

CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

20th Meeting, 2023, Session 6

15 June 2023

National Outcomes

1. The Scottish Government is undertaking a review of its [National Outcomes](#), the broad policy aims which inform its [National Performance Framework](#) (NPF).
2. To input to that review, and in light of our [Inquiry into the Scottish Government's international work](#), the report we published in April 2022, the Committee is focusing on the current National Outcomes and Indicators relating to international policy.
3. The areas on which we are taking evidence in June cover—
 - An overview of the Scottish Government's international work in relation to the National Outcomes and Indicators (with a panel session of academics which took place on [1 June](#))
 - A focus on how trade and culture are promoted (with this week's panel session)
 - A look at how Ireland measures and evaluates the impact of its international work (with a session scheduled for 22 June).
4. The intention of this inquiry is to enable the Committee to consider such questions as—
 - How the Scottish Government's international work should be evaluated and what measurable outcomes could be developed?
 - What is the intended impact of diplomacy and soft power? And how could this be measured?
 - What economic related outcomes and targets are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of external affairs policies from that perspective?
 - How should the National Outcomes inform the work of the Scottish Government's international offices and how could this be evaluated?
5. SPICe has prepared a briefing for this second evidence session at **Annexe A**.

CEEAC/S6/23/20/1

**CEEAC Committee Clerks
June 2023**

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Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

20th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Thursday, 15 June

Inquiry into the National Performance Framework international outcomes and indicators

Context

The Scottish Government is currently consulting on a review of the National Outcomes, a key aspect of the National Performance Framework (NPF). Following this public consultation, it must consult the Parliament on any proposed changes arising from that review. Consultation with the Parliament is likely to take place later in the year / early 2024 and the Finance and Public Administration Committee is expected to lead the parliamentary process. This Committee will have an opportunity to provide its views which will be informed by this short inquiry.

The National Performance Framework

The [National Performance Framework](#) (NPF) is used by the Scottish Government to evaluate the outcomes of its policies. The current NPF has 11 National Outcomes. The most relevant National Outcome for the Europe and External Affairs elements of the committee's remit is:

- **International:** We are open, connected and make a positive contribution Internationally.

The Scottish Government's vision which [sits beneath this National Outcome](#) states:

"We pursue happiness and quality of life as legitimate social goals. Our family, communities and people are important to us and we are committed to being fair and socially just. We are respectful of all who chose to visit, live and work in Scotland and acknowledge the positive contribution they make. Our visitor economy is thriving.

We are proud of our achievements and are confident, ambitious and positive about the future. We are regarded as a vibrant, modern country and have positive international relations, influence and exchange networks. We recognise the inter-connectedness of people and the obligations which flow from this and play a valuable role in providing aid and supporting developing countries. We are committed to promoting peace, democracy and human rights globally.”

Beneath the National Outcomes are a number of [National Indicators](#) which are used to measure performance. In total there are 81 indicators. Under the International National Outcome there are 6 indicators:

- **A positive experience for people coming to live in Scotland** - intended to measure one important dimension of migrants’ experiences in Scotland – a strong sense of belonging.
- **Scotland’s Reputation** – intended to measure Scotland’s reputation against 60 countries across the world on the Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands IndexSM (NBISM)
- **Scotland’s Population** - measures the number of council areas experiencing population decline.
- **Trust in public organisations** – no indicator has been developed
- **International networks** – no indicator has been developed
- **Contribution of development support to other nations** - a composite that measures Scotland’s international development activities. It provides a comprehensive depiction of how Scotland contributes to international development.

Of the 6 indicators, no detailed indicator to measure progress has been developed for two of them.

There is also an indicator related to international trade which is relevant to the Scottish Government’s international policies:

- **International exporting** - measures the annual value of international exports (not including the rest of the UK or Oil and Gas exports) as published in Export Statistics Scotland.

Written evidence provided to the Committee from Scotland’s International Development Alliance (SIDA) suggests that the “national indicators to support the international outcome are flawed, incomplete and under reported on”. SIDA makes a number of suggestions on how it believes measurement of progress towards the international outcome can be more effective:

- Using existing data that is being collected across the other Outcomes to help demonstrate Scotland’s global contribution.
- Introducing an indicator on Scotland’s “material footprint” to better track the environmental footprint of Scotland’s raw material consumption, in line with existing UK practice and the UN [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).
- Measuring Scottish participation in global business human rights initiatives or corporate accountability reporting would give an initial gauge of Scotland’s impact on low-income countries.

- Measuring Scotland’s political voice on key global issues. For example, speaking out on loss and damage finance or in support of vaccine equity can and does have a positive impact globally.
- Developing indicators to track:
 - socio-economic impacts in Scotland’s global value chains
 - fossil fuels extraction and export
 - the arms trade (manufacture or storage of weapons and arms)

According to SIDA:

“These recommendations would result in more meaningful tracking of progress, whilst also supporting other government commitments to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development, move towards a feminist approach to global affairs and work towards the SDGs.”

Specifically on the contribution of development support to other nations indicator, SIDA highlights the lack of published data adding that:

“This indicator should measure Scotland’s activities as a ‘good global citizen’, focus on ‘how Scotland can avoid harm to the development of other nations’ and how ‘Scotland supports their development’. However, It is unclear what data has been collected across any of the variables under each of these statements, and thus no clear picture or progress over 5 years exists at all.”

Today’s evidence session

Today’s evidence session with representatives from the trade and culture sectors is an opportunity for the Committee to discuss how the Scottish Government’s external engagement policies support the international roles of the organisations represented. This includes interactions with the Scottish Government’s international offices.

