

# East of England Language Framework UK

## General Policy



## Good Practice Executive Summary

The East of England Language Framework is a document which provides the key priorities for the language & culture skills development for employment in the 6 counties of the East of England. It is supported by 2 more detailed documents, namely the March 2008 document 'International Communications Scoping Report' and the May 2008 Train to Gain 'Language & Culture for International Trade: Evaluation Report'. The Framework is designed as a guide for regional stakeholders in terms of the themes to be addressed and employers to be supported. It was first developed in Oct 2005 and updated in Aug 2009 for the Lilama project.

As the majority of stakeholders in our region do not have the time to read long documents, we have developed the Framework to provide an overview which can be quickly read. Practical implementation of its proposals can only really be carried out with the understanding and information provided by the 2 supporting documents mentioned above. Details of the content of the Framework are to be presented and discussed at the Lilama network launch.

The political dimension within which the Framework operates is based around a combination of regional organisations (the East of England Development Agency, East of England Regional Assembly, East of England Skills & Competitiveness Partnership are examples), regional networks (such as the Nations and Regions East Skills Group, responsible for the delivery of the Olympics in the region), national organisations with regional management (UK Trade & Investment East of England, Learning & Skills Council East of England) and organisations based within the 6 'counties' which make up the East of England region. These counties are Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk & Suffolk. Within these counties are County Council Economic Development departments of government.

The East of England has an enviable track record of public support for language & culture skills development. It also has a strong higher education sector, with Cambridge University as a well-known player. It is a small community, with key government staff being members of several steering groups and networks. This ensures a greater flow of information. RLN East was established in 2005 to drive the language & culture agenda in the region.

The Framework foresees a dual approach to language & culture skills development. This ensures that over time the importance of language skills is recognised by a wide range of organisations and not just those dedicated to the languages agenda. This will also alleviate the need to constantly 'ask for money' to develop stand-alone projects.

## 1. Reflects current EU and regional policy on multilingualism

The Framework addresses lifelong learning relating to contextualised employment needs. A wide range of areas are addressed by the Framework and its 2 supporting documents. First, it promotes a wider knowledge and use of all languages throughout the Union, as the languages currently supported include a mix of 'traditional' languages taught at school (French, Spanish, German), those which are mother tongues of migrant workers (Polish, Portuguese, Russian) and those which represent the growth international trade markets (Chinese, Arabic, Japanese).

The Framework promotes lifelong learning and learner mobility. The East of England does not access sufficiently European lifelong learning funds as much as other English regions, and we are working with ECOTEC, the UK National Agency, to address this. Some of the projects which respond to the Framework promote the learning of languages for communication with migrant communities who have moved to work in the region, particularly in the field of agriculture and retail.

The Framework seeks to improve the quality and efficiency of provisions and outcomes through engagement with the higher education sector, private training sector and qualifications bodies such as the Open College Network, who produce a range of nationally-recognised 'short' qualifications. The universities in the region have also developed an international communications qualification recognised within the university CATS system (credit & accreditation transfer system) and used as part of the LCB Language & Culture for Business projects. Through both this and the close cooperation between training provider and broker groups the Framework ensures the provision of the necessary skills and qualifications for the world of work.

The economic priorities driving this are international trade and the 2012 Olympics. The new EEDA International Strategy highlights the need for further development and co-ordination of key skills required to enhance the region's international trading performance which will include international market planning, market scanning, foreign language acquisition and intercultural understanding. This forms part of the RES Regional Economic Strategy. The East of England Europe & International Affairs Panel receives regular updates from RLN East (to whom it has given the mandate for oversight of language & culture development for the world of employment) through a series of public papers and discussions with both MPs/MEPs, co-financing organisations and community stakeholders. The Panel fully supports the development of language & culture skills where these benefit the region's economy

RLN East is responsible for the oversight & overall implementation of the Framework. However, it can only do this with the support (both in terms of personnel, contacts & finance) of key regional and county-based

organisations. In turn, RLN East reports to the Advisory Board, which consists of members of UKTI, EEDA, EERA, EESCP & LSC. RLN East sits on several steering groups through which it promotes the languages agenda. It also maintains close links with ECOTEC and the East of England Brussels Office.

The Framework is informed through regular discussions with and visits to employers, both SMEs and larger multinationals. Approximately 100-120 employer visits are made each year. Employers from both the private and public sectors are represented at the Lilama network launch.

The Framework is written for the period 2005-12, which mirrors the regional skills planning cycles. The majority of the activities which arise from it tend to be 12-24 months in length. The sectors targetted by the framework fall into 3 parts – those targetted by the international trade strategy, those targetted by the Olympics strategy, and those forming part of the justice report completed in Mar 2009.

With regard to international trade, the sectors are agrifood & drink, life sciences, creative & media, hi-tech manufacturing, energy & environment, telecommunications & software, automotive and aerospace. As for the Olympics they are passenger transport (especially airports), sports training camps and tourist attractions. In justice, they are the police and prison service.

