

## 1. The implications and possible impacts of Brexit on young peoples' attitudes towards European languages and cultures

1.1 There has been a marked decline in the uptake of modern foreign languages at secondary schools in Wales over the last decade. This has reached a critical stage for some languages, for example only 64 pupils in Wales studied German at A level in 2016-17.

### GCSE entries for MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES: 2012-2017

Language	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Differential
French	5,859	5,049	4,793	4,124	3,558	-39.3%
Spanish	1,695	1,601	1,745	1,252	1,351	-20.3%
German	1,210	1,217	1,024	1,072	717	-40.7%
Other	348	416	394	443	447	+28.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,112</b>	<b>8,283</b>	<b>7,956</b>	<b>6,891</b>	<b>6,073</b>	<b>-33.4%</b>

Data collected from: Welsh Government. 2018. *GCSE entries and results (pupils in Year 11/pupils aged 15) by subject group*. <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Examinations-and-Assessments/Key-Stage-4/gcseentriesandresultspupilsaged15only-by-subjectgroup> [Accessed: 25 July 2018]

### A-level entries for MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES: 2012-2017

Language	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Differential
French	356	343	352	283	235	-34%
Spanish	130	102	150	81	91	-30%
German	114	96	104	77	64	-43.9%
Other	97	112	94	64	62	-36.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>-35.2%</b>

Data collected from: Welsh Government. 2018. *A level entries and results (pupils aged 17 only) by subject group*. <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Examinations-and-Assessments/Advanced-Level-and-Equivalent/alevelentriesandresultspupilsaged17only-by-subjectgroup> [Accessed: 4 October 2018]

1.2 This decline can be attributed to systemic factors related to the current curriculum in Wales, such as the late start date for learning modern foreign languages in Wales, compared to our European counterparts, and the number of hours timetabled for language learning. This is currently reported as two hours per week in many state sector schools (Gorrara 2018). This situation has been exacerbated by the short duration of compulsory modern foreign language study in Wales. In some schools, pupils are making GCSE choices after only 12-15 months of studying a modern foreign language.

- 1.3 This decline can also be attributed to negative attitudes towards other European languages and cultures. These attitudes are beginning to impact on pupil perspectives on modern foreign languages in Welsh schools. A forthcoming piece of research carried out by the British Council has found that around a third of schools surveyed believe that Brexit is having a negative impact on parental attitudes towards modern foreign languages, with 29% saying it is also negatively affecting pupil attitudes. In all, 37% of schools reported an increase in negative attitudes towards modern foreign languages in schools since Brexit, either from pupils or parents.
- 1.4 The Welsh Government has made a substantial investment in supporting modern foreign languages in Wales via its *Global Futures* strategy, launched in 2015. However, this has not as yet arrested or reversed the decline in uptake in modern foreign languages. It could be argued that negative attitudes generated by the referendum in 2016 have countered some of the good work that is being done through the *Global Futures* programme. Brexit has become a systemic factor in and of itself and could be affecting young people's attitudes towards other peoples and cultures.

## **2. The implications and possible impacts of Brexit on the teaching workforce**

- 2.1 The teaching of modern foreign languages in Wales is dependent on a supply of suitably qualified non-UK EU nationals. The British Council's *Language Trends Wales* survey (2016-17) reports that 23% of schools employ non-UK EU nationals as full-time teachers of modern foreign languages and 16% employ them as part-time teachers (British Council *Language Trends* 2017: 44). The report comments that 'recent shrinkage in modern foreign language provision has disguised an underlying shortage of teachers, with evidence that some schools are relying on teachers who are not qualified in the subject to bridge gaps.' (British Council, *Language Trends* 2017: 47).
- 2.2 With fewer students electing to study GCSE and A level modern foreign languages, the progression rate from secondary to tertiary education is likely to continue to fall. This will have an impact on the pool of people with the skills to become modern foreign language teachers. In the current Brexit scenario, Wales is likely to need to increase the recruitment of suitably qualified UK teachers of modern foreign languages.
- 2.3 In 2016-17, Cardiff Council successfully secured €71,000 to support 38 teachers to study a language abroad. In total, Cardiff Council's International School Linking department has secured funding for 129 teachers across Wales to learn a new or improve an existing language in a European partner country over a three-year period. The extensive Erasmus+ Key Action 1 programme of language learning aims to improve linguistic competences and cultural knowledge. It has enabled teachers to study in the country where the language is spoken. The funding has also enabled schools to host teachers from abroad (Welsh Government, *Global Futures* annual report: 2017).
- 2.4 Erasmus+ funding awarded to schools in Wales has increased substantially in recent years. In 2016-17, Cardiff Council's International School Linking department coordinated 8 Erasmus+ Key Action 2 and 7 Key Action 1 projects, bringing funding levels to €3 million (Welsh Government, *Global Futures* annual report: 2017).

