

## **Notes on event “Connections through Languages – Ireland, Europe and Beyond”**

On Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, the One Voice for Languages Group held a Panel Discussion on the theme - “Connections through Languages - Ireland, Europe and Beyond”.

The event was hosted by the European Commission in Ireland in Europe House on Lower Mount St., Dublin 2. The venue was excellent for many reasons, not least its location and accessibility and a very warm welcome and interest in the topic from Eimear Ní Bhroin, Languages Officer with the European Commission in Ireland. Joining Eimear on the panel were our Patron, Mairéad McGuinness, MEP, our Languages Champion, Marc Coleman, Sorcha Pollak from the Irish Times and Dr. Deirdre Kirwan, who is a member of the OVFL Committee.

The Chair of OVFL, Dr. Kristin Brogan, delivered an great introductory speech covering the aims, mission statement and work done by OVFL and then followed the Panel Discussion which was moderated by Tanya Flanagan, also from the OVFL Committee.

A number of questions for the panel had been submitted and discussed by the OVFL Committee in advance and questions and comments were also taken from the floor. Among the topics discussed by the panel were the importance and relevance of foreign language learning (especially at an early age), the current situation in Ireland regarding language provision and language policy, the need for a promotional campaign similar to the boost STEM subjects have received in recent years and their thoughts were also sought as to how, as a society, we can create a greater awareness and an appreciation for the value of language learning and language skills.

The contributions of the guest speakers were very positive and supportive of the work being done by OVFL. Post event discussions generally agreed that having media people who are interested in languages is so important to the work of OVFL. It was also noted that we were fortunate to have such a well-assembled and diverse panel of speakers. Having an MEP of the calibre of Mairéad McGuinness as our patron is an invaluable asset to our group and it was heartening to hear Mairéad commit to further support of OVFL in the future.

Other OVFL committee members assisted with the registration and welcome of attendees and taking photos and videos, as well as actively using our social media channels to further disseminate the evening’s discussion.

TF, October 2019.