

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee  
Thursday 30 January 2025  
4th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

## Review of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement Inquiry: Part 2

1. The Committee published the [UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Barriers to trade in goods and opportunities to improve the UK-EU trading relationship](#) report on 10 September 2024, following the first part of our [Review of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#) inquiry.
2. That piece of work focused on trade in goods between the UK and the EU. The second part of the inquiry is looking at trade in services and also youth mobility and touring artists.
3. The Cabinet Secretary's [response to CEEACC TCA Report Part I](#) set out the Scottish Government priorities for improving UK EU relations, including its aim to—
  - Seek full participation in relevant EU programmes, with specific priority to request a commitment to open negotiations with the EU Council to discuss options for partial or full association with Erasmus+ and Creative Europe
  - Seek restored opportunities for professionals in sectors across our economy to work in the EU
4. Evidence for the second part of the inquiry, focused on services, has covered: [a panel representing the legal profession](#) (31 October); [academics and think tanks](#) (21 November); [sectoral representative bodies](#) (5 December); [British Chambers of Commerce and Energy UK](#) (12 December); [economists and trade experts](#) (16 January); and the [European perspective](#) (23 January).
5. This week is the first session on youth mobility and we are hearing from—
  - Lesley Jackson, Deputy Director (Policy), Universities Scotland
  - Roy Gardner, Vice Principal, Corporate Development and Innovation, City of Glasgow College, and Colleges Scotland
  - Sarah Paterson, Communications and Public Affairs Manager, YouthLink Scotland
  - Sai Shraddha S Viswanathan, President, NUS Scotland
6. A SPICe briefing is provided at **Annexe A** and witness submissions at **Annexe B**.

Clerks to the Committee  
January 2025

**SPICe****The Information Centre**  
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

## **Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee**

### **4<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 2024 (Session 6), Thursday, 30 January**

#### **Youth mobility**

This paper has been prepared for the Committee's sessions on youth mobility, which forms part of its inquiry into the review of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement. It offers background on youth mobility prior to EU exit and the UK's association with EU programmes such as Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe. Additionally, the paper outlines the UK Government's Youth Mobility Visa and international exchange programmes established by the UK, Welsh, and Scottish Governments. It also highlights potential issues for discussion during the Committee's sessions on 30 January and 6 February regarding youth mobility.

#### **Background on youth mobility and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement**

When the UK was an EU member state, UK citizens could travel, reside, work, or study in any EU Member State without needing a visa. The eligibility of UK citizens to live, work, or study in an EU Member State now depends on the national immigration laws and visa requirements of the host country.<sup>1</sup>

Youth mobility schemes typically refer to visa or funding schemes that allow individuals aged between 18 and 35 to live, work, or study in a country for a set period. These schemes are generally designed to enhance skills across regions and promote cultural exchange. The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement does not include provisions for youth mobility.

---

<sup>1</sup> UK citizens do not need to apply for a visa in advance of travel to the EU as a short-term visitor and can stay within the Schengen area for up to 90 days in any 180-day period.

## Participation in EU programmes

[Part 5 of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement \(TCA\)](#) includes provisions for UK participation in EU programmes, with the specific programmes outlined in a separate Protocol known as Protocol I, or the [Protocol on Programmes and Activities in which the UK participates](#).

At the outset of TCA negotiations, the UK requested to continue participation in two EU programmes associated with youth and research mobility: [Horizon Europe](#) and [Erasmus+](#). Horizon Europe is a research and innovation programme that funds research projects, fellowships, and the mobility of researchers, while Erasmus+ facilitates student and staff educational exchanges. However, the EU and the UK were only able to agree on continued participation in Horizon Europe.<sup>2</sup>

### *UK's association to Horizon Europe*

[Horizon Europe](#) is the EU's main funding programme for research and innovation. The programme facilitates collaboration between institutions across the EU and aims to strengthen knowledge exchange and the impact of research. It is not a student mobility programme.

In 2023, the UK agreed a deal with the EU to associate to Horizon Europe. [A joint statement](#) released by the UK Government and the European Commission states that from the 2024 Work Programme onwards:

UK researchers will be able to fully participate in the Horizon Europe programme on the same terms as the researchers from other associated countries, including leading consortia...

Further information about Horizon Europe and developments leading up to the deal agreed in 2023 are outlined in the July 2023 SPICe blog '[EU-UK relations – developments on the Horizon?](#)'

### *Erasmus+*

The Erasmus programme, established in 1987, began as a university student mobility initiative. Over time, it has expanded to include previous EU programmes like Socrates, which focused on mobility and language learning. The current iteration, [Erasmus+](#), launched in 2014, is an EU funding programme that provides mobility and cooperation opportunities across various sectors:

- higher education
- vocational education and training
- school education (including early childhood education and care)

---

<sup>2</sup> SPICe published a blog in January 2021 on [university research funding and student mobility post-Brexit](#) following the publication of the TCA.

## CEEAC/S6/25/4/1

- adult education
- youth
- sport.

Educational institutions and youth groups, as well as voluntary and sporting organisations, can apply for funding via Erasmus+. These organisations, if awarded a grant, then make this money available to their respective members.

[Grants for higher education students to study abroad](#) are the most well-known purpose of Erasmus+. Students can be funded for varying durations under Erasmus+. Long-term mobility can last from a minimum of 2 months to a maximum of 12 months within each study cycle (i.e., within each undergraduate or postgraduate degree). For one-cycle courses like medicine or architecture, the maximum duration can extend up to 24 months. Short-term mobility grants can support visits lasting between 5 and 30 days. Erasmus+ students do not pay tuition fees to the host university. Instead, they continue to pay their home institution's fees. The Erasmus+ grant covers part of the travel and living costs.

### Implementation of Erasmus+

The [European Commission](#) is responsible for Erasmus+. It oversees the programme's budget, priority and target setting, application criteria, and evaluation. Most Erasmus+ activities are carried out at the national level with applications and awards for Erasmus+ projects managed by a network of [National Agencies](#). These agencies operate under the supervision of responsible government departments, known as National Authorities. The current mandate for the programme is running on the [EU's 2021 to 2027 multiannual financial framework and is supported by a €26.2 billion budget](#).

Full participation in Erasmus+ is open to [EU member states and associated third countries](#). The EU member states and associated third countries are subject to all the obligations and requirements of [Regulation 2021/817](#) (i.e., the regulation establishing the current Erasmus+ programme).

### Impact of Erasmus+ in UK and Scotland

The [UK participated in Erasmus+ when it was an EU member state](#) and during the transition period. The Erasmus+ programme was managed in the UK by the UK Erasmus+ National Agency, which brought together the [British Council](#) and [Ecorys UK](#). The UK Government Department of Education was the UK National Authority for the Erasmus+ programme. The UK Government Department for Education also oversaw the alignment of the programme's delivery with the policies of the UK and devolved governments.

The funding cycle for the [2014 to 2020 Erasmus+ programme ended on 31 May 2023](#). This means [that Erasmus+ funding in UK and Scotland that had been awarded could have been used until that date](#). The UK is now a [third country not associated to the programme](#). Third countries not associated to the programme may only participate in Erasmus+ activities provided for by Article 20 of [Regulation 2021/817](#)

(i.e., where the European Commission has deemed there is good reason to allow international countries to participate and it considers it beneficial to the EU).

## Funding in UK and Scotland

The [last Erasmus+ mandate that the UK participated in](#) as an EU member state ran from 2014 to 2020. The total programme funding was €14.7 billion.

