**Languages Strategy for HEA proposed by gradireland**

**November 2013**

**Context**

Ireland has a need for improved foreign language fluency to assist in the development of export markets as well as building relationships globally for social as well as economic benefit. A range of reports substantiate the need for language fluency (see overleaf). It is generally accepted that this strategy will require commitment from government to support language learning from primary school through the whole education cycle.

gradireland (a partnership between Association of Higher Education Careers Services (AHECS) & GTI Ireland) has an opportunity to influence the direction of this strategy through assisting students making course and career choices as well as assisting language educators at third level and HEA to encourage more students to choose languages as their course of choice. These actions would facilitate employers to develop export markets and encourage more employers to invest in Ireland in the longer term due to the excellence of our multilingual workforce. Language lecturers continuously voice their concerns at the need for languages in the curriculum in Higher Education. Enterprise Ireland & IBEC have highlighted the shortage of language ability in the Irish workforce. Many employees are recruited from countries where they have mother tongue fluency. This trend may not be completely reversed but there is room for us to assist in improving the situation and highlighting the career possibilities for students and graduates with languages.

Many employers are currently recruiting staff with fluency in languages - SAP, Facebook, Google, Gerson Lehrman, PayPal, to name a few.

**Suggested action:**

Develop a Language Strategy to provide resources, jobs and employer links for students & graduates interested in using their languages in the workplace in Ireland and abroad by:

* Collaborating with HEA and third level lecturers
* Collaborating with employers of graduates with languages (including IBEC and Chambers of Commerce) to identify job and work experience opportunities and to highlight the importance of work experience and study abroad (tie in with Erasmus).
* Developing the existing Languages & Culture section of gradireland including Careers with Languages booklet ( informed by Languages Work <http://www.languageswork.org.uk/career_choices/case_studies.aspx>)
* Developing a Language Fair, February 2014
  + Targeting: penultimate and final year undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as recent graduates with a language (whether studying language or with mother tongue fluency) interested in working and/or studying in Ireland or abroad
  + Objectives:
    - To connect employers seeking employees with languages and students and graduates with languages
    - To allow employers the opportunity to network with careers services specifically in relation to language requirements.
    - To showcase work, work experience and study opportunities for students and graduates with languages across a range of sectors in Ireland and abroad
    - To connect students and graduates to organisations who have quality information on living and studying abroad e.g. Embassies, Chambers of Commerce, education portals e.g. DAAD, Campus France
* Develop video footage on career possibilities across a range of sectors, languages and job roles to inform potential and current third level students of languages. To include:
  + Six working graduates (German, French, Spanish, Russian, Irish, international student mother tongue another language e.g. Mandarin/ Japanese) working in a range of sectors (e.g. translation, business- customer service, business- marketing, digital /creative media, not for profit, communications) highlighting their employability skills
  + A placement student- the value of international placement
  + An academic - the importance of a curriculum informed by global developments
  + Three employers (e.g. SAP, EOP, Google, creative arts)- the benefits of employees with language fluency and level required
  + Use sign language to interpret the film clip

**Some key messages:**

* Balance between those studying languages and those with mother tongue fluency (international & European students). Balance languages including Irish, sign language, European and non-European languages.
* Leverage working, travelling and studying abroad as an important part of language development.
* Promote employers’ use of European Common Framework for languages so graduates can match their skills to what employers seek.
* Encourage students to study more than one language to third level proficiency including Irish, foreign languages and sign language too! Promote the importance of embracing diversity.
* Promote the export markets important to Ireland currently (Germany, Netherlands, France etc) and into the future (China....)

**Proposition to the Higher Education Authority:**

**To be a key sponsor of the gradireland Language Fair – meeting the needs of global business in Ireland**

*Proposal*: HEA to be the headline partner for this event, which would become the " supported by (or in association with) the Higher Education Authority" or similar (to be discussed).

**To facilitate an employer/ academic forum on the labour market needs and supply**

To be done collaboratively with IBEC members, Enterprise Ireland etc.

R**elevant Reports & Links:**

* Conference on Learning Mobility, Language Acquisition & Employability Conference, December 2012. Kirstin Brogan, Lecturer in German, IT Tralee amongst other speakers http://www.eurireland.ie/erasmus-programme-2012/-erasmus-conference-on-learning-mobility-language-acquisition-and-employability-on-6-december-2012-at-bewleys-hotel-ballsbridge-dublin.1681.html
* Enterprise Ireland, Angela Byrne, Marketing & Sales Strategy Adviser addressed AHECS Biennial 2012 highlighting the need for graduates with languages for export markets.

Slides presented to the Association of Third Level Teachers of German in Ireland Conference, 2010 available at http://www.languagesinireland.ie/index.php?option=com\_content&view=article&id=70&Itemid=103

* Forfás Report, June 2012, Key Skills for Enterprise to Trade Internationally

The report indicates Ireland’s top 10 trading countries, skills and competencies required and suggests a National Foreign Language Education Policy http://www.forfas.ie/publication/search.jsp?ft=/publications/2012/Title,9547,en.php

* Forfás Report, April 2013, The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs Statement on Activity 2012 <http://www.forfas.ie/publication/search.jsp?ft=/publications/2013/Title,10430,en.php>

The report confirms sales and languages skills shortages

* IBEC, Tony Donohue, March 2012, Modern Languages a Business Perspective & other reports and information available at <http://www.languagesinireland.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3&Itemid=80>

Proposed to Gerry O’Sullivan of the HEA by gradireland and represented by:

Orlaith Tunney (TCD) and Jill Barrett (DIT) members of AHECS

Ruairí Kavanagh and Louise Keegan, GTI Ireland

November 2013