



PRESS RELEASE

UK GOVERNMENT CUTS UNDERMINING LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Proposed cuts have put on hold a successful and cost-effective reciprocal scheme for the training of language teachers

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The English Trust for European Education (ETEE), the foremost non-profit organisation for the diffusion of European multi-literacy, has written to the School Minister Nick Gibb, urging him to reconsider putting on hold the highly successful reciprocal arrangement that allows the British Council to organise a sandwich year abroad for foreign language trainee teachers in order to acquire advanced language skills.

The scheme has been running successfully for nearly a century, developing from an initial tripartite agreement between the UK, France and Germany and now enabling some 2400 language assistants to work abroad for at least a year, most of them in schools, as well as allowing a similar number to come to the UK from 23 countries to assist language teachers here.

John Sayer, Trustee of the ETEE, says: "The Foreign Language Assistants (FLA) scheme is a remarkably economical means of bringing native speakers into the language classroom, as well as bringing future teachers of languages to the highest possible standards of competence and cultural understanding, essential for the teaching of modern languages."

The hold has been placed as part of the government spending review, delaying this year's recruitment for England and Wales, due to begin on 15th October. Regardless of cuts, this unnecessary hold alone puts an enormous strain on the process of recruitment and negotiation, whether in the British Council, or in its equivalents abroad, or in university departments making arrangements for a sandwich year abroad, or in local authorities and receiving schools, and not least for students making decisions about their future.

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“Six weeks on, there is still no sign of agreement to proceed, and it must be assumed that unless a revised timetable can be projected to universities by early December, arrangements for the coming school year will become impracticable, to the great loss of all concerned. Moreover, the reciprocal schemes now under way in partner countries will be jeopardised if by March the UK offer has not been completed, and the government will be rightly seen as having reneged on and severely damaged an international commitment.” adds John Sayer.

ETEE hopes that the government will reconsider what is in effect a highly damaging measure that would have enormous repercussion for the future training of teachers and for the teaching of modern languages in England and Wales, already one of the weakest points of the current curriculum. Re-instating the FLA system will inevitably be financially more demanding than any modest savings achieved by its abolition.

ENDS

Background

The English Trust for European Education is a charitable organisation for the development of multilingual European Education in Britain.

The Trust's main objective is to support the establishment of schools in England that provide multilingual European education, as well as supporting teachers and educators keen to encourage the diffusion of multilingual education.

The Trust is a registered charity no. 1123847. The Trust's Patrons are Prof. Norman Davies, Lord Jay of Ewelme, Baroness Quin, Lord Thomas of Swinnerton and Gerald Wilson (Scottish European Education Trust - SEET).

ETEE collaborates with SEET on the dissemination of information on European education affairs affecting the lives of citizens in the UK.

This press release has been issued by the English Trust for European Education; for additional information contact Maurizio Fantato, Trustee and Press Officer, on 07500 947 599 or at info@etee.org.uk

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