



YouthLink Scotland submission to Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Thursday 30th January 2025

UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Youth Mobility from a Scottish Perspective

About YouthLink Scotland

We are the national agency for youth work and the collective voice of the sector

We champion and advocate for the youth work sector so that all young people can access high-quality youth work. Our membership of voluntary and statutory youth work organisations and intermediaries, including every local authority, spans all of Scotland, and changes lives for the better every day.

Our vision

A Scotland where young people realise their full potential through youth work.

Our values

- We believe in young people and prioritise their needs and rights
- We are committed to the highest standards of protection and safety for young people
- We are a learning organisation, promoting innovation and change
- We represent our members with integrity and value collaboration with partners
- We are committed to being inclusive, accessible, ethical, equitable and diverse

Our mission

YouthLink Scotland is the collective voice of youth work. We represent and advocate for the sector so that all young people can access high-quality youth work.

We strongly believe that a healthy and vibrant youth work sector can bring transformation, not only to the lives of young people but also to their families, communities and society as a whole. Youth work can prevent many negative outcomes for young people and provide significant social return on investment.

We know **youth work changes lives** and we support the development of a practice model, outcomes and skills that are of high quality and evidence-based in order to realise this ambition.

We believe that **youth work is for all young people** and we support accessible, equitable and inclusive youth work, whether it be through universal or targeted provision.

We want **youth work to be secure and on a par** with formal education. In order to achieve this ambition we need a stronger statutory basis, a well developed workforce and a funding base that is secure in the short, medium and longer term.

We ensure that **youth work is understood and influential**. We will support the development of research and evidence that demonstrates the life changing impact of youth work.

Our strategic goal

All young people have access to high quality youth work.

Our outcomes

- We have attracted investment in youth work
- We have developed and supported the sector to deliver for young people
- We have improved understanding of the importance of youth work

Our processes

YouthLink Scotland as the national agency for youth work and as intermediary for the sector, provides a range of services including networks, communications, policy, research, development, innovation, national programmes and funding.

We work in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders and partners committed to achieving the best outcomes for young people.

Key Considerations

1. Impact of Erasmus+

Erasmus+ was extremely valuable to the youth work and wider 'youth' sector, enabling;

- Life changing opportunities for young people who wouldn't otherwise be able to travel, build friendships and learn from other cultures and places, often enabling them up to change trajectory and be in a position to pursue further education and employment.
Example – Jack Kane Community Centre, Woodcraft Folk, Royston Youth Action
- Significant professional development, inspiration and innovation opportunities for youth work practitioners and organisations
Example – St Pauls Youth Forum, Citadel Youth Centre
- International youth volunteering benefiting young people and charities across Scotland and internationally – including the charity workforce.
Example – British Red Cross
- Strategic partnerships to benefit organisations and the development of the sector
Example – Digital Youth Work at YouthLink Scotland, LEAP Sports Scotland

The **Financial value** of Erasmus+ for Youth projects in Scotland 2014-2020 was **€5,389,664**. Programme funding has doubled for this 7 year cycle so there could have been €10.7 million funding to youth work in Scotland for international and intercultural learning.

And this doesn't include the European Solidarity Corps which replaced European Voluntary Service funding (and took it out of E+). In 2020, organisations in Scotland were granted €434,513 for ESC projects.

[RAY – Research-based Analysis and Monitoring of European Youth Programmes](#) research highlights the impact on young people's readiness to learn, appreciation of diversity, personal development and future pathways.

2. Young people's priorities

The EU-UK Youth Stronger Together project led by The British Council over the last two years has published a set of [Youth Recommendations](#) with the first recommendation being: **Advance negotiations on UK-EU youth learning mobility.**

YouthLink Scotland nominated young people to take part in this project at events in Strasbourg (European Youth Event 2023) and London (UK-EU Youth Policy Dialogue Events 2023, 2024) and we have been involved in the development of recommendations and a new network.

