

# TNP LANGUAGES

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National Report on Curriculum Innovation

Republic of Ireland

## 1. *Introduction*

### 1.1 **The system of higher education**

#### 1.1.1 Recent changes in the system of higher education

A number of important changes to the system of higher education have taken place over the last decade.

At the beginning of the decade there were there are seven universities and x RTC's ( regional colleges of technology) in Ireland. Four of the Unversities were grouped under NUI (National University of Ireland ) – Galway , University College Dublin , Maynooth and Cork . The others – the University of Dublin, known as Trinity College and the 1989 created Universities of Limerick and Dublin City University had a more independent status .

In the mid nineties the Government introduced legislation to give all the Universities more autonomy particularly in regard to their budgets. In 1997 Acts were put in place for each of the Universities giving them a specified legal and financial status but with built in elements of accountability . At the same time legislation transformed the RTC s into Institutes of Technology (ITs) .The largest of these Cork and Waterford and Dublin might even have aspired to University status and may yet do so.

In Teacher training at the primary level it was perceived that there was an under utilization of the resources in this area and the number of colleges was reduced to two - St Patricks in Dublin and Mary Immaculate in Limerick , both as their names suggest confessional in tradition and structure . In addition each college was required to produce new degree programmes to take the spare capacity in staff and to cater for the high demand for higher education places . Each college produced a general arts degree programme

Validated by the University of Limerick for MIC and by DCU for St Pats. Both have been successful in attracting students but less so in languages than other arts subject.

The same government, a center left coalition, also abolished tuition fees, which in Ireland in contrast to most other EU countries were very high - in excess of 2000 ecus per student per annum in the mid nineties. The effect of this has been to ease access to Higher education for the better off who were paying the fees and not to the less privileged who were not paying fees anyway . The grant levels in Ireland remain very low.

The irony in relation to England is evident.

The trend for more accountability and performance appraisal cross Europe and particularly in the UK has also reached our shores .

The 1997 Acts require the Universities to initiate appraisal schemes for every area in the University . This is essentially a peer review and is very much the property of the University . The appraisals have started in most colleges and universities and will continue up to 2006 when the cycle will repeat. It is still not clear what the results of these assessment exercises will be . The Irish government is keen to avoid the excesses of the UK experience and so far there is no indication that the results will be tied to funding or league tables or job shedding.

Research has become the focus for all higher education in Ireland and the Government through the Higher Education Authority has launched a series of bidding rounds for large sums of money aimed at promoting research. The whole sector is at present convulsed in preparing bids for the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of research funds which are in excess of 250 million punts . There is going to be 4<sup>th</sup> and a 5<sup>th</sup> round. Money is being channeled to specialist areas and to productive, young researchers. the results are patchy and inevitably the languages areas are not attracting the funds that are going into science and engineering .

### 1.1.2 The impact of the Bologna Declaration

The Bologna Declaration of June 1999 commits 29 European countries to a process of so reforming their higher education systems as to bring about greater convergence (including more transparency in qualification structures) while also improving the international competitiveness of the European HE system. The intention is to create by 2010 'the European space for higher education' on the basis of an agreed action

programme. The signatory countries will meet again in Prague in May 2001 to review progress and agree on new steps to be taken. It is too early to comment on the impact of the Declaration in Ireland but its proposals are certainly under active consideration at government level.

## **1.2 Identification of relevant changes in the social, political, cultural, professional and economic environments**

The major change in Ireland over the last decade has been the spectacular economic growth. Ireland still has the highest growth rate in Europe. It reached 9% and will fall back to 5% soon. Also, ten years ago unemployment had reached 18%, it has now fallen back to 3 or 4%, virtually full employment. It is estimated that Ireland needs at least 250 000 more workers to fuel this growth.

This has had three immediate effects on immigration patterns. Firstly fewer Irish people are emigrating as they can now find jobs here, Secondly more Irish people are returning to take up jobs that were not available in the past and thirdly Ireland has now become an attractive destination for refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants - legal or illegal. Although the migration of eastern European and African peoples is not as great as in the rest of Europe it presents Ireland with a novel situation. Ireland was always a country of emigration and now it has to adjust to an influx of peoples of different ethnic backgrounds and speaking a variety of languages. This offers challenges and opportunities in regard to multi-culturism, language diversity as well as the pitfalls of racism.

