



NATIONAL LANGUAGES STRATEGY

ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY NATIONAL COMMITTEE
FOR MODERN LANGUAGE, LITERARY
AND CULTURAL STUDIES

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IT has been noted in a range of official documents and expert papers that the formulation of a coherent national languages policy by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) is urgently required for both social and economic reasons.* Much of the work towards the formulation of such a policy has already been conducted, most notably in producing a Language Education Policy Profile for Ireland from 2005 to 2007. This work was carried out by the (then) Department of Education and Science, in co-operation with an Expert Group from the Council of Europe, who in turn consulted various stakeholders during their visit to Ireland. The resulting Council of Europe Language Education Policy Profile (2008) notes that ‘Compared with other countries where Language Education Policy Profiles have been prepared, Ireland has already produced a significant number of studies and reports, either descriptive or position papers’ (Section 2.1). As the Council of Europe report also notes, what is required now is an integrated, overarching language policy that is not limited to Irish and that is grounded in, while also extending beyond, the education sector: ‘If the key advice to the national authorities could be summed up in one recommendation, it would be to examine the feasibility of an integrated, coherent, language in education policy’ (Section 3.3).

* See for example: Ireland (2007: 198); Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, Languages and Enterprise (2005: x, xiii, 23, 41); Little (2003); NCCA (2005a); INTO (2004: 89).

AIMS

This strategy document has three main aims:

1. to provide an overview of the position of languages in education in Ireland today,
2. to outline the challenges facing Ireland in its development as a multilingual society, particularly in relation to education, and
3. to make recommendations, in relation to language education and more broadly, which seek to meet these challenges and enhance Ireland's position within an increasingly multilingual global economy.

THIS document is aimed primarily at policy decision-makers at national, local and institutional levels across Ireland. It seeks to encourage these key stakeholders to collaborate in the development of a coherent and integrated national policy for languages in education. Such a policy would ideally put in place a clear and consistent framework for the provision of language education at each level within the education system (primary, post-primary and third levels). It would also establish integration mechanisms across the different levels to ensure the coherence and continuity of the learning experience for students as they move up through the education system. The provision of high-quality language education is dependent on the availability of excellent teaching; any languages-in-education policy should therefore also consider the education of language teachers and the development of appropriate frameworks, strategies and structures both for initial teacher education and for the ongoing professional development of language educators. The policy should also take account of the increasing levels of language diversity in twenty-first-century Ireland. It should, for example, consider how best to support the increasing numbers of students in the education system who are not native speakers of English or Irish, both in terms of developing their proficiency in English and in terms of providing them with opportunities for formal learning of their various mother tongues and accreditation of that learning. Finally, mechanisms should be established for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the policy and for reviewing it at regular intervals to ensure its continued relevance and viability as a framework for language education in Ireland.

KEY ISSUES:

CURRENT POLICIES

AND TRENDS

- ▶ **ENGLISH** is the mother tongue of the vast majority of the population of Ireland, though Irish is also spoken as a mother tongue by a portion of the population.¹ Languages that are widely spoken as mother tongues among Irish immigrant communities include: Vietnamese, Polish, Moldovan, Chinese, Lithuanian, Romanian, Arabic, Albanian, Yoruba and Russian. There are speakers of at least 60 different languages registered in Irish schools (DES 2005: 28).
- ▶ **IRELAND**, as part of the European Union and the broader global community, is becoming increasingly multicultural. Within the EU, people are increasingly interacting with counterparts from other member states or are living and working outside the country where they grew up. Beyond its 23 official languages, the EU is home to another 60 indigenous languages; people moving to live and work in the EU bring their own languages with them and it is estimated that at least 175 nationalities are now present within the EU's borders (European Commission 2008: 4). However, Ireland has yet to formulate an appropriate response to the EU policy on plurilingualism, namely that all citizens of Europe should achieve proficiency in at least two languages apart from their mother tongue (Barcelona European Council 2002: 19). In Ireland, implementation of this policy has been perceived as a complex issue given the fact that Ireland has two official languages, Irish and English.²
- ▶ **IRELAND** is the only country in Europe, other than Scotland, where a foreign language is not compulsory at any stage of the mainstream educational curriculum. Indeed, a 2006 Eurobarometer survey of EU citizens showed that while 56% of respondents across Europe were 'able to hold a conversation in one language other than their mother tongue' (European Commission 2006: 3), Ireland was the

¹ For full details on the most recent census statistics regarding the Irish language, see Central Statistics Office (2007).

