

YouthLink Scotland

Submission to Education, Children and Young People Committee

Wednesday 24th May 2023

International Exchange Schemes

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 negatives 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 Messages

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 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, YouthLink 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.

2. Lack of 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.

3. Scottish Educational Exchange Programme

We welcome the commitment to develop a Scottish Educational Exchange programme. The youth work sector is extremely keen to contribute to and make the most of this programme.

- YouthLink Scotland has 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 has 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.
- This includes 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 – they've 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 importance of youth work as a key learning approach to invest in young people being able to broaden their horizons and build skills through international youth work and volunteering and a unique experiential learning environment.

4. Delay

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.

The longer it will take to re-establish international relationships and partnerships and potentially large programmes that have had to close due to lack of funds.

5. Opportunity

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.

Sector Quotes and Case Studies

<https://erasmusplus.org.uk/stories/jack-kane-community-centre.html>

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. "

Mari Allan, Head of Youth Engagement, British Red Cross

"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.”

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, YouthLink Scotland, formerly Jack Kane Community Centre

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.