3. Scottish Educational Exchange Programme

We welcome development of a Scottish Educational Exchange Programme. The youth work sector is extremely keen to contribute to and make the most of this programme where possible.

Development and Recommendations from a Youth Work perspective:

- YouthLink Scotland facilitated sector involvement in this process, from campaigning to remain part of Erasmus+ to regular collaboration with the SG team developing the programme.
- YouthLink Scotland presented a set of proposed principles for the youth work strand of the SEEP programme to SG focusing on inclusion, accessibility, support for and relevance to European partners. There are opportunities to do more and better to explore the – even more access and potentially offer more full cost recovery to a stretched youth work sector. (annexed) These principles include policy alignment with the [European Youth Work Agenda](#) – and would be the opportunity to give a funded structure to make our ambitions a reality.
- Opportunity to learn from Taith in Wales – they have built the youth work sector into the development, governance and administration of the programme and provided localised support for youth work organisations to apply for and implement projects.
- There is an opportunity within the context of Education Reform and the recognition of the importance of youth work as an impactful learning approach, to invest in young people, particularly those most excluded, being able to broaden their horizons and build skills through international youth work and volunteering and a unique experiential learning environment.

Current Status:

Scottish Government is currently in the second year of a [Scottish Education Exchange Programme Test and Learn Project](#). The programme is aimed at Higher and Further Education Institutions. There

is some additional funding that these institutions can apply for if they partner with other educators including youth work. In 23-24 no projects were funded which included youth work. We don't have the data for 24-25 yet. YouthLink Scotland shared the opportunity with the sector and encouraged approaching FE and HE partners, we had one reply from a youth work organisation that was considering this.

4. Lack of Erasmus+ replacement

Despite the transformative impact of international youth work, the youth work sector has not been prioritised in the development of UK wide replacement programmes (Turing) or extending European funding schemes (Horizon Europe till end 2022).

This is hugely disappointing at what is an extremely difficult time for the sector financially, and is felt as devastation for some agencies within the youth sector. Organisations are having to close transformational programmes, lose staff and volunteers.

The longer the delay in an appropriate replacement programme being established, the more young people are missing out on life changing opportunities – young people who can't access this elsewhere. And the longer it will take to re-establish international relationships, partnerships and programmes.

The European Movement is currently running the [This is Erasmus campaign](#), lobbying for rejoining the programme.

5. Policy Alignment

[European Youth Work Agenda](#) - combines EU and Council of Europe policy agenda on youth work: the **European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027** and the **Council of Europe's Recommendation on youth work from 2017**. In its **Youth Sector Strategy 2030**, the Council of Europe declares youth work to be one of its priorities.

In 2023 the Council of Europe committed to the importance of a youth perspective within all policy priorities – [Reykjavik Declaration](#) and there is an understanding that youth work and the civic spaces it creates facilitates this.

6. Opportunity

The report from [YouthLink Scotland's 2024 Policy Convention – Youth Work and Civic Engagement: International Policy Perspectives](#) highlights the impact of international youth exchange and calls on governments to support.

Through further development of the Scottish Educational Exchange Programme or through re-joining Erasmus+ there is an opportunity to build a fantastic programme, being more accessible for grass roots organisations to make it possible for more young people and educators to travel and learn with others, young people for whom it can make the most difference.

There is an opportunity to share Scotland's high quality youth work practice and volunteering opportunities with international partners, as well as being inspired by them, fueling innovation within our sector.

