

#LANGUAGES250

TOWARDS 250 YEARS OF MODERN
LANGUAGES AT THIRD LEVEL

I dTreo 250 Bliain de na
Nuatheangacha sa Tríú Leibhéal

Tuesday, 12 December 2023, 2-6pm,
Royal Irish Academy,
19 Dawson Street, Dublin 2



Acadamh Ríoga na hÉireann
Royal Irish Academy

PROGRAMME

2pm Arrival

2.15pm Welcome Professor: Pat Guiry, President RIA

Opening Keynote Address: Micheál Martin,
Tánaiste, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for
Defence

Taking Stock - Policies, Challenges and Opportunities

Panel Discussion with:

- **Linsey Farrell**, Deputy Secretary for Education Policy and Children's Services, Department of Education, Northern Ireland
- **Micheál Martin**, Tánaiste, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence
- **Claire McGee**, Head of Education and Innovation Policy IBEC
- **Barbara Nolan**, Head EU Commission Ireland
- **Karen Ruddock**, Director PPLI Languages Connect

3.30-4pm Coffee Break

4-5pm Why Languages Matter

Panel Discussion with:

- **Prof Luke Drury**, ALLEA Vice President, former President RIA
- **Linda Ervine**, Bainisteoir Tionscadal Turas, Misean Oirthear Bhéal Feirste, Cearnóg Skainos, Béal Feirste
- **H.E. Vincent Guérend**, French Ambassador to Ireland
- **Manchán Mangan**, Writer and documentary-maker
- **Liam Ryan**, CEO SAP Ireland
- **Prof Michael Semple**, The Senator George J Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice, Queen's University and Talk for Peace

MC - **Noelle O Connell**, CEO European Movement Ireland

5-6pm Wine Reception

CONTEXT

Modern Languages as a discipline in Ireland is in a special position for a number of reasons. Ireland can boast of having the longest tradition of “institutionalised” modern language teaching in academia in the world, thanks to the first university positions in French, German, Italian and Spanish, established in Trinity College Dublin in 1776. Accordingly, we can look forward to 250 years of Modern Language Studies at third level in Ireland (and the world) in 2026.

A SERIES OF EVENTS

The opening event in December 2023 in the RIA will be the first of four annual events, followed by an event in Queen’s University Belfast in 2024, Limerick in 2025 and finally 2026 in Trinity College Dublin, where the first chairs were established 250 years ago in 1776. The planned events will build on this major milestone and create a stronger awareness of the importance of languages. The idea for this emerged from the RIA committee for Languages, Literature, Culture and Communication and has been developed by a working group of academics and language advocates.

LANGUAGES IN IRELAND

The 250th anniversary of the first chairs in Modern Languages provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on and highlight the contemporary and historical contribution of the discipline to Irish society, in a European and global context. Ireland is the only sizeable EU country where English is widely spoken as a first language, but where Language Studies flourish and are not endangered by a lack of students or a disinterested government. Quite the opposite.

The Republic of Ireland is officially working to increase the number of language learners (see “Languages Connect 2017-2026 – Ireland’s Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education”) and has launched a programme for ever closer cooperation with both Germany (“A wider and deeper footprint”, 2018) and France (both countries agreed a Joint Plan of Action (2021-2025) to strengthen and deepen relations between them). But these strategies are a work-in-progress. The situation in the North is more complex. The Irish-medium sector is expanding, and foreign-language education and research benefit from strong relations with the UK-based cultural institutes and embassies of several European countries. However, while there are positive indicators and increasing dialogue with policymakers, there is a need for a coherent forward-looking strategy to prevent further attrition and promote growth.

AIMS, OBJECTIVES & ISSUES

In the course of the next three years, we will be hosting a series of events designed to open up conversations around the value and significance of languages in different spheres of activity that could enhance public and political awareness. Potential topics and questions to be addressed include, but are not limited to:

- How can we enhance the offering and uptake of languages from early childhood years through to university and beyond?
- What would an all-Ireland review of provision reveal and what might an all-Ireland languages strategy look like?
- How can we sustain and share best practice, also in view of migration and the increasing number of languages spoken in Ireland?

- What are the lessons learned from teaching online during Covid-19?
- How can languages be better supported in the Technological Universities and Further Education colleges?
- What do recent developments in Artificial Intelligence mean for the field?
- To what extent are languages integrated into the broader Irish academic landscape and discourse?
- What is their place within the Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and other disciplines?
- To what extent does the embeddedness of Ireland in European cultural tradition play a role in and enrich Irish academia?
- How does this impact on Ireland in an increasingly transnational, global context?

The launch event at the RIA in December 2023 will make the case for languages across a range of sectors, including education, business, technology, science, politics, peace-building, diplomacy and culture. We will explore ways in which policy can support languages to overcome existing challenges and harness potential opportunities. In short, we will emphasize why languages matter. The focus of the 2024 event in Belfast will be Languages in Higher Education. In 2025, the Limerick event will take into account language learning at primary and secondary level and include an international context. In 2026 the series of events will culminate in TCD which will host a celebratory conference to mark the quarter millennial of the establishment of its Chairs of French and German in 1776.

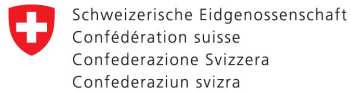
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INSTITUTES



UNIVERSITIES



**The “250 Years of Modern Languages at Third Level”
working group includes:**

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Prof Jürgen Barkhoff (TCD),
Prof Janice Carruthers (QUB),
Dr Úna Carthy (ATU),
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Dr Sabine Egger (MIC),

Tanya Flanagan (One Voice for Languages & St. Farnan’s Post Primary School),
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Prof Bettina Migge (UCD),
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