

FRAMEWORK FOR CONSULTATION

on a

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

in

EDUCATION STRATEGY

For IRELAND

August 2014

Background

As part of the Government's Action Plan for Jobs 2014, the Department of Education and Skills has committed itself to develop and publish a foreign languages strategy mindful, not only of the Language Education Policy Profile (2008), but of other circumstances that have evolved, particularly in the last decade, and of our need to "support Ireland's "winning abroad" agenda".¹

The intention is to develop a foreign languages strategy which covers post-primary, further and higher education. This document does not consider the role of Irish and English, nor will the strategy. Significant work is currently being undertaken separately in relation to the Irish language by the Department of Education and Skills. Instead it is intended to concentrate on the additional foreign languages that our students may learn in post-primary education and thereafter. The Strategy will not address the needs of students who come to Ireland to attend language schools. Their needs are being addressed in other contexts.

Consultation

All stakeholders are invited to comment on this consultation document. The consultation is open from August 2014 to the end of October 2014.

When the consultation closes, a forum will be held to discuss outcomes from the consultation and to seek further clarifications towards the finalisation of a foreign languages in education strategy for Ireland.

Structure of this consultation document

Part 1 of this consultation document sets out the background and national context in relation to foreign languages in Irish society.

Part 2 asks a series of consultation questions, the responses to which will inform consideration and development of the strategy. The questions are designed to stimulate debate and to promote reflection, so as to generate material which will inform the development and thereafter implementation of the strategy.

Stakeholders are invited to submit written responses to as many questions as are relevant to their areas of interest and expertise and may do so from a sectoral perspective, if they so wish.

Next Steps

When the results of this consultative process have been analysed, a forum will be organised to discuss the findings from the submissions that have been received. Following the forum, a foreign languages in education strategy will be finalised for consideration by the Minister in spring 2015.

¹ Action Plan for Jobs 2014, p26

PART 1: CONTEXT

1. Introduction - Why a foreign languages strategy?

Language is one of the means by which we think, organise our knowledge, express our thoughts and feelings, and communicate with others. We live in a world which is rich in languages, and Ireland, too, has its own linguistic heritage. English and Irish and other minority languages such as Cant/Shelta, sign language and immigrant languages (particularly now that immigrants account for over 10% of our population) are part of our unique, ever evolving, cultural and linguistic identity. As citizens of Europe and the world, we are also exposed to many other languages and cultures. Knowledge of those languages opens doors for us to understand other peoples and to engage with our neighbours in Europe and beyond.

Knowledge of languages, other than English and Irish, is essential for Ireland's cultural, social and economic well-being. English may be a significant lingua franca of international communications, but our knowledge of English does not exempt us from learning other languages. In a changing, multicultural and multilingual Ireland, knowing and being aware of other languages is also important for social cohesion. Competence in a number of languages is a key skill that our citizens should be encouraged to achieve, particularly since Ireland has not only a national and European context, but also a global one. Our enhanced language diversity, predominantly due to the arrival of migrants from over 200 countries since 2000, is a social, cultural and national resource that should be nurtured and welcomed.

The Language Education Policy Profile for Ireland, published jointly by the Department of Education and Skills and the Council of Europe in 2008, highlighted the special place of Irish, the central role of English, and the importance of other languages. It recommended that such a plurilingual approach to languages would be acknowledged as part of the country's cultural and economic resources and assets, as well as linked to individual identities and collective loyalties.²

2. European citizenship

Ireland's membership of the European Union carries with it important implications for foreign language policy and practice. Respect for linguistic diversity is a core value of the European Union, which is founded on 'unity in diversity': diversity of cultures, customs and beliefs, and languages. Communication in foreign languages is one of the eight key competencies for lifelong learning as outlined in the Education and Training contribution to the Lisbon Strategy. In 2002, European Heads of State or Government, meeting in Barcelona, called for at least two foreign languages to be taught from an early age — 'Mother Tongue Plus Two'. Member States were invited to establish national plans to give structure, coherence and direction to actions to promote multilingualism. In its conclusions on May 20, 2014, the Council of the European Union called for Member States to adopt and improve measures aimed at promoting multilingualism and enhancing the quality and efficiency of language

² Council of Europe, Language Policy Division and Department of Education and Science, *Language Education Policy Profile, Ireland* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe; Dublin: Department of Education and Science, 2008. www.coe.int), p. 34.

learning and teaching, including by teaching at least two languages in addition to the main language(s) of instruction from an early age, and by exploring the potential of innovative approaches to the development of language competences³. A number of European programmes promote exchanges and links which allow students to learn about and experience the languages and cultures of other countries.

In 2008, the Council of the European Union invited member States to promote multilingualism in support of competitiveness, mobility and employability, and as a means of strengthening intercultural dialogue. In February 2014, the Council of the European Union brought forward a proposal to assess language competencies by means of an EU-wide survey.

