

Consultation Questions
Section 1

Partly agree. We applaud and wholeheartedly support the rationales set out for the Strategy. However, we would disagree with the statements on p.4 that "we do not bear the same responsibility for the development of other world languages which are used by communities with their roots now in Scotland."

20/03/2007

1. Do you agree with the reasons given for promoting and learning languages on pages 4 and 5, and that these are the main reasons for supporting current language initiatives in Scotland? If not, why not?

Those languages will continue to derive their main support from communities outside Scotland. Scotland as part of the UK has signed up to the aims of the Barcelona Agreement, which states that each member state has responsibility to develop the language competence of its citizens to proficiency in three languages, i.e. the mother tongue and two additional languages. We would also point out that in helping to implement the agreement the Scottish Executive has a number of organisations within Scotland to which it can turn. Further, the wide range of European languages and cultures are not just our doorstep they are alive and spoken by considerable numbers of speakers within Scotland, as evidenced by the existence of a wide range of cultural institutes from these countries. Further, we must not only seek to ensure that Scots are fully equipped with the languages skills necessary for employment, study and travel throughout the European Union and beyond. In order to be an outward looking society we need also to ensure that Scots are also fully equipped to welcome visitors from different nations and cultures within Scotland. We would also disagree with the statement that there is significant funding in place in a number of areas of languages activity as in many cases funding has been or is about to be withdrawn and has therefore been of a transient nature. We would argue that the strategy must, contrary to what is stated, include a framework for resource allocations as well as output targets in order to be meaningful. On p.5 it should be explicitly stated that both indigenous and immigrant languages used in Scotland should be valued and respected. On p.6 we suggest rephrasing the last sentence under the heading "Increasing economic opportunity" thus: "We must also encourage and provide real and desirable opportunities for people living in Scotland to learn languages other than their own". The last sentence in the next paragraph should be reworded thus: "The public and private sectors should collaborate in helping to ensure that language does not limit employment opportunities and contribute to inequality." We disagree with the statement that the document demonstrates that there are a range of contexts in which language acquisition is promoted in Scotland as some of these

	<p>promotions are no longer in existence or are on the verge of disappearing. Thus the document needs to set out the ways in which the Scottish Executive will promote and support language acquisition and language maintenance in all education sectors and in the workplace. These initiatives must consider how we can support educational establishments in providing desirable options to increase plurilingual competence without sacrificing overall language diversity. We believe that all languages spoken by the nationalities of those people living in Scotland are part of the Scottish linguistic landscape.</p>
<p><i>2. Do you agree that the language initiatives described on pages 6 – 12 and elsewhere are the key areas for language promotion in Scotland? If not, why not?</i></p>	<p>Don't agree. A number of the initiatives described under the heading of "language learning" have been discontinued, are being scaled down or are even being phased out. In order for the proposed strategy to be effective, however, there needs to be consistent support for Scotland's languages, and support for all Scots to learn at least two other languages as agreed under the Barcelona Agreement. Further, these initiatives must be targeted at all education sectors as well as business and industry. With regard to the latter, there needs to be better understanding about the way in which generic skill surveys can unintentionally hide the need for, and indeed the use of, language skills in business and industry. It is clear that as a nation Scotland must develop amongst its people a language capability at an advanced level for economic, diplomatic and societal reasons. So the final strategy document must include initiatives that will help to halt the closure or the reduction of provision, which is being implemented with alarming regularity at HE and FE institutions. A review of Scottish Funding Council funding mechanisms would be a vital part of such a strategy, giving both senior managers and curriculum leaders real incentives to maintain a strong language provision and to include languages as part of FE and HE programmes specifically. In addition, future teachers delivering languages in all education sectors, including primary, need to be equipped with adequate language skills. We also feel that there is no need to distinguish between languages spoken by ethnic minorities and those spoken by other immigrant minorities (p.11 – 3) if the aim of the strategy is to give equality of support to all of Scotland's languages. We would include</p>

	<p>speakers of the "traditional" European languages (French, German, Italian, Spanish etc.) into the category of immigrant minorities " not just the more recent additions from Poland and the Baltic States. We would like to reiterate the importance of cultural awareness and transferable communication skills in relation to employability, which are sought after by graduate recruiters. In this respect, the document states that "Scottish young people could be at a disadvantage compared to their bilingual counterparts in today's global economy." Yet we would argue that there is increasing evidence to show that Scottish young people are already at a disadvantage, and that many of their counterparts are not just bi-but multilingual. It is insufficient to simply provide "opportunities" and "promote" language learning through various policy statements, opportunities must not just be available in practice but also be made desirable and promotions must be accompanied by realistic resources.</p>
<p>3. Do you agree that the key principles listed on pages 14 and 15 should shape language activity in Scotland? If not, why not?</p>	<p>Don't agree. The key principles that should shape language activity need to include all education and the business & industry sector. Scotland must be guided by the Barcelona Agreement, which stipulates that EU citizens should be proficient in two languages in addition to their mother tongue. In the light of imminent curricular revisions (A Curriculum for Excellence) we therefore recommend that the Scottish Executive should express a commitment as part of these reforms that as a MINIMUM level of competence (expressed in terms of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), all pupils should have reached level A1 (Breakthrough) at the end of Primary 7 and level A2 (Waystage) at the end of S3. Competence at level A describes a "Basic User" of the language being learnt. Anyone wishing to continue into higher education, either directly from school or from further education, should have reached level B1 (Threshold). Finally, by the end of their higher education studies, all students should have reached level B2 (Vantage). Competence at level B describes an "Independent User" of the language learnt. Competence at Level C (Proficient User) should be reached by anyone who is studying for a language or language-related degree, or who is intending to work with foreign visitors to this country, or who</p>

	<p>will be dealing with foreign nationals abroad on a regular basis, such as tourist guides or tour managers, import and export agents. Other member states have set national targets to that effect (or higher) and Scotland should not allow itself to fall behind any further. There is also a need to address the gender imbalance in language study. The language plans referred to on p. 14 need to include input from Scottish Enterprise and the Skills Sector Councils, and require further details. Scotland owes it to its young people to provide them with opportunities for mobility. It is therefore surprising that European initiatives such as SOCRATES, LEONARDO, ERASMUS and COMENIUS do not even feature in the consultation document. Scotland should ensure that any group that applies for funding from these initiatives includes not only a language learning element in their proposal, but also accepts and takes account of the special position of English.</p>
<p><i>4. Are there any other comments you would like to offer on this strategy in relation to the promotion of languages in Scotland?</i></p>	<p>Although we welcome the fact that a strategy has been put forward we believe that the document concentrates too much on past initiatives rather than on future plans. We wish to reiterate our argument that the strategy will only work if its initiatives are targeted at all education sectors and the business community. It is absolutely crucial that there is purposeful and constructive collaboration between the Department of Education and that of Enterprise, Transport & Lifelong Learning, and the Sector Skill Councils.</p>
<p>5. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, how do you think you may be able to contribute to the success of the strategy?</p>	<p>The Scottish Association for Language Teaching (SALT) includes membership from language teachers in primary, secondary, further and higher education as well as representatives from the business sector and is therefore ideally placed to help support the implementation strategy that we have outlined. We promote effective learning and teaching of all languages in Scotland and provide opportunities to exchange information, experience and good practice for everyone concerned with language teaching and learning. We would be happy to meet with representatives from the Scottish Executive to discuss these proposals in greater detail.</p>