The Committee may wish to explore what international networks the witnesses are part of and how the Scottish Government and its agencies seek to support that engagement.

It is also an opportunity to discuss with the witnesses how the Scottish Government’s external engagement should be evaluated and what indicators, particularly in the areas of trade and culture could usefully assist that evaluation including any suggestions for new indicators.

The Committee may also wish to discuss with the witnesses whether the Scottish Government consulted stakeholders in the development of the indicators and whether there is any ongoing discussion about the performance against the indicators.

Finally, the Committee may wish to discuss some of the issues which were raised by representatives from the Scottish Council on Global Affairs at the Committee meeting on 1 June 2023.

Issues arising from the evidence session with the Scottish Council on Global Affairs

The Committee held its first evidence session for the inquiry on 1 June 2023 when it [heard from academics representing the Scottish Council on Global Affairs](#). The key issues that were raised during the evidence session are summarised below.

The Committee heard that measuring soft power and assessing whether it translates into influence in international relations is challenging. Professor Juliet Kaarbo told the Committee:

“Lots of different Governments and sub-state Governments are interested in soft power, which is just an attraction to a state’s culture that presumably helps Governments to influence and to co-operate with others. However, that concept is a little bit outdated and vague. It is difficult to see how soft power translates into influence in international relations. It is also difficult for Governments to control soft power capability. Counting up capabilities, attraction and branding is fine, but Governments have only so much control over that, and it often takes a long-term evolutionary perspective in order to have big soft power. We can find lots of examples of where soft power translates into influence, but we can also find lots of examples of where it does not.”

As a result of this, it was suggested that it would be better to focus on strategic narratives when it comes to external engagement. In Scotland’s case, the focus should be on being a good global citizen.

Whilst being a good global citizen was seen as important, the panel also highlighted the importance of promoting the concept of good global citizenship within Scotland. The Committee was told that the objective of international engagement for most countries is to support domestic policies. Professor Kaarbo told the Committee

“All state actors on the international stage are doing what they do in international relations in part because the international affects almost everything that they do at home. The two areas should not be separated arbitrarily”

As a result of this link, the witnesses said that there should be a clear link between external affairs policy and domestic policy and the day-to-day lives of people living in Scotland. The Committee heard that given the difficulty of measuring the efficacy of international work, international engagement should be viewed from the perspective of whether it was delivering jobs and investment in Scotland for example. In addition, it can be about how Scotland is viewed with regards to addressing climate change and human rights issues.

Whilst the witnesses felt monitoring external engagement was difficult, they added that it was important that criteria are developed for understanding how the approach of the Scottish Government to external relations can support its domestic goals and priorities. It was suggested this can be done in a way that is more to do with assessment criteria than it is to do with hard numbers.

The witnesses highlighted the need for better analysis of the development of Scotland’s international networks and whether they are helping to meet the Scottish

Government's policy goals. In addition to networks, Professor Kaarbo highlighted the importance of international organisations:

"International organisations are really good for small states and sub-states, because they multiply those communication channels. They are cheaper than having embassies or international offices in every country. They provide that conversation and that forum for co-operation".

Professor Peter Jackson suggested that the Scottish Council on Global Affairs might be able to help in supporting Scottish Government external engagement and developing measures for its efficacy:

"I will just add that the Scottish Council on Global Affairs might find a way to contribute to the enterprise of both supporting policy and trying to find measurements. For example, we could commission a report to map out international networks of engagement in the three key sectors that we are talking about: business and industry; the third sector, which covers everything from churches and religious organisations to think tanks such as ourselves; and education. If that were to be followed up by a subsequent report, that would provide a picture that would allow before-and-after measurement, which would act as a guide to support the efforts.

Examination of the situation in relation to business and industry would be a big job and would be quite difficult to do, but the other two sectors could be handled quite easily. We could put that before our management team to see whether we might put out a specific call for something like that."

The Committee also heard that it is legitimate to assess whether the prioritisation of issues is matched by the resources allocated to them. Professor Stephen Gethins told the Committee:

"There are legitimate questions about prioritisation, which is something on which to scrutinise the Scottish Government. We should look at the Scottish Government's goals on engagement with the European Union and ask whether the resources match them. We should also look at some of the other goals, such as on the climate, and ask whether the resources match them. I am not expressing an opinion either way, but I think that those are legitimate questions to ask."

Witnesses told the Committee there was significant overlap between the UK and Scottish Government and as a result the Scottish Government tries to influence the UK's priorities. Professor Gethins told the Committee:

"There are huge areas of overlap and common cause between Scotland and the UK, although the nature of things is that we tend to see the areas of disagreement, which is perfectly legitimate. On big areas such as climate change, which is the biggest to an extent, and on development of the economy and the situation with the war in Ukraine, we see overlaps".

As a result of the links between Scottish and UK external priorities, the witnesses suggested there is room to assess how the Scottish Government is managing to influence UK foreign policy. This was seen as important because the external

policies of the UK and Scottish Governments have an influence of Scotland's domestic policies.

Whilst there was a focus on the Scottish Government's external priorities and what was achieved, the Committee heard there needs to be a measure looking at what Scotland should do less of internationally because no country or sub-state can do everything.

On the role of the Scottish Government's international offices, Professor Gethins suggested there needed to be more clarity from the Scottish Government on the purpose of them. He suggested more information was needed such as, are they there to help boost trade and investment or are they an expression of soft power? In terms of the geographical spread of the international offices, the witnesses suggested that a presence in the global south would be helpful. In addition, it was suggested looking at locations where the presence can be more than just an office in a country, allowing them to reach out to other countries in the region so that their presence can be maximised for the cost.

Iain McIver, SPICe Research