² For a discussion of policy and the legislative framework on official languages in Ireland see Conrick (2009).

member state with the highest percentage of citizens admitting to 'not knowing any other language than their mother tongue' (66%) (European Commission 2006: 4).

► **IN** 1998, the Pilot Project on Teaching Modern Languages in Primary Schools in Ireland was launched (see: <http://www.mlpsi.ie>). From 2001, the project became known as the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI), in which approximately 15% of primary schools (527 schools) participated during the school year 2010–11. The number of participating schools was capped and a waiting list established in 2002 (DES 2005: 6.1.2, footnote 29). This cap was partially lifted in the case of schools that had existing language-teaching capacity. Primary schools participating in this initiative can offer French, German, Spanish or Italian classes. The MLPSI offers induction days and other training via the Education Centre network, and has developed a range of useful support materials accessible from its website. The initiative adopts an integrated, cross-curricular approach, and actively encourages the use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in classrooms.

► **WHILE** Irish and English are compulsory, no other language is compulsory at Junior Certificate level. At Leaving Certificate level, Irish is compulsory but no other language is required, except in the case of the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied. At least one language other than Irish and English is nevertheless studied by most students in post-primary school. This is partly due to the fact that a third language is required for access to each of the four constituent universities of the National University of Ireland; in recent years, however, this rule has been relaxed in the case of some programmes. Competence in a third language is not required to access programmes in the remaining universities or in the Institute of Technology sector, except where those programmes involve the study of particular languages at advanced level. No post-primary school is currently obliged to offer a third language, although all mainstream schools do opt to offer at least one third language (DES 2005: 22).

► **THIRD** languages offered as options on the Junior Certificate curriculum are: French, German, Spanish and Italian. Modern languages offered as options on the Leaving Certificate curriculum are: as above, and also Russian, Japanese (both *ab initio*) and Arabic, with other languages being offered on a non-curricular basis.³ The Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) was instigated in 2000 by the Department of Education and Science under the National Development Plan 2000–2006, and continues under the National Development Plan 2007–2013 (Ireland 2007). Its objective is to diversify, enhance and expand language teaching at post-primary schools. The initiative has enhanced access to Spanish and Italian at

³In 2009, the list of non-curricular languages offered for examination was: Latvian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Modern Greek, Finnish, Polish, Estonian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Swedish, Czech, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Portuguese, Danish and Dutch. See: <http://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ex&sc=eu> (Last accessed: 26 April 2011).

post-primary level and has produced valuable teaching materials, such as the first Italian Leaving Certificate textbook, published in November 2010; it has introduced Japanese at Leaving Certificate level in 35 schools as well as via Saturday classes in Cork, Dublin and Galway; 24 of these schools offered Japanese as a Leaving Certificate subject in 2010–11, and this number is increasing each year. The PPLI has also established Russian as a transition year subject in 24 schools, and is in addition currently offering extra-curricular Leaving Certificate classes (for both complete beginners and more advanced learners) on a pilot basis in Dublin.

▶ **IN** 2010, 50.6% of those who sat the Leaving Certificate took French, while 13.4% of candidates took German, 6.7% took Spanish, 0.8% took Polish, approximately 0.5% took Italian and Russian respectively, and 0.2% took Arabic (State Examinations Commission 2010). These figures reveal, by comparison with the figures for 2001, a fall in the percentage of those taking French and German, but a notable increase in the numbers taking Spanish and a marginal increase in Italian. They also reflect the fact that students can now sit examinations in a wider range of curricular and non-curricular language subjects.

▶ **FOR** historical reasons, French has been the dominant third language taught at post-primary level since the nineteenth century, with the result that it has traditionally been the language most often studied at third level. French, German, Spanish and Italian are the third languages most often studied at third level, although other languages are also taught, including Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Dutch, Polish and Catalan. Unlike the other third languages taught at third level, French does not tend to be offered at *ab initio* level in the higher-education institutions.

▶ **INITIAL** teacher education for primary level is provided by the colleges of education and for post-primary level by the universities. Post-primary curricular language subjects currently approved by the Teaching Council are: Arabic, Classical Studies, English, French, German, Ancient Greek, Hebrew Studies, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Russian and Spanish.⁴ Teacher education in the area of English as a second language is provided by at least two universities.

