

English language centres face triple threat to business as UK industry reports 13% decline

English language teaching centres in the UK are being hit by lack of government support, increased competition from overseas and the threat of Brexit, according to English UK, the world's largest association for English language centres.

In a report presented at English UK's annual conference, representatives of the 465 member centres were told of a sharp fall in the UK's performance, including a:

- 23% fall in business over the past four years
- 13% decrease in business from 2014 to 2015
- Drop in global market share from 49% in 2011 to 43% in 2015.

The English UK Student Statistics Report 2015, compiled by international industry specialists, StudentMarketing, indicated that English language centres in the UK are facing increased competition from other English-speaking countries, including Australia, Ireland, Canada and the USA.

While UK business has declined by 23%, in the same four-year period Australia has seen a 43% increase. In 2012 Australia had less than half the UK's market share but this year it is poised to take over the UK's position in second place behind the USA.

Steve Phillips, chair of English UK, cited the lack of government support for the industry as one of the challenges facing the UK's industry. 'There are a number of factors at work here,' he said, 'but there is no doubt that one of them is that the Australian government is far more supportive of this important industry.'

'Teaching English brings £1.2bn of overseas earnings into the country and provides employment for 26,500 people. We feed vital students to our universities and create immense goodwill towards the UK in the many countries our students come from. We need the UK government to not only recognise this but support our industry.'

Last year, English UK commissioned Capital Economics to value the economic impact of English language teaching in the UK. Their report showed that students bring in more money for the government than they take out through their use of public services.

Currently, nearly two-thirds of overseas students come from the European Union. The threat of the UK leaving the EU is presenting the industry with difficulties in attracting students. In a recent survey of English UK members, 77% said that leaving the EU would be "bad" or "very bad" for business.

'The message going out is that the UK is not welcoming to visitors from abroad,' adds Richard Day, acting chief executive of English UK. 'But teaching English is economically vital in many UK towns and cities. The UK is home to the English language and it is probably our most successful export ever. Urgent action is needed to send the world a much more positive message and help this essential UK industry.'

Notes to editor

English UK is the national association of English language teaching centres. It has 465 member centres, all of which are accredited by Accreditation UK, run in partnership with the British Council. Find out more about us at englishuk.com

The Economic Impact of English Language Teaching in the UK report, Capital Economics, November 2015, available at englishuk.com/facts-figures

The English UK Student Statistics Report 2016: Executive Summary, StudentMarketing, May 2016, available at englishuk.com/facts-figures

[English UK Board welcomes EU survey findings](#), English UK, April 2016

[English UK 2015-2017 strategic plan: summary](#), English UK, February 2016
(also available at englishuk.com/who-are-we)

[National Strategy for International Education 2025](#), Australian Government, April 2016

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