

GENERAL

# New supports to promote the teaching and learning of modern foreign languages



Tionscnamh Teangacha Iar-bhunscoile



The Government of Ireland 'Languages Connect' awareness raising campaign was launched by the Department of Education and Skills in September 2018 as an integral part of the national foreign languages strategy. Modelled on Smart Futures, the STEM promotional campaign, the Languages Connect awareness raising initiative offers supports to the educational community to encourage the learning of foreign languages.

Recognising the role of the guidance counsellor in the context of whole school guidance provision, in supporting students to make the best subject choices and career planning decisions for them, and in line with Goal 3.A.1 of the implementation plan (awareness raising), NCGE is pleased to publish the article below compiled by Karen Ruddock, Director of the Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI).

Goal 3: Increase awareness of the importance of language learning to encourage the wider use of foreign languages		
ACTION	TIMESCALE	LEAD
<b>AWARENESS RAISING</b>		
<b>3.A.1</b>	Carry out an awareness-raising campaign to highlight the importance of foreign languages – both for cultural and social awareness and for career opportunities, based on languages themselves or in combination with other disciplines, e.g. Engineering/German. The campaign should target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School principals, teachers, and guidance counsellors.</li> <li>Parents and students.</li> <li>Third level institutions.</li> </ul> Seek to adopt a model similar to the existing "SmartFutures" brand and delivery models to promote priority skills required for enterprise which would include languages.	Q1 2018 onwards
		PPLI with support from NCGE, Enterprise Agencies and Education Stakeholders

At this time of global change and a dramatically changing EU, the skill to communicate in languages other than our national languages is important. Learning a foreign language can transform any career, from finance, to beauty therapy, to engineering. Even a basic understanding of a language can open the door to promotions or international experience. In addition to employability gains, learning foreign languages has proven cognitive benefits and enables students and future workers to demonstrate greater intercultural competence.

According to a LinkedIn report (2016) (<https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/trends-and-research/2016/most-in-demand-soft-skills>), the most in-demand soft skill by employers is communication, and in the top ten list of skills coveted by employers are those that are enhanced by language learning, such as critical thinking, interpersonal communication and adaptability.



Paul Mannion, Gaelic Football star and graduate of a degree in Commerce and Chinese, recently spoke of the life enriching aspects of being able to speak with people in

their own language "speaking in another person's native tongue, making them smile and laugh is something technology will never replace. It's that personal touch, like a hand written note that allows you to connect to people in a really special way".

The website [www.languagesconnect.ie](http://www.languagesconnect.ie) offers guidance on the reasons to learn languages with a focus on employability using foreign languages, including a range of career videos from a wide array of professions to demonstrate how crucial it is to engage with language learning. Included in this video series is an engineer, a chef, a singer, a spa manager, an entrepreneur, a Garda, diplomats and many other people working across a variety of sectors.

Languages Connect has developed specific resources for the career guidance department in schools. These are available on <https://languagesconnect.ie/education-zone/career-guidance-teachers/>. One of the specific resources is an in class activity for senior level students in secondary schools. The aim of the task is for students to get a better understanding of the utility of foreign languages in the working world and why they should aspire to keep studying foreign languages. The learning outcomes were designed following the NCGE – A Whole School Guidance Framework <https://www.ncge.ie/school-guidance-handbook/ncge-whole-school-guidance-framework>.

Another is an online interactive activity which can be used in class or independently by students. The activity is also designed for senior cycle students and it will allow students to build their personal

Language Profile by reflecting on the place of languages in their life, in the workplace and in their future. The activity focuses on the skills acquired while learning a foreign language and highlights the relevance of these skills to any area of work but also focusses on the use of languages across a variety of specific sectors so that it is tailored to students' own areas of interest.

Languages Connect engages with schools and students in many different ways. In addition to providing online and paper-based publications to support guidance



Paul Mannion, Dublin GAA, at Zeminar



Niamh Cacciato, Solicitor, William Fry

professionals, teachers, school leaders, students, parents and employers, Languages Connect is present at events such as Higher Options and Zeminar, visits schools for career evenings, and organises a careers event targeted at transition year students called #ThinkLanguages. Languages Connect has supported the publication of a GradIreland publication with comprehensive advice relating to studying languages <https://languagesconnect.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/gradireland-Languages-2019-1.pdf>

Languages Connect is administered by the Post-Primary Languages Initiative of the Department of Education & Skills and collaborates closely with partners such as NCGE, enterprise agencies such as IDA, IBEC and Enterprise Ireland, and other Government Departments. Information is also available on [www.careersportal.ie](http://www.careersportal.ie). Visit [www.languagesconnect.ie](http://www.languagesconnect.ie), and follow on social media channels for more information.

#### Languages Connect awareness campaign:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2018-press-releases/PR18-09-17.html>

#### Languages Connect implementation plan:

[https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Foreign-Languages-Strategy/fls\\_languages\\_connect\\_implementation\\_plan.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Foreign-Languages-Strategy/fls_languages_connect_implementation_plan.pdf)



#### The Author

**Karen Ruddock** is Director of Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI), lead partners in the implementation of Languages Connect, Ireland's strategy for Foreign Languages in Education. She began as a second level teacher in the sciences, did post-graduate studies in Applied Linguistics, EFL and Japanese language pedagogy, and taught these at second and third level. She also has experience in curriculum development, implementing digital technologies in the MFL classroom, and teacher training, and ran a consultancy for a number of years providing cross-cultural training, and language consulting. She has been with PPLI since April 2009.

The Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) is working to implement foreign languages strategy of the DES in Ireland, primarily in the context of post-primary schools. Languages Connect is a project of the PPLI and is a campaign to raise awareness of the value of teaching and learning foreign languages.