

PART 2: QUESTIONS FOR CONSULTATION

The Department of Education and Skills is drafting a Foreign Languages in Education Strategy. The views of stakeholders are being sought to inform the development of this Strategy. Outlined below are a number of key questions. You are invited to provide your feedback on each question. There is also a space at the end of this template for any other more general comments you may wish to make that are relevant to the issue of foreign languages in education. It would be important to note that the submissions received will be available for general distribution.

Name of respondent: Teacher Education Section, DES

Organisation, if any, whose views are being represented:

Email address:

1. Raising Awareness

What measures should be undertaken to promote awareness, at national, community, enterprise and individual level, of the importance of language learning and to increase interest in and motivation for foreign language learning?

- All stakeholders should be made aware of the benefits of language acquisition, firstly, the competences developed in learning a language and the resulting lifelong skillset, and secondly, the transferable skills that are acquired throughout the language-learning process. School leaders should be empowered to inform parents and students of these benefits, and staff development related to curricular reform should focus on these skills and the advantages of language learning.
- The implementation of literacy plans in schools provide rich opportunities to promote language awareness among students across the curriculum.
- Initial teacher education (primary and post primary) also has a vital role to play in raising awareness of the importance of language learning and motivating teachers and learners at all levels to engage with foreign language learning.
- A greater awareness needs to be generated among education partners of programmes such as Erasmus plus and how it can contribute to greater levels of teacher mobility and promote the benefits of language learning. Participation in such programmes needs to be integrated into initial teacher education programmes.
- In addition, emphasis needs to be placed on raising awareness of the importance of intercultural competence. The manner in which languages other than L1 can be used in an innovative way to present outside perspectives on a learner's own culture and thought processes is an area that merits exploration in terms of pedagogy.

2. Supporting migrant languages in educational settings

How can we encourage our migrant children to become proficient in the language of their adopted community, while at the same time maintaining oral, written and cognitive academic language proficiency in their own mother tongue?

With regard to the needs of migrant students, there is increased autonomy provided to schools within *A Framework for Junior Cycle*. Specifically designed short courses could be created to meet the needs of this student body.

Post Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) is in the process of developing short courses in a diverse range of languages, such as Russian, and the NCCA has developed a short course in Chinese Language and Culture. Interested teachers may modify these short courses to suit the needs of their particular students.

Transition Year also offers schools great flexibility in the programme offered in senior cycle. Languages of migrant students, through modules/ short courses could be incorporated into the programme, as relevant.

State Examinations Commission needs to continue to provide migrant students with access to examinations in their mother tongue.

3. Learning and Teaching

How can foreign language learning be supported for students from post-primary educational settings and thereafter? You may wish to concentrate on one educational sector.

A Framework for Junior Cycle (October 2012) offers the potential to make significant strides at junior cycle level in engendering an interest in and love and appreciation of language as a system of communication among students. This should encourage them in pursuing the study of languages in senior cycle and beyond.

To support this post-primary schools need to in the first instance, recognise English and Irish as languages and their potential in contributing to students' experience of language learning. Schools need to offer access to more than one foreign language to students, particularly in junior cycle. The availability of short courses and the flexibility afforded by Transition Year could be used to enhance curricular provision for languages.

School leaders need to take teacher' language and pedagogical competence into account when planning the languages curriculum and school's CPD plan for staff.

Development of short courses in modern languages

Short courses offer excellent opportunities to extend access to Modern Foreign languages. The Post Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) is in the process of developing short courses in a diverse range of languages, including Russian, and the NCCA has developed a short course in Chinese. Interested teachers may modify these short courses to suit the needs of their students, or alternatively develop their own short courses to meet the skillset of the staff. This will promote diversity in language acquisition. These short courses will integrate language e-portfolios based on the European Language Portfolio (ELP) which will promote lifelong learning.