The total reserved funding for Erasmus+ projects in the UK between 2014 and 2019 is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Total reserved EU funding for Erasmus+ projects in the UK 2014 - 2019

	2014	2015	2016	2018	2018	2019
€m	112	122	129	145	170	187

Note: The figures in this table are from publications by the [House of Commons Library](#) and the [British Council](#).

The UK Government [released estimates of the UK's contributions to the 2014 to 2020 Erasmus+ programme](#) in the UK Parliament House of Lords on 23 July 2021. Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay wrote in response to the question on behalf of the UK Government:

While the UK was a member state of the EU, we did not make separate contributions to individual EU programmes such as Erasmus+, but instead made an overall contribution to the EU budget which was then used to fund those programmes. It is therefore not possible to calculate a figure for the UK government's direct contributions to Erasmus+.

However, an indicative UK contribution figure can be obtained by taking the total Erasmus+ payments made in each year and applying to it the UK's funding share of the overall EU budget in that year.

The UK Government published Table 2 in its response. Table 2 estimates the UK's financial contributions to the Erasmus+ programme over the period of the 2014 to 2020 mandate during which the UK was an EU member state.

Table 2: UK indicative estimate of Erasmus+ contributions 2015 - 2019

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Erasmus+ payments executed €m [1][2]	1,834	2,048	2,153	2,366	2,857
UK Share of Own Resources [2]	15.7%	12.0%	11.9%	11.5%	11.8%
UK Indicative Erasmus+ Contributions €m	288	247	257	273	338
Exchange Rate [3]	1.38	1.22	1.14	1.13	1.14
UK Indicative Erasmus+ Contributions £m	209	201	224	241	296

[1] Budget amounts are taken from EU Financial Report Data (see [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/financial-reports\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/financial-reports_en)). Note: the figures do not correct for assigned revenue from non-EU country participants in Erasmus+.

[2] Erasmus+ payments in each year cover both current programmes and the completion of previous programmes.

[3] UK Share of Own Resources are taken from EU Financial Report Data (see [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/financial-reports\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/financial-reports_en)). Own resources are funds that Member States make available in advance for the EU (see 'What are Own Resources' worksheet for a detailed definition).

Note: the figures do not correct for assigned revenue from non-EU country participants in Erasmus+.

These figures are determined by the EU's Own Resources Funding System and do not reflect the UK's level of funding received from the Erasmus+ programme.

Payments in each year cover both current programmes and the completion of previous programmes.

## Participation

The European Commission statistics on outgoing and incoming participants in Erasmus+ projects are shown in Figures 1 and 2. The full breakdown of participation outgoing and incoming students, trainees, and staff is published in the [European Commission's 2020 factsheet for the UK](#).

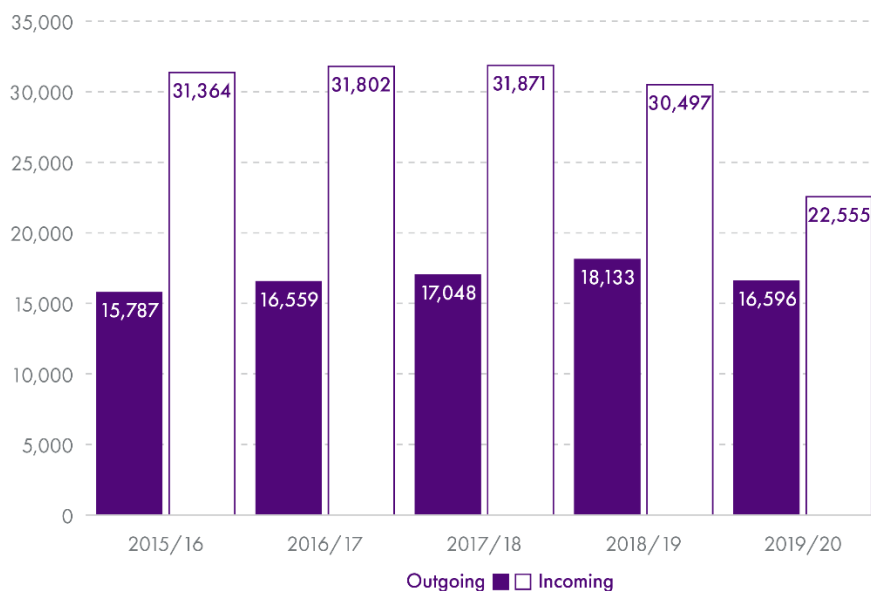


Figure 1. Outgoing and incoming students and trainees from and to the United Kingdom during Erasmus+ 2014-2020

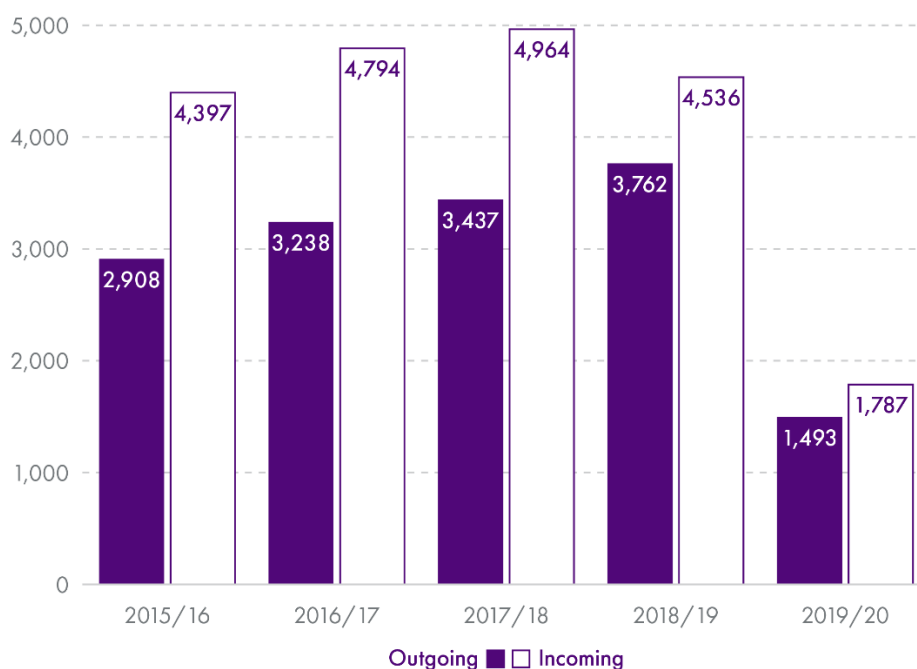


Figure 2. Outgoing and incoming staff from and to the United Kingdom during Erasmus+ 2014-2020

Figures previously obtained from Erasmus UK (and as reported in a SPICE briefing to the Education, Children and Young People Committee) show that between

2013/14 and 2022/23, 17,065 staff and 112,355 students took part in the scheme. Table 3 sets out the number of staff and students taking part by country of sending institution.