Youth Work Sector Quotes

“This programme makes a tremendous, often life-changing, impact on its participants. Programme evaluations consistently highlight participants’ increased confidence, communication, language skills, intercultural awareness, resilience and adaptability.” Mairi Allan, British Red Cross

“The Erasmus+ scheme provided opportunities that specifically targeted young people with fewer opportunities and it did so by enabling enhanced support, and flexibility with aspects of the programme. This is essential to ensure young people from minority groups get the right kind of support to make their learning journeys successful.” Hugh Torrance, LEAP Sports Scotland

“We have not been able to identify any alternative sources of funding to continue this work, so where exchanges continue it is now largely restricted to those families who can afford to pay (and those young people who probably get greater opportunities).” Deborah McMahon, Woodcraft Folk

“While digital technology has enabled easier access to people internationally, the ability to learn face to face and experience other cultures and environments is invaluable.” Colin MacFarlane YMCA Scotland

“It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for young people. All the participants involved in the project were affected by multiple levels of deprivation but all of them are now in further education or employment. This was a wonderful opportunity for everyone involved, providing a remarkable hands-on learning environment which encouraged young people to fully embrace new experiences.” Emma Kyles, Jack Kane Community Centre

Please also see in the annexed document for further case studies and quotes from the youth work sector about the experiences and impact of youth and youth worker mobility. Including some videos from a Scottish young person from Dumfries YMCA attending an international conference in Mombasa.

Further Information

Please see below the financial tables of the Erasmus+ Youth Strand in Scotland and the Principles for a SEEP Youth Strand document YouthLink Scotland shared with the SG team developing the Scottish Education Exchange Programme.

Financial Value of Erasmus+ programme 2014-20 to Youth Work in Scotland

Erasmus+ UK decentralised actions

Youth: Value of successful applications by Key Action and Field (Scotland)

Key Action	Field	2014 Call	2015 Call	2016 Call	2017 Call	2018 Call	2019 Call	2020 Call	Total
		Rounds 1-3 €	Rounds 1-3 €	Rounds 1-3 €	Rounds 1-3 €	Rounds 1-3 €	Rounds 1-3 €	Rounds 1-3 €	Cumulative €
Combined	Youth	363,171	982,542	491,572	1,487,440	1,009,616	399,260	656,062	5,389,664
Breakdown									
KA105	Youth	363,171	812,093	491,572	790,040	413,250	399,260	598,922	3,868,308
KA125	Youth Volunteering projects	-	-	-	-	386,786	-	-	386,786
KA205	Youth Strategic Partnerships	-	170,449	-	697,400	159,780	-	57,140	1,084,769
KA347	Youth Structured Dialogue	-	-	-	-	49,800	-	-	49,800
KA227	Partnerships for creativity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Excerpt/figures from UK National Agency Application Results spreadsheet accessible at <https://erasmusplus.org.uk/results-and-statistics.html>

During the 2014-20 phase of the programme Youth Work in Scotland received **€5,389,664**. 10% of the Erasmus+ funding was ring-fenced for the Youth strand. In the current 2021-29 programme, the budget has doubled.

Youth Work in Scotland is potentially missing out on €10.7million of funding for international and intercultural learning.

Proposed principles for a Youth Work Strand of SEEP

Scottish Educational Exchange Programme – Youth Work Strand

YouthLink Scotland Dec 2021, shared with Scottish Government in January 2022

Summary Principles

Activities/Actions

- Must have **youth work sector specific** strand to align with European opportunities
- Should include opportunities for cross-sectoral partnerships
- Must include **mobility for young people** and **practitioners**
- Includes **strategic partnerships, capacity building, practice sharing** and the **fostering of innovation** as well as mobility
- Enable **building up experience through smaller scale engagement, to build confidence and skills for future international engagement and take part in larger scale projects** – for organisations, young people and practitioners
- **Enable access to SALTO** CPD Opportunities for practitioners
- Fund annual **International Youth Work Conference** in Scotland (via YLS and our networks)

