

# International Models of Language Planning

Thomas Pace



**T**homas Pace presented a comparative analysis, arguing that studying other jurisdictions helps policymakers understand how to promote language across key domains like administration, education, and media. However, he cautioned that comparisons must be contextual: Malta's official bilingualism (Maltese and English) and its status as a small island state create a unique "linguistic ecology" different from large monolingual nations like France or Germany.

Pace focused on three specific case studies that offer relevant lessons for Malta:

## 1. Luxembourg: The Multilingual Model

Luxembourg serves as a parallel for a small, multilingual state. It actively promotes its national language, Luxembourgish, as a tool for social integration without rejecting French or German.

- *Strategy:* Luxembourg ties citizenship to language proficiency. It is impossible to become a naturalised citizen without proving competence in Luxembourgish.
- *Workplace:* They utilise strong incentives for workplace language training.
- *Lesson for Malta:* A small state can maintain a national language alongside global languages if it is institutionalised as the language of integration.

## 2. Iceland: The Digital Defence

Iceland represents a historically monolingual state now facing immense pressure from English, particularly in digital media and youth culture.

- *Strategy:* Iceland has declared a "digital extinction" emergency. Their response includes a massive government investment in language technology, partnering with OpenAI (GPT-4) to guarantee that AI generates text in correct Icelandic. They also heavily subsidise dubbing and subtitling to ensure children's media is available in Icelandic.
- *Lesson for Malta:* If a language is not present in digital spaces, it will lose the younger generation.

### 3. Ireland: The Warning

Ireland is a bilingual state where the national language (Irish) is the first official language, yet a minority language in practice.

- *Strategy*: Ireland offers robust legal frameworks, long-term strategies, and dedicated regulatory bodies (like *An Coimisinéir Teanga*). They secure funding and visibility for the Irish language.
- *Reality Check*: Despite these efforts, daily usage outside the Gaeltacht remains low.
- *Lesson for Malta*: Legal status alone does not guarantee language vitality. Policy must address *usage*, not just rights.

### Key Takeaway

Pace concluded that language policy must be treated as serious public policy with clear objectives and measurable actions. A written, long-term national strategy is necessary to provide stability beyond political election cycles.