**Table 3: Outgoing staff and student numbers by UK country of sending institution**

Staff	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total cumulative
England	66	1,677	2,085	2,236	2,445	2,673	820	28	1,059	57	13,146
Northern Ireland	3	64	63	76	99	91	15	8	57	2	478
Overseas Territories	0	0	0	2	10	10	6	0	2	0	30
Scotland	11	262	357	465	516	644	218	7	169	18	2,667
Wales	0	88	130	142	148	148	43	0	40	5	744
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>2,091</b>	<b>2,635</b>	<b>2,921</b>	<b>3,218</b>	<b>3,566</b>	<b>1,102</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>1,327</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>17,065</b>

Students	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total cumulative
England	104	11,184	11,957	12,429	12,714	12,542	10,468	5,050	8,400	14	84,862
Northern Ireland	1	610	616	685	702	588	600	202	356	0	4,360
Overseas Territories	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	3
Scotland	6	2,197	2,431	2,548	2,705	2,701	2,487	840	2,207	2	18,124
Wales	10	741	738	794	754	744	559	256	408	2	5,006
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>14,732</b>	<b>15,742</b>	<b>16,456</b>	<b>16,875</b>	<b>16,575</b>	<b>14,114</b>	<b>6,349</b>	<b>11,373</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>112,355</b>

**Source:** Erasmus+ UK 2014-2023 Higher education mobility statistics

Between 2013/14 and 2022/23 of all UK **staff** taking part in Erasmus+:

- 16% were from Scottish institutions.
- 77% were from English institutions.
- 3% were from Northern Irish institutions.
- 4% were from Welsh institutions.

Between 2013/14 and 2022/23 of all UK **students** taking part in Erasmus+:



## CEEAC/S6/25/4/1

- 16% were from Scottish institutions.
- 76% from English institutions.
- 4% from Northern Irish institutions.
- and 4% from Welsh institutions.

Data from the [Erasmus+ annual report 2019](#) indicates that the UK was the 6th highest participator in the programme with 9,993 higher education students on study placements (see Table 4). The countries receiving the [most outgoing students](#) from the UK were Spain, France, and Germany (in that order). These countries were also the most likely to [send students to the UK](#) with France sending the most (7,155 students), followed by Germany (4,866 students) and then Spain (4,480 students).

1	Spain	34,276
2	Germany	33,282
3	Italy	30,876
4	France	30,505
5	Turkey	13,131
6	United Kingdom	9,993
7	Netherlands	9,852
8	Poland	9,729
9	Portugal	7,487
10	Belgium	6,269

### Participation in Scotland

As detailed in Table 3, Scottish universities were often proportionately more active than universities in other nations and regions of the United Kingdom. The [Scottish Government stated](#) that:

Since 2014 more than 15,000 people have been involved in Erasmus+ projects across Scotland. These support skills development and collaboration across the EU through student and other exchanges. From 2014-2018 a total of €90.7 million was awarded to Scotland across 844 projects involving 13,957 participants. Proportionally more European Erasmus students come to Scotland than to any other country in the UK, and proportionally more Scottish students study abroad on Erasmus than from any other country in the UK.

In [written evidence to the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee inquiry on Universities and Scotland](#) in October 2020, the Royal Society of Edinburgh indicated that Scottish participants comprised 12% of UK participants in Erasmus+ between 2014 and 2018. During the same period, Scotland received 13% of the total Erasmus+ funding in the UK, despite Scotland's population making up only 8.2% of the UK population. Similarly, [Universities UK stated](#):

Scottish universities benefited hugely from Erasmus+ participation, proportionally being one of the most active nations across Europe as well as within the UK (16% of all UK students participating in Erasmus+ were from Scottish institutions). 18,124 students from Scottish universities participated in Erasmus+ between 2014/15 and 2022/23. According to Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) figures, 2,755 Erasmus+ students attended Scottish universities in 2018/19 on inbound schemes. In addition, Erasmus+ offered opportunities for staff with 2,667 university staff participating during the same time period.

### [Negotiations to participate in Erasmus+](#)

In the years leading up to the UK's exit from the EU, retaining access to EU programmes such as Erasmus+ was a priority for the higher education sector. [Universities Scotland raised concern](#) that a successor scheme would be "inferior". The Russell Group, representing UK research universities including the University of Edinburgh and University of Glasgow, [highlighted the importance of Erasmus+](#) for students.

YouthLink Scotland ran the Keep Erasmus Plus campaign, calling on MPs and MSPs to support continued participation in the scheme. YouthLink Scotland highlighted the importance of Erasmus+ in its [response to the UK Parliament Education Committee's 2016 inquiry into the impact of exiting the EU on higher education](#). In the submission, YouthLink stated that Erasmus+ often benefited those furthest away from education the most, with 10% of Erasmus+ funding ring-fenced for the youth strand:

Erasmus+ funding has allowed young people, who might otherwise not have the opportunity, to participate in an international exchange. A number of our members involved in international youth work exchanges have noted the impact on young people in the case studies presented here. Through engaging in youth work, young people are more resilient, optimistic for the future, consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control.

In the run up to the UK exit from the EU, the [Scottish Government called for the UK to remain a member of the programme](#). The Scottish Parliament's Session 5 Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee also [recommended continued participation in Erasmus+](#). The [UK Government's February 2020 Future Relationship document](#) stated that participation would be considered "provided the terms are in the UK's interests."

The UK and EU did not reach a deal on participation in Erasmus+ during negotiations on the TCA and the programme was not listed in Protocol I. As such,

the UK no longer participates in the scheme. When the EU and UK agreed the TCA, the European Commission stated in a [“Questions & Answers”](#) on 24 December 2020:

By leaving the EU, the UK effectively terminated the possibility for EU and UK students to benefit from the Erasmus exchange programme.

The Erasmus programme is open to the participation of third countries under the conditions set out in the basic act establishing the programme. Among these, third countries that become associated to Erasmus have to participate in the programme in full, to ensure the synergies between the different areas in the programme.

The UK requested partial participation in the programme, which is not foreseen in the basic act establishing Erasmus. The UK subsequently decided that it did not want to participate in Erasmus.

Following the UK Government’s announcement of withdrawal from Erasmus+, in January 2021 [a joint statement was issued](#) by then-Further and Higher Education Minister Richard Lochhead MSP and then-Welsh Minister for Education Kirsty Williams MS. This stated that the Scottish and Welsh Governments would explore how Scotland and Wales could “continue to enjoy the benefits offered by Erasmus+”.

Also in January 2021, 145 Members of the European Parliament wrote to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Commissioner Mariya Gabriel calling for the Commission to allow Scotland and Wales to have continued participation in Erasmus+. In February 2021, Ursula von der Leyen replied to the letter and [is reported in Politico](#) as stating:

As one constituent nation of the UK, association to Erasmus+ is not possible for Scotland, separately. The only possibility for the UK is to associate as a whole, or not at all.

The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture Angus Robertson MSP indicated to the Committee in [oral evidence on 20 June 2024](#) that the Scottish Government was compiling a list of improvements to the EU-UK relationship that it considers reachable, one of which was to rejoin Erasmus+. The Cabinet Secretary later stated in the [Scottish Government’s response to the Committee’s report](#) on the TCA and trade in goods (dated 28 October 2024) that the Cabinet Secretary intends to:

Seek full participation in relevant EU programmes, with specific priority to request a commitment to open negotiations with the EU Council to discuss options for partial or full association with Erasmus+ and Creative Europe. The current UK Government has indicated it has [no plans to rejoin](#) Erasmus+.

## Views on Erasmus+ participation

Witnesses providing oral evidence to the Committee during its inquiry have provided various views on Erasmus+ participation. Irene Oldfather from the Scottish Advisory Forum on Europe gave [evidence to the Committee on 8 February 2024](#) and stated:

Participation in Erasmus+ is a clear and pressing issue, but we are not talking just about further and higher education. In recent discussions that we have had, businesses have said that they are keen for young people to be in apprenticeships and involved in exchanges; they do not want the approach to be about just further and higher education.

Alastair Sim from Universities Scotland stated at the same evidence session on 8 February 2024:

There have been strong voices from Scotland, the wider UK and European civil society partners that it would be a great thing to keep the UK fully in Erasmus+. That would help to build the living bridge between Europe and the UK of people who have been abroad and understood each other's cultures and circumstances. It is really disappointing not to get that, but I think that the decision has probably been driven by price. When the UK Government looked at what it would cost to be in Erasmus+, it stepped back.

