

# SOLVIT

## UK

### Language Policy



## Good Practice Executive Summary

SOLVIT is a webpage that serves as a tool for companies language training planning. Mainly oriented towards SMEs, SOLVIT's objective is to help enterprises in their internationalisation process, guiding them so they ask themselves relevant questions that might help them to acquire linguistic and cultural capacities fostering an increasing internationalisation.

SOLVIT was first created by Stephen Hagen, expert in "language and business integration" and, presently, professor at the University of the West of England, in a brochure and CD format. Afterwards, and together with CILT<sup>1</sup>, all the information was transferred into a webpage, broadening and updating it.

The United Kingdom Trade and Investment Agency (UKTI) collaborated with CILT in SOLVIT's development, as the Agency, although it certainly covered all the relevant areas related to businesses' internationalisation, lacked information and/or initiatives on linguistic and cultural capacities development.

Therefore, SOLVIT arose as a tool to advice and orient enterprises in their business planning bringing in the linguistic and cultural dimension and making enterprises aware of their linguistic needs for doing business. Hence, SOLVIT is not only a facilitating tool but also an awareness raising one.

Special attention was paid to not duplicating the work made by other agencies, being SOLVIT complementary to, for example, UKTI's Intenational Communication Planning tool.

SOLVIT aims at helping enterprises to boost exports and reach success. Thus, SOLVIT helps them to:

1. Improve workers' linguistic capacities.
2. Search for specialized linguists.
3. Translation of WebPages.
4. Adapt products to the country of export culture.

Information regarding all these issues is organised around 4 main axis completely interlinked (each section redirects you to the other sections, making sure you don't miss any relevant information).

---

<sup>1</sup> CILT, the National Centre for Languages, was formed in 2003 from the merger of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching & Research and the Languages National Training Organisation (LNTTO). CILT seeks to promote a greater national capability in languages, supporting and developing multilingualism and cultural skills in all sectors of society.

The organisation serves education, business and the wider community with specialised, impartial and quality assured information services, expert advice and guidance as well as support for professional development. It manages major national initiatives in support of the National Languages Strategy, and works closely with national partner organisations across the UK and on the regional level through its (Regional) Language Networks ((R)LN). <http://www.cilt.org.uk/home.aspx>

The 4 axis are the following:

- International Communication Planning.
- Spoken Communication.
- Written and Oral Communication.
- Cultural Communication.

International Communication is therefore approached from all perspectives involved in the export/import exercise: from human resources and product adaptation and marketing, to linguistic and cultural issues that might arise during the process.



**solvit**  
Solving the Challenges of International Communications

HOME

**International Communication Planning**

**Spoken Communication**

**Written & Visual Communication**

**Cultural Communication**

**Copyright**

Professor Stephen Hagen is the author of the title and original content and owner of the intellectual property of Solvit. Professor Hagen in association with CILT, the National Centre for Languages, which has revised the original content, agrees that most of the material featured on this site may be reproduced free of charge for non-profit purposes without specific permission, provided that the source and copyright status is acknowledged. This is subject to the material being reproduced accurately and not being used in a derogatory manner or in a misleading context.

The permission to reproduce material does not extend to any material on this site which is identified as being the copyright of a third party.

Authorisation to reproduce material for all other purposes is subject to specific permission and this should be requested by writing to: Webmaster (Solvit), CILT, the National Centre for Languages, 20 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4LB.

CILT BLiS services

About Solvit | Copyright | Terms and Conditions | Privacy Statement **solvit**

[www.solvit.org.uk](http://www.solvit.org.uk)

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

SOLVIT website, maintained by CILT, is a national initiative that reflects current EU and UK policy and priorities on multilingualism as it is linked to the 'Languages for All; Languages for Life', UK's Languages Strategy (DfES, 2002), embraced by CILT.

SOLVIT is a tool to advice and orient enterprises when developing an International Communication strategy facilitating information on language skills in the workforce, translation of websites, adaptation of products to the overseas markets, etc. and being a source of specialist linguists, always according to the needs of the enterprise who, by answering to the questions set by SOLVIT, is lead to the pertinent information displayed on the website.

*SOLVIT does ensures the provision of the necessary skills and qualifications for the world of work, as it is the need for internationalisation of businesses that drives SOLVIT. As stated on its webpage: “with one in five companies losing business because of language and cultural barriers, it is vital for international businesses to address these obstacles to success. This can be achieved by establishing a comprehensive international communication plan”.*

To do so, SOLVIT offers information oriented to the needs identified by businesses when trying to develop an integral International Communication Plan, and not only in terms of language training for workers, for example, but also by providing access to relevant information to considerate when hiring language professionals, adapt its products, or even looking for funds to help enterprises export. It's important to underline that information is not always available in SOLVIT webpage but it redirects you to other agencies' web pages, avoiding, thus, information duplication

To develop SOLVIT initiatives, CILT works closely with other UK agencies and entities to implement the scheme, such as UK-Trade, RLNs, Blis Database, etc. This is observed in SOLVIT webpage as it redirects the visitor to these entities according to the information sought.

