

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
BY DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 8th OCTOBER 2013**

Question

Will the Minister state which foreign languages are the most important for Jersey both currently and in the medium and longer term in terms of business?

What plans are there for co-ordination with the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to make sure that a sufficient number of local school-leavers are sufficiently competent in these languages to meet current and future demands for these language skills for business and culture?

Answer

Businesses in Jersey increasingly work in a global market place with the majority of business transactions undertaken using the English language, except in the emerging BRIC markets and the Middle East. As business development, from Jersey, to these emerging markets represents a longer term investment, where opportunities or needs arise with regard to language these will be prioritised by States Departments in conjunction with private sector suppliers.

It is therefore currently believed that the most likely medium to longer term business language requirements include Mandarin (China) and Portuguese (Brazil).

In 2007 the Council of Ministers agreed to the establishment of a Skills Executive comprising the Ministers and Chief Officers for Economic Development, Education Sport and Culture and Social Security. The purpose of the Skills Executive was to give political leadership, determine policy priorities and provide strategic direction to an employer-led Skills Board charged with co-ordinating the work of three government departments in developing policy and strategy for enhancing skills – including languages - in the workforce and those about to enter it.

Skills Jersey Board activity to identify where the skills gaps are now and where industry feels it will be in the future, with the Board tasking officers from all three departments to work closely with industry representatives to develop strategies to better align the skills needs of businesses and aspirations of individuals.

Individuals who study languages at a higher level in Jersey have remained relatively and consistently low over the last 5 years with a slight dip in the 2013/2014 academic year.

Enhanced language skills are likely to become a key employability asset in terms of the future Jersey workforce and the States is seeking to promote languages alongside other higher level professional skills, through the recent launch of the 'Skills Accelerator' product. Under this EDD funded scheme, individuals – with the support of their employer – can access up to 75% of the costs of specialist training, with a financial cap of States support at £5,000. By taking advantage of a Skills Accelerator grant, businesses can identify those key individuals with both a business need and a languages capability and acquire the requisite private sector training required for them to learn those languages appropriate for future business development.