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Research Article

## The Grin of the Cheshire Cat: European Studies in Irish Universities 1974-2014

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## Abstract

The fortunes of European Studies in Irish universities have tended to reflect the experience of Ireland as a member-state of the EU. At the outset, the need to prepare graduates for careers in EU institutions and, more broadly, for occupations directly affected by the EU such as law, banking, business, farming and tourism, was met by a wide range of courses (BA and MA) at most Irish universities. These had a strong vocational mission and were supported by EU-funded schemes such as TEMPUS, Erasmus and, later, Jean Monnet, all of which stimulated transnational mobility and the subsequent standardisation of curricula through the adoption of credit transfers (ECTS) under the 'Bologna process'. In all these developments, Ireland 'punched above its weight' in a context where it was basking in economic success due largely to favourable trade and inwards investment conditions. More recently, however, and especially since the demise of the 'Celtic Tiger' public opinion has been much more circumspect as expressed in negative referendum results and, most recently as a reaction to, the management of the economy by a 'troika' of external agencies. Today, European Studies programmes have been the victim of public disillusionment with the EU, and tighter budgets have resulted in a 'cannibalisation' of these programmes by their constituent disciplines so that the label "European Studies" is reduced to a fig-leaf barely concealing an underlying fragmentation into more traditional mono-disciplinary degrees.

## Keywords

European Studies; Ireland; teaching and learning; Bologna

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## INTRODUCTION

The story of European Studies in Irish universities between 1974 and 2014 mirrors, to some extent, the experience of Irish membership of the European Union. We can detect an early phase of enthusiasm linked to a strongly perceived need to prepare graduates for living and working with, and within, the countries of the EU. This entailed a focus on policy-making, on understanding how the EU institutions operated, and on the best ways to derive benefits from new trading opportunities offered by the increasing consolidation of the Single Market. Since about 2008, however, a number of factors have combined to dilute and diversify the hitherto strict attention to the 'mechanics' of membership and transform European Studies (especially at the graduate level) into something more reflective, but also more specialised in the sense that formerly pluridisciplinary degrees have been replaced by programmes focussing on discrete disciplinary themes e.g. law or regional development. Among factors contributing to this dilution have been, firstly, the success of Irish membership, and the concomitant 'Celtic Tiger' phenomenon that has created a certain complacency that found expression in negative referendum results and a somewhat arrogant belief that "they" (i.e. other EU countries and especially the new East European member-states) had much more to learn from Ireland's success than Ireland did from them. Secondly, and more recently, the bracing experience of supervision by the 'Troika' (ECB, IMF, European Commission) caused public opinion to doubt if the EU was any longer an undisputed "good thing"; with students, anecdotally at least, beginning to question why they needed to study something that had apparently failed to cement the prosperity generated by the boom of the Tiger years. Ironically, at a time when it was (is)

arguably more important than ever to understand the implications of Ireland's EU membership, and especially the permanent and, overwhelmingly beneficial sharing of sovereignty involved therein, the focus of university curricula on matters European has tended to be somewhat dissipated. To be fair, Ireland's tendency to take its eye off the European ball, has not been helped by severe budgetary constraints in the higher education sector, nor by the development of new curricular themes that seemingly offered a welcome relief from the tedious troubles of a turbulent Eurozone: themes such as the environment and climate change, human rights, and the developing world, and new perspectives on global peace and security. Areas such as Chinese Studies are well-funded by the Chinese Government thus increasing the pressure on less lucrative European programmes (Murphy 2014:481). As we shall see below, the evolution of university postgraduate curricula, from 2008 onwards, has reflected these wider developments. Resource constraints have also discouraged risking the relatively greater costs that interdisciplinary programmes inevitably incur; they have also contributed to a disciplinary 'siege mentality' whereby academics tend to hold on to what do they best (i.e. teach their own subjects) instead of following the more perilous path of trans-disciplinary cooperation that lies at the heart of any credible European Studies programme. Budgetary retrenchment in the age of austerity has also led to a general decline in the international standing of Irish universities in widely-publicised league tables. While one may quibble with one or other of these 'objective' indicators, collectively they tell a rather depressing story. To mention them is not to argue for their infallibility: but any serious assessment of European Studies education in Ireland today needs to take into account this rather gloomy context. Thirdly, we do live in an international market-place and if students cannot find what they are looking for in Ireland, there are plenty of postgraduate European Studies degrees that are thriving in third-level institutions such as the ZEI in Bonn, Germany, the university in Lund, Sweden, College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium, and the Europa Institute in Edinburgh Scotland.