Erasmus+ was also raised at the Committee's [session on legal services on 31 October 2024](#). Dr Adam Marks speaking on behalf of the Law Society of Scotland stated:

Broadly speaking, we would be delighted to rejoin something like Erasmus.

Professor David Collins from City St George's, University of London stated:

Britain was losing money on Erasmus. [...] Far more Europeans used Erasmus to come here than British students used it to go to Europe. The Turing scheme is very good, and it is a good example of where savings have been made as a result of Brexit.

The Education, Children and Young People (ECYP) Committee heard evidence about the impact of Erasmus+ withdrawal on the youth work sector on [24 May 2023](#). Liz Green of YouthLink Scotland said in the last seven-year cycle of the programme:

...youth projects in Scotland received €5,389,664.

Liz Green said that Erasmus+ had allowed youth organisations to provide opportunities to young people who would otherwise not have had experiences of international exchange and learning:

The fact that a key route to those experiences is unavailable to the sector and to those young people is having a significant negative impact on the youth work sector and on young people.

# European Commission proposal for a youth mobility scheme

## *EU civil society engagement on youth mobility*

The [European Economic and Social Committee \(EESC\)](#) serves as a consultative body within the European Union (EU). It comprises of representatives from employers' associations, trade unions, and civil society organisations and is intended to ensure the perspectives of civil society are considered in EU decision-making processes. Youth engagement is a significant part of the current EESC's work programme. The [opinion on EU-UK youth engagement issued by the EESC](#) proposed a mobility scheme for EU and UK citizens. The opinion states:

Given that post-Brexit changes to arrangements for mobility between the UK and the EU have had a disproportionately significant impact on younger people both in the EU and in the UK, especially in the area of education and science, the EESC should propose to the EU institutions to consider the possibility of facilitating EU-UK youth relations, including a possible reciprocal youth mobility scheme with the UK, as well as identifying various areas where EU-UK youth engagement can help young people on both sides of the Channel, which at the same time would contribute to enhancing EU-UK relations in general.

The EESC also called for the European Commission to negotiate for the reintegration of the UK into the EU programmes Erasmus+ and Creative Europe. It described the UK's decision to leave Erasmus+ as "the definitive issue impacting the EU-UK relationship in the field of youth". The EESC also suggested that the implementation review of the TCA was an opportunity to address the issue of youth mobility.

## *European Commission proposal to open negotiations*

Following the EESC opinion, the European Commission [published a recommendation that EU member state governments agree to open negotiations with the UK Government](#) for an agreement on youth mobility between the EU and the UK (dated 18 April 2024).<sup>3</sup> The recommendation means Member States must now agree whether to pursue a mobility agreement with the UK and develop the negotiating mandate to give to the European Commission. If the UK Government adopts a policy position in favour of an EU-UK youth mobility scheme, the European Commission would then be able to begin conducting negotiations. However, the UK Government has indicated that it has "[no plans for an EU-wide youth mobility scheme](#)". The European Commission has suggested they are not in favour of bilateral youth mobility agreements between the UK and individual member states. [Media reports](#) have suggested the UK Government have previously approached individual member states on the matter of bilateral mobility arrangements. The European Commission stated in a "[Questions and Answers](#)" on the proposal:

---

<sup>3</sup> SPICe [published a blog on the detail of the Commission's proposal](#) on 19 April 2024.

Only an EU-level approach will ensure that all Member States are treated equally in respect of mobility of young people to the UK. This is one of the key considerations of the 2018 European Council guidelines on relations with the UK.

Parallel negotiations by Member States neither guarantee that the UK would be interested in reaching an agreement with each Member State nor would they guarantee that each Member State would be treated equally.

### Summary of the proposed scheme

The European Commission indicates in its recommendation that the proposed scheme would be targeted at individuals aged between 18 and 30. This scheme would allow young people to stay in a member state country for up to four years without needing a specific purpose, such as studying, training, or working. The proposed scheme would require individuals to hold a valid travel document, comprehensive health insurance, and proof of sufficient means of subsistence for the period of their stay. UK nationals would not receive intra-EU mobility rights via the scheme. Admission under the scheme would only be valid for that specific member state country, with travel within the rest of the EU restricted to up to 90 days.

### European Commission negotiating objectives

One of the European Commission's aims in the proposal is to restore equal treatment between EU and UK nationals on tuition fees and the healthcare surcharge. Currently, most EU students pay overseas or international tuition fees to study in the UK. The proposal would mean that EU students would be treated as home students with regard to tuition fees. The proposal would also mean that EU nationals on the envisaged scheme would be exempt from paying the UK Government healthcare surcharge paid by most foreign nationals applying for temporary permission to live in the UK.

## **UK Government Youth Mobility Scheme Visa**

The UK Government Home Office operates a [Youth Mobility Scheme visa](#). It is available to young adults from specific countries to live, work, and travel in the UK for up to two years.

[Eligibility for the scheme](#) varies depending on the applicant's country of origin. For individuals from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Korea, applicants must be aged between 18 and 35. They must be at least 18 years old when the visa starts and 35 or under when applying. It is possible to apply before turning 18, and the visa can start after the applicant turns 35.

For applicants from other countries, the age range is 18 to 30. Eligible countries include Andorra, Iceland, Japan, Monaco, San Marino, and Uruguay. Additionally, applicants from Hong Kong (with an SAR passport) and Taiwan must be selected in the Youth Mobility Scheme ballot before applying. [British overseas citizens](#), [British overseas territories citizens](#), and [British nationals \(overseas\)](#) are also eligible, provided they are aged 18 to 30.



Applicants must also have at least £2,530 in savings. The [application process](#) can begin up to six months before the intended travel date. It involves proving identity, submitting necessary documents, paying an application fee of £298, and paying the healthcare surcharge.

The visa is valid for 24 months and allows multiple entries and exits from the UK. Citizens of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand can [extend their stay](#) by an additional year. While in the UK, visa holders can work in most jobs, study, and be self-employed under certain conditions. However, they cannot work as professional sportspersons or access public funds.

## Proposal for a Scottish Graduate Visa

The Scottish Government published its proposal for a Scottish Graduate Visa on 22 January 2025. In a letter to the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee, Minister for Equalities Kaukab Stewart MSP stated:

This proposed tailored visa route would be for international graduates from Scottish Universities or Colleges who want to stay in Scotland, and would be deliverable within the current UK immigration system. It would be linked to a Scottish tax code and be based on a requirement to live and work in Scotland. It would give international students in Scotland an additional two years, beyond the existing Graduate Visa, to develop their career in Scotland to meet the salary threshold for a Skilled Worker Visa.

The [supporting strategy document](#) indicates the proposed visa route is based on a similar scheme from 2005 known as Fresh Talent: Working in Scotland. The Fresh Talent scheme ran from 2005 to 2008. The scheme concluded when the UK-wide Tier 1 post-study work visa was launched.

## International Exchange Programmes

Following the UK's withdrawal from Erasmus+, the UK, Welsh and Scottish Governments each established student mobility programmes. The UK Government's Turing Scheme, Welsh Government scheme Taith and Scottish Government scheme Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP) vary in scope and have progressed at different rates. More information about each scheme can be found under the headings below.

### *The Turing Scheme*

The Turing Scheme is the UK Government's programme to provide grants to education providers for UK students to study and take up work placements anywhere in the world.

