

# MANIFESTO FOR LANGUAGES

From the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages\*

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English is an important world language, but the latest cutting-edge research shows that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, speaking **only** English is as much of a disadvantage as speaking **no** English.

Knowledge of other languages - and of other cultures - is important for education and skills, the economy, international engagement, defence and security and community relations.

The 2015 General Election provides an ideal opportunity to make some milestone commitments – for the short, medium and long term – to making a step change in the UK’s national capacity in modern languages.

Without this step change:

- our economy will suffer as British firms are held back from trading across the world,
- our young people will suffer as they lose out in a global jobs market,
- our international reputation and capacity for global influence will suffer,
- our defence and security interests abroad will be damaged, and
- our cultural capital at home will be impoverished.

**We need sustained action across the UK to revive national competence in languages and to arrest the growing tendency for language learning to be the preserve of an intellectual or affluent élite.**

**All children, not just the 7% in private education, should have a high quality language education to equip them to play their part in a globalised world.**

THE PRESSING CASE FOR  
IMPROVING OUR  
LINGUISTIC SKILLS BASE

**£48 billion a year** that the UK stands to lose in international sales because of language and cultural ignorance.

*J Foreman-Peck, Cardiff Business School*

‘In an increasingly diverse and interconnected world, **language skills are gaining rather than losing their relevance.**’

*Dr Robin Niblett, Director, Chatham House*

**Jobs are going unfilled** because applicants do not have language skills – and the greatest shortages are amongst elementary staff (22% in 2013) – *UKCES*

‘The next generation of business owners must be **‘born global’** with language skills’

*British Chambers of Commerce*

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\***Chair:** Baroness Coussins (Crossbench) **Vice Chairs:** Paul Maynard MP (Conservative), Nia Griffith MP (Labour), Baroness Sharp of Guildford (Liberal Democrat)

The APPG is leading a call to all political parties to support a **Framework for National Recovery in Language Learning** in their 2015 General Election manifestos:

- ❑ **A long term commitment to transforming the reputation of UK citizens as poor linguists, reluctant to value languages other than English.** Languages are as important for our future as STEM subjects. Leadership is needed to ensure they are given similar recognition.
- ❑ **High quality language learning for all children throughout the UK from age 7.** Support for teachers and trainers to develop their linguistic and professional skills and lead the recovery.
- ❑ **A goal for every child to have a high quality language qualification by the end of secondary education.** The reform of GCSEs and A-levels must encourage and reward progression to higher levels.
- ❑ **Active encouragement for business and employers to get involved in tackling the crisis.** Support for schools and employers to work together. Tax breaks and other incentives for business to train and recruit home-grown linguists.
- ❑ **A commitment to maintaining and developing UK expertise in modern languages and cultures in university language departments.** Maintain the status of languages as ‘strategically important and vulnerable’ subjects and continued support for the Year Abroad.

The Framework for National Recovery in Language Learning is supported by:

ASCL

British Council

HSBC

ISMLA

London School of Economics Language Centre

Speak the Future, the Campaign for Languages

UCML

University of Cambridge - Faculty of Modern &

Medieval Languages, and Language Centre

*(Updated 9 June 2014)*

## THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL RECOVERY PROGRAMME

Only **9% of English** 15 year olds are competent in their first foreign language beyond a basic level, compared with an average of 42% across 14 countries.

Languages are compulsory for all up to 16 in **69%** of independent schools, but only in **16%** of state schools.

A-level languages are in deep crisis. Numbers for French and German A -level dropped **10% in one year.**

The number of students taking language degrees is at a record low. **44 universities have scrapped** language degrees since 2000.

There is an urgent need to **train primary school teachers** in order to implement language teaching in primary schools successfully.