## UNDERGRADUATE EUROPEAN STUDIES

Undergraduate curricula in European Studies in Irish universities have been remarkably stable over the forty years of EU membership. The earliest was the BA in European Studies in 1974 at the National Institute for Higher Education in Limerick which (with a similar programme at Loughborough in the UK) pioneered an interdisciplinary curriculum that has been emulated and refined in many parts of Europe, and beyond. The Limerick European Studies programme has remained remarkably constant with the only major restructuring taking place at the time of semesterisation. Although the postgraduate programme in 'European Integration and International Trade' launched at UCD in 1966 is sometimes cited as the first 'European Studies' degree in Ireland (Murphy 2014:475) it was essentially economics. At Limerick, the interdisciplinary ideas have remained much the same. From the start, students have followed a core European Studies module stream, a language stream (French, German, Spanish) and then may take either three disciplinary subjects (from History, Sociology, Law and Economics or two such streams plus a second language (from French, German Spanish and Irish). At the end of Year 2 and the start of Year 3 students go off campus for internships and/or further language training in a relevant country. The Erasmus student mobility programme (of which more later) has become an indispensable adjunct to European Studies programmes in Ireland. In the final year, students finalise their language and disciplinary studies, choose some electives, and complete a 'capstone' project which should in theory tie together many of the facets of their degree experience.

This structure underlies other undergraduate programmes in Ireland, At University College Cork (UCC), Maynooth University (MU) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD), just to take three examples, languages are an integral part of the programme as is the time spent abroad. All three have a strong interdisciplinary basis. The three universities differ only in the range of modules offered to students.

At Maynooth French German and Spanish are offered but a wider choice is available at TCD where Italian, and Russian are also on the menu. At UCC Italian is offered in addition to French, German and Spanish. While all universities offering undergraduate European Studies combine similar languages, the complementing disciplinary streams vary in emphasis. At UCC for example, geography and economics provide a distinctive flavour to the degree with modules making students aware of demographic change, the impact of urbanisation, centre-periphery tensions, regional development, and agricultural policy. Like all other European Studies degrees, students are introduced to the EU institutions, and the policy-making process in Brussels. UCC uniquely provides, in addition, a module devoted to a simulation game involving decision-making in the European Council. At Maynooth the same hybrid pattern prevails: in first year students take a core European Studies module, a language (French German or Spanish) and one other subject. These 'other subjects' extend to Greek and Roman Civilisation, Law, Economics, Finance, and Anthropology. In subsequent years, two subjects are taken each year plus the chosen language. The BA at TCD also follows the same pattern as the other universities but there are some features that distinguish this degree from other European Studies degrees in Ireland; firstly, an emphasis on history; secondly, a greater choice of languages (extending beyond the usual three to Russian and Italian); thirdly, the first year is a compulsory common foundation year made up of History, the History of Ideas and an Introduction to Social Science; fourthly, TCD students must study two languages (although selecting one as their major language for study abroad in third year); fifth, there is no compulsory module involving study of the EU institutions, but only an option in fourth year entitled European Union Politics. In second year, and in addition to two languages, TCD students take two compulsory modules focussing on the 18<sup>th</sup> century and an additional optional module from topics drawn from modern European history, sociology of Europe; comparative politics; micro- and macroeconomics; and international relations. The third year is spent abroad in a country related to the student's language major; and the final year is spent studying languages (although only one hour a week on the 'minor' language), a compulsory text-based module on modern European cultural history; and two optional modules from a wide range including, for example, France 1912-1923; Turkish-German literature; contemporary Italian literature; Spanish culture; and EU politics.