The UK Government announced in December 2020 that the Turing Scheme would open to UK students from September 2021, providing:

...similar opportunities for students to study and work abroad as the Erasmus+ programme but it will include countries across the world and aims to deliver greater value for money to taxpayers.

While the scheme was initially delivered by Capita, from AY 2024-25 it is being [delivered directly by the Department for Education](#).

Initial funding of £100m was provided for the first year of the scheme and this was expected to enable around 35,000 students to go on overseas placements and exchanges. The scheme is open to Scottish institutions. Organisations including schools, colleges and universities can apply for funding for projects on behalf of their students. [Youth work organisations were eligible to apply for Turing Scheme funding for 2023/24 in partnership with schools, further education or vocational education and training providers.](#)

An [August 2023 House of Commons Library \(HoCL\) briefing](#) on the Turing Scheme sets out the funding of £110m was available for AY 2022-23.

A [UK Parliament Written Answer](#) from 26 November 2024 states:

- The Turing Scheme has provided funding to support more than 160,000 placements since the UK's departure from Erasmus+;
- £105m has been allocated for AY 2024-25; and
- More than 43,000 students from across the UK will take part in placements in 2024-25.

Comparing the spend from Turing with that of Erasmus+ is complicated, and the HoCL briefing notes:

...as the Government has argued, direct comparisons here are also complicated by the fact the two programmes do not cover the same activities.

In terms of support provided for students, the HoCL briefing notes the UK Government has said grants under the Turing Scheme are “broadly consistent” with what was available under the 2014 to 2020 Erasmus+ programme. However, the briefing states that Erasmus+ living cost grants for placements outside the EU lasting more than eight weeks are more generous than what is provided by the Turing Scheme. In addition, while tuition fees are waived under Erasmus+, under the Turing Scheme it is only an expectation that universities will waive fees.

**Table 5** shows projects funded by the Turing Scheme, broken down by nation and sector.

Table 5: Turing Scheme funding amounts and number of approved projects								
	Higher Education		Further Education		Schools		Total	
	Funding (£m)	Projects	Funding (£m)	Projects	Funding (£m)	Projects	Funding (£m)	Projects
<b>2021/22</b>								
England	56.04	111	21.65	101	5.77	105	83.46	317



CEEAC/S6/25/4/1

Wales	3.01	7	1.55	2	0.56	4	5.12	13
Scotland	6.95	17	0.98	7	0.38	5	8.31	29
N.I	0.94	4	0.65	9	0.00	0	1.59	13
<b>UK Total</b>	<b>66.94</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>24.83</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>6.71</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>98.48</b>	<b>372</b>
<b>2022/23</b>								
England	53.06	103	32.01	93	6.93	69	92.00	265
Wales	2.16	8	0.17	1	0.12	1	2.45	10
Scotland	5.81	16	2.65	11	0.56	3	9.02	30
N.I	1.08	4	1.52	7	0.00	0	2.60	11
<b>UK Total</b>	<b>62.11</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>36.35</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>7.61</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>106.07</b>	<b>316</b>
<b>2023/24</b>								
England	51.40	99	28.00	138	9.10	164	88.50	401
Wales	1.80	6	1.20	3	0.28	2	3.28	11
Scotland	5.60	15	3.60	17	0.74	11	9.94	43
N.I	1.20	4	1.70	12	0.15	3	3.05	19
<b>UK total</b>	<b>60.00</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>34.50</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>10.27</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>104.77</b>	<b>474</b>
<b>2024/25</b>								
England	54.47	101	29.57	184	9.29	266	93.33	551
Wales	1.3	7	0.73	4	0.15	4	2.18	15
Scotland	5.03	18	1.37	11	0.48	17	6.88	46
N.I	0.82	3	1.78	14	0.31	11	2.91	28
<b>UK Total</b>	<b>61.62</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>33.45</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>10.23</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>105.3</b>	<b>640</b>

Source: [HoCL Briefing](#) and [DfE figures 2024-25](#). Please note, the DfE figures refer to 'projects' as 'successful applications'.

Table 6 below shows the share of Turing Scheme funding by nation from 2021-22 to 2023-24.

<b>Table 6: % share of funding by nation</b>		
	<b>£m</b>	<b>% share</b>
<b>2021/22</b>		
England	83.46	84.7%
Wales	5.12	5.2%
Scotland	8.31	8.4%
N.I	1.59	1.6%
<b>UK Total</b>	<b>98.48</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>2022/23</b>		
England	92.00	86.7%
Wales	2.45	2.3%
Scotland	9.02	8.5%
N.I	2.60	2.5%

**CEEAC/S6/25/4/1**

<b>UK Total</b>	<b>106.07</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>2023/24</b>		
England	88.50	84.5%
Wales	3.28	3.1%
Scotland	9.94	9.5%
N.I	3.05	2.9%
<b>UK Total</b>	<b>104.77</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>2024/25</b>		
England	93.33	88.6%
Wales	2.17	2.1%
Scotland	6.89	6.5%
N.I	2.9	2.8%
<b>UK Total</b>	<b>105.3</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: [HoCL Briefing](#) and [DfE figures 2024-25](#)

The data in **Tables 5 and 6** shows that while Scotland's overall percentage share of Turing Scheme funding decreased in 2024-25, the number of projects increased to 46.

**Table 7** shows participant numbers and the percentage of participants classed as disadvantaged by nation from 2022-23 to 2024-25. The [HoCL briefing states](#) the criteria for disadvantaged groups includes: students with an annual household income of £25,000 or less; students receiving Universal Credit or income-related benefits; school pupils/students in care or care experienced; school pupils who are/were entitled to free school meals; refugees and asylum seekers.

	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25	
	Participants	Disadvantaged participants (%)	Participants	Disadvantaged participants (%)	Participants	Disadvantaged participants (%)
<b>England</b>	33,099	53%	33,863	62%	38,054	55%
<b>Wales</b>	1,067	37%	1,355	45%	985	33%
<b>Scotland</b>	3,344	51%	3,943	52%	2,869	45%
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	864	48%	1,045	56%	1,210	44%

Source: [HoCL Briefing](#) and [DfE figures 2024-25](#)

Table 7 shows that the number of participants from institutions in Scotland fell from 3,943 in 2023-24 to 2,869 in 2024-25. The proportion of participants classed as 'disadvantaged' also fell. The number of participants from institutions in England rose to 38,054 in 2024-25 from 33,863 in 2023-24.

Details of the Turing Scheme for 2025-26 have not yet been announced.

## *Taith*

In March 2021, the Welsh Government announced that their [replacement Erasmus+ scheme would start from 2022](#), with funding of £65m up to 2026. The scheme is called Taith, which is Welsh for 'journey'.

Taith is open to learners and staff in adult education; further and vocational education; higher education; schools; and youth work. Participating organisations in Wales can invite international partners and learners to study, train, volunteer or work in Wales. It is delivered by International Learning Exchange Programme (ILEP Ltd), a subsidiary company of Cardiff University.

The first programme (2022 to 2026) aims to fund 15,000 people from Wales to go on exchanges. 10,000 people from all over the world will come to study, train, volunteer or work in Wales.

A [Welsh Government news release](#) from November 2024 stated that, since it began in 2022, Taith has funded 327 Welsh organisations to support 199 projects in over 90 countries.

Taith also awarded £10m to Universities Wales to deliver the Global Wales project. This brings together Welsh further and higher education institutions and organisations to work collaboratively to boost Wales' international profile, build networks and partnerships and support international recruitment.

