

Support the English Language teaching sector to help build the UK's post-EU international trade and influence, says English UK

The UK's English Language teaching sector is a vital part of the country's post-EU economic and trading strategy - but it urgently needs government support to play its full part, says trade body English UK.

ELT brings significant soft power benefits to the UK, as well as contributing £1.2bn to the economy and supporting over 26,000 jobs. All of this will become increasingly important once the UK is outside the EU.

But UK ELT sector is facing stiff competition from competitor nations, many supported by their own governments. The UK suffered a 13 per cent year-on-year decline in business last year, and 23 per cent over four years. English UK is calling for the government to recognise and support our industry as it considers future visa arrangements and trade deals, to enable the ELT industry to work for the UK economy.

"Welcoming international students to our language schools brings many soft power benefits to the UK as well as hard cash: those can only become more important as we contemplate our future as a nation outside the EU. We believe our sector has a great deal to offer, and we are keen to work with the government on this. We will be seeking urgent meetings with incoming ministers as the situation becomes clearer," said Steve Phillips, chair of English UK.

"As the UK goes forward after the referendum, we urge the government to remember that while there has been a great deal of debate about immigration, the majority of people in the UK do not classify students as migrants.

"They understand that students stay for a short while and then return home - often to influential positions - with positive views of the UK. An ICM poll in 2014 showed just 22 per cent of people thought students were immigrants, and 59 per cent thought the government should not reduce the number of international students coming to the UK.

"We want the government to consider a more student-friendly visa regime, including removing students from net migration figures. Our competitors are demonstrating that they welcome students from all over the world with more accommodating visa regimes and positive rhetoric. We need the same.

"We are at risk of losing our leading position in the global ELT industry to Australia, whose industry has been actively supported by their government during the past few years. Meanwhile, our market share has declined from 49 per cent in 2011 to 43 per cent in 2015."

English UK will be continuing to campaign for a better deal for the industry, and is encouraging its 465 member centres, which include privately-owned language colleges and boarding schools as well as state universities and further education colleges, to lobby local MPs to do the same.

The ELT industry brings crucial economic benefits to many areas and constituencies, with student spending on tuition and living fees supporting a wide range of businesses and individuals, including ordinary families supplementing their incomes by hosting students, language centre staff, and local tourism and transport.

International students who have studied English in the UK are more likely to apply to university here, and to encourage relationships between the UK and their own country once they have returned home.

These benefits and many others are outlined in full in *Supporting the British economy through teaching English as a foreign language: an assessment of the contribution of English language*

teaching to the United Kingdom economy, a report produced for English UK by Capital Economics in late 2015.

Notes to Editors

1. English UK is the world's leading language teaching association, with around 465 accredited centres in membership. It covers university and further education college language departments, international study centres in independent schools, educational trusts and charities, and private sector colleges. English UK is a UK registered charity (www.englishuk.com).
2. The [Capital Economics](#) report on ELT is available here
3. Information on recent market trends is available in the [English UK Student Statistics Report](#), authored by StudentMarketing.
4. For more information, please contact Steve Phillips, chair of English UK via steve.phillips@englishuk.com