The Council of Europe, of which Ireland became a founder member in 1949, actively promotes multilingualism and plurilingualism⁴. Since 2002, Ireland has been a member of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), a Council of Europe institution based in Graz, Austria. The Centre promotes best practice in language teaching and learning.⁵ Ireland also worked closely with the Council's Language Policy Division in Strasbourg towards developing a language education policy profile in 2008.

3. Globalisation

Ireland in the twenty-first century finds itself in a global setting, where some of our citizens have emigrated around the world. For others, our economy is dependent on gaining markets abroad, whether, for example, in South America or the Far East. Achieving successful trade links in such markets requires that our citizens involved in trade have knowledge of the cultures, economies and languages of those countries. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs has identified, as a priority area, the skills needed to “trade internationally, including foreign languages and selling”.

4. The linguistic landscape

It is estimated that about 200 languages are used every day in Ireland. These include the indigenous languages of Irish, English, Irish and British Sign Language, Cant/Shelta, and Ulster Scots.

Recent migration to Ireland has brought with it a wealth of new community languages. The 2011 census found that over half a million people spoke a language other than Irish or English at home.⁶ Polish, followed by Lithuanian were the most common European languages, with Filipino and Mandarin Chinese the most common languages spoken by Asians now living in Ireland. Other data show that, for example, in our post-primary schools approximately 12% of students were born outside of

³ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/142692.pdf

⁴ According to the Council of Europe, ‘multilingualism’ refers to the presence of more than one language in a given geographical area, while ‘plurilingualism’ refers to the language repertoire of an individual; it is the opposite of ‘monolingual’.

⁵ www.ecml.at.

⁶ Census 2011, CSO Profile 6: Migration and Diversity in Ireland – A profile of diversity in Ireland. October 2012

Ireland⁷. Our immigrants are providing us with a rich and diverse source of languages. These communities need to be supported in maintaining their own languages, which constitute a new national resource, as yet largely untapped, for Ireland.

5. The limitations of a lingua franca

As an island nation, dependent on service industries and overseas markets, Ireland now extends its horizons globally and well beyond the English-speaking world. Recent decades have seen the rise of English as the language of business, science, technology and international communication generally. This has led many in English-speaking countries to adopt the mistaken belief that proficiency in English is enough, and to assume an attitude of complacency regarding the learning of other languages. English is the most widely known second language in the EU. However, recent surveys show that, even now, fewer than half the EU population knows it well enough to be able to communicate.⁸

A lingua franca has its limitations. It is widely recognised that those who wish to buy can always do so in their own language, but those who wish to sell must do so in the language of the buyer. In the world of international business, where competence in English is increasingly taken for granted, it is companies with additional language capabilities and an understanding of local cultures that will enjoy competitive advantage.⁹ Apart from these commercial considerations, competence in foreign languages facilitates greater mobility and enables Irish people to access and be enriched by the social and cultural life of other countries.

At least two thirds of the world's population is bilingual and there is a significant body of research which demonstrates the many benefits associated with bilingualism and plurilingualism.¹⁰ These benefits are cognitive, social, cultural, communicative and economic. People who are bilingual or plurilingual tend to be more flexible, more creative, and more fluent in their mother tongue. They communicate more clearly and accurately to diverse audiences and are much sought after by employers. More and more parents now realise that their children can benefit from the various forms of bilingual and immersion-type education.

6. Foreign language competence and capacity—current concerns

⁷ At post-primary, the top ten countries are: UK, Poland, Nigeria, Lithuania, USA, Philippines, Spain, Latvia, Romania and Germany (note that it is likely that many of the Spanish and German students are exchange students).

⁸ Frequently asked questions on languages in Europe http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-825_en.htm

⁹ See the recommendations from the Business Forum for Multilingualism, *Languages Mean Business: Companies work better with languages* (Brussels: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2008). See also, David Graddol, *English Next: Why global English may mean the end of 'English as a Foreign Language'*, British Council, 2006.

¹⁰ See O. Garcia, *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective* (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 93-108; A. King (ed.), *Languages and the Transfer of Skills: The Relevance of Language Learning for 21st Century Graduates in the World of Work* (London: CILT, 2000); C. Baker and S. Prys Jones (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998).

Irish citizens lag behind most of their European counterparts as regards foreign language competence. In 2012, Ireland was found to have one of the lowest percentages in Europe of citizens who were able to hold a conversation in at least one foreign language—40%, compared with an average of 54%.¹¹ Only the UK, Portugal, Italy and Hungary scored lower. In the same study, however, Ireland was noted as having among the most “notable increases” in the proportion of people being able to have a conversation in one or two foreign languages.