### 3. The implications and effects of Brexit on international partnership and student exchange in Higher Education: case study example of Cardiff University

3.1 In common with other Welsh Universities, Cardiff University has embedded internationalisation as a core pillar of its education mission. Cardiff University currently has 174 partnership agreements with EU countries and 80 Exchange Agreements with other institutions in countries around the world.

3.2 The European Union's Erasmus+ programme offers opportunities for students to study and staff to teach or train in higher education institutions (HEIs) beyond Europe. It also makes the same opportunities available for staff and students from countries beyond Europe to come to participating HEIs in Europe. Cardiff University currently has 9 funded projects, coordinated by 6 academic Schools, across 9 countries. **€567,489** has been awarded to fund Erasmus+ projects.

3.3 Residency abroad and student exchanges are core to modern foreign language degrees at Cardiff University as for other Welsh and UK universities. Current numbers of Cardiff University student exchanges (as below) include a large proportion of modern languages undergraduates, some of whom will progress to become the next generation of modern foreign language teachers.

<b>Incoming European Students by Academic Year</b>	16/17: <b>563</b>	17/18: <b>494</b>	18/19: <b>411</b>
<b>Outgoing Students to EU countries by Academic Year</b>	16/17: <b>386</b>	17/18: <b>331</b>	18/19: <b>299</b>

### 4. Welsh Government's preparedness for Brexit in these areas

4.1 The Welsh Government's five-year strategy for modern foreign languages, *Global Futures* (2015-2020) was launched with three strategic actions:

*Action 1: to promote and raise the profile of modern foreign languages as an important subject not only at GCSE (Level 2) but also as a longer-term choice which can lead to career opportunities.*

*Action 2: build capacity and support for the professional development of the education workforce to deliver modern foreign languages effectively from Year 5 onwards, enabling all learners to benefit from the bilingual plus 1 strategy via Professional Development for the education workforce, review of the Initial Teacher Education or Training (ITET) and pioneer school network.*

*Action 3: to provide enhanced learning opportunities to engage and excite learners*

**Suggestion:** to consider how this strategy could be extended and adapted beyond its current end-date (2020) to help Welsh Government address the impacts of Brexit on attitudes to language learning and the development of a global mindset for young people in Wales.

4.2 The Welsh Government is currently undertaking planning and preparation for a radical reform of primary and secondary education, *Successful Futures*. One core purpose of the curriculum is for all young people and children to 'become ethical informed citizens ready to be citizens of Wales and the world'. <https://beta.gov.wales/new-curriculum-poster>

**Suggestion:** to consider how the international dimension of the new curriculum can be embedded in all six Areas of Learning Experience, ensuring that openness to other peoples and cultures is central to the educational profile of young Welsh learners.

- 4.3 The British Council has recently produced a report on Wales and 'soft power'. Soft power is understood as a country or a region's international influence through culture, public diplomacy and positive global contribution. Education was Wales' weakest indicator (<https://wales.britishcouncil.org/en/wales-soft-power-barometer-2018>)

**Suggestion:** to explore how the Welsh Government can further boost the global presence of Welsh education, research and international partnership, ensuring continued delivery of opportunities for Welsh staff and student mobility within and beyond Higher Education.

#### *References*

British Council, *Language Trends Wales 2016-17*: <https://wales.britishcouncil.org/en/language-trends-wales>

Gorrara C, 'Speaking from Wales: Building a modern languages community in the era of Brexit', *Languages after Brexit: How the UK Speaks to the World*, ed. M. H. Kelly (Palgrave/Macmillan, 2018), pp. 149-158

Welsh Government, *Global Futures* annual report 2017: <https://beta.gov.wales/global-futures-annual-report-2017>

Welsh Government, *Successful Futures*, 'the four purposes of the new curriculum', 2015, <https://beta.gov.wales/new-curriculum-poster>