Funding scope

- Must **support costs for Scotland AND International partners** – unless for some projects there is a way to properly link funding and align with Erasmus+ programmes/projects - currently exploring the Swiss model
- **Inclusion fund** which can be applied for on top of existing grants to enable participants with accessibility needs, that were not budgeted for initially, to be properly supported to participate
- Funds contribution to **staff time** for youth mobility projects (would add, include time for preparation and follow up with young people)
- **Easier to apply** for small organisations and those not experienced in Erasmus+
- Priorities **must align with European Youth Work Agenda** and Bonn Process to bring us in line with Council of Europe (of which we are still a member) and EU priorities for youth

Delivery

- Must provide **local support** to apply and report
- **Limit bureaucracy** while maintaining transparency and use accessible language
- Ensure assessors **understand the context** of the youth work sector and practice
- Deliver through **sector bodies** (YouthLink Scotland for the Youth Strand)
- Allocate **ring fenced funding for sector bodies** to deliver appropriate **capacity building** projects – national and international

Please note this proposal does not include scoping for International Youth Volunteering which we would also suggest as key part of the programme. (Covered by ESC outside of Erasmus+ since 2018)



YouthLink Scotland submission to Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee – Annex - Youth Work Quotes and Case Studies

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Youth Work Sector Quotes

“Youth Volunteering:

This programme makes a tremendous, often life-changing, impact on its participants. Programme evaluations consistently highlight participants’ increased confidence, communication, language skills, intercultural awareness, resilience and adaptability. There is also strong evidence on participants’ increased motivation to engage in social action and the Red Cross mission after their placements. The professional development is a key part of the programme and there is also strong evidence of improved employability and confidence in future career plans as a result of this programme.

Post Erasmus+ we have been able to continue our International Youth Volunteering Programme but only in Wales, where it is funded by the Taith scheme. By the end of 2025 30 young people from Wales will have had an international placement in Portugal, France, Sweden and Iceland and 8 young people from outside the UK (Portugal, Spain, France and Iceland) will have been hosted in Wales. Activity is still happening and young people are still benefitting but sadly they aren’t from Scotland. We would love to be able to send young people from Scotland and host young people in Scotland too.”

Mairi Allan, Head of Youth, British Red Cross

“The Erasmus+ scheme provided opportunities that specifically targeted young people with fewer opportunities and it did so by enabling enhanced support, and flexibility with aspects of the programme. This is essential to ensure young people from minority groups get the right kind of support to make their learning journeys successful and we would encourage any future scheme to replicate such systems of support. Central to this is ensuring that the scheme values non-formal learning as an integral and equal part of the programme offer.

Lee (name changed) had a number of short term employment experiences. They undertook a placement with us and one of our partners based out in Slovenia. There were some disruptions in the placement but due to it having been built in a way to allow for such experiences, we were able

to support Lee to ultimately work through these and to eventually successfully complete their placement. This wasn't straightforward but the power of this cannot be underestimated as Lee has now been in an employment role for close to a year since their return. “

Hugh Torrance, Executive Director, LEAP Sports Scotland

“Erasmus+ has enabled:

- Woodcraft Folk staff and volunteers to engage in personal and professional development opportunities, learning lessons from European colleagues
- Woodcraft Folk to host long-term volunteers through the European Solidarity Corps
- Woodcraft Folk's young members to participate in exchanges and educational seminars. These experiences have been instrumental in shaping their future careers, giving them skills and experiences to support their academic studies and wellbeing.
- Woodcraft Folk to host young people from other international organisations - creating common understanding of youth and helping them to explore global issues

We are devastated that we can no longer engage in Erasmus+, our international work will be decimated as we haven't yet found a replacement funding source.

The level of international work has much reduced following the UK's departure from the EU. Erasmus+ was a key funder/supporter of such a wide range of initiatives, our young people are definitely missing out.

We have not been able to identify any alternative sources of funding to continue this work, so where exchanges continue it is now largely restricted to those families who can afford to pay (and those young people who probably get greater opportunities).”