This brief survey of some of the major BA European Studies programmes inevitably raises the question as to what students are seeking when they embark on such a degree programme. What all these degrees have in common is the acquisition of fluency in one (or two) European languages linked to a study of the political, cultural, and economic contexts in which these languages might be used: international finance, tourism, banking, commerce, and any public authority that has dealings with its European counterparts such as county councils, universities, and semi-state bodies, spring to mind. For anyone wishing to work in, or around, or in a direct relationship with, the EU institutions in Brussels a European studies degree is often seen as an ideal preparation. Interestingly, however, the Central Applications Office (CAO) entry points seem to suggest that curricular content relevant to an understanding of 'how Brussels works' is not a key factor in guiding student choice. The TCD curriculum which has no required study of the European Union commanded a 535 CAO entry level in 2013, while UCC with the most EU content (including an EU-based compulsory simulation game) of the four universities, required a CAO score of 335 with UL (355) and NUIM (395) falling in between (i.e. in the amount of EU content included in the syllabus). What this suggests is that "employability" may not (despite what is often assumed especially in a recession) be the key factor in guiding student choice. If not, it may be the oft-quoted 'student experience' or the perceived 'reputation' of the university.

A key component of undergraduate education in European Studies has been the Erasmus programme. Over three million students have benefited from the Erasmus mobility exchanges since they were established in 1987. Since then, the numbers of students and countries involved has risen steadily from just over 3000 students and eleven countries in 1987 to over 250,000 annually today with 33 countries involved (28 EU member-states plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland

and Turkey). The programme has also included visits by university staff (academic and administration) of whom about 40,000 benefited in the year 2009-10. Another feature, since 2007, has been the support for work placements - now accounting for about one in six of all Erasmus exchanges. The programme can be seen therefore as partly an attempt to enhance EU labour mobility by familiarising young graduates with foreign labour markets, but partly (although intangibly) to create a 'transnational society' that is less conscious of the limitations of national borders. Commissioner Vassiliou touched on these themes in alluding to the various benefits of Erasmus: 'By enabling students to spend a period studying or working abroad, Erasmus provides them with more than what is for many the experience of a lifetime. It teaches them a foreign language, it hones their communication skills, it improves their interpersonal and intercultural abilities' (Vassiliou 2012). Not only are young people given the confidence and ability to work in other countries where the right jobs may be available and not be trapped by a geographic mismatch, but they are also likely to form permanent personal partnerships across national borders. Thirty-three percent of Erasmus students have life partners of a different nationality (compared to 13 per cent of non-Erasmus students) with the result that one million babies are reckoned to have been born to transnational Erasmus parents since 1987 (European Commission 2014). The most popular countries as destinations for Erasmus students are: Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy while the countries sending out most students are Spain, France, Germany, Italy and Poland. Although countries generally try to maintain a rough balance between outgoing and incoming students, there are imbalances: the most acute being Malta which receives four times as many students as it sends out (European Commission 2013).

For its size, Ireland has been an active participant in the Erasmus programme. In the year 2011-2012, 2754 Irish students went abroad for study or work placement, while almost twice as many (5751) Erasmus students came to Ireland from abroad. Irish students on work placements abroad rose from 303 in 2007-8 to 791 in 2011-12. Incoming students to Ireland for work placements have run at double the outgoing figures: up from 645 in 2007-8 to 1476 in 2011-12. This almost certainly reflects a high demand for competence in English among continental European countries. Financial support for Irish Erasmus students has never been generous, and has declined gradually from 299EUR in 2007-8 to 242EUR in 2011-12. Participation rates (i.e. the proportion of Irish graduating students, having been involved in Erasmus) have however increased over the same period from 3.08 per cent to 4.68 per cent. In 2009-12, the most active universities in sending out Erasmus students were (in order) University of Limerick, University College Dublin, University College Cork, Dublin Institute of Technology, and Trinity College Dublin. In the same period, the most popular destinations for Irish students were (in order) France, Spain, Germany, United Kingdom and the Netherlands, while incoming students came principally from five countries: France, Spain, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. Outgoing Erasmus staff visits from Ireland went principally (in order) from University of Limerick, University College Cork, Royal Irish Academy of Music, Cork Institute of Technology, and NUI Galway (European Commission 2013). It is worth mentioning, if only in passing, that the exponential growth of Irish low-cost airline Ryanair has played a conspicuous role in enabling thousands of students to travel on a scale that would have been unimaginable twenty years ago. This has made possible the initiation, continuation and enhancement of contacts under the aegis of the Erasmus programme.