Short courses developed by the PPLI are benchmarked against the CEFR and include strands such as Language Awareness and Intercultural Awareness which are considered very important aspects of developing communicative competence in a language. The CEFR uses an action-oriented approach which bases language teaching and learning on the performance of communicative tasks and on language communication activities. The CEFR also encourages the learner to be involved in their language learning, and gives them the means of setting goals for themselves and developing their autonomy, recording their language progress, valuing success and giving a meaning to language learning.

Aligning learning with the CEFR provides that a students' certificate/ qualification is transferable and recognised in other jurisdiction supporting workforce mobility / further and lifelong study of languages.

Developing new specifications for languages

New language specifications at JC level offer the opportunity to align learning outcomes with the CEFR levels, similar to the short courses developed by PPLI. The introduction of benchmarking where all the skills are assessed will have a hugely positive effect on classroom teaching and learning experience and students' engagement with the languages.

The approaches to teaching modern foreign languages need to be explored as traditionally, languages are thought in the classroom as stand-alone subjects. Curricular reform offers an

opportunity to discuss alternative approaches to language teaching which complement language acquisition. One such approach is the use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), where the language of instruction is not L1.

The reticence in adopting this approach to language learning in Ireland is underlined in *Language Education Policy Profile: Ireland* (Council of Europe, 2008: p 10), which examined approaches to language teaching in Ireland and found that:

Ireland has a tradition of immersion education to teach the Irish language. However, partial bilingual programmes or CLIL-type models or options—where parts of the curriculum are taught through the L2 (Irish) or a foreign language—have not been adopted to any significant extent. Teachers therefore need education and training in areas like CLIL.

There is also scope to further integrate ICT into language learning to foster student engagement and support language acquisition.

4. Teacher Education

How can we ensure an adequate and ongoing supply of highly-skilled, professional teachers/trainers of foreign language at all educational levels to meet ongoing and emerging needs?

The Teaching Council

The Teaching Council has a key role in setting standards and ensuring the ongoing supply of highly-skilled teachers of foreign languages.

The required level of language competence among modern foreign language teachers should be taken into account by the Teaching Council in the context of its statutory function to establish and maintain codes of professional conduct for teachers including standards of teaching, knowledge, skills and competences. Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and language subject degree providers should ensure that course provision caters for any required language competence standards accordingly, as well as relevant pedagogical content knowledge, where appropriate.

The Teaching Council's current consultation on CPD is an opportunity to ensure that different formats of teacher's engagement in professional learning are captured and recognised in the forthcoming CPD framework.

Initial Teacher Education

Initial Teacher Education providers have a key role to play in ensuring that teachers have adequate competence in language and pedagogical content knowledge to meet the needs of all learners in schools. Some providers conduct interviews in the target language with applicants in order to ensure that entry standards are met. This approach could be adopted across providers.

The extended initial teacher education programmes now being implemented provide opportunities for student participation in Erasmus type programmes. ITE programme

providers need to integrate such learning experiences into their assessment and accreditation frameworks.

Continuing Professional Development

Languages are living, and this nature of languages including Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) must be reflected in approaches to teaching. This means that innovative approaches to the teaching of languages are necessary and this must be supported at all stages along the continuum of teacher professional development. This is reflected in *Language Education Policy Profile: Ireland* (Council of Europe, 2008, p.10)

‘Without definite intervention, especially in the areas of awareness-raising and teacher in-career development, it is almost inevitable that the situation of languages at second level will continue to decline’.

Language teachers need support in order to be aware of and familiar with the latest developments in language teaching. Teacher pedagogy needs to be empowered and supported by up to date resources in order to engage their students and engender a love of language learning. Ongoing and sustained professional development for teachers will positively impact on language development in schools and will contribute to lasting change in the teaching and learning of modern foreign languages

ICT offers a wide range of opportunities in the CPD space. From the teachers’ perspective, it supports their own personal and professional development, as language subjects require the teacher to engage in ongoing upskilling to maintain and develop their competence and support the teacher in using their MFL skills for the creation and maintenance of social relations in authentic scenarios and exposes the teachers to a wealth of resources in an online community of practice

5. Assessment and Qualifications

How can enhanced flexibility, choice and continuity in foreign language learning programmes, their assessment and accreditation be provided, particularly at Further and Higher Education?

