

Language Ambassadors

Profile



PAUL KAYE

Occupation: Language Officer

Company: European Commission

Degree/University: BSc Biology with European Studies, University of Sussex; MSc European Environmental Policy and Regulation, University of Lancaster

Languages spoken (native and learned): English native, learned French, Slovak (fluent), Czech, Polish, Hungarian (advanced), German, Estonian (good knowledge), Turkish (intermediate) and Korean (beginner)

Learning and using a new language allows different dimensions of your personality and character to emerge. It makes you understand and use your native language better. It gives you a clearer understanding of other cultures, and of your own place in the world's mix of cultures. My favourite Slovak proverb, roughly translated, says 'however many languages you know, that's how many times you are a person'. I feel immeasurably enriched by having learned several foreign languages.

French was my best subject at school but because I initially wanted to be a doctor, I ended up diverting into sciences through A-levels and university. I don't regret that, but I have gravitated back towards languages in my career. There were three significant moments: firstly, being given the opportunity to study biology for a year in France while at university; secondly, moving to live in Slovakia after university, where I taught English and was able to learn what felt like an exotic language. And finally, when I started working in London as an environment policy journalist, my knowledge of French meant I was offered the role as EU correspondent for my publication, based in Brussels. This led to nearly 15 years in the capital of Europe, first as a journalist and then as translator for the EU, where I have had a very satisfying career, being paid to learn new languages and now to promote them back in my home country.

Web:

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