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| **ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP on** **MODERN LANGUAGES**Chair: Nia Griffith MP (Lab); Co-Chair: Baroness Coussins (CB);Vice-Chairs: Sir David Amess MP (Con); Tonia Antoniazzi MP (Lab); Lord Dykes (CB); Baroness Garden of Frognal (LD). |  |

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**MPs and Peers in urgent call for a National Recovery Programme to revolutionise language skills in the UK**

**Embargoed until 00h01 on MONDAY 4 March 2019**

Britain’s dwindling language skills are a disaster for the country and must be recovered through concerted action led by the government and supported by us all, a group of MPs and Peers warns today.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages **National Recovery Programme for Languages** makes an economic, international relations and security case for a renewed focus on language learning in Britain.

It argues that languages are not just an issue for schools, but that their educational and cultural value means that businesses, government and higher education institutions must all play a part.

It highlights:

· The UK loses 3.5 per cent of GDP in lost business opportunities due to our poor language skills; SMEs who deploy languages report 43 per cent higher export/turnover ratios.

· That homegrown language skills are vital to national security, diplomacy and international relations

· Young people need languages to become culturally agile, ready for the mobile and inter-connected jobs of the future.

The **National Recovery Programme for Languages** sets out strategic objectives across five sectors, with a series of goals for each:

* **Schools** should ensure all young people learn a language from ages five to 18 and provide a variety of forms of accreditation.
* **Colleges and universities** should protect and expand language courses to reverse closures of degree courses.
* **Business** should invest in language and cultural skills in the workforce to boost GDP and export growth.
* **Government** should take a strategic lead on this question, perform an audit of language skills in the civil service and rectify the absence of language skills in the Export and Industrial strategies.
* **Society** should recognise language skills as achievable, beneficial and fun to learn.

**Baroness Coussins, Co-Chair of the APPG on Modern Languages, said:**

*“The decline in language skills in the UK is disastrous.*

*“The reason we have published this Framework is that languages have an important role across policy areas and in society, but tend to be thought of as an issue just for schools.*

*“As a country looking to redefine its role on the international stage and be a leader in trade and diplomacy, we need language skills to become the norm, not the exception. So today we call on the Government to provide the strategic leadership, and on stakeholders to act, to revolutionise language skills in the UK.”*

**Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce, welcomed the publication of the report. He added:**

*“At a time when businesses need to look around the world for future opportunities, a lack of language skills is a self-imposed brake on their growth.*

*“The English language may take many businesspeople far, but with over 80 per cent operating only in English, many of our companies are missing out on customers and contracts overseas. Language skills lead to a better understanding of how people and cultures operate, and that understanding is often the key to closing a business deal.*

*“The fact that language skills are not mentioned in the government’s Export Strategy is indicative of the need for more joined-up thinking.*

*“If we could change this culture, the economic benefits wou**ld be significant. The task is a shared one. Government, business and the education sector need to increase the visibility and promotion of language learning and its clear link to personal and business success in international trade.”*

**Vicky Gough, Schools Adviser at the British Council, said:**

*“Anyone who has learned a language knows that it's more than a qualification and a skill, it's a gateway to understanding other cultures.*

*“All of Britain's international trade, diplomatic and security relationships come through the development of trust between countries and peoples, and leading those relationships is language.*

*“If we don’t reverse recent trends we will be locked into a downward spiral of fewer pupils studying languages at GCSE, tiny and unsustainable numbers at A- level, the continuing closure of university departments, and fewer teachers. It is important for the future of the UK that we have more young people with language skills who are better equipped to work in a global economy and live in a global society.”*

* The proportion of students taking a GCSE in languages dropped from 76% in 2002 to 40% in 2011. This rose to 49% in 2014 with the introduction of the government’s Ebacc performance measure, but has declined again since (Ofqual).
* High levels of eligibility for free school meals correlates with markedly worse MFL uptake in schools (Language Trends survey 2018).
* University undergraduate numbers for MFL have dropped by 54% in the last 10 years (HESA Student Record).

The *National Recovery Programme for Languages* will be available for anyone to download from 4 March 2019 on the following link: [**http://bit.ly/LanguagesRecoveryProgramme2019**](http://bit.ly/LanguagesRecoveryProgramme2019)

**ENDS.**

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

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**The *National Recovery Programme for Languages* can be downloaded via the following Dropbox link – it is embargoed until 00h01 on Monday 4 March:**Shortcut: [**http://bit.ly/LanguagesRecoveryProgramme2019**](http://bit.ly/LanguagesRecoveryProgramme2019)

Full link: [**https://www.dropbox.com/s/cj6kdqgl4uaz685/LanguagesRecoveryProgrammeAPPGMFL-Embargo4March.pdf?dl=0**](https://www.dropbox.com/s/cj6kdqgl4uaz685/LanguagesRecoveryProgrammeAPPGMFL-Embargo4March.pdf?dl=0)

**About the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages:**

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages is a cross-party group of MPs and Peers. It meets six times a year to discuss a wide range of issues relating to languages and their place in the policy discussions of the day. The APPG also acts to gather evidence and write to Ministers and other key figures when the need arises, to draw attention to key issues.

The Chair of the APPG is Nia Griffith MP (Labour); its Co-Chair is Baroness Coussins (Crossbench); its Vice-Chairs are Sir David Amess MP (Conservative), Tonia Antoniazzi MP (Labour), Lord Dykes (Crossbench), and Baroness Garden of Frognal (Liberal Democrat). Secretariat and support to the APPG is provided by the British Council.

The APPG’s stated purpose is:

* to explore the educational, skills-related, employment, competitive and cultural benefits of learning and using modern languages throughout the UK;
* to provide a parliamentary forum for information exchange, discussion and consultation;
* and to encourage and suport policies and action to improve the take-up of modern languages in schools, further and higher education, in the workplace and in the community.

The APPG on Modern Languages’ website is:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/schools/support-for-languages/thought-leadership/appg>