

Funding for School Exchanges Scheme

Encouraging more senior cycle students to avail of language exchange opportunities

Introduction

The Minister for Education and Skills has set the ambition to make Ireland's Education and Training Service the best in Europe by 2026. In order to deliver on this ambition, a number of programmes that develop competencies that our children will need in order to achieve this have been launched with associated funding e.g. School Excellence Fund – Digital, Creative Schools, etc.

Students are naturally curious, adaptable and inquisitive. Spending time abroad creates an environment that nurtures, values and stretches these attributes. Skills developed through taking part in language exchanges which include adaptability, problem-solving, networking and communication skills as well as actual language skills, are necessary in order for students to develop and thrive in the future as well as to find employment.

With the prospect of Brexit in March 2019, and with the launch of Languages Connect in December 2017, the central role of languages in education has been brought more to the fore, and an increase in the number and quality of school exchanges will play a significant role in delivering the competencies that our children will need, therefore a Funding for School Exchanges has been set up as part of plan to raise awareness of the value of learning languages and specifically under action 1.D.1 of Languages Connect.

Purpose of Funding for School Exchanges Scheme:

1. The Funding for School Exchanges Scheme is part of an awareness raising campaign and focusses language teachers on the importance and benefits of undertaking a school exchange.
2. Exchange experiences will provide excellent opportunities for increasing awareness of the value of learning languages.
3. Students who are confident in their language skills are more likely to be open to the idea of doing an Erasmus placement if they progress to Higher Education.
4. Funding will encourage schools that may have issues with funding to run a school exchange. Students will benefit from the exchange (improved language skills, new way of thinking, CV, independence, confidence, appreciation of what they have, new friends, experience other culture, experience life with other family, potentially work experience). Teachers will also benefit from the exchange (language skills up to date, job-shadowing/team-teaching methodologies with exchange teachers in Target Language country).
5. Schools that receive funding as part of the Funding for School Exchanges Scheme will organise exchanges during term-time, which will allow students to experience school in the Target Language country, facilitate teacher participation, and enable non-language teachers to assist with the programme which facilitates a whole-school approach.
6. Funding offers the possibility to a school of offering a scholarship to a student, who would not otherwise be in a financial position to go on the school exchange.
7. Opportunities will be created to acknowledge the teachers involved, promote the work being done to other schools via events and the media, and raise awareness of the importance of school exchanges
8. 3 year funding is proposed with the aim of making an exchange programme in the school more sustainable in the longer term.

Funding:

- 10 schools will be awarded €15,000 each to cover identified needs. This will be €5,000 per year over 3 consecutive years, to be paid at the beginning of each year. A yearly report, including a financial report, and evaluation must be submitted to PPLI each year by the end of April detailing what the funding provided has been used for. Further funding for year 2/3 will be subject to provision of this report and spending of the funding allocated in accordance with the plan submitted and the criteria as set out.

Funding may include: Contribution towards costs divided across whole class, scholarships for particular students, administrative support, assistance to families hosting return students, activities which provide opportunity for language learning in the target language country.

Funding may not include: Substitution, hotel accommodation.

Criteria:

1. All DES recognised post-primary schools are eligible to apply.
2. The exchange must be with a school in a TL country of one of the curricular languages taught in the school. The country and language involved in the exchange should be the same each year as continuity is recommended for the development of exchanges
3. The exchange must enable students, or in the case of schools that have existing exchanges more students, to avail of language exchange
4. Where more than one language is taught in a school, more than one application may be submitted by that school
5. In order to demonstrate commitment and continuity, applicants who are awarded funding must commit to running the exchange for 3 consecutive years.
6. Applicants must demonstrate a whole-school approach to the exchange.
7. In order for students to experience school life in the TL country, the exchange must take place during term-time in the target language country.
8. Students must stay with host families in order to experience immersion in the TL.
9. Applicants should demonstrate that the exchange is open to a significant number of students.
10. Students participating in the exchange must have studied the language for a minimum of three years.
11. Applications should include an outline plan for the exchange for the three years and a detailed plan and schedule for the exchange in Year one.
12. A school exchange must take place in the academic year of application.
13. Schools must show a willingness, both within and outside the school community, to promote the value of school exchanges through photos, social media, etc., for use by PPLI
14. Members of the PPLI team, the inspectorate and independent experts with relevant experience will review the application forms in order to select the ten schools for participation in the project. Shortlisting may apply and schools would then be visited and/or interviewed during the week of 15th October as part of the selection process. In selecting the 10 schools, the project team will determine the extent to which the proposal:
 - Supports the teaching and learning of the foreign language
 - Is specific to the needs of the relevant learners
 - Demonstrates a whole school approach
 - Is open to a high percentage of students in the school
 - Increases the number of senior cycle students going on school exchanges
 - Sets out a clear plan

- Promotes the value of the language exchange upon return (support will be provided with this by PPLI)

School type will also be taken in to consideration.

15. Closing date: Friday 12th October 2018. Schools awarded funding will be informed by Friday 26th October 2018.

The application link is <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Funding4Exchanges>