Deborah McMahon, Chief Executive Officer, Woodcraft Folk

“Impacts on youth workers/young people on the delay to accessing opportunities via Erasmus+

- Young people and youth workers are missing out on life changing opportunities and educational experiences. The longer the delay, the bigger the impact. It has been proved on many occasions how beneficial Erasmus+ programmes can be for young people in relation to increasing skills and learning which young people have built upon to access further education and/or employment and is especially important for young people who do/did not excel academically in the formal school environment. The longer the delay in these informal educational life changing opportunities, the more young people are denied these opportunities.
- Danger with the increase in demands and pressures on the youth work sector, that the longer this is delayed, then there is an increased likelihood that this may *slip off the radar* as other competing demands become higher up the agenda and youth work organisations *fight for survival*.
- Negative impact on relationships built with other trusted and professional European youth work organisations: Longer the process, most likely key staff have moved on to different

roles/organisations and therefore the need to re-establish these relationships to ensure effective and efficient projects are able to be implemented is required, this needs time and resource.”

Emma Kyles, formerly Jack Kane Community Centre

The Erasmus+ programme has benefitted me both personally as a volunteer and in my professional role in Youth Work. Having the opportunity to support young people to engage in international opportunities has provided the young people we work with invaluable life experience that can often not be taught in other areas.

On a recent visit to Finland I was able to link with colleagues and share learning about Early and Effective Intervention approaches we have developed in Scotland and use learning from the Finnish system to help shape the work we are proposing to do in the future. While digital technology has enabled easier access to people internationally, the ability to learn face to face and experience other cultures and environments is invaluable.

Although we cannot access Erasmus+ support, at YMCA Scotland we are still able to engage young people in international youth work opportunities:

In October 2024 2 young people participated in the World YMCA Accelerator Summit in Mombasa, Kenya as representatives of their local YMCAs.

Nathan from Cupar YMCA was one of the YMCA Change Agents - this story was published about the impact this had on him. <https://www.pressreader.com/uk/the-courier-advertiser-angus-and-the-mearns-edition/20241214/281629605863288>

Danny from Dumfries YMCA was the youngest person at the summit and put together a couple of videos to chart his journey and the influence on his perspective:

Day 1: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1811846192974828&t=0>

Day 2: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1070822757649010&t=0>

Day 3: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=575687904829851&t=0>

Colin MacFarlane, National Programme Director, YMCA Scotland

Case Studies

Jack Kane Community Centre

One young man hated school and didn't know which path to take when he left. That was until his Erasmus+ Mobility placement which saw his life take a completely different direction.

The 16-year-old grew up in the Greater Craigmillar area of Edinburgh which is considered to be the fourth most deprived area of Scotland. Like many of his peers, he hadn't travelled outside of the UK until he was given the opportunity to take part in a youth exchange to Italy through his involvement with the Jack Kane Community Centre.

He has since completed his HNC in social sciences, secured employment as a youth work trainee and is also continuing his studies through University.

The Jack Kane Community Centre provides experiential learning opportunities for young people to learn and develop. Through the organisation's first Erasmus+ youth Mobility project, all the young people who took part in the project have since progressed onto further education or employment.

Young participants aged between 15 and 21 took part in a youth exchange to the village of Strona in Italy. The exchange made use of non-formal learning approaches and tools such as discussion, group work and presentations on the central theme of employment across Europe. The young people chose the topics for the exchange, identifying jobs and future prospects as priority issues for all young people. From this, they went on to set the agenda and organise the exchange project, visiting partners in Italy and exploring these topics with their Italian counterparts.

100% of the young people who took part have progressed into further education or employment

Emma Kyles, Senior Worker of the Jack Kane Community Centre said participants faced a range of challenges in their personal lives. Residents of the Greater Craigmillar area were well below the national average with regards to income and there were poor statistics relating to health and qualifications. She added some of the young people involved also had a background in violent crime.