Feedback from employers in industry suggests that there are significant shortcomings in the language competence of many graduates, and even among graduates with very good degrees. There is also a shortage of graduates in some foreign languages, such as Chinese, Spanish and German. Employers are depending on the availability of mother-tongue speakers and immigrants to fill positions requiring foreign language competence.¹²

In 2012, the Forfás/EGFSN report, *Key Skills for Enterprise to Trade Internationally*, made recommendations aimed at ensuring that education and training provision would be aligned to the international trade skills requirements of enterprise.¹³ One of the report’s recommendations was to boost the supply (quantity and proficiency) of foreign language skills and cultural awareness being taught at third level for German, French, Spanish, Italian and the emerging BRIC markets. Also in 2012, IBEC surveyed employers on Irish higher education outcomes.¹⁴ One of the occupation gaps most frequently cited was graduates with an international language, along with a discipline such as engineering. The majority of respondents required that potential employees had a high degree of fluency in written and spoken language, often beyond that acquired from completion of a degree course at NFQ level 8.

A recent report by the British Council (2013) found that the UK had “fallen behind by not devoting sufficient time, resources and effort to language learning” and that the resulting language deficit, if not tackled, would be a threat to Britain’s competitiveness, influence and standing in the world. The report concluded that the UK needed “to build on its existing language learning profile to include a wider range of languages and to enable far greater numbers of people to learn languages”.¹⁵ The same could be said for Ireland: successive reports have highlighted the shortfall in foreign language skills among Irish school leavers and graduates.

7. Employers’ needs

Given the nature of Ireland’s open and globally-focused economy, foreign language skills are clearly of relevance to a range of businesses in Ireland, as outlined in the 2012 Forfás/EGFSN report, *Key Skills for Enterprise to Trade Internationally*.

¹¹ European Commission, *Europeans and Their Languages – Special Eurobarometer 386*, 2012, p. 15. (<http://ec.europa.eu>).

¹² It is accepted that Irish students study English and Irish as well as foreign languages

¹³ Forfás, Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, *Key Skills for Enterprise to Trade Internationally*, accessible on www.skillsireland.ie.

¹⁴ IBEC, *National Survey of Employers’ Views of Irish Higher Education Outcomes*, 2012. Accessible on www.heai.ie.

¹⁵ The British Council, *Languages for the Future: Which languages the UK needs most and why*, 2013, p. 19. www.britishcouncil.org.

However, it can be more difficult to establish the precise expectations and views of employers in respect of the foreign language competence of Irish graduates.

The pilot national survey of employers carried out by IBEC and the Higher Education Authority in 2012 included a special module asking employers “how important it was for them to recruit graduates who had foreign language skills”. However, as the report notes, “only a small number of respondents answered this question making meaningful analysis difficult”.

Of the small number who responded, around 20% “considered having foreign language skills upon recruitment important or very important among graduates”. Around 50% were satisfied with the language skills of their graduates, compared to an overall figure of 75% employer satisfaction with graduate skills.

IDA Ireland noted in 2012¹⁶ that “most companies seeking people with language skills are looking for native speakers or the equivalent.” This means that they seek to employ “foreign nationals who are already living in Ireland, Irish people living abroad, Irish people who have studied linguistics abroad, newcomers or a combination thereof”.

The nature of employer demand for foreign language skills has important implications for the education system, for graduates and employers.

The education system clearly has a key role to play in providing a formal structure to develop language competence. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), is a guideline, with 6 benchmarks/standards, used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages, particularly across Europe and, increasingly, in other countries. It was developed by the Council of Europe. Its main aim is to provide guidelines for learning, teaching and assessing languages. However, education can only go so far in meeting the need for functional mastery of a language, a level of proficiency which requires significant immersion and experience far beyond what could be provided in an education setting, even with study abroad elements.

Graduates who wish to obtain vacancies which require high-level language skills, will likely need to enhance their competence through immersion, for example by living, working or studying overseas. There could be particular opportunities for Irish citizens currently living overseas in areas whose language and culture are in demand in Ireland, for example parts of Europe, Asia and the Middle East. This is particularly the case where such graduates also have other in-demand disciplines such as engineering or ICT qualifications.

Employers may need to look at their own graduate recruitment and up-skilling policies to give opportunities for graduates with strong language skills the opportunity to further develop them to a higher standard.

8. Pre-school education

¹⁶ Evidence by Mr Barry O’Leary, CEO IDA Ireland to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 17 July 2012.

The early years (0 to 6 years) are a crucial time in a child's language formation. This is the time when children are first learning about languages and how and when to use them.