What impact has the Erasmus programme had on Irish universities, and on national higher education policy? Despite higher education being seen quite early on by government as an engine of economic development, the international context of this process was relatively slow in making itself felt in government thinking. In the 1992 green paper, for example, *Education for a changing Ireland* (Government of Ireland 1992) the primary goal was 'to increase awareness of both technology and enterprise' as a key strategic purpose. Internationalisation did not play a significant role in higher education policy-making until the mid-1990s. The OECD Report (OECD 1991) did not mention internationalisation issues at all, nor did the 1995 Report of the Steering Committee on the future of

higher education in Ireland (Higher Education Authority 1995). That said, it is not wise to assume that Irish universities were unaffected by international issues. On the contrary, they were affected early by funding opportunities (from the Social Fund) and by the Erasmus programme itself which forced universities to adopt credit-transfer schemes that guaranteed the equivalence of courses undertaken by mobility students. In some respects, we can argue that the higher education sector was the “tail that wagged the dog” in the evolution of a more internationally-focused higher education system, notwithstanding the demands of the Bologna Process (which provided a short burst of energy to fuel the more long-term ‘slow-burn’ benefits of the Erasmus programme). In the late 1990s, government policy also purported to encourage the development of Ireland as a centre of educational excellence. In tandem with this initiative, bodies were set up to monitor and maintain the credibility of educational qualifications, partly with a view to matching equivalent standards in countries to which, and from which, students might be expected to travel. Partly for financial reasons, universities began more energetically to recruit students from non-EU countries but these ventures, even where they were educationally desirable, have run into opposition on the grounds that ‘home’ (i.e. EU) students already place a strain on increasingly scarce resources. Moreover, Ireland is in competition with many other ‘educational destinations’ a challenge that is all the more daunting, in the context of a relative decline of all Irish universities in global league tables. The impact of Erasmus on universities is difficult to calibrate precisely, but, clearly visible, are the establishment of international offices, orientation programmes for EU students, credit transfer schemes firmly established, the standardised Europass CV, ‘semesterisation’ to align with other EU countries, curricular adaptations to cater for a more cosmopolitan clientele, and an increase in teaching exchanges and research collaboration. Universities have become increasingly aware of the European environment in which they operate. Erasmus has helped to raise this consciousness but it cannot be said to be totally responsible for it. Despite funding constraints, Irish universities are still relatively autonomous in the sphere of teaching and research: a desire for self-preservation, in the teeth of a more managerial culture being imposed from above, if nothing else, drives the academy towards cooperation in Europe, and beyond.

## POSTGRADUATE EUROPEAN STUDIES

Postgraduate courses in European Studies in Ireland have displayed much less continuity than what we have observed in the case of undergraduate programmes where, as we have seen, there has been a remarkable stability. One reason for the more fluid evolution of postgraduate programmes is the perceived need to adapt to labour market trends. This supposition is based on the assumption that students proceed to a postgraduate degree to prepare themselves for a particular career choice for which the undergraduate degree has been too broad and insufficiently focussed on ‘real world’ contexts. As noted at the outset, we can see a process whereby postgraduate programmes in European Studies have generally moved away from being specifically attuned to the needs of the EU institutions in the context of EU membership, and towards either more ‘academic’ approaches, or more sharply focussed on a particular discipline. Thus, at UCD, TCD and UL, until recently, postgraduate programmes were geared to bridging the gap between academe and the demands of the EU institutions. For example, an early MScEcon degree run jointly by TCD and UCD routinely included civil servants among its student body. This joint degree was superseded by one at UCD entitled MEconSc in European Economic and Public Affairs.. It included a tight focus on the policy-making processes of the EU; it provided two study trips (one to the EUI in Florence, and one to Brussels) thus giving students an opportunity to make early and fruitful contacts with policy-makers, among whom many would eventually be working. This link with ‘real world’ exigencies was cemented by a series of scholarships, provided to UCD by the Irish Government, to enable young high-fliers from the “accession countries” to benefit from relevant training in Dublin at UCD. This process ran in parallel, of course, with visits by east European civil servants to government

