- Gordon Lyons MLA](#)', 18 May 2026; Northern Ireland Assembly Hansard, '[Northern Ireland Assembly: Irish Language Strategy- Colm Gildernew MLA](#)', 19 May 2026; Northern Ireland Assembly Hansard, 'Northern Ireland Assembly: Belfast City Council: Irish Language Policy- Phillip Brett MLA', 6 October 2025.

⁸¹ The research reports on results from the 2025 Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey. 1,244 adults living in Northern Ireland completed the NILT survey in 2025. Over half (56%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Irish language adds to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland, while nearly half of respondents (45%) agreed or strongly agreed that Ulster Scots language, heritage and culture add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland. 45% of respondents think that learning Irish is beneficial for children at school, while 31% feel the same about Ulster Scots. 45% of respondents believe that more should be done by the Northern Ireland Executive to encourage and promote the Irish language, with 28% thinking the same for Ulster Scots. The top five preferred ways of learning more about Ulster Scots and Irish are: visiting hairtlains and Gaeltacht areas; TV and radio; online courses; apps; informal education. Aisling O'Boyle, Lorna Carson and Paula Devine, 'Words Matter. Public attitudes to the Irish language and Ulster-Scots'. Available at: [NILT | ARK - Access Research Knowledge](#).

minority language legal framework in promoting and fostering mutual understanding of language issues in Northern Ireland.

7.0 Support for Minority Language Broadcasting

- 7.1 The Committee of Ministers recommended that, as a matter of priority, the UK take measures to enhance support for minority language broadcasting and ensure an appropriate regulatory framework to guarantee sustainability.⁸² Similarly, and whilst not a recommendation for immediate action, the Committee of Experts called on the UK to ensure that the Media Act 2024 and the future revision of the BBC Royal Charter include adequate promotion of regional or minority languages, including Irish and Ulster Scots.⁸³
- 7.2 The BBC's Charter came into force on 1 January 2017 and is due to expire on 31 December 2027. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for drafting the Charter. In late 2025, the Department launched a review of the current Charter (the Charter Review).⁸⁴ Alongside Terms of Reference,⁸⁵ the Department published a Green Paper and opened a public consultation, which closed in March 2026.⁸⁶ This process will inform proposals for a renewed Charter, which is expected to come into force on 1 January 2028 and remain in place for a further 10 years.⁸⁷
- 7.3 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Green Paper on the Charter Review briefly addresses the promotion of minority languages. One option

⁸² CM/RecChL(2024)6, 'Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for regional or Minority Languages by the United Kingdom' (CoE, 2024).

⁸³ CoE Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 'Sixth Evaluation Report on the UK and the Isle of Man' (COMEX, 2024), at 5, 8 and para 19.

⁸⁴ Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 'Review of the BBC Royal Charter 2025 to 2027 - Terms of reference'. Available at: [Review of the BBC Royal Charter 2025 to 2027 - Terms of reference - GOV.UK](#).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 'Press release: Government launches Charter Review to future-proof the BBC', 16 December 2025. Available at: [Government launches Charter Review to future-proof the BBC - GOV.UK](#); Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 'Closed consultation Britain's Story: The Next Chapter - the BBC Royal Charter Review, Green Paper and public consultation'. Available at: [Britain's Story: The Next Chapter - the BBC Royal Charter Review, Green Paper and public consultation - GOV.UK](#).

⁸⁷ Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 'Closed consultation Britain's Story: The Next Chapter - the BBC Royal Charter Review, Green Paper and public consultation'. Available at: [Britain's Story: The Next Chapter - the BBC Royal Charter Review, Green Paper and public consultation - GOV.UK](#).

under consideration is support for sustainable minority language broadcasting, which “could include more explicitly defining the BBC’s commitment to minority language communities or adapting how the BBC is made to partner with existing minority language broadcasters”.⁸⁸

- 7.4 While efforts to strengthen commitments to, and funding for, minority language broadcasting are welcome, the NIHRC notes that the Green Paper focuses predominantly on Welsh, with only limited reference to Irish and Ulster Scots.⁸⁹ The outcome of the public consultation is pending, and a White Paper outlining the Government’s proposed policy changes is expected in 2026.⁹⁰ The NIHRC hopes the White Paper will clearly set out strategies to promote and ensure sustainable funding of Irish and Ulster Scots broadcasting in Northern Ireland.
- 7.5 The Media Act 2024 received Royal Assent on 24 May 2024. The Act amends the remit of public service television by expressly requiring “a sufficient quantity of audiovisual content that is in, or mainly in, a recognised regional or minority language”.⁹¹ Consequently, the Act imposes a legal obligation on public service broadcasters to collectively support minority language broadcasting, with the regulator Ofcom responsible for supervising compliance.⁹² However, unlike for Welsh, the Act does not provide specific protections or minimum content requirements for Irish or Ulster Scots. The Media Bill was criticised during parliamentary debate for failing to place other UK minority languages on an equal footing with Welsh.⁹³
- 7.6 **The Committee of Experts may wish to seek confirmation from the UK Government that proposals for a renewed BBC Royal Charter**

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Welsh is mentioned 16 times, Irish twice, and Ulster Scots once in the Green Paper, and the public consultation does not mention them at all.

⁹⁰ Department for Culture, Media & Sport, ‘Press release: Government launches Charter Review to future-proof the BBC’, 16 December 2025. Available at: [Government launches Charter Review to future-proof the BBC - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-charter-review-to-future-proof-the-bbc).

⁹¹ Section 1(5)(ii), Media Act 2024.

⁹² Media Act 2024; UNESCO, ‘Minority Language Broadcasting’. Available at: [Minority Language Broadcasting - Policy Monitoring Platform](https://www.unesco.org/en/repertoire/minority-language-broadcasting).

⁹³ Parallel Parliament, ‘Media Bill (First sitting)’. Available at: <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/debate/2023-12-05/commons/public-bill-committees/media-bill-first-sitting>; Hansard, Contribution by Kirsty Blackman MP. Available at: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-12-05/debates/55291173-1211-4ec2-a579-9fef4146d528/MediaBill\(FirstSitting\)#contribution-F2674201-F71B-48F9-8D1A-65AD7611D62C](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-12-05/debates/55291173-1211-4ec2-a579-9fef4146d528/MediaBill(FirstSitting)#contribution-F2674201-F71B-48F9-8D1A-65AD7611D62C); Hansard, Contribution by Stephanie Peacock MP. Available at: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-12-05/debates/55291173-1211-4ec2-a579-9fef4146d528/MediaBill\(FirstSitting\)#contribution-3EEF114D-7583-41D4-B0F4-E5E10093A5A9](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-12-05/debates/55291173-1211-4ec2-a579-9fef4146d528/MediaBill(FirstSitting)#contribution-3EEF114D-7583-41D4-B0F4-E5E10093A5A9)

will clearly set out strategies to promote and ensure sustainable funding for Irish and Ulster Scots broadcasting.

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