As a result, before the project the organisation did a range of preparatory activities with the young people. This involved inviting their parents and carers to an informal evening where they could find out more about the exchange. Emma explained the organisation's support ranged from guiding participants through the passport application process for the first time, to extensive baseline evaluations with the young people. This helped to establish the young people's aspirations for the future.

Participants were asked to write personal letters about what they wanted to achieve, as well as to keep video and personal diaries to capture what they had learnt.

Before I went on the exchange I was scared to speak out loud in front of large groups of people, but now, after the exchange, I know I can do it. - participant

Inspiring young people with fewer opportunities

Emma Kyles, Senior Worker of the Jack Kane Management Committee, said: "It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for young people. All the participants involved in the project were affected by multiple levels of deprivation but all of them are now in further education or employment. This was a wonderful opportunity for everyone involved, providing a remarkable hands-on learning environment which encouraged young people to fully embrace new experiences."

"I feel I have become more confident about speaking in front of everyone and I learnt so much about different cultures. Before I went on the exchange I was scared to speak out loud in front of large groups of people but now, after the exchange, I know I can do it." - participant.

Sustainability of Erasmus+ funding

Since returning to Scotland the young people are making the most of their future careers. One participant is now in full-time employment and has moved into his own house which he would not have had the confidence to do beforehand. Another has since completed her college studies, undertaken a nursing degree and is now about to travel to the Philippines as a volunteer nurse. She continues to share her first aid skills with young people at the youth centre to pass on her learning.

The project used Youthpass, which recognised the young people's achievements and gave participants something they can show to future employers.

Participants have continued to share their experience with stakeholders and the management team. They also produced a set of recommendations following the project acting as a mandate for youth work and these actions have been implemented by the centre for future projects.

The Power of Exchange and Impact of Erasmus+

By Gillian McDiarmid, Youth Development Worker, at Ocean Youth Trust.

"And we're here, together, just trying to make the world a better place"

These were the words of our trainer Zita Szalai (Director of Tudatos Ifjúságért Alapítványt), as we were standing outside our training space in Holloko, Hungary, chatting and listening to the laughter and joy of over 20 professional youth workers.

In September, I was delighted to receive invitations to take part in two training courses specifically for youth workers. I would be training alongside 50 professional youth workers from 12 countries and travelling to Krakow, Poland and Holloko, Hungary. Erasmus+ funded both projects. Waking up on the 6th of November (flight day) I was excited, but also very nervous. All sorts going through my head – I had no idea whom I would meet, who the trainers would be, what the accommodation would be like, what the food would be like. Yes, all of the exact thoughts the young people we work with have before taking part in any of our activities.

The first course, “*Sharing Learning from the Past*” in Krakow, was learning how to build heritage projects with young people. Delivered by Youth Development and Integration Association STRIM, it aimed to increase knowledge and spark excitement in youth workers around heritage and history, which we could then pass on to young people. We visited castles and archives, community centres and traditional restaurants. This culminated in us creating a youth workers’ heritage manifesto which we can now all use in our respective countries.

The second course “*Let’s Go!*” in Holloko, Hungary delivered by Tudatos Ifjúságért Alapítványt focused on supporting youth workers to make the step up into leadership and management positions within youth development organisations. In stark contrast to Krakow, we were taken out of the city for the week to give us all a chance to breathe, be creative, focus on learning, and build our own wee community.

The content, delivery and pace of both courses were spot on.

Both projects used tried and tested youth work processes to help us feel comfortable, create trust, build a team and harness and nurture any connections we were making.

I started off my youth work career in Poland in 2002 on an exchange programme. Since then, I have worked for organisations that either focused on supporting young people to take part in exchanges or referred young people on to take part in them.

The two weeks in Europe reminded me just how important these opportunities are for young people and youth workers. Ultimately, it is the young people who benefit.

Sitting on my flight home, I felt a range of emotions, trying to process everything that had happened. I felt that I had pushed myself to engage fully in the process – I was exhausted yet invigorated; I was hopeful, motivated, and inspired!