departments in Dublin, and missions by Irish policy-makers to help accession countries prepare for membership. This was a time when the Irish economy was displaying precocious growth and allowing Ireland to be seen as a template for emerging economies in Europe and to 'sit at the feet' of the Celtic Tiger. However a number of factors changed the status of postgraduate programmes in European Studies. The demise of the Celtic Tiger took the shine off Ireland as a 'role-model'; cutbacks in financing for higher education generally made it more difficult to support programmes at the same level; public opinion was turning against the EU partly as a result of Ireland being no longer a net beneficiary in the EU structural funds, and partly from a misplaced popular arrogance that said Ireland no longer 'needed' the EU. One reaction to the dilution of European Studies programmes was to recoup student numbers by offering alternative programmes: Peace and Development Studies at UL; Development Studies at UCC, European Regional and Minority Cultures at UCD, a bifurcation of the UCD programme into a MA/MSc offering two alternative 'tracks', and European Employment Studies at TCD. One apparent exception to the apparent splintering and dissipation of postgraduate programmes in European Studies was a new MPhil degree at TCD labelled simply European Studies and launched in 2009. Although this degree accentuates the trend away from a strongly 'vocational' remit, it is a truly interdisciplinary programme, and it has a remarkably cohesive structure. Like the BA in European Studies at TCD, however, it is possible to go through the entire programme without any meaningful contact with the European Union.

The Trans European Mobility Programme for University Studies (TEMPUS) was initiated in 1990 as an early response to the fall of the Berlin Wall. The emphasis ever since has been on higher education reform in an ever-expanding group of partner countries. In the early days the focus was on east and central Europe, but, later, the 'neighbourhood' countries, Central Asia, the Western Balkans, the Mediterranean and most, recently, Libya, Israel and Egypt have participated. Irish universities, as partners in joint European projects (JEPs) coordinated by other universities, participated from the outset. Examples of early projects were: public administration reforms in Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania; European Studies curricular reform in Bulgaria, the setting up of a European Training Centre (for journalists, civil servants, and business persons) in Skopje, Macedonia. More recently (under TEMPUS IV) projects have tended to be more tightly focussed than earlier. For example, TCD has had a project with Belgrade, Serbia to implement a postgraduate qualification in pharmacy. UCD helped to establish an environmental specialist training programme at the University of Zagreb, Croatia. UCC is involved in quality assurance criteria for higher education institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and UL participated as a partner in delivering an online European Studies programme in northwestern Romania (University of Cluj-Napoca). These are, of course, only a sample of many projects that Ireland has participated in over the past twenty-three years. The projects carry an important mobility aspect whereby students and staff travel between partner countries. Graduates of Masters programmes in Ireland go back to their own countries and set up new courses and centres which in turn attract funding from the EU. As an English speaking country with sound European credentials Ireland was a popular choice for an EU-China Cooperation mobility project, as well as other global schemes under Erasmus Mundus with Australasia, the USA, and Canada.

Another important initiative undertaken by the EU to stimulate European integration studies, and which has benefited Ireland, is the Jean Monnet Action. This was launched in 1989, and has grown exponentially since that date to cover 72 countries on all five continents. So far, the Action has set up 162 Jean Monnet Centres of Excellence, 875 Jean Monnet Chairs, and just over 1000 Jean Monnet modules. In addition, the Action directly assists six academic non-university institutes, including the College of Europe in Bruges, the European University Institute in Florence, and the European Institute of Public Administration in Maastricht.

