



Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used Languages Work Sector

Ministerial Meeting, Cardiff, Friday 24th October 2014

Communiqué

The third Ministerial meeting of the British-Irish Council Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used (IML) Languages work sector was held today at the Welsh Government Headquarters in Cardiff. The meeting was hosted and chaired by Rt. Hon. Carwyn Jones AM, First Minister of Wales. The Welsh Government takes the lead within the BIC with regard to Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used languages issues.

Representatives

The Irish Government was represented by Joe McHugh TD, Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs. The UK Government was represented by Mr Clive Barbour, Head of International, Social & Economic Engagement at the Northern Ireland Office. The Scottish Government was represented by Alasdair Allan MSP, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages. The Northern Ireland Executive was represented by Jennifer McCann MLA, Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and by Accompanying Minister Mervyn Storey MLA, Minister for Social Development. The Government of Guernsey was represented by Deputy Michael O'Hara, Minister at the Culture and Leisure. The Isle of Man Government was represented by Hon. Tim Crookall

MHK, the Minister for Education and Children and the Government of Jersey was represented by Tony Scott Warren, Offici du Jèrriais / Jèrriais Language Officer.

Meeting

The meeting considered a paper on the place of Indigenous Minority and Lesser-Used Languages in Early Years Education, an area which officials have been examining at Ministerial request and the subject of an expert and stakeholder seminar organised by the BIC in Cardiff in November 2012, and titled 'Promoting IML languages through early years education'. Ministers endorsed the paper as capturing the key issues in developing and supporting early years education and childcare within Indigenous Minority, and Lesser Used Language communities. Ministers also agreed the important role of encouraging linguistic continuity through the use of IML languages within childcare and early years education, as appropriate in each jurisdiction. This includes needs identification, planning for provision, developing resources, workforce development and relevant professional development. Quality practice development and the use of relevant research also have a key role to play.

Ministers received a presentation by Professor Rob Dunbar, Edinburgh University based on the official report of the BIC's Seminar on Language Policy and Legislation held in Edinburgh in November 2013. The seminar considered language legislation both in these isles and further afield, embedding IML languages in other legislation, the role of policy as opposed to legislation in supporting and developing IML languages; external influences on IML languages policy and reflections on the first year of the Welsh Language Commissioner. Ministers noted this report and discussed the important role that legislative, regulatory and/or policy approaches can play in support of IML languages; whether suitable initiatives in this regard may be appropriate to their jurisdiction; and how continued sharing of best practice in the area of language legislation and/or regulation could further support IML languages across BIC jurisdictions.

Ministers also reviewed other activities of the IML languages work sector since the last Ministerial in November 2011 based on a report prepared by officials. They noted the continuing sharing of good practice between Member Administrations on language issues. They especially commended the range of bilateral and other relationships built up and facilitated through membership of the Council and the opportunities which that presents in this regard. These contacts are having beneficial results for smaller BIC Administrations in particular.

Finally, Ministers considered and approved proposals for the future work programme of the IML languages work sector. This will focus on issues around language learning for adults, marketing, the arts and digital media, the links between language and the wider economy and the role of the community in sustaining IML languages. Ministers also felt that the three year cycle between Ministerial meetings was too lengthy and will give consideration to more frequent meetings.

BIC Secretariat
24 October 2014