In contrast to this Ireland has experienced for the first time a falling birthrate. This has been known for some time and the dip in the number of children entering the education system has now reached the third level institutions.

Although this may be offset by returnees and immigration to a certain extent, universities and colleges are aware that they are going to have to widen their target to include more mature students and more international students from within and outside the EU. Demand for higher education however still remains high and an important element remains that in order to gain University entrance students must take one continental language as part of their Leaving Certificate examinations. These are the examinations at the end of the secondary school cycle.

## **Language Degree Programmes**

## *2. Innovations in language degree programmes offered by universities*

### **2.1 Traditional language programmes**

#### **2.1.1 Content, objectives and structure of programmes**

Traditional language programmes are to be found in the older Universities such as Cork and Trinity . This is where single language departments offer either a degree in that language (Trinity) or as part of a general Arts degree where students take four subjects in first year and then take two thereafter.

The traditional model has been three years but with the advent of Erasmus /Socrates more and more students were adding an extra year to their programme. As this is not the intent of the Socrates programme (to add to the length of study) several Universities Galway ,UCD offer their students a BA either in 3 years or in 4. The four year version is called a BA International and students follow a prescribed course of study at a partner EU University.

The content of these courses largely follows the lang/lit tradition but over the last few years would have expanded to include other areas or cultural expression , such as film and other areas of study such as South America for Spanish . The University of Cork is an example of this.

The titles and subjects of these degrees has evolved as well and can include Cultural Studies which means different things in different Universities .again Cork has degrees in German and Cultural Studies , Italian and --- etc.

Increasingly however languages are being combined with other subjects .

In some Universities this means that the teaching of the language content does not change but is simply allied with another subject such as law (Trinity) the degree looks different but the components have not changed.

Repackaging existing components has become a feature of Irish Universities in their quest to maintain student enrolment but in itself does not present any curricular change.

Degrees in European Studies have been around since 1972 , long enough to constitute a tradition . The first was in Limerick and Cork and Trinity have developed different versions of this. The language elements are compulsory,one or two languages. At Limerick the language teaching was designed to fit into a new context and has continued to add elements of technology and media as they develop. Innovation in the other Universities have largely taken place outside the traditional departments. (see 2.2.1).

#### **2.1.2 Careers prospects for graduates**

Graduates from these courses have traditionally gone towards teaching at second level and towards the civil service. Nowadays there is a diversity of opportunities in tele – sales which provides immediate if dull employment, or in tourism.

Increasingly language students decide to continue their studies and gain a professional competence by adding a qualification in TEFL, computer applications ,technical writing , marketing.

The striking point about graduate employment is that whereas 10-15 years ago up to 50% of all graduates would go abroad, in 1999 this was at about 15% (UL Graduate Employment 1999). Language graduates would tend to go abroad at a higher rate than other disciplines.

### 2.1.3 Recent changes in content, objectives and/or structure of programmes

See 2.1.1.

### 2.1.4 Example of good practice

For an example of good practice, see the information on the University of Galway.

### 2.1.5 Reasons underlying these changes

See 2.1.1

### 2.1.6 Identification of needs

The most important needs of traditional departments are structural in embracing new course and disciplines. There is still a tendency to retrench into traditional enclaves and even to create more leaving the students to find more practical outlets elsewhere in other faculties.

### 2.1.7 Measures to be taken at institutional, national, and European level to meet the needs identified

#### 2.1.7.1 At first-degree level

At national level, there is a need for a language policy that goes beyond a statement that we should be better at languages. More languages should be encouraged at second level and this means putting the resources into training the teachers. There is also a need for more internationalization and diversification of joint degrees with European partners.

#### 2.1.7.1 At postgraduate level

At postgraduate level a primary aim for all must be create meaningful outlets into doctoral studies for those following an academic career and professional skills based programmes which lead directly on to targeted employment.