In terms of language training, SOLVIT, as an initiative promoted by CILT, does refer on its website to the *National Language Standards* set in the **National Languages Strategy for England (2002)** and all the information related to this regard available in CILT's website, to which it redirects the visitor. In CILT'S Language Ladder section, the national recognition system for language learning set in 2005 is explained, including links and equivalence to the **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages**.

SOLVIT does also refer on its webpage to the **UK European Language Portfolio (ELP) for adults** developed by CILT to provide an attractive, portable and motivating way for the individual learner to maintain an up-to-date record of their language learning experience and to track their changing levels of performance.

SOLVIT is a short –term results tool as it enables access to information and services that can be accessed promptly, always in the framework of the long-term goal of reaching internationalisation.

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

The main purpose of SOLVIT is to raise awareness on the need to promote within the business sector language and culture training as part of a coherent international communication plan that will favour enterprises internationalisation.

Although this awareness is stressed all throughout the website’s sections and that SOLVIT remarks on its webpage that “language learning requires motivation and commitment from the learner, a dynamic and well-delivered course from the provider - and time”, SOLVIT does not refer to any specific action oriented towards learners motivation carried out by itself or any other national agency.

Regarding information campaigns, CILT recognises that, due to lack of finance, dissemination and promotion has not been enough and has not reach all the audience firstly targeted.

The SOLVIT service is accessible also from other websites (CILT, RLNs, etc.) but these are not easily reachable.

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

SOLVIT is a national initiative developed and carried out by CILT together with the United Kingdom Trade and Investment Agency (UKTI). Therefore, it responds to national priorities set out in different strategic papers related to language and culture training oriented towards labour market needs, and specially oriented towards SMEs identified needs.

Some of these documents are:

- National Languages Strategy for England.
- The future of EU competitiveness: From economic recovery to sustainable growth.
- Ambition 2020: World class skills and jobs for the UK.
- Report on the implementation of the Action Plan 'Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity 2004-2006'.

SOLVIT it is not specifically region-driven and is, therefore, not focused on specific needs but address the language and culture literacy issue as a national priority within the internationalisation of UK enterprises’ need.

As a national strategy, and although it is linked to RLNs, SOLVIT makes reference to schemes developed at national level, such as, for example, the UKTI *Export Communications Review* as a source for funding or the national BLISS Database for employment.

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

All throughout its webpage, SOLVIT makes reference at the great importance of not only learning foreign languages but also knowing the culture of the target country.

To this end, SOLVIT mentions migrants or native speakers as a source of staff. It remarks that, as native speakers of languages other than English, employers clearly need to ensure their English is strong enough for the enterprise's needs and that, culturally, they will have a very strong understanding of the target market (if this is where they were brought up).

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

SOLVIT makes reference to the fact that placements overseas would benefit language and culture learning, but does not provide any information on financing for such initiatives.

On the other hand, it does recommend employers to hire foreign staff or welcome overseas placement as it can be very cost effective and is a good option especially if employers are unsure about committing to recruiting someone with language skills.

On its webpage it does not refer to collaboration or participation in international networks, although it works closely with Regional Language Networks.

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

Regarding language training, on its webpage SOLVIT remarks the importance of qualifications related to National Language Standards, although it recognises the difficulty to assess knowledge.

It also refers to the National Occupational Standards, which as the benchmark for all future qualifications development. CILT, responsible for the maintenance of SOLVIT's webpage, is the UK Sector Skills Body for languages, responsible for maintaining and developing National Occupational Standards in languages and intercultural skills for work and Standards for the specialist language professions, interpreting and translation. These have been

created through a long process of consultation with language and intercultural professionals and employers, and are approved by the UK regulatory authorities.

The system is intended to complement existing national qualification frameworks and provides a 'ladder of recognition' from beginner (Breakthrough) to postgraduate or native equivalent (Mastery). Descriptors included, align with the National Qualifications Framework<sup>2</sup>, National Curriculum levels, national examinations (Entry Level, GCSE, A Level) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. You can see the table of equivalences in the following table:

**Mapping of qualification levels**

NQF	NC Levels	General Qualifications	Language Ladder Stages	CEF (approx)
Entry Level	1, 2, 3	Entry 1, 2, 3	Breakthrough: 1-3	A1, A2, A3
Level 1	4 -6	Foundation GCSE	Preliminary: 4-6	B2
Level 2	7- EP	Higher GCSE	Intermediate: 7-9	C1
Level 3		AS/A/AEA	Advanced: 10-12	C2
Level 4-6			Proficiency: 13-15	
Levels 7 & 8			Mastery: 16&17	

**Abbreviations:**

NQF = National Qualifications Framework

NC = National Curriculum

CEF = Common European Framework

## 7. Can be readily & usefully implemented

Research conducted by CILT shows that SOLVIT was enthusiastically received by enterprises right from the beginning. Businesses using the services provided stated that it provides useful and complete information, enabling them to improve their language and cultural abilities and identify which is the next step to take towards internationalisation.