I was sad that it was over, yet so happy that it had happened.

I had been well and truly “*youth worked*”. After two decades in the field, using these processes time and time again with different groups of young people, even I could still be trapped, captivated, by it!

Unfortunately, the UK government opted out of taking part in Erasmus+ as an associated third country, it will now be much more difficult, if even possible, to secure funding. There will now be very limited opportunities for youth workers in Scotland to take part in training with our European colleagues. We need these opportunities, and we deserve these opportunities.

As Zita said, all we, as youth workers want is to make the world a better place for ourselves and the young people we work with, and exchange programmes help us try to achieve this. My hope for the near future is that the Scottish Government will fulfil their commitment to developing a Scottish Exchange programme and that the youth work sector will be at the forefront of this.

This experience made me fall back in love with youth work, others should have that same opportunity.

DIGITAL YOUTH WORK – AN INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP PROJECT FUNDED BY ERASMUS +

Case Study from YouthLink Scotland, the national agency for youth work

The full Erasmus+ programme not only benefits young people, it also creates opportunities for youth workers to share knowledge and practice. The youth work sector's involvement in Erasmus has a direct life changing impact on young people, which we can see from the many individual case studies and testimonies from youth workers. However, the Erasmus+ programme has also created a long-term lasting impact across Scotland. Shared practice across Erasmus+ for youth workers proved invaluable during Covid-19.

Our involvement in digitalyouthwork.eu over the last few years has led to the creation of digitalyouthwork.scot, which has put Scotland's youth work sector at the forefront of shaping online services for young people. We have been able to respond quickly to the needs of youth workers and young people during the pandemic, ensuring vital youth work services have continued online, through support, knowledge and training.

Learning and Engaging with New Technologies: Digitally Agile Youth Work - Salto (participationpool.eu)

Introducing new ways of learning using digital technologies can be confusing. That is why experts and youth workers from seven organisations came together to collect several innovative methods, tools and some brilliant new practices! With the dizzying number of online platforms and gadgets now being developed, this great project has provided valuable skills that educators can pass on to thousands of young people across Europe, and of course Scotland.

The Project

The Digitally Agile Youth Work Project was a strategic partnership between experts and leaders in the field of Digital Youth Work in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland and Scotland. As a partnership, we strongly believe that for youth work in the 21st Century to meet young people's needs the sector must understand and embrace the role of digitalisation within young people's lives.

The objectives of the Digitally Agile Youth Work project were:

- Share good digital youth work practice across Europe leading to improved practice and innovation within the European youth work community
- Build capacity of youth workers to respond to digitalisation through training that meets their needs
- Improve digital youth work planning and the development of digital youth work strategies through increasing awareness of managers of ethical and organisational considerations and requirements of digital youth work
- Raise awareness of digital youth work within the youth work sector and to policy makers and funders nationally and EU wide

Throughout the project, we have intended to create accessible resources to help to break down this barrier to engagement and support practitioners and managers to acknowledge the importance of building digital into their youth work, the impact and relevance for young people and the way that new technologies can enhance practice. This project has also engaged with the infrastructure enabling the development of digital youth work; identifying resources needed for good practice examples, building strategic development tools into the training materials and calling on organisations, funders and policy makers to support digital youth work in the European Guidelines for Digital Youth Work.

How was the project structured?

We planned to produce three things with the project: [a collection of 36 good practices](#), [training materials](#) and the [European Guidelines for Digital Youth Work](#). At the transnational project meetings, we identified good practices, before starting to work on training materials. Later on, we developed the European guidelines based on what we had learned, designing them to be relevant for people involved at all levels, from youth workers up to decision makers.