▶ **SINCE** the Council of Europe's Expert Group visit in 2005, when teacher associations reported that language teachers felt insufficiently supported (despite their satisfaction with the continuing professional development offered by the MLPSI, the PPLI and the no longer existing Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT)), supplementary funding has been made available for voluntary Teacher Professional Networks, including language teacher associations, in order to assist in the continuing professional development of teachers of third languages. In addition,

⁴The Teaching Council (An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta) website is at: <http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/section1/default.asp?NCID=621> (15 June 2011).

a peer-led continuing professional development network is currently in development for post-primary language teachers. However, while the Department of Education and Science pledged support in 2006 for the formal provision of continuing professional development for teachers of Irish, no corresponding commitment has been made for teachers of third languages.

▶ **CHILDREN** of migrant families, whose mother tongue is not English, represent a significant portion of our school-going population (there are more than 48,000 migrant students at post-primary level), being approximately 14% of the overall post-primary cohort.⁵ Mother tongue classes for these children can be funded by the DES, and the first language of students from EU member states can be made available as a Leaving Certificate examination subject, subject to certain conditions. Extra language support is provided in schools for these learners, where possible. Prior to its closure in 2008, the IILT developed benchmarked proficiency assessment tools for primary and post-primary learners of English as a second language (DES 2005: 4.2.5). A range of documents published by the IILT is currently available (in English only) to assist Language Support Teachers.⁶ In addition, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has published guidelines on its website for ordinary classroom teachers in relation to supporting students for whom English is not the first language.

▶ **PRIOR** to 2008, IILT offered English classes to adult immigrants. IILT also monitored the delivery of mother-tongue classes to adult learners. These classes were organised by immigrant communities and funded by the Department of Education and Science.⁷

▶ **BEFORE** 2004, when it went into liquidation, Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (ITÉ) produced many fundamental surveys and research results in the field of languages (DES 2005: 5.2.3 footnote 27). Since then, no other body has been put in place to fill the significant gap left by the closure of ITÉ.

⁵ The 14% figure has been arrived at by combining the Immigrant Council of Ireland (2010) figure of 48,000 with the figure of 350,687 students at post-primary level in 2009–10 as given on the DES website, available at: http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/stat_web_stats_09_10.pdf (15 June 2011).

⁶ The documents are hosted on the NCCA website, but are not NCCA publications.

⁷ For further discussion of language, migration and citizenship issues in Ireland, see Conrick (2009).

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CHALLENGES

- ▶ **THE** widespread but erroneous perception that ‘English is enough’ militates against the kind of plurilingual ambitions and achievements common in non-anglophone EU member states. The most recent strategy and action plan issued by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation argues that ‘the main challenge for Ireland...is to become a truly multilingual society, where the ability to learn and use two or more languages is taken for granted and fostered at every stage of the education system and through lifelong education’ (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation 2010: 32). However, the recent report of the Higher Education Strategy Group (2011) makes no mention of the importance of the teaching and learning of non-indigenous languages for the future of our country.
- ▶ **THE** Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation strategy and action plan (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation 2010) places emphasis on Ireland’s need to create the best possible international trade and investment environment for business and to improve long-term competitiveness by driving innovation and productivity. Developing language capacity within our society must be a key factor in this plan. In an increasingly competitive employment market, job candidates with language skills have an advantage.⁸ An individual’s employment opportunities within the domestic and global job market are significantly enhanced by proficiency in one or more foreign languages; s/he will need to compete with counterparts from other EU member states where plurilingual competence is the norm. Of the 339 companies that participated in IBEC’s 2010 Education and Skills Survey, over 10% identified languages as an area in which they are likely to experience an ‘occupational skills gap’ (McGann 2010) in the coming two-year period.
- ▶ **AS** the EU seeks to expand its markets, language skills become ever more important. While English currently has a key role as a global business language,

⁸ Conversely, those without adequate language skills may be at a disadvantage (Faller 2010).

EU companies will only gain a competitive edge and successfully enter new markets with the help of other languages. Better language skills are needed wherever companies interact with service providers and suppliers, as well as in sales and marketing. Shortages of language skills in business impact strongly on the EU economy; a 2007 European Commission study estimated that 11% of exporting EU SMEs may be losing business because of language barriers. Language skills are needed for EU companies wishing to enter emerging markets such as Brazil, Russia, India and China (European Commission 2008: 7–8). This point of view is echoed in the British Academy’s position paper on languages (British Academy 2011: 5).