Opening children's minds to multilingualism and different cultures from an early age can be an enriching experience for children and result in a number of benefits. These include the enhancement of competences such as comprehension, expression, communication and problem-solving, thereby enabling children to interact successfully with peers and adults.¹⁷

9. Primary education

At primary level, in line with the provisions of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (2011)¹⁸, the focus is on the development of learners' competence in English and Irish as either first or second languages. The feasibility of introducing a modern European language was explored through the Modern Languages in Primary School Initiative (MLPSI), established in 1998. A decision was made to end the MLPSI in 2012 in light of concerns about curriculum overload at primary level and capacity to extend the MLPSI language-competence model of provision. Primary schools may offer an additional modern language outside of the normal school day if they so wish.

10. Post-primary education

While Irish and English are taught to almost all students throughout the period of primary and post-primary education, the learning of other foreign languages are, at present, optional (except in the Leaving Certificate Applied and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme). In this, Ireland is almost unique in Europe.

About 70% of students study another language up to Leaving Certificate level; this may be due to the National University of Ireland's third language requirement.¹⁹ However, the number studying a third language is declining year on year. An additional concern is that fewer students than in the past are now choosing to study two foreign languages, and in some schools it is not possible to do so. There is also a worrying tendency for some students not to take any foreign language at all. There is a need to raise the awareness of parents, guidance counsellors, school principals and students themselves of the importance of languages, including foreign languages, as a life skill for all, and not just for those with a particular aptitude for languages.

¹⁷ Eurydice, *Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities*, 2009, <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/eurydice/documents/098EN.pdf>. Referred to in Council of the European Union (2011), *European strategic framework for Education and Training (ET 2020) - Language learning at pre-primary school level : making it efficient and sustainable - A policy handbook*, p.7

¹⁸ Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020

¹⁹ Irish, English and a third language (foreign or Classical) are normally required for matriculation in the Universities which constitute the NUI.

The implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle will open up new opportunities for teaching and learning other foreign languages. One of the twenty-four statements of learning states that a student will be able to “listen, speak, read and write in L2 and one other language at a level of proficiency that is appropriate to his or her ability”. For students whose mother-tongue is English, this will mean proficiency in Irish and another foreign language. The new Junior Cycle will also provide for short courses, some of which may be in foreign languages. These short courses offer opportunities not only for our migrant communities, but also their Irish peers to study languages such as Polish and Mandarin Chinese.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has developed a short course in Chinese Language and Culture, and the Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) has developed a template for short courses in other, non-curricular languages based on the work of the NCCA on the short course template. Using this template, the PPLI is currently working on ‘off-the-shelf’ courses in Irish Sign Language (ISL), Japanese and Russian. It is also developing a short course in Polish as a heritage language in collaboration with the Polish embassy. Schools could also use these templates to develop their own short courses in other foreign languages, for example the heritage languages of children present in the school population.

One of the features of language provision and uptake at post-primary level is the predominance of French, mainly due to historical factors. Greater diversification of foreign language provision in post-primary schools is essential in order to meet the present and future needs of individuals and of society as a whole.

The Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI), established in 2000 by the Department of Education and Skills to diversify the range of languages at second level, has highlighted significant challenges associated with the introduction of new languages to the education system.²⁰ The main challenges in introducing a new language are: creating/maintaining a pool of suitably qualified teachers; generating levels of demand from schools which will sustain viable employment of teachers with the new language skills in the context of the overall pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) and competition from other subjects; persuading students to study the language as a Leaving Certificate subject; and attracting students and graduates with foreign language skills into teacher training. The experience of the PPLI has shown that schools and teachers, students and their parents respond positively to initiatives which provide external support for the teaching of new or lesser taught foreign languages.

A challenge to the education system is how to assist young people who already speak a language other than English in the home to acquire full proficiency and competency in that language.

At present, the State Examinations Commission offers Leaving Certificate written examinations for mother-tongue speakers of EU languages which are not included on the post-primary senior cycle curriculum.

²⁰ www.languagesinitiative.ie. The Initiative’s target languages were initially Italian, Japanese, Russian and Spanish. The initiative now supports the teaching and learning of all foreign languages in post-primary schools.

11. Further education and training

This has been a period of considerable change, consolidation and reform in the Further Education and Training (FET) sector with the enactment of the Further Education and Training Act in 2013. Under the Act, SOLAS is required to propose a five year strategy for the provision of Further Education and Training. The Strategy, published in 2014²¹, sets out the future direction for FET to ensure the provision of 21st century high-quality further education and training programmes and services to learners, employees and employers.

The FET sector to date has, in general, developed without co-ordinated overall strategic direction across the education and training sectors. The new FET strategy should allow for much more effective co-ordinated action across sectors. The challenge for the delivery of foreign language learning opportunities is to ensure that provision is co-ordinated effectively across the sectors and that opportunities are available for learners within FET to access foreign language learning and accreditation, through the National Framework of Qualifications, in a way which is appropriate to their needs.