European Language Portfolio & e-Portfolios

e-Portfolios offer exciting opportunities to develop ongoing assessment approaches in the language learning classroom and also promote the notion of lifelong learning in relation to languages. The use of e-Portfolios also provides for the alignment of learning with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) as reflected in previous European Language Portfolios (see link below).

From an assessment point of view, this offers students the opportunity to become involved in the assessment process and promotes formative feedback. Both the CEFR and the European Language Portfolio link clearly with many aspects of the Framework for Junior Cycle. This is outlined in a document prepared by the Post Primary Languages Initiative (2013)

http://www.languagesinitiative.ie/images/l_can_article_table_9.09.13.pdf

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) provides a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency. It is used in Europe but also in other continents and is now available in 39 languages. It is essential that any future developments in relation to language learning at all levels including initial and continuing teacher professional development are aligned with the CEFR in a meaningful and constructive manner.

Across Europe, the CEFR is increasingly used in teacher education, the reform of foreign language curricula and the development of teaching materials
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Survey_CEFR_2007_EN.doc

RELANG - Upskill experts in Irish context on promoting common assessment across languages

Relier les examens de langues aux niveaux européens communs de référence pour les compétences linguistiques

Relating language examinations to the common European reference levels of language proficiency

At post-primary level, numerous Irish education stakeholders (e.g., DES, NCCA, SEC, PDST, JCT, PPLI) are soon to engage in a RELANG workshop (April 2015)

The main focus of the workshop is to give relevant experts the tools to promote assessment that is based on the *Common European Framework of Reference* in order to promote quality assurance and facilitate mobility. The impact of this training and process could ensure:

1. Confidence that Irish practice is aligned with Europe in the area of languages assessment
2. Higher quality provision of CPD and resources in the area of assessment and languages education
3. Support for improved teaching and learning of foreign languages because assessment is based on the CEFR which promotes a communicative language teaching approach, and it also 'mirrors' the principles of JC reform
4. Shared best practice across agencies of the DES.

REFERENCES:

Council of Europe (2002) *Common European Framework of Reference*

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/elp/elp-reg/cefr_EN.asp [Accessed 6th October 2014]

Council of Europe (2008) *Language Education Policy Profile: Ireland*

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Council-of-Europe-Language-Education-Policy-Profile.pdf> [Accessed 6th October 2014]

Dalton-Puffer, C. (2011). Content-and-language integrated learning: from practice to principles? *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31, 182-204

5. Assuring Quality

What measures should be in place to support quality assurance measures, evaluation processes and research projects and to provide a knowledge and evidence base for policy making in the area of foreign languages?

Modern Foreign Language course providers at third level, including initial teacher education providers, have a key role to play in setting standards and assuring the quality of learning at all levels.

Language learning needs to be aligned with the common European Framework of Language Learning.

6. Supporting Multilingualism in Business and Society

How can we promote a multilingual society and support service providers, both public and private, in meeting emerging needs?

a) What role can the education system play?

- Provide opportunities for learners to engage in language learning
- Adopt a CLIL approach in schools
- Encourage and facilitate participation in Comenius and Erasmus and other such programmes at all levels.

b) What role can employers play in enhancing the linguistic skills of their employees, particularly their Irish employees?

Employees need to be given opportunities to use and enhance their language skills and have achievements recognised.

7. Other Comments

Please add any other comments you may have below that you believe are relevant to the development of the Strategy.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this template. Your feedback will help to inform the development of the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy

Please email this template to foreignlanguages@education.gov.ie , or post it to: Tim O’Keeffe, Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1