► **THE** lack of coherent language policies at both institutional and national levels means that Irish citizens are often denied high-quality language-learning experiences and opportunities.⁹ This incoherence also means that valuable resources are wasted. There is a perceived lack of vertical continuity, for example, between the various educational levels, both in the choice of third languages taught and between the levels of proficiency required, as well as a sense that achievements, especially in oral competence, are insufficient.¹⁰ The role of languages in education must be planned in a systematic way, underpinned by an understanding of the current and future needs of Irish society; this includes not just considering the economic needs¹¹ but also the cultural and social needs¹² of our citizens. It should be borne in mind that any commitment towards increasing language diversification at primary and post-primary levels would have implications throughout the education sector; underpinning such an initiative through high-quality teacher education would require diversification within programmes currently offered by the colleges of education and universities. It is the view of this committee that diversification should not be at the expense of, but an enhancement to, existing languages.

► **ONE** of the biggest threats facing language education in Ireland is the gradual erosion of the NUI third-language matriculation requirement. The removal of the third-language requirement would have serious consequences for the sustainability of languages at all levels, a situation which would ultimately undermine Ireland’s status and competitiveness in global terms.

⁹ See for example the discussion in Bruen (2004). For further discussion of international examples of language policy strategies, see Conrick and Regan (2007).

¹⁰ The issue of continuity receives particular attention in the Council of Europe *Policy Profile* (Council of Europe Languages Policy Division 2008). See sections 2.4.3, 2.8.1 and 3.4.2.

¹¹ The report by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (2005: ix-x) emphasised the urgency of developing a better understanding of Ireland’s language capacity and undertaking an ‘analysis of the needs of learners, and the state, in the contemporary economic, social or cultural context’.

¹² Transcultural literacy and intercultural communication, via the learning of foreign languages, is a ‘key component of education for democratic citizenship’, helping to equip people living in a multicultural society with the skills necessary ‘to deal with difference knowledgeably, sensibly, tolerantly and morally’, thereby strengthening ‘social cohesion, mutual understanding and solidarity’ (Gallagher-Brett 2005).

- ▶ **THE** third-level system needs to produce language teachers in sufficient numbers to sustain and improve current levels of language education in the primary, post-primary and tertiary sectors, in order to ensure that the need for better language skills, articulated in documents such as the 2005 Report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, can be addressed throughout the education system.

OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ **IRELAND** has a proud tradition of teaching and scholarship at third level, not least in the four traditional third languages, namely French, German, Spanish and Italian.¹³ The continued fostering of existing teaching and research expertise in all established disciplines will ensure Ireland's enduring international reputation as a European centre of educational and research excellence in language, literary and cultural studies.¹⁴

- ▶ **THE** Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative and the Post-Primary Languages Initiative have prepared the way for a diversification and mainstreaming of modern languages in Irish educational curricula. The current boost in numbers studying Spanish at third level presents an excellent opportunity from the point of view of diversifying the languages offered at post-primary level. In addition, economic considerations have led to a strong demand for Chinese language classes at post-primary level; one secondary school has already begun to offer Mandarin Chinese classes from first year onwards, on an extra-curricular basis, and there are plans to extend this scheme. There is a clear opportunity here to extend the range of languages accredited by the Teaching Council of Ireland. Teachers who wish to avail themselves of the language training and exchange programmes administered by the European Union, such as Comenius, Gruntvig and Lingua schemes, can do so via Léargas (see <http://www.leargas.ie>).

- ▶ **THE** European Union remains committed to the Barcelona objective that all citizens should be able to communicate in their mother tongue plus two languages (Barcelona European Council 2002: 19). Languages provide a strong integrating force in building economic and cultural links with our European neighbours and contribute towards building a European civil society. Building a strong European Union helps strengthen the position of each of its member states.

¹³ For discussion of the breadth of scholarship covered by scholars of Modern Languages in Higher Education in Ireland, see the RIA Committee on Modern Language, Literary and Cultural Studies contribution to RIA (2011: 44–47).

¹⁴ The benefits of such an approach in a broad range of arts and humanities disciplines were underlined by the recommendations of the IRCHSS report: *Playing to our Strengths: The Role of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and Implications for Public Policy* (IRCHSS 2010).

