

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:

- **Mary Donaghy (St. Oliver's CC Drogheda)**
- **Ian Cumiskey (Centre for European Schooling Dunshaughlin)**

Additional Comments:

- **Máire Ní Bhróithe. Education Officer LMETB**

Organisation, if any, whose views are being represented: **LMETB**

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?

To reinstate MFL at primary level.

Create a standardized programme which would allow for continuity at post-primary level.

Need for industry to encourage language learning through news releases, school visits, sponsored programmes, internships, scholarships, etc.

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?

Greater E.F.L support, inside and outside school times.

Increase awareness among migrant parents of opportunity to sit native language in many cases at leaving cert.

Encourage migrant groups to encourage language learning among younger members of community through provision of teachers, facilities, and accreditation.

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.

Greater provision of foreign language films on public broadcasting services.

Financial assistance for second level students to spend time in target language countries.

Academic recognition of language proficiency aside from state examinations.

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?

Premium pay for individuals who have spent long periods of time in the country of target language and can demonstrate proficiency.

Provide greater financial assistance for teachers working to spend time abroad in a country of the target language.

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?

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?

More focus on communicational competence. Also more focus on the learning experience as opposed to the learning outcomes.

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?*

Accreditation for language skills outside of State Exams.

MFL introduction at first year of primary school education. Continuity of learning through to end of second level.

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

Payment of course fees/general study costs.

Establish leave of absence entitlement to those willing to enhance their linguistic skills.

Other Comments

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

Need for re-introduction of language learning in primary schools as part of the core curriculum.

Further comments from Máire Ni Bhróithe Education Officer LMETB

Teachers:

This ETB is having great difficulties employing MFL teachers.

There is a shortage of these teachers and invariably a very small number apply for positions. Very often, when invited to interview they decline as they have been offered a better position (more hours) in another school. This continued right throughout the summer of 2014. We re-advertised positions again and again to ensure we had teachers. We are still short a Spanish teacher in one of our schools.

The second reason that we have difficulty in employing teachers is that very often their oral language skills are poor. Teachers have often obtained good grades in their degree but have major difficulty being interviewed through the medium of the language that they intend to teach. While this might seem surprising (many of them having spent a year abroad on an Erasmus programme), they have often explained that while they were abroad that they lived with other Irish, American or English people and that they spoke English among themselves.

RE: NUI requirement to study a foreign language:

In schools, students rarely take up a second foreign language in Leaving Certificate. Many of them take up one language simply because it is a requirement of NUI. In recent years Principals have been approached by leaving certificate students and asked to provide “ordinary level” language classes after school once a week. The thinking behind this is that languages are perceived as subjects in which it is difficult to obtain the A grade. Students and their parents propose to choose other “easier” subjects and to take the language as an extra subject at ordinary level after school. Many of these students would be very capable of taking the language at higher level but have opted not to do so in order to maximise their points and at the same time fulfil the NUI requirement to have a MFL.

Campaign to promote MFL learning:

I believe that we need a media campaign to promote MFL learning. Young people and their parents need to be made aware of the importance of being competent in another language. The campaign needs to focus on young people who have succeeded in obtaining positions in good companies both home and abroad.

We need MFL teachers. There is a shortage of language teachers. There is a need to highlight this to young people. They need to be aware that there are jobs in this area. There may be a need to offer incentives to attract young people into teaching (e.g.: summer scholarships to spend time in another country).

Some qualified teachers of other subject areas (e.g. English, Geography, History and Business) find it difficult to get a position in our schools. It might be useful to retrain these teachers as language teachers by offering them an opportunity to study a language and by allowing them to spend time in another country to improve their language skills

MFL Teaching:

There is a need to ensure that students become more engaged with language learning. We need to look at our teaching methodologies and question the amount of time that is spent on “teacher talk” in the MFL classroom. There is a need to invest in quality CPD for teachers of language not only helping them in improving their practises but also in improving their own language skills.

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