

We write as Presidents or Chairs of UK Learned Societies whose work is concerned with all aspects of education and research on language and on languages. We ask the government to pay particular heed to the UK's engagement with linguistic issues as we move towards Brexit and beyond.

We share the concern of UK universities that the benefits to education and research of international mobility and cross-border networks, especially our participation in Erasmus+ and EU research schemes (such as Horizon 2020) could be negatively affected by the UK leaving the EU. We ask that continued international mobility of staff, students and research be specifically addressed in the forthcoming negotiations, since EU membership is not a prerequisite for participation in such programmes. Furthermore, we ask the government to commit to continue funding Study Abroad programmes for UK students (in any country) in the form of special student-fee and student-loan arrangements.

We recognize that Brexit means that there will be a new environment, in both education and research, and we urge the UK Government to develop a well-articulated policy on language education and research (devolving where appropriate), from primary school through to Higher Education and beyond. Such a policy will help the UK prosper in a more global context and address the skills gap in languages for UK businesses after Brexit, as well as provide UK citizens with ways to engage with the global cultures and technologies of the 21st century.

Understanding language and speech, learning particular languages, and learning how to translate between languages, are all crucial for the development of trade, for bolstering intelligence and security, for maintaining and broadening the UK's diplomatic relations across the wider world, for engagement with new technologies, for the education and personal development of individuals, for creating cohesion in complex multicultural and multilingual communities and for addressing questions of health, both mental and physical, in our diversifying and ageing populations. Language enters into virtually every communicative act, and research on linguistic issues has had a deep impact across human intellectual endeavour, from pure mathematics to history and culture.

We call on the Government, therefore, to develop a clearly articulated language policy for the UK, which does four things. First, it should reconfigure our citizens' attitudes to language by explicitly supporting learning and working with languages as a valued skill. Second, it should help maintain and enlarge our international networks in diplomacy, in regulation, and in security. Third, such a policy should develop multilingual skills at every stage of the curriculum, importantly including student exchanges. Fourth, it should be a policy that provides for research on language as a unique facet of human nature and human societies, which enters into virtually everything we think or do.

At primary school level, this policy would involve deep and sustained engagement with language, developing a cohort of linguistically capable individuals in secondary school, who already have links with other nations across the world. Secondary school education should develop linguistic skills in English, as well as other languages, and knowledge of how

language works more generally. In Higher Education, it will require the UK's ability to arrange exchanges of students between Higher Education institutions in the UK and those in other nations, to recruit students from outside our borders, to recruit experts in languages, linguistics and speech science from across the world, and to continue to develop research on languages (their history, their structure, their use) and on language and speech in general (as a unique ability of the human species, as an information technology, as a fundamental means of communication within and across cultures).

Linguistic research in Higher Education and in businesses has been bolstered by the UK's remarkable success in EU research programmes over the past decades, by our openness to recruitment of the most qualified individuals as undergraduate and research students, as postdoctoral researchers inside and outside of Higher Education, and as academics. Issues of exchange, recruitment and international networks obviously go beyond a language policy, but they have particular resonance for education and research on languages. Such research requires strong international networks, many of which have been developed over 40 years of collaboration across the EU, and we urge the government to aim for a Brexit outcome that does not put such collaboration in jeopardy.

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