12. Higher education

Background

The higher education system plays a crucial role in the development of foreign language skills within Ireland and, more widely, in enhancing and developing understanding of language, literature and culture through teaching and research.

It is one of the core missions of the higher education system to meet the human capital and skills needs of the Irish economy. Given that Ireland is a highly globalised economy, the *Higher Education System Performance Framework 2014-2016* includes an indicator regarding alignment of international activities of higher education institutions with the national Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy, including the number of graduates who have competence in the foreign languages of Ireland's 27 priority trade, tourism and investment markets.

The higher education system also plays an important role in the education and training of graduates who go on to become foreign language teachers in the school system. To guarantee the quality of language teaching, Ireland continues to need teachers who are linguistically and pedagogically competent, who are highly motivated and who can communicate their enthusiasm for languages to young learners so that they in turn are motivated to become lifelong learners of languages.

Foreign language options offered by higher education institutions

Prospective students have access to a wide range of foreign language courses at higher education that can be taken as core subjects or in combination with a range of other disciplines across business, the arts, the humanities and the sciences. A number

²¹ Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019, SOLAS (2014)

of higher education institutions also offer part-time or evening courses in a range of languages.

Nevertheless, it has been commented that “programmes [in the higher education system] which provide knowledge about other parts of the world are limited ... [and] in addition to the relatively low take-up in foreign languages the number of languages that can be studied is limited”²².

Level 8 programmes offered in higher education institutions include those with significant modules in: French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Russian, Japanese, Korean and Mandarin Chinese. Language programmes are also provided by higher education institutions in extra-mural settings to students, and in part-time or in evening classes to the wider population, including; these include languages not currently provided in the mainstream system including Arabic, Hebrew, Persian and Dutch.

In line with identified skills needs, foreign language programmes have also been selected for funding through the Springboard skills initiative.

Take-up of foreign language programmes

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs’ 2012 report on *Key Skills for Enterprise to Trade Internationally* noted that some 3,400 students were registered on language programmes or other programmes with a significant language component – around 2-3% of the total cohort.

The Group noted that not all courses were identifiable in the data used for this report, particularly where languages were elective modules. Taking these other components into account, initial research undertaken by the Higher Education Authority suggested that up to 9,000 higher education students in total were studying a foreign language either as a single core subject or as an accredited part of a wide range of other undergraduate disciplines in 2012/13.

In terms of demand, it is worth noting that a number of Springboard language programmes proposed since 2011 have not been able to proceed due to low demand from potential participants.

Study abroad and immersion opportunities

Immersion is recognised as important means of enhancing language competence, and students in higher education have an opportunity to further deepen their language competence through overseas study, most significantly as part of the European Union’s Erasmus + programme. Around 4.2% of Irish graduates have participated in an Erasmus higher education exchange, very close to the European average of 4.3%²³.

²² Higher Education Authority/Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (2013), *Playing to Our Strengths: The Role of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and Implications for Public Policy*, p.56.

²³ European Commission (2013) On the Way to Erasmus+: A statistical overview of the ERASMUS programme in 2010-2011.

Over 2,700 Irish participants study overseas on Erasmus each year and over 30,000 Irish people have benefited since the programme began in 1987. The majority of Irish participants (approximately 60%) have pursued their studies abroad through the medium of a foreign language. The most popular non-Anglophone destinations are France, Spain and Germany. Outward mobility also takes place outside the Erasmus+ framework, for example with partner institutions in Asia.

International students

A key national objective of the higher education system, set out in the higher education performance framework, is to have institutions which are “internationally oriented and globally competitive”. This includes a significant focus in some institutions on recruiting international students which, among other things, add significantly to the “linguistic base” of Irish higher education students and graduates. Over 8,000 international students in universities and institutes of technology are from non-native English speaking countries²⁴

²⁴ Higher Education Authority (2014): *Domiciliary Origin of Full-Time Students*, 2012-2013

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: Anne Grills

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?

- A national publicity campaign should be conducted along the lines of “How far can a language take you?” The campaign should make the learning of languages attractive and be visually rich highlighting all walks of life e.g. Irish nurse working in Peru/ professional footballer playing for Real Madrid.
- Such a campaign should also highlight the edge that proficiency in another language can give you in the jobs market. It could also highlight the fact that employees with foreign languages are often paid higher salaries.
- The campaign should also raise awareness of the “new” Irish (immigrants whose L1 is not English) – our plurilingual society, this should be a resource Ireland can draw on.
- The much published evidence of the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism should be emphasized in all publicity.
- The campaign needs to recognise key social concerns and the result having a mfl can have on our future economy– employment and emigration can be positively affected with improved use of our mfl base.
- Similarly the evidence that increased grammatical awareness has benefits educationally across the board and certainly facilitates literacy in every subject
- It needs to be underscored that the teaching of languages in schools promotes, develops and encourages global awareness, diversity, acceptance and inclusion.
- We should invite Irish celebrities who speak languages to become language ambassadors and speak publically about the benefits speaking that language brings. A short promotional video featuring such people speaking in different languages could be produced and distributed to schools, universities and businesses. An example of such a celebrity would be the cyclist Stephen Roche, Johnny Sexton, Ronan O’Gara or Donal Skehan for example.