However, and although welcome has been positive, CILT recognises that, due to lack of finance, dissemination and promotion has not been enough and has not reach all the audience firstly targeted.

Another aspect to take into consideration when transferring this initiative is sources for funding that might enable both maintenance and information

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.qcda.gov.uk>

update of the web, but also dissemination and promotion. CILT has found difficulties to financed SOLVIT as maintain, update and select all the relevant information implies certain costs that have been difficult to cover. Maybe applying for funds to other organisations or sponsoring should be considered as interesting sources for funds.

## 8. Transferability assessment

### 8.1. Evidence of transfer

There exists evidence of transfer of the initiative at regional level. It is the case of RLN London's Planner – Talking Solutions.

[www.rln-london.com/planner/planner.aspx](http://www.rln-london.com/planner/planner.aspx)

This tool, accessible from RLN London's website, is also oriented to businesses' language and culture identified needs for exporting and trading internationally. Information is organised around 3 axis:

- Trading internationally- tips
- Language and cultural services
- Language and culture training

This is service it's complemented with the Service Finder tool which facilitates access to related professionals, also included in RLN London's website.

[www.rln-london.com/ServiceFinder/default.aspx](http://www.rln-london.com/ServiceFinder/default.aspx)

These services differs from SOLVIT as it does not present an integrated strategy to approach internationalisation; not as part of a whole International Communication Plan, in which business are accompanied through the identification of their language and culture needs. In this case, users fill in a short test indicating their concrete needs and, then, they are redirected to the pertinent information. Other tips and related information is suggested but does not form part of a coherent structure as it does in SOLVIT, which could be defined as a "step-by-step" process.

### 8.2. Innovation

SOLVIT has been already transferred or at least adapted within the UK, but there is no evidence of international transfer.

In other countries/regions there might exist initiatives covering some parts of all the information collected in SOLVIT. To this regard, it might be considered as innovative SOLVIT's horizontal approach to businesses' language and culture needs, as part of an International Communication Plan, as it does not only target these needs but also, and right from the beginning, raises awareness among enterprises and helps businesses to identify them.

### 8.3. Dependence on political context

SOLVIT is an initiative financed by public entities. As internationalisation has been identified as a priority in all EU economies and, considering the lack of initiatives approaching foreign language and culture illiteracy, an initiative as SOLVIT should be regarded as not only beneficial but also necessary.

Unfortunately, the current economic crisis and the difficulties enterprises are going through might have a negative impact in initiatives such as SOLVIT, whose effects are only visible in a long term basis. Thus, this kind of initiative might not only suffer from funds shortages coming from public entities, but also from lack of interest of the business” sector as the needs it covers might no be regarded as a priority.

Apart from this, it has to be underlined that funding is not only necessary for maintenance and sustainability purposes, but also for promotion and dissemination of the SOLVIT tool. As mentioned before, CILT recognised that the initiative had not a higher impact due to lack of finance for dissemination and promotion purposes.

### 8.4. Flexibility

SOLVIT is an online tool that provides general information to business on language and culture issues as part of an integrated internationalisation strategy. More concrete and complex information on certain services is offered through links to related entities, such UKTI or CILT. SOLVIT aims in fact at raising awareness among enterprises and provide them with the information that might drive them towards a complete internationalisation process.

Therefore, information contained must be extensive but not too specific, giving “directions” to where further information on certain topics is available. This makes this initiative highly flexible, although certain steps should be observed:

- All the information contained in the webpage should be thoroughly analysed, observing possible parallelisms between SOLVIT and the context and needs of the region to which the initiative is going to be transferred.
- Measure the impact, sustainability and scope of the website to be created.
- Collaborate thoroughly with all the entities and agencies involved in the various policies to be tackled to make sure all the fields of information are covered but also avoiding duplication.

## 8.5. Multi-region transfer

As mentioned before, all the thorough information contained in SOLVIT addresses all the needs arising from businesses' internationalisation processes making general reference to where and how approach these needs, and redirecting the user to the appropriate sources.

Therefore, and being also a national initiative, it can be concluded that such an action can be transferred at national, regional and multi-regional level, always taking into consideration the context and needs of the territories to which is going to be transferred and identifying where and who (depending of the competencies) the rest of the information, practical aid, etc. is going to be provided, avoiding duplication of information.

Thus, for example, national level of governance, differing so much all throughout the EU, should not present a problem if in the development of a similar tool all the governing bodies and the governance are respected.

Therefore, we can also conclude that one of the most important aspects to take into consideration, when developing a tool similar to SOLVIT, is how to structure the information making it easily accessible to users.