The [Taith Programme Strategy](#) sets out five main objectives for the 2022 to 2026 :

1. To deliver an inclusive, all-Wales programme to get more people involved in international exchanges, to broaden the horizons and confidence of young people, learners and staff at all levels in Wales, give them life-enhancing opportunities and support them to become ambitious, capable learners throughout their lives.
2. To promote collaborations between Welsh and international organisations that enable two-way learning exchanges to benefit everyone involved, build international links, and support the education sectors, including youth work and adult education.
3. To encourage ambitious, innovative and creative activities that represent the best in international education exchanges and collaboration.
4. To raise the international profile of Wales as an open, outward-looking and globally responsible nation, committed to building on its legacy of international partnerships and relations.
5. To help deliver Welsh Government priorities in transforming international engagement and developing the best in international education and youth sectors through sustainable actions that benefit current and future generations in Wales.

The programme is also committed to improving access for people with disabilities, additional learning needs, underrepresented groups and from disadvantaged backgrounds. It seeks to promote Wales and the Welsh language to the world. It also seeks to encourage sustainable travel.

The [next Taith funding call](#) is set to open for applicants this month (January 2025), with a focus on mobility of participants, providing short and long-term opportunities to learn, work or volunteer. This is open to all sectors eligible for Taith.

More information about previous projects funded by Taith is [available on the Taith website](#).

## ***Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP)***

The Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP) is the Scottish Government's proposed replacement scheme for Erasmus+.

The Scottish Government stated in the 2021-22 Programme for Government (PfG) the intention to replace Erasmus+ with a Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP). The [PfG stated](#):

We will...develop a Scottish Education Exchange Programme to support the international mobility of staff and learners, and work to resecure Scotland's access to the Erasmus + Programme.

In a [letter to the Education, Children and Young People \(ECYP\) Committee](#) on 19 May 2023, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education; and Minister for Veterans Graeme Dey said that the Scottish Government had engaged with stakeholders and is “listening to the sectors and the needs of their learners and staff”. The Minister’s letter stated that the Scottish scheme would focus on “addressing the gaps in the Turing scheme”:

...including in areas such as the participation of youth programmes, adult learners, and community learning.

The letter also stated that the Scottish Government continued to “explore options to support the vital bilateral exchange arrangements between educational institutions”.

Giving evidence to the [ECYP Committee on 21 June 2023](#), the Minister noted the budget challenges faced by the Scottish Government, and said he anticipated a pilot project would be launched later that financial year. Asked whether he anticipated any issues with the scheme in relation to the free movement of people now that Scotland was no longer in the EU, the Minister said:

We believe that the scheme would be covered by a six-month study visa, which would take account of a term. We believe that it will be ok, but we await confirmation of that.

Asked why Scotland had not at that time set up its own programme, the Minister said that the Scottish Government was looking at “a number of things to get this right”. He said the Scottish Government wanted to look at Turing Scheme allocations and to “help determine what the gaps are”:

As the committee knows, there is no inward mobility element to Turing and no inward or outward mobility for staff. Of course, there is also no youth element. We know that, but we need to understand the basis on which Turing awards. We will see shortly what the awards will be for 2023-24, which will also inform our thinking.

A further [letter from the Minister to the ECYP Committee in September 2023](#) announced that a Test and Learn Project would open for bids in October 2023, and this would be built on to develop SEEP in 2024-25.

The Minister’s letter stated the Scottish Government would provide an “initial up to £1 million” for the test project. Scottish universities and colleges could bid for grants of between £1,000 and £25,000 for international projects. For projects containing cross-sectoral educational partnerships (e.g. with schools, youth work adult learning or sports organisations) a further £10,000 was available.

The 2024-25 funding round opened for bids between 31 July and 15 September 2024. Grant letters were issued in October 2024 and projects are due to end by 31 March 2025.

In correspondence with SPICe in January 2025, Scottish Government officials stated that £535,000 was allocated to the 2024-25 programme, and that all applications meeting the scoring criteria were fully funded.

The Test and Learn project has three objectives:

- Maintain the Erasmus+ approach as far as possible, with projects being led by the higher education sector.
- Encourage the development of international partnerships between colleges and universities, addressing a gap between Turing and Erasmus+.
- Support the collaborative ambition set out in Scotland's International Education Strategy (IES).

To receive funding, bids must evidence how they will support at least one of the ten actions in the IES.

36 projects received funding through the 2024-25 programme. A full list of projects funded can be found on the Scottish Government website. These were taken forward by colleges and universities and focused on developing relationships with institutions elsewhere in the world, often involving visits to the institution. Projects covered a range of areas such as health care, sport, climate change and net zero, engineering, sustainability, culture and the arts, and staff and student mobility.

## Scotland's International Education Strategy (IES)

[Scotland's International Education Strategy \(IES\)](#) was launched in February 2024. The Scottish Government's overall vision is for Scotland to be an attractive place to live, work, study and do businesses at the same time as becoming more active internationally, working in partnership with countries who share the aims of alleviating poverty and achieving net zero.

The ambitions for the IES are to work with universities and colleges to:

- attract students, staff and researchers from outside of the UK and diversify Scotland's international student population;
- maximise Scotland's global social, educational and economic contribution;
- become a world leader in international education, research and knowledge exchange and deepen global collaboration and engagement.

Delivery of SEEP is [listed in the strategy](#) as an action under the ambition to attract international students, staff and researchers to Scotland.

1.2 We will deliver a Scottish Education Exchange Test and Learn project in 2023/24 and build on this to develop a Scottish Education Exchange Programme.

The Scottish Government has an international network of offices. These are located in Beijing (China), Berlin (Germany), Brussels (Belgium), Copenhagen (Denmark), Dublin (Ireland), London (United Kingdom), Ottawa (Canada), Paris (France) and Washington DC (USA). These offices engage with governments and organisations and their work includes forwarding the aims of the IES.

## *Views on international exchange programmes*

Witnesses appearing at Scottish Parliament Committees in recent years have provided evidence about the Turing Scheme, Taith and the Scottish Education Exchange Programme.

Giving evidence to [this Committee in February 2022](#), Professor Andrea Nolan of Universities Scotland said that “the lack of inward mobility” was a “real challenge” of the Turing Scheme.

Professor Nolan said a Scottish scheme could take elements from Erasmus+ and the Turing Scheme by combining the Turing Scheme’s short-term exchanges with continuing support for inward students as offered by Erasmus+. Professor Nolan highlighted the work universities had to do to build relationships in the aftermath of the UK’s withdrawal from Erasmus+:

...the ideal scheme would have those reciprocal relationships. We are all frantically trying to build them...You can just imagine it, though: we once had this wonderfully organised multifaceted scheme, and now we are all suddenly making bilateral arrangements. The ideal would be a broad-based scheme with no bilaterals and funding for inward students.

Professor Nolan also said that another strength of the Turing Scheme was its focus on ensuring disadvantaged students had opportunities to take part in exchanges.

The ECYP Committee heard evidence on student mobility programmes at its meetings on [24 May](#) and [21 June 2023](#). At the [24 May 2023 meeting](#), the Committee heard from representatives from Taith and YouthLink Scotland.

Liz Green of YouthLink Scotland also highlighted the Turing Scheme’s focus on provisions for young people requiring additional support as a positive aspect, however she added that youth organisations “cannot really access” Turing, and while they could apply in partnership with institutions it was not as accessible to them as Erasmus+ had been:

...the scheme is not set up for youth work. It does not have opportunities for informal education programmes to make that youth work difference or to run a youth work programme through it. It does not seem to be accessible to the sector.

