

## Press Release

### European Language Label 2010 and the Language Ambassadors of the Year

To celebrate the European Day of Languages, eleven Irish projects were awarded the European Language Label for innovative ways of teaching and learning languages by Professor Tom Collins, Dean of Teaching and Learning at NUI Maynooth, at an awards' ceremony in NUI Maynooth today.

Dr Muiris Ó Laoire, Chair of the Irish National Jury, commented that, as in previous years, innovation and excellence are clearly recognizable in the eleven projects awarded this year, which cover a wide range of successful ideas and effectively attested approaches and methods in language learning. Award-winning projects like these provide a potential source of inspiration for others working with different languages and in different contexts. Dr Ó Laoire observed, "As we continue to confront economic obstacles, we need more than ever to identify and award the innovators in our field and to learn from those who create flexible responses and encourage initiative."

In his keynote address, Professor Tom Collins stated that with the shift in the global centre of gravity from the United States of America and Europe, assumptions that a proficiency in English would guarantee economic social and cultural mobility to Irish people, no longer hold. He added, "We must therefore become much more serious in our engagement with language learning and in our readiness to take on the challenges involved in it."

The eleven winning projects are:

- Valuing Bilingualism in our School through the Creation of Dual Language Texts
- ClubLeabhar.com – Club leabhar Gaeilge ar líne
- EuroCatering Language Training
- Bunachar Logainmneacha na hÉireann: Placenames Database of Ireland
- Using a blog and a blend of other ICTs with learners of German to promote language learning, improve technology skills, heighten student engagement and provide formative feedback.
- The Influence of the Piñata on Spanish Culture
- Language Trap: An Adaptive Language Learning Video Game
- SpEakWise
- Getting to Grips with the English Language
- SCENARIO – a new bilingual, peer-reviewed online journal for drama and theatre in foreign and second language education
- Euromazing Languages

#### The Language Ambassadors of the Year 2010

Four Language Ambassadors of the Year were also honoured at this event. The Language Ambassador of the Year Award aims to recognise the achievements of individuals in the promotion of language learning, which is a powerful tool for building an inclusive multicultural society. These individuals, from the formal and non-formal education sectors, help to raise awareness of cultural

diversity and encourage an understanding of different values and beliefs through their work teaching and promoting language learning.

- **Prof. David Little, Centre for Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College Dublin**  
The range and depth of Professor Little's activities and achievements confirm his enormous contribution to the field of language learning. He is recognised worldwide as a leading proponent of the theory of language learner autonomy, and has been a driving force behind many significant language education initiatives nationally and internationally.
- **Dr Konstantin Doulamis, Department of Classics, University College Cork**  
Dr Doulamis' qualification for the post of Language Ambassador rests mainly upon his work teaching Ancient Greek at the annual UCC International Summer School and his successful promotion of Modern Greek in the University curriculum and beyond. But his linguistic skills encompass, beyond his extraordinary grasp of English, fluency also in French, Spanish and Italian.
- **Art Ó Súilleabháin, Ionad Oideachais Mhaigh Eo**  
Art Ó Súilleabháin is the Director of Mayo Education Centre and has worked tirelessly for the Irish language for over 25 years. He has committed a huge amount of voluntary time and energy for schools and teachers, developed teaching resources and promoted Irish to all age groups through both writing and broadcasting.
- **Neasa Ní Dhomhnaill, Coláiste an Phiarsaigh**  
Neasa Ní Dhomhnaill has been promoting English, Irish, French, Italian and Latin in an all-Irish secondary school environment for more than 30 years. She was responsible, with the help of the PPLI (Post-Primary Languages Initiative), for ensuring that Italian became a subject available to students at Coláiste an Phiarsaigh. As well as her formal teaching career, she also carries out volunteer work teaching English to people who have recently arrived in Ireland, and helps them to integrate into society.

Dr Muiris Ó Laoire, Chair of the Irish National Jury, praised the very significant achievements of each of these Language Ambassadors and said that their experience served to underline the importance and relevance of language learning in Ireland today.

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The European Language Label, which is simultaneously run in over 20 European countries, has been a major event in the languages' calendar since 1998. The Award recognises creative and innovative ways to improve the quality of language teaching and learning. This year's winners were selected on the basis of excellence, innovation, creativity and their ability to serve as a model for others. The projects this year were exceptionally innovative, with learners ranging from primary school through to adults. The projects highlighted the importance of language learning in the creation of an inclusive multicultural society and the significance of real life situations in providing motivation for learners to develop and enhance their linguistic competence. For further information contact: Nellie Woods-Tattersall or Lisa Fox, Léargas, 189 Parnell Street, Dublin 1, Tel: 01 887 1263 or [languages@leargas.ie](mailto:languages@leargas.ie)

Léargas is Ireland's National Agency for the management of national and international exchange and cooperation programmes in education, youth and community work, and vocational education and training. Léargas is a not-for-profit organisation that operates under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills. Léargas works on behalf of the Department to manage

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