## **2. Includes incentives to enhance and sustain language learner motivation and employment benefits**

Almost all projects include an element of employer needs analysis prior to training. This is done through several ways, ranging from telephone survey, face-to-face discussion and group discussion. Training is also informed by employer input as it progresses.

Case studies are used as a way to present the benefits of language & culture. These case studies are available via the website [www.rln-east.com/case-studies](http://www.rln-east.com/case-studies) but companies also volunteer to be case studies during workshops and events. For example, an event on how to manage sales at international exhibitions will include a section on language & culture. Regular culture workshops are delivered by a mixture of culture presenter and case study company.

Partnerships have been formed between business and schools to present the practical ways in which languages are used in the world of work. School students are set practical activities to try out their language skills, and these activities are 'scored' by local employers. Some activity has been high-profile, with the major motor companies (Honda, Ford) working with school children. A visit to the project staff of the Business Language Champions project in Norfolk is planned as part of the Lilama project visit to Cambridge.

The case study approach has also been transferred to DVD, where companies undertaking the UKTI Export Communications Review scheme outline the benefits of language & culture skills. This DVD is presented to all 230 companies undergoing the UKTI Passport to Export scheme, and has also been placed on YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)). Use has also been made of the well-known regional publication Business Weekly.

For companies on the Passport or Gateway programmes, measurement of impact is done through the independent PIMS system where companies are surveyed for the quality and benefit of the services they have received. For other projects, an independent evaluator is sourced, and this service usually goes out to tender.

An important 'route to market' is the recognition of the importance of language & culture skills by skills brokers and business advisors. These are staff who have full-time interaction with businesses and who are best placed to identify company language needs.

### **3. Reflects regional strategy for employability and intercultural benefits**

The Framework is based on the context of the EEDA International Strategy, which in turn is based on the Regional Economic Strategy. Language & culture content is also provided to EEDA and UKTI for its annual International Business Plan.

Most of the regional funds to support local businesses are aimed at SMEs, although this can sometimes cause difficulty with the larger organisations (such as British Aerospace or British Airports Authority) who also wish to receive government support. In some projects we have allocated a percentage of the funds to larger companies on the basis that they promote the languages offer to SMEs in their value chain. This is happening at BAA Stansted, which forms part of the Lilama project visit to Cambridge.

Surveys of business need can take a range of forms. The most effective surveys are those conducted by brokers who know the businesses. These include cluster groups such as ERBI and Screen East. These cluster groups are membership organisations which represent the needs of the businesses in their sector.

Surveys forming part of the Harvest, BioCulture and LCIT projects questioned businesses about their business aims, learning aims, language & level, current ability, logistical needs (time, place), situations which the training should focus on, and any specific dialogues needed by the company staff.

Although the Framework does not favour one language over another, there are some languages which are in greater demand. The languages outlined in

the LCIT project (focussed on all sectors) were French, German, Polish, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Czech, Russian & Dutch. Sectors present a different story. The Harvest (agrifood) project saw most demand for French, Spanish, German & Polish. The BioCulture project (life sciences) saw most demand for Japanese & Chinese. In Essex there is a wide range of activity focussed on Chinese, with Chinese tutors from Jiangsu province teaching in Essex schools. This is complemented by Chinese language & culture training for the annual trade missions from Essex to China.

Most SMEs in the East of England expect a level of financial support from government. This is partly due to the high taxes that UK citizens feel they pay and partly due to the history of government support for training. Funds derive from a mix of sources, with the largest amounts coming from ESF European Social Fund. Some funding also comes from UKTI core finance, EU lifelong learning funds and LSC/EEDA skills finance. In most cases, companies are now expected to contribute 50% of the cost of training.

The ECRF scales are widely used to gauge language ability. The OCN qualifications body as well as the universities' own grading systems provide other benchmarks.

The website [www.rln-east.com/resources](http://www.rln-east.com/resources) provides a range of resources (training materials, culture reports, guides) for companies and brokers. To help companies navigate through the different projects and offers, a roadmap has been developed [www.rln-east.com/roadmap](http://www.rln-east.com/roadmap) in which information can be stripped out by the software and presented in a summary report on exiting the roadmap.

#### **4. Addresses local language minority and migrant community language resources**

The East of England has a large proportion of migrant workers compared to other English regions. This is partially due to the dominant agricultural sector which attracts seasonal employment. Several projects have been developed, mainly using EEDA or ESF funds, to meet the English language training needs of these workers. Some local councils have supported the development of local newspapers or radio stations in the languages of the larger migrant worker communities.

To coordinate these projects, a 'super steering group' was established in 2007 which consisted of the managers of the various migrant worker projects and key staff from EEDA and EERA. The language & culture agenda was represented by RLN East. As part of the Lilama visit in Cambridge, project staff shall meet staff of the ESOL training project for migrant workers. A separate section on the RLN East roadmap is dedicated to the language issues of employing migrant workers.