Liz Green said YouthLink Scotland would like to see a Scottish scheme have a:

...ring-fenced youth work sector-specific strand, so that funding is available specifically for youth work.

During the same meeting, Susana Galván of Taith spoke about how the programme was launched. In March 2021, the Welsh Government announced funding of £65m over four years to set up an international learning exchange programme. Hosted at Cardiff University as a subsidiary company of the university, the programme launched in February 2022.



Susana Galván spoke of the scheme's aim of being all-inclusive, and stated it provided inward and outward mobility opportunities. She said the visa regime sometimes posed challenges:

...there is an inward mobility aspect to Taith, and particularly with work-based mobilities—things such as apprenticeships and work-based learning—the current visa regime makes it really difficult for those mobilities to take place. We are constantly raising that with the Welsh Government...

She added:

The visa regime can also be a challenge for outward mobility, particularly because Taith is sometimes not recognised. It is not as well known as Erasmus. We are seeking to ensure that the programme is known and that people know that it facilitates the mobilities.

Giving evidence to [this Committee on 31 October 2024](#), Professor David Collins of City St George's, University of London said that he personally felt the Turing Scheme was "much better" than Erasmus+ and that he did not see the lack of staff mobility under Turing as a loss.

However, in evidence to [this Committee on 21 November 2024](#), Professor Catherine Barnard of the University of Cambridge said Turing "has not been an adequate replacement" for the loss of Erasmus+

In evidence to [this Committee on 8 February 2024](#), Alastair Sim of Universities Scotland said that while there were "a lot of administrative difficulties" with the Turing Scheme, the numbers of students participating in it were "not incomparable" to the numbers benefitting from Erasmus+.

On SEEP, Alastair Sim said:

At the moment, it is so small that it is hard to reach a judgment on it. It is very much proof of concept. The Scottish Government will need to evaluate it and decide whether it is worth developing further and whether it is good value for money compared with other things that, frankly, having faced funding cuts, universities are prioritising.

## Issues to discuss

The evidence session on 30 January 2025 with representatives from universities, colleges and youth organisations provides an opportunity to discuss youth mobility post EU exit and the role that the issue may play in UK-EU relations ahead of the TCA implementation review.

The Committee may wish to explore the set-up of the replacement schemes and their comparison to the UK's previous participation in Erasmus+. The Committee may wish to explore with the witnesses the response from schools, education institutions, and other youth institutions, to the UK not associating the Erasmus+ programme and the successes and limitations of the replacement schemes.



**CEEAC/S6/25/4/1**

The Committee may wish to explore any additional or unanticipated effects of not associating with Erasmus+ or setting up a bespoke mobility scheme with the EU. For example, whether there are any significant changes to rates of European language learning by young people in the UK and teaching of English as a foreign language in the EU.

The Committee may also wish to discuss whether there is interest in an EU-UK youth mobility scheme and what aspects of Erasmus+ and the replacement schemes could inform a potential EU-UK youth mobility scheme.

**Courtney Aitken, Post EU Researcher**

**Lynne Currie, Senior Researcher (Further and Higher Education)**

**24.01.25**

Note: Committee briefing papers are provided by SPICe for the use of Scottish Parliament committees and clerking staff. They provide focused information or respond to specific questions or areas of interest to committees and are not intended to offer comprehensive coverage of a subject area.

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP [www.parliament.scot](http://www.parliament.scot)

# Impact of current EU mobility arrangements on Scotland's universities

Summary briefing for the Constitution, Europe, and External Affairs Committee

January 2024

Universities  
Scotland



## Key Points

- Youth mobility within the EU can be long term - for example, to undertake study or employment under the free movement principle - or short term, generally through an organised exchange programme such as Erasmus+. The UK's exit from the EU has impacted both the outward mobility of Scottish students and graduates to the EU, and the inward mobility of EU students and graduates into Scottish universities.
- This is concerning given the demonstrated benefits that youth mobilities can bring. For example, a 2015 Universities UK International (UUKi) analysis of the benefits of mobility on the 2012/13 cohort of graduates<sup>1</sup> noted that:
  - Scottish students from the 2012/13 cohort were the most mobile across the four nations of the UK, with 6.2% of graduates having undertaken a mobility compared to 5.4% in Northern Ireland, 4.4% in England, and 3.4% in Wales.
  - Unemployment was lower amongst those who had participated in a mobility scheme than those who had not.
  - Graduates who had participated in a mobility programme were earning more in 40 out of 67 subjects (with available data), with disparities as high as £3,000 in some cases.
- We expect, by 2026/27, that the number of EU students studying in Scotland will have decreased by at least two thirds compared to the pre-Brexit period. The percentage of EU nationals amongst academic staff is also falling.
- The UK's decision not to join the Erasmus+ programme has significantly reduced the funding available for outward student mobility at Scottish universities. Between 2014 and 2020, Scottish universities were awarded on average €12.1 million (approximately £10.2 million) per year through Erasmus+. Scottish universities are currently awarded less than half of that value (£5.03 million) through the Turing Scheme, the UK's replacement for Erasmus+. They are also becoming less competitive at securing funding for mobility from the Turing Scheme, with a -28% decline in award since the scheme was introduced.
- The Scottish Government's Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP) has provided funding for staff mobilities that were covered by Erasmus+ and not replicated in the Turing Scheme, which the sector has welcomed. However, short deadlines have made it difficult for some universities to access SEEP support.

Long term mobility – Full-time students and staff at Scottish universities

Impact of Brexit on EU students at Scottish universities

- The withdrawal of the UK from the EU has severely impacted the number of EU students studying in Scotland. This is largely due to the change from home fee status to international fee status, coupled with the requirement for a study visa.
- Following the Brexit referendum EU student numbers at Scottish universities continued to increase, reaching a peak in academic year 2018/19 at 21,505 students. By 2022/23 that number had fallen to 13,130, a reduction of -39%.<sup>2</sup>
- Most EU students in Scotland (~70%) study undergraduate degrees, followed by taught postgraduate degrees (~20%) and research postgraduate degrees (~10%). Numbers have fallen significantly across all three cohorts since Brexit – undergraduates are down 37%; taught postgraduates are down 50%; and research postgraduates are down 26%.
- This decline is set to continue, as current data includes many EU students who began studying 4 year undergraduate degrees prior to Brexit. EU students in the first year of a degree fell by -66% between 2018/19 and 2022/23, with the biggest decline amongst undergraduates (-72%).

Impact of Brexit on EU staff at Scottish universities

- In 2022/23, there were 6,075 EU nationals working at Scottish universities, representing 13.5% of total staff. Despite Brexit, EU staff have grown both in number (from 5,290) and proportion (from 13.1%) since 2018/19.<sup>3</sup>
- The number of EU nationals within the academic workforce specifically has also grown, albeit at a more limited rate (from 3,675 in 2018/19 to 3,895 in 2022/23). However, that represents a decrease in the proportion of EU academics within the total academic staff (from 20.3% to 19.2%).

Academic Year	2018/19	2022/23	Difference
Total Staff – EU	5285	6070	+14.9%
Total Staff - All Nationalities	40235	45150	+12.2%
Total Staff - % EU	13.1%	13.4%	
Academic (Research/Teaching) Staff – EU	3675	3885	+5.7%
Academic (Research/Teaching) Staff - All nationalities	18085	20200	+11.7%
Academic (Research/Teaching) Staff - (% EU)	20.3%	19.2%	

- Although there has been an increase in total and academic EU staff under the age of 25 (+24% and +19% respectively), growth has been much higher amongst those aged 41 or over (+39% and +28% respectively).
- Total EU staff aged between 26 and 40 show little change between 2018/19 and 2022/23 (-0.2%). However, EU academic staff aged between 26 and 40 fell 9% between 2018/19 and 2022/23, with the largest fall in the 31 to 35 age group (-19%).