## **Alternative' programmes (Applied Language Studies, Cultural Studies etc.)**

### 2.2.1 Content, objectives and structure of programmes

Applied languages programmes were first developed by the newer Universities and by the Institutes of Technology. Dublin City University and Waterford IT followed by UL are good examples. These courses attract students of higher calibre than the general arts entry. They combine the study of up to three languages with options such as TEFL, Marketing, management, politics. Some go further into translating and interpreting than others but do not claim to train the students professionally. Preceding this there was the development of Business Studies with a language. These courses were first developed in the 80s by the newer Universities and the ITs and a feature of the 90s has been that all Universities now offer Business with a language degrees. The languages generally include French, German, Irish, Japanese and Spanish. These courses also attract students with better Leaving certificate results than traditional courses. The most elaborated of these courses would be the BA in languages and international marketing at DCU.

Cultural Studies is a title that is creeping into Department names. Limerick has a Department called Languages and Cultural Studies, DCU has Intercultural in its title.

Limerick has the only degree course entitled Language and Cultural Studies.

Students take one or two languages, focused on the cultural rather than the vocational. A feature of this course which started in 1997 is that there is a stream of modules entitled Cultural Studies which endeavours to address the field from a European and language perspective rather than from the usual anglophone perspective.

Dundalk offers a Cultural studies diploma where the a part of the third year is spent abroad.

There is also the whole area of Languages with Computing which range from more language based to more computer base. This will be dealt with all together in the next section. It is a growing area in Ireland.

It is also important to mention the Irish language here.

There have always been Irish Departments in the Universities and Irish has a strong degree profile in all the Universities. Recently some of the Applied degrees are also offering Irish as an option. Irish is also to be found in European Studies and Cultural Studies in Limerick. The nature of the programmes has also tried to adapt the language teaching to new contexts.

Limerick offers an international applied languages degree where students study at three Universities including the home one and obtain a degree recognized by all three.

### 2.2.2 Careers prospects for graduates

The career prospects for these students are better than for those of traditional programmes in that they have an immediately marketable qualification. This is particularly true of Business students and of Applied languages students who have taken courses in technical writing.

### 2.2.3 recent changes in content, objectives, and/or structure of programmes See 2.2.1

### 2.2.4 Example of good practice

For an example of good practice, see courses at DCU

### 2.2.5 Reasons underlying these changes.

The need to update and follow the market have motivated most institutions to develop these courses. Some have embraced them enthusiastically and others reluctantly.

### 2.2.6 Identification of needs

There is a clear need to develop new modes of delivery which take advantage of modern technological developments (e.g. the kind of distance learning developed above all by the Open University).

International programmes can be developed in this area and there is a need for Universities to develop policies to deal with these developments.

### 2.2.7 Measures to be taken at institutional, regional, national and European level to meet the needs identified

#### 2.2.7.1 At first-degree level

To develop policies for Internationalisation

#### 2.2.7.2 At postgraduate level

To further develop courses in Computer related applications to provide the industry with competent language graduates.

### 3. Innovations in the training of language teachers

#### 3.1 Language teaching and learning in primary and secondary school education

##### 3.2 Initial teacher training

3.2.1 Initial teacher training for primary teaching mainly takes place in two teacher training colleges St Patrick's in Dublin and Mary Immaculate in Limerick. These colleges are now affiliated to their nearest Universities D.C.U and Limerick which validate their qualifications . Secondary teacher training is the responsibility of some of the Universities who offer post-graduate diplomas in education. There are no specialized degree programmes for language teachers.

3.2.2 Although B.Ed students training to be primary school teachers can take a language (other than Irish ) as an academic subject they are not trained to teach these languages . However a large part of the 4 year course would be devoted to the learning and pedagogy of the Irish language which is compulsory through the school system from year on to year thirteen or fourteen. For secondary teachers of languages a one year diploma will involve on academic year devoted to formal instruction in education and also considerable teaching practice in schools.

3.2.3 Although there is a stated need for language teachers , qualified graduates still find it relatively difficult to find a first post and many are forced to get a start as replacement teachers and then hope to get a permanent placement. Current industrial disputes point to a loss of morale among the teaching profession and the decreasing attractiveness of teaching as a career.

3.2.4 There are no discernible changes in the training programmes in recent years.The examination system has produced some backwash on the secondary curriculum with increased value given to oral skills and general communicative competence.

3.2.5 Examples of good practice are

National University of Ireland, Cork

National University of Ireland, Galway - the department of French offers an intensive course in oral French to training teachers.

3.2.6 Although there is no great change in the training of teachers at primary or secondary level innovation does exist at the in service level .

3.2.7.1 There is a definite need to provide language specific training aimed at developing language competence which at graduate level could still be improved.