▶ **RESEARCH** suggests that candidates with language skills are often recruited by companies because the development of language competence tends to be linked with the development of a range of other skills, including an ability to empathise with others (Nuffield Languages Inquiry 2000). Research also points to a clear link between plurilingualism and creativity. There is evidence that plurilingualism contributes to the development of mental flexibility, problem-solving ability, learning capacity and interpersonal ability, all of which are desirable skills in a developing information society and knowledge economy (European Commission 2009). Indeed, in tests measuring aspects of intelligence, creativity, divergent thinking and cognitive flexibility, the performance of high-level plurilinguals is better than that of corresponding monolinguals (Skutnabb-Kangas 2002).¹⁵ Research carried out in Irish higher-education institutions indicates that language learning contributes to the development of the kinds of transferable skills desired by twenty-first-century employers.¹⁶

▶ **EMERGING** technologies in the digital age provide an opportunity to enhance the quality and delivery of language teaching. One of the problems with learning languages has been their perceived difficulty and the quality of some of the teaching; using digital technologies has proved to be valuable in enlivening and making more relevant the teaching of languages. It is very important that we spread effective teaching methodologies throughout the education system so as to enable all language learners to benefit from new technologies.

¹⁵ There is some evidence to suggest that bilingualism wards off dementia in later life (see Shelley 2010).

¹⁶ See the collaborative Dublin City University (DCU), Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) 2003–6 project, *Transferable Skills in Third-Level Modern Languages Curricula*.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, ACTIONS

GENERAL 'LANGUAGES-IN-EDUCATION' RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ **THAT** the DES, in consultation with language-teaching experts at all stages of the educational system, and on the basis of the many expert reviews produced in recent years, formulate a coherent languages-in-education policy.
- ▶ **THAT** adequate resources be allocated, as a matter of urgency, to implement this much needed languages-in-education policy.
- ▶ **THAT** modern languages continue to be taught with an emphasis on cultural, as distinct from purely linguistic, awareness. Sociocultural awareness needs to be seen and understood as an integral part of language education.
- ▶ **THAT** continuity between languages taught at primary, post-primary and tertiary levels be achieved, where desired, by publishing data in a centralised and easily accessible location.
- ▶ **THAT** vertical and horizontal coherence be enhanced in language learning at all stages of the curriculum by adopting the Common European Framework of Reference and the European Language Portfolio, as recommended by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (2005) and various other stakeholders.¹⁷

¹⁷ A European Language Portfolio in both English and Irish has already been developed, published and distributed by the Centre for Language and Communication Studies at TCD for use in post-primary schools, based on the ECF and the DES syllabi. English and Irish versions of the European Language Portfolio have also been developed for primary schools by the MLPSI Project Leaders based at the Kildare Education Centre; these were validated by the Council of Europe in September 2005 (DES 2005: 6.4; 6.1.2).

- ▶ **THAT** the DES support language-assistant programmes which would allow university students fluent in the target language to spend a paid year teaching their language in Irish primary and secondary schools. In the past, a similar arrangement has been facilitated in the case of a small number of schools via the Socrates scheme Lingua C (DES 2005: 6.1, footnote 28). Currently, funding is available from various governments for Irish-based university students of modern languages who wish to obtain professional experience and enhance their linguistic expertise by teaching in a primary or secondary school in a country or region of their target language. In at least one Irish university, this year abroad is given equivalent accreditation to the Erasmus year, students who follow either route earning a BA International.
- ▶ **THAT** mother-tongue support and English-language support be reinstated as standard, for children of newcomers to Ireland in particular.
- ▶ **THAT** the possibilities offered by new technologies (e-learning, video-conferencing and virtual exchanges) be fully explored by all interested parties at all levels (including lecturers, teachers, policy makers, education managers, government departments), with a view to diversifying and enhancing language education.

PRIMARY LEVEL

- ▶ **THAT** the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative be integrated into the mainstream curriculum, as strongly recommended by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (2005) and the Council of Europe Policy Profile (2008) document, rather than being limited to extra-curricular time and to a portion of schools.¹⁸ In order to strengthen the teaching of third languages in primary schools, these subjects must not only continue to be taught as academic subjects in B.Ed. degrees but also be seen as central components of the B.Ed. degree.
- ▶ **THAT** pupils be taught, on an extra-curricular basis, about the languages and cultures of their school's immigrant pupils. These languages and cultures should also be given visible recognition in classrooms. Where a class group includes one or more hearing-impaired pupils, or one or more Traveller children, Irish Sign Language and Irish Traveller Shelta should also be referenced and recognised in classroom lessons and environments (Council of Europe Languages Policy Division 2008: 3.5.3).

