

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

on

MODERN LANGUAGES

Chair: Baroness Coussins (Crossbench) **Vice Chairs:** Paul Maynard MP (Conservative), Luciana Berger MP (Labour), Baroness Sharp of Guildford (Liberal Democrat)

SUBMISSION TO THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S REVIEW OF THE BALANCE OF COMPETENCES BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

SUMMARY

1. The APPG on Modern Languages welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this review. Our response is general rather than specific, bringing together evidence from a range of sources to show that the UK is failing to derive the full economic, political and educational benefits from membership of the European Union because of a lack of language skills.
2. We are pleased that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has already recognised the value and importance of languages in diplomacy by increasing its budget for language training and the number of posts for which languages are an absolute requirement. We hope that the review will help to raise awareness more widely of the need to boost Britain's linguistic capacity, in the interests of individuals' educational experience, the future competitiveness of the UK economy and our international standing and reputation.

BACKGROUND

3. The APPG was established in January 2008 and its terms of reference are to:
 - explore the educational, skills-related, employment, competitive and cultural benefits of learning and using modern languages throughout the United Kingdom;
 - provide a parliamentary forum for information exchange, discussion and consultation; and

- encourage and support policies and action to improve the take-up of modern languages in schools, further and higher education, in the workplace and in the community.
4. Over the last five years, the APPG has held regular meetings at which we have had the benefit of hearing from and questioning a wide range of experts. These have included employers and departmental officials, academics, researchers and policy advisers, professional and specialist bodies as well as teachers, head teachers and pupils.
 5. **Our overall conclusion is that the national deficit in languages is now so serious that it needs to be acknowledged and redressed by coordinated government action across a range of departments including the FCO, BIS, the Home Office and the Department for Education.**

LANGUAGE SKILLS AND EXPORTS IN THE SINGLE MARKET

6. There is now a considerable body of evidence, both policy-oriented and academic, which shows that languages are linked to export growth. This year, both the CBI and the British Chambers of Commerce have published reports highlighting the risks to British companies because of insufficient supply of language skills among British graduates and college leavers¹. Business leaders say that language availability, instead of market strategy, is driving exporting decisions, and that a lack language and cultural capability is a barrier for non-exporters who want to start trading internationally.
7. The econometrist James Foreman-Peck has shown that market failure in language skills affects the UK disproportionately: whilst there is an inbuilt tendency for everyone to under-invest in language skills, patterns of world trade show that, allowing for other factors, the UK is more likely than other countries to gravitate towards trading partners which have a language in common².
8. The Department for Business, Innovation and skills has noted that the proportion of UK's exports of goods and services which went to the other 26 EU member states is falling and now stands at less than 50%³. At the same time, participation in EU trade networks can help UK exporters to access high growth markets beyond Europe.

¹ CBI/Pearson, 'Learning to Grow : What Employers Need from Education and Skills', 2012. British Chambers of Commerce, *Exporting Is Good for Britain - Skills*, 2012
<<http://www.britishchambers.org.uk/policy-maker/policy-reports-and-publications/exporting-is-good-for-britain-skills.html#.UMDH-9vKdAM>>.

² James Foreman Peck, 'Costing_Babel. The Contribution of Language Skills to Exporting and Productivity'.

³ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 'Government Review of the Balance of Competences between the United Kingdom and the European Union', 2012

9. The CBI/Ernst and Young report 'Winning Overseas' makes it clear that the need to improve foreign language competence is not simply a question of communication skills to service existing or future markets, but about the internationalisation of business outlook and the rebranding of the UK as being 'open for business'.⁴
10. However, there is also evidence that UK businesses are less 'language aware' than their counterparts in other parts of the EU, and this means that there is a need to stimulate demand by improving business language management practices, as well as taking action on the supply side⁵.
11. **We conclude that improving Britain's language skills and expertise in *managing* language issues would allow employers to take greater advantage of the Single Market in goods and services.**

LANGUAGE SKILLS AND JOBS IN THE SINGLE MARKET

12. Poor or non-existent language skills impact on the opportunities for UK individuals to take advantage of labour mobility within the Single Market, whilst leaving them open to competition from incomers. Whilst UK employers are dissatisfied with the language skills of British graduates, they are enthusiastic recruiters of multilingual graduates from other EU countries. In a recent survey, nearly 57% of UK employers said they recruited from other EU countries, compared with a European average of 30%⁶. Although this shows that the Single Market is working well in terms of the free movement of persons, British workers are limited in their ability to take advantage of this freedom in the opposite direction because of their lack of language skills.
13. **Improving Britons' language skills would enable individuals to take greater advantage of opportunities for employment within the Single Market, and be better equipped to compete for jobs at home.**

LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE

14. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has itself noted that a shortage of British staff in international institutions is detrimental to the national interest and undermines UK policy influence internationally. It highlighted that UK nationals make up only 5% of the European Civil Service, whilst accounting for more than 12% of the population of Europe. In 2011 only 2.6% of applicants were from the UK - fewer than from any other member state - and a key reason for this was that English-speaking applicants must

⁴ CBI/Ernst and Young, 'Winning Overseas : Boosting Business Export Performance', 2011.

⁵ H Doughty, 'La Grande Illusion: Why Scottish Further Education Has Failed to Grasp the Potential of Modern Languages', *SCILT Languages Review*, 2011.

⁶ Eurobarometer and European Commission, *Employers' Perception of Graduate Employability Analytical Report*, 2010.

offer either French or German as a second language⁷. This situation must surely be repeated in international organisations worldwide.

15. **Improving Britain's language capacity would enable UK nationals to have greater influence in international organisations both within and beyond the European Union.**

LANGUAGES AND INVOLVEMENT IN EUROPEAN COOPERATION PROGRAMMES

16. UK participation in EU mobility programmes, which improve employability and equip individuals with skills and competences to work across borders, is a fraction of that of comparator countries such as France and Germany.
17. In 2011, only 4,265 Britons took part in work experience placements in another European country under the Leonardo programme, compared to more than 10,000 French and nearly 15,000 Germans⁸.
18. UK participation in overseas university placements under the Erasmus programme is around one third that of France and Germany, with only 8,577 Britons benefitting in 2010/11 compared to more than 25,000 in both France and Germany⁹.
19. European Parliament research into take up of Erasmus placements, which interviewed students in 7 countries, found that lack of language skills was the major reason, after finance, why students were put off taking part. The deterrent effect of lack of foreign language skills was highest amongst UK students (62% compared to an average of 41% across all countries)¹⁰.
20. Organisations such as the CBI and the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) have stressed the importance of international experience for acquiring the language and cultural skills which are increasingly valued by employers¹¹, and the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills' Joint Steering Group on Outward Student Mobility has recommended that greater emphasis should be placed on language skills at primary, secondary and tertiary levels within the education system¹². The House of

⁷ Blog by David Liddington, Minister for Europe on FCO website accessed 13/8/12 <http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/davidliddington/2012/03/20/more-british-nationals-in-the-eu-civil-service-can-transfrom-our-influence/>

⁸ European Commission, *Leonardo Da Vinci Mobility Figures by Country in the Years 2000 – 2011 (Number of All Individuals Who Went on Mobility to Another Country)*, 2011, mmxi, 2011.

⁹ European Commission, *Erasmus Figures 2010-11*, 2011.

¹⁰ European Parliament, *Improving the Participation in the Erasmus Programme*, 2010.

¹¹ E.g. J Diamond, A, Walkely, L, Forbes, P, Hughes, T, Sheen, *Global Graduates into Global Leaders (AGR/CIHE)*.

¹² Joint Steering Group on UK Outward Student Mobility, *Recommendations to Support UK Outward Student Mobility Submitted to David Willetts by the Joint Steering Group on Outward Student Mobility*, March 2012.

Lords EU Committee has also recently concluded that the UK's prevailing monoglot culture is a barrier to British students participating in Erasmus and other mobility schemes to the same extent as those of other member states¹³.

- 21. Improving Britain's language capability would enable UK individuals to take greater advantage of the opportunities to participate in work experience and study placements offered through European Union programmes.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

22. In order to ensure that the UK and its citizens derive the full economic, cultural and educational benefits from membership of the European Union, the APPG on Modern Languages urges Her Majesty's Government to implement the following:
 - A national languages recovery programme in education and training. This should include compulsory language learning in both primary and secondary schools up to school leaving age, as well as opportunities and encouragement for older students to continue with a language either as a specialist discipline or alongside other studies.
 - Stimulating the demand for language skills through training and awareness-raising to improve practices in the strategic management of language skills. This should include, for example, auditing the linguistic skills of existing employees, training and recruitment policies, and the use of specialist interpreters, translators and other multilingual services.
 - Appointing a single government minister responsible for coordinating government policy on foreign languages across departments.

*Baroness Coussins
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¹³ House of Lords European Union Committee, *The Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe*, 2012.