Although the government states that we need to widen language choice , French is still the dominant language after English and Irish there is little real provision for this in programmes . Policy is not translated into practice.

The place of Irish in the curriculum which is entirely justified has led to a reluctance to introduce other language into the curriculum particularly at primary level . This is however, being addressed in that money has been provided for primary schools to undertake language initiatives . This is not , however, accompanied with any curriculum guidance or training. The schools can spend the money as best they can .

3.2.7.2 Although the curriculum at secondary level has changed over the last ten years , the Teachers' registration council still looks for heavy literary content in the training teacher's first degree. This ,despite the fact that no literature at all is taught in second level language classes . More recently there has been a recognition that degree programmes involving European Studies , Computing or Applied Languages are valid for teaching purposes . This may be a reflection on the inspectorate itself.

Once employed in school a teacher who has only a passing knowledge of a language can be called on to teach this language as their so called second subject . This practice can lead to great variations in language standards.

3.2.8.1 See 3.2.7.1

3.2.8.2

### **3.3 Continuing teacher education (in service)**

3.3.1 The main responsibility for the in-service training of teachers devolves on to the Department of Education. They organize , fund and reimburse teachers( for courses taken out of term time). There are also curriculum councils for the major languages and regionally based teachers associations . All these provide useful short courses in the current developments in language teaching . Attendance is however voluntary and as always it is the best motivated teachers who participate. The Institute of Linguistics in Dublin also provides a focus for training and the dissemination of good practice.

The University of Limerick offers an M.A. in French and the major clients for this course are serving teachers of French . A large part of this course is devoted to Language technology and multimedia applications.

3.3.2 Programmes are designed to consolidate and improve the skills of the classroom teachers. Frequently they offer an opportunity to extend teachers' knowledge into areas which have been introduced into the curriculum because of the requirements of the national examinations . CALL would generate many in service courses in the light of increased computer access for some but not all schools.

3.3.3 Programmes are modified in the light of changing needs and to reflect recent developments in the field.

3.3.4 The recently formed group for the development of Japanese into secondary schools is a very recent development .

For information on the EU-funded TALLENT project, which - for example - enables teachers of German to follow an ICT training course in Germany, see: <http://www.solki.jyu.fi/tallent>. A course in Limerick for EU based teachers was held in the summer of 2000

3.3.5 See 3.3.3

3.3.6.1 Although courses organized at a central location can have great benefits for those who participate, in a country like Ireland these initiatives (and this is not confined to education) tend to take place in Dublin where over a third of the population resides . It requires more effort and dedication from teachers the rest of the country to take part. One solution could be to develop e- learning .There is a clear need for more in-service training to take place on line .

3.3.6.2 Post experience graduate courses in individual languages can address the issues of technological change which teachers may find difficulty in keeping up with.In Ireland the acquisition of a post-graduate degree has salary benefits

3.3.7 There are needs for coordinated government approaches to in service training in Ireland . But this has been the case for the last thirty years and very little momentum comes from the center . Universities are in position to act as gateways for the more technologically based changes and e learning is set to become the next darling of the computer industry after the relative failure of many e- commerce initiatives . Funding in today's climate will always be difficult issue .

#### **4. Innovations in the training of translators and interpreters**

4.1 Description and analysis of the current spectrum of professional activities

Some professional translators and interpreters find full-time employment working for international organisations such as the European Union, the United Nations, the World Health Organisation and NATO. Others work, often on a freelance consultancy basis, for major companies in industry, commerce and business. There has been a tendency for companies to employ their in-house translators rather than use agencies. Some agencies thrive but much translation activity still goes on in an unorganized individual basis. It is difficult to make a good living from translation in Ireland.

#### 4.2 Institutions responsible for training

Translation and Interpreting is a profession that has low profile in Ireland. It would not figure very high on career or study choices among school students. This is no doubt the traditional Anglophone attitude that does not perceive a need. Generally students who wish to train in this area go abroad. Where translation used to be the mainstay of traditional language programmes it has yielded to communicative approaches as well as to the cultural studies approach. The department of Italian in Cork has, for example, almost completely dropped the translation class.

There is a small number of courses at undergraduate level and two postgraduate courses at DCU.

