

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP on MODERN LANGUAGES



Chair: Nia Griffith MP (Lab); Co-Chair: Baroness Coussins (CB);
Vice-Chairs: Sir David Amess MP (Con); Tonia Antoniazzi MP (Lab);
Lord Dykes (CB); Baroness Garden of Frognal (LD).

A NATIONAL RECOVERY PROGRAMME FOR LANGUAGES

**A framework proposal from the
All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages**

4 March 2019

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A message from Nia Griffith MP, Chair, & Baroness Coussins, Co-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages:

The case for languages is compelling and urgent. The UK's languages deficit is holding us back economically, socially and culturally. We need to reverse this so that we can:

Provide a world-class education in our schools & universities: Young people need languages to become culturally agile, ready for the mobile and inter-connected jobs of the future. Students with experience abroad on Erasmus+ already have an unemployment rate 23% lower than that of non-mobile students¹.

Grow an export-led economy: The UK's lack of language skills already costs an estimated 3.5% of GDP. SMEs using languages report 43% higher export/turnover ratios². But over 80% of SMEs operate in English only³, and the DIT's Export Strategy doesn't mention language skills.

Enhance the UK's role and influence as a world leader in international relations, security & soft power: 75% of the world's population doesn't speak English⁴. Linguistic diversity is a hallmark of the use of cyberspace and the proportion of web content in English is declining. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the Armed Forces and the police and security services are already prioritising language training. We must build on this, so that the UK can be fully engaged in all international organisations and networks without relying on EU staff.

Build a fairer, healthier and more resilient society: Language learning is a marker of social advantage in the UK⁵. Social inclusion is helped by supporting bilingual children study their home languages too. Learning languages – at any age – has cognitive health benefits^{6,7}, helping to develop other skills and protecting against dementia⁸ and stroke impairment⁹.

But the UK is in a languages crisis.

The languages 'supply chain' through schools is drying up. GCSE and A Level figures are historically low. Exam entries in 'languages with smaller cohorts' – some of the most strategically important for the future – are minuscule, despite 2 million bilingual children in our schools. University language departments are closing fast. There are now fewer MFL graduates each year than there are MFL teacher training places.

We need a fresh mindset about learning languages. They are perceived as difficult subjects; bilingual pupils are considered a problem rather than an asset; businesses say they are unhappy with school leavers' and graduates' language skills and yet do not prioritise language training. And the Government regularly fails to consider languages in major strategies despite their relevance (such as the 2018 Export Strategy).

The UK cannot keep relying on international recruitment for language skills. More needs to be done – and, crucially, policies and action need to be properly co-ordinated across Government.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages calls on Government, civil society and all stakeholders to act now to reverse this national crisis.

The following National Recovery Programme is proposed as an overarching framework of strategic objectives against which specific policies and actions can be mapped and implemented by the professionals and practitioners with the detailed knowledge and responsibility to achieve a step change in the UK's languages capability.

¹ *Erasmus Impact Study*, European Commission (2014)

² Foreman-Peck, J. & Wang, Y. *The Costs to the UK of Language Deficiencies as a Barrier to UK Engagement in Exporting: A Report to UK Trade & Investment*. (2013).

³ *Born Global*, British Academy (2014).

⁴ *The English Effect*, British Council (2013).

⁵ Tinsley, T. *Language Trends – Language Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools in England*, British Council (2018).

⁶ Vega-Mendoza et al 2015, *Cognition*.

⁷ Bak et al, 2014, *Annals of Neurology*.

⁸ Alladi et al 2013, *Neurology*.

⁹ Alladi et al 2016, *Stroke*

NATIONAL RECOVERY PROGRAMME FOR LANGUAGES

VISION

To meet the UK's goals in government, business and civil society by building a country where language skills are valued; where speaking more than one language is the norm; and where languages education and training are world class, equipping the current and next generations with the right language skills for the future.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Schools	Objective 2: Further & Higher Education	Objective 3: Business	Objective 4: Government	Objective 5: Society
Develop and implement an inclusive language policy from 5 – 18 with clear pathways to qualifications in a wide range of languages	Protect and expand language courses in colleges and universities – both at degree level and in Institution-Wide Language Programmes. And introduce language accreditation into the Apprenticeship Programme	Business and government to work together on role modelling in schools and on language & cultural skills training for exporters.	Ensure the machinery of government reflects and is accountable for the strategy on languages.	Challenge the view that English is enough and encourage more young people, parents and employers to recognise the value of languages skills.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: Schools