One of the current priorities is the improvement of the English language skills of employees with skills considered important to the region's economy. The ESF Transqual project aims to improve the basic English skills of staff employed by SMEs. The above training has all been provided free of charge.

Training has also been given to sections of the region's police force, mainly in Polish, which represents the largest migrant community (the second being Portuguese). This has been partially extended to the prison service, as on average 25% of the prison population in the East of England's 14 prisons are overseas nationals (in Bullwood Hall it is 100%). The languages most needed by prison staff are Polish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Romanian and Chinese. These represent the largest or most isolated non-English speaking communities as of March 2009. Culture training was provided in relation to Nigeria & Jamaica.

## **5. Provides for international networking and/or mobility**

Period of training in other countries is mainly catered for through study at secondary / higher education level or through ERDF Interreg Territorial Cooperation projects. The latter is partly limited to work with France, the Benelux countries, Germany and Scandinavia, which form the common coastal neighbouring countries.

Students enrolled on 4-yr language courses at the 'newer' universities spend 1 year in the country of their target language. Participants on the proposed ERDF Interlangues III project spend 36hrs in classroom tuition in the UK and 2 visits of 4 days in the country of the target language (piloted with northern France). The training & visits are co-financed at 50%.

Businesses involved in international trade travel by default to their target markets, therefore they have regular opportunity to practise their language & culture skills. Much short-term language (such as refresher) training is timed to take place shortly before market visits.

Employers taking part in the Leonardo Harvest, BioCulture and Decipher projects receive visits from business support agents from a range of European countries, including Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Denmark, Poland & Hungary. Companies participating in the UKTI culture programme receive visits from business support agents from a wide range of countries, including (in addition to the above) Japan, China, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, India, Mexico, USA, Russia & Romania. These speakers are mostly brought over for specific training workshops organised by UKTI as part of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office BDV Business Development Visit scheme.

## 6. Incorporates the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) with transparent validation/ credits

A range of qualifications are foreseen by the Framework. These include those provided as part of the OCN short qualification scheme, the CATS certificate in international communication developed by the University of Bedfordshire, and the OCR (Oxford Cambridge RSA) qualifications. In terms of English language training, Cambridge is also fortunate to host the well-known Cambridge University-developed qualifications such as Cambridge First Certificate, Advanced and Proficiency qualifications. There are a range of qualifications bodies in the UK, and these are widely used by the education establishments in the East of England.

Most SMEs we support in the region do not require (or strive for) a qualification, as their primary aim is that of achieving a level of proficiency required to perform specific work-based tasks. Although a qualification is useful in that it provides a benchmark of achievement, many small businesses do not consider this essential.

The university CATS system is a transfer system based on units of 30 and 60 points.

The OCN qualifications are approved nationally. All qualifications need to be registered on the Learning & Skills Council LAD Learning Aims Database for companies to receive LSC government finance for training. The recommended guided learning hours for one credit is 10. Each unit is 30 hours and cannot be subdivided. The total recommended guided learning hours are 60 for the each award and 120 for a certificate. This is notional learning time based on the credit values assigned to the units, and the number of unit credits required to achieve the qualifications. Some learners will be able to achieve these units in a shorter time, and some may take longer. The NOCN Level 1 Award in Language Skills and the NOCN Level 1 Certificate in Language Skills are related to the National Language Standards developed by the National Centre for Languages (CILT).

## 7. Can be readily & usefully implemented

The dossier file should capture data on whether the policy can be realistically implemented, and should show linkages between recent employer surveys and planned implementation of activity.

The above 6 sections contain sufficient information to answer this question. There is substantial support for the language & culture agenda by the business community and business support community. There is also a recognition by governmental organisations to improve the region's language capability.

Finance is a barrier to the development of appropriate projects. As a wealthy region, the East of England receives a lower proportionate amount of central government finance, and this pressure on budgets is passed down the chain at operational level. However, this has encouraged the region to become more effectively coordinated and more sophisticated in the use of the funds it does have.

There is an effective network of key players in the region, combined with a wide range of language & culture resources available free of charge to the region's employers.

## 8. Transferability

The policy contains a wide range of target audiences and economic priorities, therefore it is difficult to focus on the whole policy as easily transferable. Rather, elements of the policy can be transferred depending on the strategic priority of the recipient organisation. The majority of the policy elements do not depend on political context, with the exception of the need to maximise European funding opportunities, which would exclude non-EU member and non-EEA states.

For regions with different ESF priorities to the East of England, transferability may be limited by the ESF priorities of that region (such as the extent to which ESF funding is focussed on NEET [not in education, employment or training] groups as opposed to company management. Nevertheless, we believe that the fund represents an excellent 'selection ground' for other regions to select those areas which best reflect their priorities. Furthermore, there is in-built flexibility to all policy areas to adapt to changing economic and social needs.

Many areas of the policy (such as SME training, sector-based work and education into employment) have been implemented in other EU member states, sometimes in collaboration with the East of England and sometimes independently. Furthermore, elements of the education into employment policy area have already been replicated in the United States, although the target languages may be different.