#### 4.3 Content, objectives, and structures of programmes

The content of courses is the responsibility of the University and where professional recognition is sought, exemptions and equivalences are negotiated with professional bodies.

4.3.1 There is no undergraduate qualification being offered in this area and the author is not aware of any plans to introduce one.

Translating and interpreting are nevertheless used in the teaching of languages, particularly in Applied languages degrees. No claim is made for professional competence but an introduction to and practice of T/I techniques is part of the curriculum.

Examples are Limerick and DCU

4.3.2 There are two postgraduate courses on offer at DCU (Dublin City University). One is in translation and the other is in conference interpreting. Both are offered as Graduate Diplomas with option of going on to obtain an MA by completing a substantial dissertation.

Both offer a professional qualification and cover the range of professional competences.

4.3.3 The author was unable to detect any activity in this area.

#### 4.4 Careers prospects for graduates

Career prospects are good ,given the increase in conference activity in Ireland following the economic boom. Graduates typically work for agencies and would expect to spend a fair proportion of their time outside Ireland.

#### 4.5 Recent changes in content, objectives, and/or structure of programmes

4.5.1 At undergraduate level a recent branch of this profession is software localisation and technical writing . The latter is to be found at the University of Limerick in Applied languages.

4.5.2 At postgraduate level the same applies . Software localization forms a part of the DCU course and at Limerick there are postgraduate course in SL and technical communication . Language graduates who follow these courses find employment in this newer profession which is allied to the traditional translating/interpreting profession . Galway has plans to develop an M. A. in translating. The Irish Department in Galway is also actively considering such a development.

4.5.3 See 4.3.3

#### 4.6 Examples of good practice

Examples of good practice are:

DCU

University of Limerick

#### 4.7 Reasons underlying these changes

Economic development and changes in European training provision have encouraged the move into this area .

The siting of many software companies in Ireland has provided a ready market for those with high level language skills and software capabilities.

#### 4.8 Identification of needs

There is a need to ascertain the exact needs of the software industry and the type of language professionals that companies need .

4.8.1 See 4.8

4.8.2 See 4.8

4.8.3 .See 4.3.3

#### 4.9 Measures to be taken at institutional, regional, national, and European level to meet the needs identified

4.9.1 Further use of courses in S/L and technical communication would increase the attractiveness of these courses to students

4.9.2 . The new DCU course will provide useful indicators for the future

4.9.3 The recent influx political and economic migrants legally and illegally will create language needs in this area as in others.

## **5. Innovations in language provision for students of other disciplines**

### **5.1 Language studies integrated into non-language programmes**

5.1.1 As previously mentioned degree programmes in Business/commerce plus a language have development right across the sector. A more recent development is the combination of a language with a science or engineering subject . Galway offers biotechnology with a language and management technology with a language . Students can study physics with a language at DCU as well as other science subjects .Economics with a language is also on offer. These course sometimes offer a period of study abroad

The most recent of this type of course has been in the IT or computer systems areas.

Students spend differing periods abroad depending on the college. See below.

More common is the option for students in the science and engineering to take an elective in a language for one or more years of the degree course. These courses may be offered from within language department or as an increasing trend indicates, from a campus language center.

5.1.2 The introduction of programmes for IT or computer systems students with a language is the most recent change. French and German are the languages typically on offer. French is the most common. Dublin University (Trinity) Limerick and Galway offer degrees in this area and Carlow and Dúrk in the Institutes of Technology sector offer diplomas.

A period abroad is generally required. The University of Limerick requires the whole of the second year to be spent at a French engineering school. Galway places its students in the IT industry in France .

5.1.3 For examples of good practice, see 5.1.2.

5.1.4 The main reason for these developments is the increased mobility of the labour market and for Ireland the flow of foreign companies into Ireland . American companies often see Ireland as a gateway to Europe and graduates with a language can find work both in Ireland and in non Anglophone Europe.

5.1.5 Probably the most important measure to promote the kind of developments outlined in this section of the report would be a programme to facilitate even further the mobility of students and staff across the whole of Europe.

5.1.5.1 See 5.1.5

5.1.5.2 See 5.1.5

### **5.1.6 Identification of needs**

5.1.6.1 Despite the apparent attractiveness of these developments students from these disciplines either do not apply in great numbers for these course or when they study a language do not wish to go abroad . Part of the problem is that a student needs a technical expertise as well as a language aptitude .Good maths and good French are not so common among school leavers. An effort at the level of recruitment of students is required to overcome fears of difficulty of coping abroad an the prejudice that Engineers and scientists and especially computer specialists do not need to speak any other language than English.