Ireland has participated in the Jean Monnet programme although at a diminishing rate. This decline may be due to the co-funding requirements that universities are increasingly unwilling to undertake, or to demands on the scheme from countries outside the EU, as Jean Monnet chairs are now a truly

global phenomenon. It has also been argued that the Jean Monnet schemes have not been sufficiently well publicised in Ireland (Murphy 2014:484). Ireland had two Centres of Excellence in the late 1990s (UCD and Limerick) and a third one arrived in 2013 at Maynooth. Jean Monnet chairs have been fairly liberally sprinkled around the island (at least six at UCD, and three at UL, although these have tended not to be replaced (possibly again due to the co-financing requirement). Despite some pessimism (Murphy 2014:484) about the low participation rate in the Jean Monnet programme, there has more recently been an upturn in Irish fortunes with Monnet chairs being granted to Maynooth and Cork in 2015. Jean Monnet Centres and Jean Monnet chairs are underpinned by modules, and research networks which have collectively constituted an epistemic community in which Ireland has been well-placed. Jean Monnet conferences held in Brussels are a regular reminder of the scale and diversity of the Jean Monnet 'community'.

In Ireland, perhaps more than in other EU countries, the apex of the European Studies academic community merges with the higher echelons of policy-making structures. The establishment of the Institute of European Affairs (IEA) in 1991 provided a forum for academics and policy-makers to interact in the context of Irish membership of the European Union. Since that time the IEA has provided policy advice to government, but has also been instrumental in helping to ensure that public opinion has been better informed on EU issues. This latter function has been especially important at times when EU referendums were being held and there was a concern after the Nice and Lisbon referendums that lack of information, added to complacency on the part of some government ministers, had resulted in these referendums being lost. The Institute hosts about 100 events annually, including numerous distinguished speakers: almost any foreign visitor of note to Dublin makes the Institute a mandatory port of call. Among eminent speakers from abroad in the past have been Mikhail Gorbachev, Gordon Brown, Chris Patten, Noam Chomsky, and Jean-Claude Trichet. The Institute also carries out research based on a number of working groups including areas like enlargement, justice and home affairs, monetary policy, and the environment. Academic input (especially from TCD and UCD) has been crucial but is only part of a wider mix of expertise that embraces diplomats, businesspersons, politicians, and EU policy-makers. At the time of the Nice referendum, the IEA produced a publication summarising the main issues, and at the time of the Lisbon referendums, IEA publications elucidated issues for a wider audience. More recently the IEA has greatly enhanced its information role to the public by embracing social media such as Twitter and Facebook, hosting interactive blogs, and beaming podcasts of key speeches. Recently, the IEA became the IIEA (Institute for International and European Affairs). This transformation reflected not only the increasing role of Ireland in global issues (such as climate change and human rights) but also the difficulty in delineating clearly between EU and non-EU themes in areas such as enlargement, security and migration. Discussions at the Institute are almost always conducted under the Chatham House (known here as the Europe House) rules which enable speakers to air opinions freely on the understanding that what they say can be alluded to, but not attributed to them. This is of benefit to journalists who also participate in IIEA activities. The Institute is largely funded by corporate subscriptions but in all its activities it strives to be independent and non-partisan: among the members of its so-called *Comite d'honneur* are *inter alios*: Bertie Ahern, Albert Reynolds, Mary Robinson, Charlie McCreevy and Pat Cox.

## EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

The relative dissipation of a European focus in the undergraduate and postgraduate university curricula is accompanied by a linguistic deficit that links back to the secondary school curriculum and forward to the job market. Recent analysis of job market vacancies in Ireland highlights the need of employers for graduates with language skills. Not only are major multinationals like Google and Paypal being compelled to import graduates from outside Ireland to fill vacancies where linguistic