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?

- Students who come to school in Ireland but whose mother tongue is not English need to immerse themselves in the language of their adopted community to gain the linguistic life skills which they need to survive and thrive. However, they should also be encouraged to maintain and develop skills in their mother tongue.
- As a consequence provision of suitable and appropriate immersion programmes within schools for those students requiring ESL is essential. Such students may benefit from a reduced timetable initially with a corresponding increase in time allotted to L2 acquisition.
- There should be adequate financial backing and support for organisations willing to provide instruction in migrant students' L1 e.g. Saturday school for Polish.
- Ireland should consider the notion of a "multi-boarder" language (akin to cross boarder) programme as part of our approach to language teaching: - Students are a resource in classrooms, their languages and learning skills can be part of teaching.
- Cspe and Geography- could mfl overlap, cross curricular and allow for an aspect of mfl as a short course/new strand – could CSPE be used for points at Leaving Cert Level?
- Language syllabus- CEF – very useful tool that should form part of our syllabus, where we begin by identifying the starting point and student language backgrounds in our classrooms.

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.

- There needs to be an increase in immersion and travel opportunities through foreign exchange programmes & tours. Financial support for such opportunities is essential to encourage all students to develop their language learning. We know of students who have not opted for certain college courses because they could not afford to spend a year abroad learning the language. Studying languages and gaining valuable time in abroad should be incentivized rather than discouraged.

- There should be increased numbers of foreign language assistants in second level schools and more support for the host schools so that they can best gain from such a valuable resource. Currently there are few supports for teachers who mentor language assistants and even the provision of written material, guidelines, and suggestions for team teaching with the assistant would be an improvement on the current scenario. Perhaps the Erasmus programme could be used to facilitate the provision of classroom assistants in the foreign language being taught.
- Languages should be seen and treated as practical subjects, the focus should be more on oral competency, therefore, reduced class sizes similar to a practical subject would allow for more attention to building oral competency and doing oral exams.
- Spoken language is paramount – increase the percentage given at leaving cert for the oral exam – minimum of 60%
- Make better use of opportunities such as Euro Language Colleges: make 2-4 week residential stays compulsory (through partial financing or through awarding credits/certification for attendance)
- Publicise study abroad modules with partner schools and encourage links through etwinning for example. Create a group of teachers who have successfully run such programmes and who can be consulted by other teachers and invited to advise on best practice.
- There should be increased funding and ICT training for mfl teachers to upskill in the types of approaches to language learning that are now available – even maximizing the resources they have in their school, for example, a computer room could also double up as a language lab
- Offer modules in commonly taught languages in post primary, in university/college, but have the option of taking the language at a post Leaving Cert level as well as at a beginner's level
- Offer qualifications in foreign languages in the specific discipline being studied - eg Law, Medicine etc Offer work experience in the same discipline in the target language country or some of the modules could be given in the target language.

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 special methods classes for language teachers in post-primary teacher education need to be very specific in what they equip language teachers to do. For example, learning must include specific tools and exemplars on (for example):
 - how to plan specifically for language teaching (weekly, term by term, yearly)
 - how to create and find resources, as textbooks are inadequate or inappropriate in many cases
 - how to assess language students, and how to use formative assessment strategies in the language classroom
 - how to best access and adapt, the wealth of digital resources which exist, for use in the Irish classroom.
- Active learning methods need to underpin the PGDE for MFL teachers – immersive language teaching, persistent use of target language and AfL all need to be the core tools of MFL teacher training.
- Increased resources for PDST to ensure that in-career training for language teachers is current, regular and widely available. All language teachers should have the opportunity to attend at least one in-service during school time every 3-4 years.
- There should be more funded opportunities to upskill both at home and abroad. Currently the possibilities for second level teachers to upskill are very limited and it is vital that language teachers get the opportunity to immerse themselves in the target language.
- Increased provision of language assistants in second level schools would at least ensure that all teachers in that sector and regular access to native speakers and opportunities to converse in L2.
- There needs to be better recognition of CPD and the value it brings to teachers, students and schools. Many language teachers take classes in their own time, spend a lot of time and money on finding authentic language learning resources and travel abroad to ensure they remain up to date and relevant and yet there is no recognition of such efforts or allowance for this to be acknowledged under increased time given under recent work agreements. CPD is vital – time should be given to allow teachers time to train, attend in service and trial new methods – but this also needs to be rewarded – perhaps something similar to the course days given in primary schools? Teachers already give a lot of their “free” time researching methods, using social media etc.,

but actual concrete classroom methodologies they can trial and engage in would be excellent.

