**ABSTRACT**

Although the Republic of Ireland and Malta have English as an official language, both countries have ensured that their co-official languages, Irish and Maltese, are also recognised at European Union (EU) level. Yet, lacking a tradition as international conference languages, the road to linguistic equality in the EU institutions has not been straightforward. This article examines the motivation underpinning EU recognition of Irish and Maltese, before analysing how this change of status has been implemented.