Intellectual Legacy

The three intellectual outputs are:

1. [Good Practice Collection](#): 36 short films showcasing digital youth work from our six countries. Films come with an accompanying description and information the evaluation and how to replicate the practice. These are available in English, Finnish, Danish, German and Swedish.
2. [Training Materials in Digital Youth Work](#): A collection of materials on a broad range of themes including online safety, gaming, maker, social media, online counselling and more. The materials include training workshops for youth workers, session plans to run with young people, self-assessment and organisational development tools. All the published resources are available in English with a selection in Finnish, Danish, German and Irish.
3. [European Guidelines for Digital Youth Work](#): Highlighting the importance of youth work as an educational practice that can empower young people in an increasingly digitalising world. The Guidelines build on the work of the EU Expert Group on Digitalisation and Youth and complement the Council of the EU Conclusions on Smart Youth Work and the forthcoming Council of the EU Conclusions on Digital Youth Work. They include guidance for practitioners, organisations, funders and policy makers including definitions and outcomes of digital youth work and guidance around ethical practice and cultural organisational approaches. They are available in English, Finnish, Danish, German and Irish.

Impact and benefit for Scotland's youth work sector and young people

- Capacity of partner organisations to cooperate internationally is increased: This has definitely been the case, as evidenced through feedback from partners and appetite to continue cooperation.
- Creation and maintenance of hubs for sharing practice e.g. Scotland's Digital Youth Network. These hubs were maintained throughout the project and were a useful resource for consulting on the development of the intellectual outputs.
- Development of the profile and status of digital youth work within our countries and in Europe. The profile of Digital Youth Work has increased across the sector and positive feedback of the quality and impact of the project has been received.
 - Launch of www.digitalyouthwork.scot
 - Capacity and skills of Scotland's youth work sector developed and enhanced to deliver digital youth work and online support to young people.
 - Immediate and successful response by the sector to Covid-19 as a result of Scotland's participation in this Erasmus+ partner project.

The results and achievements of the project have been extremely successful and well received. This project has made significant strides in embedding the importance of digital youth work across Europe.

Benefits for participating partner organisations

The project had significant positive impact on our organisations in a number of ways:

- Strategically - this project reinforced and provided strategic direction, enabled digital to be seen as more of a priority internally within strategic planning.
- Recognition and visibility - enabled organisations to be recognised for their competences and expertise in digital youth work and in European cooperation.
- Partnerships - gained from collaborating with expert, committed, reliable partners
- Strengthening in international cooperation and the capacity to engage in international work
- Training offer across the youth work sector improved by incorporating new training, and new pedagogies and methods
- We not only exchanged digital youth work learning, but also models of project management, tools, youth friendly spaces and more.
- Has led to new policies and procedures within organisations

What was the impact of the project at national and European level?

In Scotland

- The project has helped to validate the work being done on digital youth work regionally and nationally in our countries.
- Raised the profile and awareness of digital youth work.
- This work has helped us shape the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work in Scotland, which are the basis for qualifications, and training at all levels - there is a standard about digital youth work for the first time.
- European context brought into the training of organisations, national, regional, local initiatives.
- Shaped the STEM in Youth Work project report in Ireland.
- Presentation to 32 senior managers who went on to make digital youth work strategies.
- Learning from the project is being used to contribute to the development of youth work strategies, digital youth work strategies and embedding digital into the sector.
- Influence Scotland's next National Youth Work Strategy

At European Level

- Implementation of the recommendations of Council of the EU Conclusions on Smart Youth Work, EU expert group on Digitalisation and Youth, and previous Erasmus+ projects i.e. "Screenagers".
- Shaped the Council of the EU Conclusions on Digital Youth Work - partners were able to comment on their development and it was done in parallel to the development of our guidelines so there is intentional influence and complementarity
- Raised the profile and awareness of digital youth work.
- Partners have been invited to present on the project at conferences, events and to relevant networks in European and international contexts e.g. Council of Europe Youth Work Training Pathways Seminar, EU Presidency Youth Conference and DG meeting, SNJ Digital Youth Work Conference, Council of Europe MOOC, Safer Internet Network.