- Currently there are very few resources available to teachers of MFL in terms of using new techniques and technology. The Department of Education and Science could play a valuable role in supporting the provision of resources, expertise and technology. Teachers are asked to incorporate ICT into their lesson planning by the DES inspectorate. However there is no real instruction provided on how to successfully incorporate ICT into language teaching and learning in the Irish classroom. Most of the digital resources being used in Irish classrooms come from the UK and are adapted for use with Junior and Leaving Certificate students. The use of ICT in language learning should be an integral part of teacher education at higher level. The Alliance Française runs an excellent workshop on how to use YouTube clips/ songs / short films in the language class. It would be very beneficial if this style of pedagogy was included in all PME courses.

- Stronger links to language agencies such the Alliance Française for French should be developed, and funding for a summer course to upskill teachers who may be teaching a long time and feel they would like to polish up their language skills.

- We need increased promotion of local teacher networks....incentives to get people involved. Something as basic and effective as teacher conversation classes as part of CPD should be promoted. It would offer teachers the opportunity to maintain and improve their own oral language skills.

- Peer led CPD is excellent – real methods in real classrooms – PDST working group for modern languages have done excellent work, recorded videos, trialled new ideas, presented and developed in-service programmes

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?

Oral competency has to be key from the beginning at all levels

- 50 – 70% of the overall exam marks at LC and JC should be allocated to an oral exam. This would have the effect of altering the focus of teaching from book-based learning which is not effective in getting students to acquire a second language. Students' competency would dramatically increase when the outcomes required were concrete and immediate.

- The LC oral exam should focus on 'real world' themes such as my dream job, my college plans, my skills, strengths and weaknesses etc. JC oral exam should be a precursor to this in terms of its format
- We believe that externally examined oral examinations at Junior Certificate level need to be compulsory for all language students.
- There is a need for oral assessment in the new JCSA syllabus. Right from the beginning importance must be based on the learner's ability to communicate in the target language.
- The levels of assessment could be broader – grading should reflect this – merit, distinction, or something similar as opposed to the current Ordinary level and Higher level options. This is too limiting.
- Consideration should be given to awarding for extra marks for undergraduate students who participate in Erasmus programmes or who attended courses or engage in work in the country of their target language.
- More combined degrees should be offered – perhaps allow for extra credit to a student's final grade achievement if they undertake a language module within their degree or take part in an Erasmus exchange.
- There needs to be wider availability of courses countrywide.
- Courses aimed at using languages for specific purposes should be introduced - Spanish for the pharmaceutical industry for example.
- Assessment at pan European level for students in further and Higher Ed is paramount to facilitate cross border qualification recognition (European Languages Framework)
- Conversation-exchange meets are very effective and valuable not just as a language learning tool but as a means of encouraging community interaction. Such gatherings that are already in place in local libraries for example should be rolled out nationwide and supported and publicised.

6. 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?

- There should be more consultation such as this paper
- Bursaries for further research in language learning by practising teachers

- DES subject inspections: DES inspectorate recommendations should match the resources and opportunities made available by the DES to all post-primary language teachers. Encourage the DES inspectorate to provide recommendations which can be readily achieved by teachers. For example, there is little point in recommending increased use of ICT in the language classroom when the DES does not provide up to date guidelines or the CDP necessary to enable teachers to do so.
- In order to facilitate quality teaching and improved proficiency particularly in oral skills it is important to maintain a class size similar to that of other practical subjects such as Home Economics, Science and Music.
- A similar approach to teacher training, qualification peer led CPD– the idea of the Charter Teacher (similar to Scotland) where a teacher can become further specialised in their field – and financially rewarded for this. Even the possibility of promotion which allows teachers to remain in the classroom rather than promotion to be seen as something linked with removal from the classroom into managerial areas. The Charter Teacher system would allow for peer led support and increase the profile of the MFL area in schools.

7. 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?

- The modern Irish classroom is very different to that of even 5 years ago- the reality is that it is multilingual and this has potential teaching and learning opportunities for MFL classrooms – this profile of the new modern Irish classroom needs to be acknowledged and raised.
- Through the above process the curriculum needs to address the meta language of learning – where we must identify how we learn- use our new Irish students (who have come from other language speaking countries) as a resource – even a starting point should be multilingual signs available to schools (I’m sure this would be a very practical and useful, welcome resource) we need to become **immersed** in language as a daily feature and a normal feature, rather than limit its existence to the MFL classroom. The new JC is an ideal opportunity to allow for short courses in MFL where a student is a native speaker in language 1 and may choose to do a short course in L2.
- The current LCVP is a missed opportunity in the area of language – it should be part of the overall assessment of students but solely with an oral language focus. –perhaps link to FETAC and allow students to achieve a FETAC language level.
- Insight and understanding through monitoring who is coming through the system. Anticipating future needs e.g. Chinese and finding ways to meet that need.