¹⁸ In a recent *Irish Times* article, Dr Ed Walsh, former president of the University of Limerick, put forward the view that: 'too much time is spent on religious studies in the colleges of education and not enough on subjects such as civic responsibility, science and foreign languages' and that 'resources should be reoriented towards improving the teaching of English, and enriching the offering of continental and Asian languages and Irish studies' (Walsh 2011). He made those comments in response to the publication of a review of the B.Ed. degree at Mary Immaculate College (Teaching Council 2010).

POST-PRIMARY LEVEL

- ▶ **THAT** advanced proficiency in a third language be made a universal requirement in order to integrate plurilingualism into the curriculum.
- ▶ **THAT** formal external assessment of oral proficiency be made compulsory for modern languages at Junior Certificate level, in order to improve communicative competence in languages at junior cycle.
- ▶ **THAT** progress made within the framework of the Post-Primary Languages Initiative be consolidated by reviewing and extending the range of languages taught at post-primary level, and by planning new actions, with a view to building overall language capacity.
- ▶ **THAT** the optional transition year offered in over 70% of schools should be used to explore at least one language and culture not already encountered at Junior Certificate level.

THIRD LEVEL

- ▶ **THAT** modern languages be treated as a priority subject at third level, in the context of the development of a global society. A similar action was recommended in the Independent Review into Higher Education Funding and Student Finance in the UK (the Browne Review) (Lord Browne 2010), and by the British Academy (2011: 2–3). This is an urgent issue if the erosion of language capacity in Ireland is to be prevented.
- ▶ **THAT** work on the alignment of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages with the Irish National Framework of Qualifications be continued with a view to facilitating and encouraging the inclusion of *ab initio* level language modules on third-level programmes.
- ▶ **THAT** each institution of higher education be formally requested to produce an internal policy on languages where such a policy is not already in place.
- ▶ **THAT** third-level institutions be encouraged to equip all of their students with strong language skills and intercultural knowledge, without placing their existing language personnel and programmes under strain. While it is imperative that institutions protect the status of languages as academic disciplines in their own right, they should also be encouraged to exploit the capacity for, and to build space into, programmes for students to pursue language subjects which, while possibly outside their specialist fields, may well be of interest due to their educational, social, personal and economic value.
- ▶ **THAT** third-level courses involving the temporary placement in schools of well-prepared modern language undergraduates be strongly supported by institutions and the DES.

- ▶ **THAT** Irish higher-education institutions be supported by the DES in playing an active role in the in-service training of primary and post-primary teachers. In-service diploma programmes have previously been offered by a number of institutions to primary and post-primary teachers, in conjunction with the MLPSI and PPLI.
- ▶ **THAT** sufficient resources be provided to enable the continuation of language assistantship exchanges at third level. At present, financial constraints are leading institutions to cut resources in this vital area, which facilitates high-quality, low-cost contact with the target language.
- ▶ **THAT** language teaching continue to be taught primarily by permanent lecturing staff rather than by teaching assistants in third-level programmes in modern languages (Arts and Applied).

BROADER NATIONAL LEVEL

- ▶ **THAT** a Language Advisory Board be established, whose role would be to advise on policy initiatives and development. Board membership should include not only language specialists at all levels of the Irish educational system, but also representatives from organisations such as Enterprise Ireland, NCCA, and government departments. Representation from the Immigrant Council of Ireland and other established immigrant organisations would facilitate an inclusive approach to the shaping of language policy in Ireland. The Board should also engage with language strategy developments in Northern Ireland.
- ▶ **THAT** a vehicle be established, either directly under the aegis of the DES or distributed throughout the third-level sector, which would fulfil the role of monitoring progress on implementation of policy initiatives and evaluating past and future initiatives.
- ▶ **THAT** resources be allocated for national-level high-quality research with a view to establishing a precise, accurate and more systematic picture of the overall linguistic landscape and profiles of the needs of, for example, exporting SMEs.
- ▶ **THAT** public bodies develop more multilingual documentation to reflect the backgrounds of those who work in, and avail of, their facilities (by producing multilingual forms and information on web pages, for example).
- ▶ **THAT** a number of key Irish public figures (from politics, sport, business, entertainment) with multilingual skills be identified as 'language ambassadors' who could be used to showcase the benefits of plurilingualism for Irish people.
- ▶ **THAT** an advertising campaign be launched to improve public perceptions of language learning, address gender imbalances in language learning and raise awareness of the benefits of language learning.

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Karen Ruddock, National Co-ordinator, PPLI

The previous Royal Irish Academy Modern Languages Committee

© 2011 ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY
19 Dawson Street
Dublin 2

T: +353 1 676 2570
F: +353 1 676 2346

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