skills are essential, but even at the level of SMEs whose export activities are crucial to their viability, need to do business in the language of their foreign customers. Due to an anachronistic attachment to French, 49 per cent of Leaving Cert students in 2011 took this subject, although France is not a major trade partner for Ireland and French is not one of the ten most widely spoken languages in the world. On the other hand, only 13percent of Leaving Cert students took German despite the growing influence of Germany in Europe and the still-untapped opportunities for Irish experts in the German market. Overall only 8percent of Irish secondary school students learn two or more foreign languages compared with a European average of 60 percent. It is significant that Ireland is the *only* country in Europe where a foreign language is not compulsory at any stage in the school curriculum. Google's European boss John Herlihy says that there is a shortage of job applicants for vacancies in his Portuguese, Hungarian and Swedish customer service teams: "There is a huge opportunity for Ireland if we can adapt our education system to allow for the studying of more languages. Indeed, we need to do so if we are to be a truly open economy operating in the global economy" (Irish Times 2011). At Facebook, staffing manager Orna Holland says 75per cent of users are outside the United States making multilingual and multicultural skills essential in the workplace. "We believe that Irish students should be encouraged to consider language skills as a complement, if not core, to whatever course of study they embark on" (Irish Times 2011). The recent emphasis on incentivising mathematics, whatever its merits may be, has tended to elbow languages out of the classroom. Behind the complacency regarding foreign language learning lies the easy assumption that, in a globalised world, English is the universal *lingua franca*. However, 75 per cent of the world's population cannot speak English, and only 9 per cent have it as their first language; and to research one's market thoroughly, and to appreciate cultural nuances in the target market, knowledge of a foreign language gives the exporter a valuable edge over the competition. According to Tony Donohue of IBEC (the Irish Business and employer association), customers prefer to buy goods and services in their own language. On a per capita basis, Ireland is one of the biggest international traders in the world, so this is a salient issue. In an IBEC survey in 2010 10% of respondents identified languages as a "skills gap" likely to be experienced over the next two years (Irish Times 2011).

Finally, the health or otherwise of European Studies in Ireland will depend in part on the existence of an active and vibrant professional association dedicated to promoting and protecting European Studies. The record so far has been rather patchy. Again we can perceive a period of "missionary zeal" in the 1970s and early 1980s when the Irish Association for Contemporary European Studies (IACES), and more latterly the European Studies Specialist Group (ESSG) of the Political Studies Association of Ireland (PSAI) have provided an Irish 'home' for scholars of European integration. To be fair, such associations have been hampered by at least three factors: lack of funding; poor public transport links within Ireland that made Dublin the inevitable hub for such activities; and most importantly the process of "satellisation" whereby Irish organisations were overshadowed by broader associations e.g. the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) in the UK, the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) in Europe and the European Union Studies Association (EUSA) in the United States. Most Irish academics in European Studies often meet each other more frequently at these international gatherings than in their home country! What any new professional organisation will need to do besides stimulating research and conferences, is to (a) defend the discipline in its own institutions (b) provide a talent-bank for policy-makers (c) help to shape opinion in civil society. It can be argued, moreover, that European Studies provides an excellent vehicle for innovation in pedagogical methods where simulation exercises, field trips, IT skills, linguistic ability could more generally be made an integral part of the third level curriculum (Murphy 2014: 485).

## CONCLUSION

'Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin' thought Alice, 'but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in my life'! Alice's observation could well be applied to the fate of European Studies in Ireland. Modules that were once designed for, and integrated into, interdisciplinary European Studies programmes have now either disappeared completely or, more often, been subsumed into other programmes surviving awkwardly in their new surroundings, serving new purposes and like the 'grin' of the Cheshire cat reminding us of the larger structures whence they came. Ireland's relationship with the EU has changed recently for at least three reasons: the bail-out supervised by the 'Troika' was a starkly uncomfortable reminder of Ireland's vulnerability in a globalised world, and its subsequent dependence on fellow EU members for its economic recovery; second, however, Ireland has ceased to be a *demandeur* in the EU but is called upon to provide assistance to others whether it be in terms of the Greek bail-out or rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean, thirdly, the prospect of a 'Brexit' has given rise to a number of questions about Ireland's relationship with Britain and its relationship with the EU: both relationships have never been so close. These developments make an awareness of Ireland's European role as urgent as ever. Whatever the future holds, it seems incumbent on those who educate the next generation of Irish citizens to ensure that they can make well-informed and responsible choices.

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