- The Department of Education should subsidise post graduate courses and encourage up-skilling for teachers. There needs to be more opportunities to travel / reside in target language country at various stages in their career.
- Liaise more closely with International Language Centres.
- Provide funding for post-primary language teachers to take part in teacher training workshops run by the Alliance Française, Goethe-Institut Irland, Instituto Cervantes, Confucius Institute Ireland etc. Courses such as the Alliance Française's Teacher Bootcamp, provided teachers with an opportunity to improve their language skills while focusing on how to successfully incorporate the latest language learning methodologies into the Irish classroom.
- Leargas currently provides a service for such courses and travel but it needs to be made more accessible and appealing to teachers through encouragement from individual schools at all levels and more effective promotion by Leargas.

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

- employers need to provide incentive packages to those employees willing to take up and learn another language as a part of their professional development. Such incentives could take the form of financial support for evening classes, immersion courses or even in-house provision.
- there should be increased remuneration for those with language skills
- Annual Leave- extra day or two if going abroad to a country which will improve proficiency in the target language

8. Other Comments

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

- Currently there are only three compulsory school subjects at second level: Irish, English and Mathematics. Foreign languages survive in post-primary schools because the National University of Ireland requires a foreign language for matriculation and we have a real concern that the study of a modern language is becoming optional in many

schools to facilitate timetabling and lack of teaching resources in straightened times. All other measures to encourage a multi-lingual society will seem insignificant if the numbers studying a foreign language at second level drops significantly and it is seen as unimportant.

- David Little, as cited in *the Languages in Europe, Towards 2020* Report, makes the salient points that Ireland has policies regarding the Irish language, but it does not have a general languages policy, far less a language education policy. He also notes that we have no national curriculum. We believe that the creation of a language education policy is vital to the progress of language learning in Ireland.

- A MFL should be a basic core subject that all students take, however there should be recognition that more than 2 levels are needed if all students can partake- a tiered language programme should be offered where students can continue to aim for the next level of achievement – this is essential as many students do not have the resources to travel to the TL country and this allows them to experience success and encourage rather than limit their progression facing one of two current options Ordinary level and Higher level.

- During any development of a language strategy it has to be kept in mind that (as with other academic subjects in post primary) the playing field isn't always level. In particular with regard to language learning, second level students in a position to do exchanges or residential courses in target language countries are at a distinct advantage. This may vary within a classroom but more so from school to school.

- Mother tongue plus two at primary level: A huge shortcoming in language learning in Ireland is the lack of MFL instruction at primary level. When the Modern Languages in Primary School Initiative came to an end in 2012, due to curriculum overload problems, we lost a valuable chance to ensure that language learning had a core place at the heart of the Irish education system. It is vital that the government recognises the importance of learning a mother tongue plus two other languages from a very early age. If we want language learners to attain a higher level of language acquisition it is essential to introduce a MFL in primary school. By keeping MFL out of the primary school syllabus we are putting our learners at a considerable disadvantage to their European counterparts. It is disappointing that in Ireland our 'lifelong learning' language journey begins at 12 or 13 years of age. However it is vital that there be a linked syllabus between primary and secondary school should MFL become commonplace at Primary Level.

- Recently Chinese has been introduced for new Junior Certificate and we have a concern that professionals undertaking such teaching, and the teaching of new foreign language subjects in the future, be fully qualified and recognized by the teaching council.

- Recognition from Teaching Council for courses being developed, incentive for teachers to qualify further.

- The Irish are famous for our gift of the gab- the focus needs to return to this, recognising that we are now Europeans as well as Irish – harness our natural native abilities for language; and market Ireland, justifiably, as a language hub!!

- This submission is from a group composed of second level teachers of modern languages including French, Spanish and German. In addition some members of our group are variously learning and teaching Japanese and Chinese. As members of the PDST modern languages group we have been involved in researching methods in the classroom, developing teaching materials and delivering workshops around the country for the last five years. Our members have taught in the target language countries and have participated in language training abroad and in Ireland. Some of our group have worked in the private sector using their language skills. They are passionate about language learning and teaching in Ireland. Although they work with eth PDST the views represented here are their own and they do not claim to represent the PDST.

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- We await acknowledgement of our observations and request a receipt of same. We would also appreciate communication regarding the next stage in process of developing a language education policy.

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