



Press release

LANGUAGE RICH ENGLAND STILL LINGUISTICALLY POOR

Release of a new study kicks off initiative to understand and improve language policies and practices

June 2012 – The British Council-led Language Rich Europe (LRE) consortium has released findings from research analysing languages throughout Europe. It shows that England has many linguistic advantages – phenomenal diversity, an international language, innovative teaching and a commitment to multilingualism. But it lags behind its partners in both provision and competence. There is still a view that English is enough, and that other languages are “important but not essential”.

Key findings in the England study include:

- Nearly a million school age children have another language besides English, but we do not seem to value this “linguistic capital”.
- There is great enthusiasm for learning a language from an early age, but provision is still less than in most European countries.
- More learners abandon language learning at 14 than in any other of the countries surveyed; very few continue with a language after 16.
- Advanced language learning is a class issue in England – the private sector and selective schools dominate at “A” level and despite brilliant exceptions “vocational” language learning is minimal.
- Business and employers generally need languages; many say this, but very few actively promote them.
- Our vibrant cities are effectively multicultural and multilingual and some lead the way in Europe.

Separate findings for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be made available on the project website (www.language-rich.eu).

The Language Rich Europe project is co-funded by the European Commission and managed by the British Council. The research was carried out by Tilburg University’s Babylon Centre for Studies of the Multicultural Society, working with partner institutions and experts in participating countries.

Over the next 9 months, networks of language stakeholders in each country will come together in a series of over 80 workshops to discuss the findings and develop ideas for further action at regional, national and European levels. These will be presented to policy makers in March 2013 in Brussels. In the UK separate reports have been produced for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The UK workshops will be supported by the “Speak to the Future” campaign.

Issues to be explored through the project include:

- How do we strengthen the languages offer in schools?
- How can we motivate people to learn languages at all stages of their lives?
- How do we address the growing shortage of language teachers?
- How can our towns and cities ensure that they are meeting the language needs of a mobile population?
- How should companies support language education?
- What is the role of the media – traditional and new?

According to Lid King, Chair of “Speak to the Future” and LRE Coordinator for England:

“We are Multilingual and Monolingual, enthusiastic but lagging behind in terms of provision and performance. The last decade has been one of considerable investment and innovation in languages with many successes as well as some failures. The current Government is also committed to greater language capability. And yet there is so much still to be done. Despite everything, however, languages remain on the agenda.”

Martin Hope, The British Council’s LRE Project Director, said:

“Through Language Rich Europe we aim to promote greater cooperation between policy makers and practitioners in Europe...to ensure that languages and cultural exchange continue to be promoted and encouraged at school, university and in broader society. This is essential if Europeans of all ages are to develop a broader international outlook, and if Europe as a whole is to position itself successfully to do business with the world’s emerging economic powers in the 21st century.”

For further information about Language Rich Europe or to interview Martin Hope, LRE Project Director, please contact Mark Moulding on +44 (0) 207 389 4889 or e-mail mark.moulding@britishcouncil.org.

For more about LRE and to download our country and region reports:

www.language-rich.eu | Twitter tag: #languagerich

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Notes to Editors

About Language Rich Europe:

- Language Rich Europe is a project co-funded by the European Commission which promotes knowledge sharing about good policy and practice in language learning and teaching across Europe, and encourages Europeans to learn more languages at all stages of their lives. The project focuses on the use of languages in education, media, public services and business.
- The survey covers 15 EU member states - Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, United Kingdom - plus Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland and Ukraine. In Spain additional research was done for Catalonia and the Basque Country. In the UK, research was done separately for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In the Netherlands additional research was done in Friesland.
- In further and higher education 69 VET institutions and 65 universities were surveyed from participating countries/regions
- In the domain of public services and spaces, 63 cities were surveyed from participating countries/regions
- In business, 484 companies were surveyed in 4 sectors: banks, hotels, supermarkets and the construction industry from participating countries/regions.
- Language Rich Europe is a knowledge exchange opportunity for professionals working in education, media, public services and business

About the British Council:

The **British Council** creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. We are a Royal Charter charity, established as the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations.

Our 7000 staff in over 100 countries work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year through English, arts, education and society programmes.

We earn over 75% of our annual turnover of nearly £700 million from services which customers pay for, education and development contracts we bid for and from partnerships. A UK Government grant provides the remaining 25%. We match every £1 of core public funding with over £3 earned in of our charitable purpose.

For more information, please visit: www.britishcouncil.org. You can also keep in touch with the British Council through <http://twitter.com/britishcouncil> and <http://blog.britishcouncil.org/>.

About Speak to the Future:

Speak to the future is a new campaign which is highlighting the importance of languages, language learning and professional language activities for the UK. Targeting the public, media and government, our initiatives are raising awareness of the issue – and aim to bring about a step-change in attitude and policy in favour of languages. The campaign is backed by leading professional and business organisations who are convinced of the importance of language learning for the future of our society, our citizens and our economy.

The campaign has five clear and ambitious objectives that set out the value of learning and using other languages in all sectors of education and at all stages of life.

- **Every language valued as an asset**
- **A coherent experience of languages for all children in primary school**
- **A basic working knowledge of at least two languages including English for every child leaving secondary school**
- **Every graduate qualified in a second language**
- **An increase in the number of highly qualified linguists**

For more information please visit www.speaktothefuture.org.

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