Develop and implement an inclusive languages policy from age 5-18 with clear pathways to qualifications in a wide range of languages

GOALS
Statutory entitlement to languages education at all stages of the curriculum from 5-18.
Improved social equity in languages education, closing gaps in participation and attainment (irrespective of socio-economic or regional factors)
Higher take-up of public examinations including a wider range of forms of accreditation.
In England, students should have a reasonable expectation that their GCSE grade in MFL will be similar to that in other subjects without any systematic variation.
Routine regular inspection of MFL in primary and secondary schools and colleges as part of a broad and balanced curriculum offer.
Adequate supply of properly trained languages teachers in the primary and secondary workforce with access to high quality initial teacher training and continuing professional development.
Every child to have the opportunity for international experience at home or overseas.
Every language learner to have access to a language assistant.
Effective communication of MFL outcomes at the point of transfer from primary to secondary schools to ensure coherent and coordinated transition.
An increase in the range of languages taught in primary and secondary schools.
Stronger messages from government to schools, parents and students about the value of languages.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: Further & Higher Education

Protect and expand language courses in colleges and universities – both at degree level and at Institution-Wide Language Programmes and introduce language accreditation into the Apprenticeship Programme

GOALS
Creation of a bespoke funding formula that respects the integrity of four-year MFL degrees and protects the provision of strategic and vulnerable languages.
Every graduate in all subjects - including vocational training - expected to have a working knowledge of at least one other language in addition to English.
HEIs initiating and/or participating in partnerships with schools (especially schools with high levels of disadvantage) and with employers to boost awareness of the value of language skills.
Widening opportunities to access applied language learning through different routes systematically linked to employment & integrate business-focussed language courses into technical education courses
UK to remain a full participant in Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020, or like for like replacement schemes; and increase uptake of the opportunity.
Strategic oversight of MFL provision to ensure changes in provision are implemented with due consideration on regional and national impact

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: Business

Business and government to work together on role modelling in schools and on language & cultural skills training for exporters.

GOALS
Government working with employers' organisations to provide businesses with comprehensive support and advice on language & culture skills for both domestic and international trade, including strengthening regional DIT support and through the DIT's GREAT website.
Government to reward and support small business owners who invest in language training, for example through tax incentives.
Government, businesses and training providers to embed languages in the Apprenticeship Scheme and other vocational training programmes.
UK businesses to promote to school heads, parents and students the value of language skills in and out of the workforce (alongside the complementary role of machine translation and use of native speakers), including through coordination of existing school:business networks.
UK business to demand better language skills among school and college leavers and university graduates, and a universal calibration system showing the level of job applicants' language skills.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: Government

Ensure the machinery of government reflects and is accountable for the strategy on languages

GOALS
The Government to act more effectively to coordinate language strategy across Departments to be able to plan more effectively for the future and make strategic and practical use of language skills across government
Departments to continue to prioritise and develop the place of language skills in sustaining and improving the UK's role & authority in diplomacy, security & defence.
The Government to rectify the current absence of language skills from most recent export and international trade strategies.
Future Government consultations and policy proposals to take account of language issues systematically.
Audit of existing language skills across the civil service & identify skills gaps.
An adequate supply chain of multilingual officials, interpreters and translators for deployment in the UN and other international bodies.
Improvement of the status of public sector employees with language capabilities.
Development and humanitarian aid budgets to be deployed with maximum efficiency by integrating language and communication with beneficiary communities in all stages of project development and delivery.
Recognition by the Government that the UK's rightful place as a leading global nation includes a multilingual confidence and capacity.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: Society

Challenge the view that English is enough and encourage more young people, parents and employers to recognise the value of languages skills

GOALS
Sustained long term campaign backed by the Government and other influencers, including businesses, to promote language skills and counter the view that English is enough.
A desire among students and their families, and adult learners, to learn languages as a core skill which they recognise has social, cognitive and career advantages.
Recognition, nurturing and deployment of the UK's bilingual citizens to meet some of the country's linguistic needs in a wide range of languages.
Establishment of the view that bilingualism and EAL children and adults are an educational and social asset, not a problem.
Improvement of the status of public service interpreters and translators working in the justice system and the health service.
Promotion of the understanding that automatic translation and artificial intelligence can complement but not replace interpersonal and intercultural interaction.
Recognition of the value of international/intercultural experience and creation of an official framework to facilitate & encourage it.