5.1.6.2 There is some exchange of postgraduate students at the research project level and also the occasional co-supervision of doctorates. The EU could require more mobility of researches in its technical programmes.

### **5.2 General and subject-oriented language courses accompanying non-language programmes**

5.2.1 See 5.1.1 above. It is increasingly common to find general provision of language courses independently from the traditional language departments. Language centers are growing up in several centers in Ireland and they are offering commercial rates to the public and free course to their own students . The funding of these centers is variable and can be problematic .

5.2. 2 . See 5.2.1

5.2.3 For examples of good practice, see provision at the UCD and Limerick

5.1.5 5.2.4 The main reason for these developments is the increased mobility of the labour market and for Ireland the flow of foreign companies into Ireland . American companies often see Ireland as a gateway to Europe and graduates with a language can find work both in Ireland and in non Anglophone Europe.

### **5.2.5 Identification of needs**

5.2.5.1 The provision of courses if of a general nature is more a question of organization and delivery rather than pedagogy . It is therefore important that centers have the resources to train and retain their teachers .

5.2.5.2 In order to successfully deliver and expand these courses it is essential that Universities develop a coherent language policy and back it with resources.

## 5.2.6

5.2.6.1 More European cooperation within non language degree programmes . joint programmes of study should be encouraged

5.2.6.2 . See 5.1 6 .2

## **5.3 Language provision and support for mobile students**

5.3.1 Incoming students are generally provided with free or fee paying English language programmes . Most Universities now have the systems and experience to welcome, integrate and provide appropriate course to incoming Socrates students .

Since England in some cases is imposing fees on EU students Ireland is attracting even more interest from partner Universities.

5.3.2 Outgoing students are usually catered for in their courses programme . The problem can arise for courses that do not offer language electives . Students who are sent out without adequate language training find survival in a European academic environment very difficult.

## **5.4 Non-language programmes or parts of programmes taught through one or several other languages**

Although there are no degree programmes taught in languages other than the national languages (Irish and English) it is worth mentioning the opportunities to study degrees through the Irish language.

5.4.1 History ,Geography and the major parts of Mathematics and Mathematical Physics at NUI Galway. Business and Commerce at DCU

5.4.2 At Galway it is the full BA degree. At DCU it is a BSc and an MSc

5.4.3 Irish

5.4.4 Home students

5.4.5 The policy is to provide native and near native speakers of the Irish to complete as large a part of their education through Irish as possible.

5.4.6 The Universities and IT's in Ireland have appointed Irish development officers to promote the use of Irish in the campus community and to the wider public . It particularly aimed at the practical and everyday awareness and use of the Irish language. The Irish initiative has put quite large sums of money at the disposal of these new officers . The more a University develops its Irish profile the more resources it can expect from the government .

This influx of resources can also have marginal effects for other languages depending on the structures.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

### **6. Innovations in language studies in continuing education (excluding languages specialists)**

6.1 Continuing Education departments or extra mural studies have not traditionally delivered language classes. This has mainly been the preserve of the regional VEC's (Vocational Education Committee) who deal with adult education inter alia.

Language centers within Universities have begun to offer courses to students outside their programmes and some have extended this to include the general public

6.2 Ab initio and intermediate courses in the main European languages plus Japanese are the main interest. The motivation seems to be mainly social. Ireland's new found prosperity has meant that the Irish are joining the European tourist and property trail .

6.3 At the University of Limerick there is a pilot scheme called the Languages Opportunities Programme which supports half the salary of one lecturer. In principle income from course should pay the other half. The programme , now in its second year has attracted large numbers particularly in Spanish and Italian.

6.4 There is a need for stability of employment for a generally temporary and precarious employment. The widening of the menu on offer i.e. lesser used languages is hampered by lack of numbers.

There is a need for a beginners Irish course .

Migrant populations are on the increase and their English language needs should be met in a structured way . At present it is either by voluntary bodies or by employers hiring in underpaid teachers.

6.5 Government funding should be given towards migrant education . EU funding should support the delivery of lesser used languages.

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