Age	Total Staff – EU			Academic (Research/Teaching) Staff - EU		
	2018/19	2022/23	Difference	2018/19	2022/23	Difference
25 years & under	270	335	+24%	105	125	+19%
26 - 30 years	810	855	+6%	545	520	-5%
31 - 35 years	1225	1085	-11%	880	715	-19%
36 - 40 years	1135	1225	+8%	785	780	-1%
41 - 45 years	770	1040	+35%	570	675	+18%
46 - 50 years	515	695	+35%	365	485	+33%
51 - 55 years	310	440	+42%	235	290	+23%
56 - 60 years	170	255	+50%	130	180	+38%
61 - 65 years	65	110	+69%	50	90	+80%
66 years & over	15	30	+100%	10	25	+150%

- The restriction of free movement, coupled with visa costs, is likely to have played a role in deterring younger academic staff from the EU from seeking employment at Scottish universities. That said, uncertainty over the UK’s participation in the Horizon Europe research and innovation programme between 2021 and 2023 is also likely to have contributed.

#### Short term mobility – exchange programmes

##### Erasmus+

- Erasmus is the flagship EU student exchange programme for education, training, youth and sport mobility, which began in 1987.
- The UK was a member of Erasmus (latterly Erasmus+) from 1987 to 2020. Following Brexit the UK decided not to participate in the current Erasmus+ programme, which runs from 2021 to 2027.
- Between 2014/15 and 2021/22, 2,200+ staff and 18,000+ students from Scottish universities benefited from the Erasmus+ programme.<sup>4</sup> That accounts for ~16% of the UK total, for both groups - equating to around 279 staff and 2255 students per annum.
- The University of Edinburgh had the highest number of both student and staff mobilities in the UK across the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ programme. The University of Glasgow and the University of Strathclyde were 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> in the UK respectively for outward student mobilities.
- Between 2014 and 2020, Scottish universities were awarded an average of €12.1 million per year from Erasmus+ (€169.3 million in total), representing 16.3% of the total UK award to higher education.
- Despite Brexit inward mobility from the EU is still possible, as 20% of Erasmus+ funding can be spent on third countries. Whilst data is not available for Scotland, 33,799 students took part in inward higher education mobilities to the UK through Erasmus+ between 2022 and 2024 (2.34% of all higher education mobilities during that time period).<sup>5</sup>

##### The Turing Scheme

- The Turing Scheme was launched in the UK in 2021, following the UK Government’s decision not to join Erasmus+. The Turing Scheme allows education providers (higher education,

further education, and schools) to apply for outward mobility funding for education or work placements abroad. It does not fund inward mobility.

- A key aim of the Turing Scheme is advancing social justice and providing mobilities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The Turing Scheme differs from Erasmus+ in that it offers outward mobilities worldwide, whereas 80% of Erasmus+ awards had to be within Europe. Scotland specific data is unavailable for the Turing Scheme at present. However, at a UK level, planned mobilities in 2023/24 slightly favoured those for the rest of world compared to EU destinations.<sup>6</sup>
- 16 Scottish universities were awarded Turing Scheme funding in 2024/25, up from 14 universities in 2023/24. However, the total funding awarded (£5.03 million) was the lowest that Scottish universities have received since the start of the Turing Scheme, accounting for only 8.2% of the funding given to higher education institutions in the UK.<sup>7</sup>
- Scottish universities have seen diminishing returns from the Turing Scheme, with a fall of -28% in award since the beginning of the scheme.

Year	Turing Scheme HE award	Proportion of UK total HE award	Number of Scottish Universities awarded
2021/22	£6.95 million	10.4%	17
2022/23	£5.8 million	9.3%	14
2023/24	£5.6 million	9.3%	14
2024/25	£5.03 million	8.2%	16

- Turing Scheme funding awarded to Scottish universities is significantly lower than the average awarded through Erasmus+ to Scottish universities per year between 2014 and 2020, which as noted above was €12.1 million (16.3% of the UK total).
- Guidance for the fifth year of the Turing Scheme was published on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025<sup>8</sup> and includes a reduction in the minimum time for higher education mobilities from 4 weeks to 2 weeks. The extent to which this will impact Scottish universities is yet to be determined.

#### The Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP)

- In 2023/24 the Scottish Government launched the Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP) as a “Test and Learn Project”, with a budget of £1million<sup>9</sup>.
- SEEP aimed to:
  - Maintain, as far as possible, the Erasmus+ approach.
  - Address key gaps between the Turing Scheme and Erasmus+, to encourage the development of partnerships between universities and colleges that could enable inward exchanges (match funded by reciprocal countries).
  - Align with the Scottish Government’s three priority missions outlined in the Programme for Government, including supporting disadvantaged groups and delivering a skilled workforce to meet new market opportunities<sup>10</sup>.
- By focussing on staff mobility and partnership development, the first year of the SEEP “Test and Learn Project” did address a key component of mobility lost from Erasmus+ and not replicated through the Turing Scheme.
- Projects eligible for funding through other sources, for example the Turing Scheme, were not eligible for SEEP funding. This meant that no student mobility projects were admissible to

SEEP, and it could not be used to top up partially funded Turing Scheme projects or provide funding to universities that were unsuccessful in obtaining Turing Scheme funding.

- Twenty projects were funded in the first year of SEEP “Test and Learn Project”<sup>11</sup>. As the maximal project value was £25,000 (or £35,000 if cross-sectoral)<sup>10</sup>, there would have likely been a significant underspend against the budget initially allocated by the Scottish Government.
- The Scottish Government has indicated they are in the process of evaluating the first year of SEEP. However, no further details on projects are publicly available at present.
- A second year of the SEEP “Test and Learn Project” was launched in July 2024.<sup>12</sup> Changes to the programme included the addition of student mobility (for projects lasting less than two weeks – the minimum duration available through the Turing Scheme), and a requirement to demonstrate how the project contributes to the Scottish Government’s International Education Strategy (published in February 2024).
- All 18 of Scotland’s universities that were eligible for the second year of SEEP were awarded funding, as were 10 Scottish colleges.<sup>13</sup> Of the 36 projects listed across the 28 institutions, those projects that specifically mention engaging with European partners are broadly equal to those mentioning non-European partners.
- Timelines remain a challenge for both universities and colleges to take advantage of SEEP. For example, in the second year of the SEEP “Test and Learn Project”, institutions were given only six weeks to develop and submit applications. In addition, the timeframe for spend (between October 2024 and end of March 2025) does not map well to the periods in which students can be mobile, which often fall during the summer break.
- To date, no plans have been published for how long SEEP will remain as a “Test and Learn Project”, and/or whether a full programme will be developed.

ENDS

<sup>1</sup> [www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/UUKi%20reports/gone-international-mobile-students-and-their-outcomes.pdf](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/UUKi%20reports/gone-international-mobile-students-and-their-outcomes.pdf) Please note that an updated analysis with a more recent cohort is due to be published by UUKi in March 2025.

<sup>2</sup> data from the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) [www.hesa.ac.uk](http://www.hesa.ac.uk)

<sup>3</sup> data from the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) [www.hesa.ac.uk](http://www.hesa.ac.uk)

<sup>4</sup> data from [webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20240206172454/https://erasmusplus.org.uk/results-and-statistics.html](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20240206172454/https://erasmusplus.org.uk/results-and-statistics.html)

<sup>5</sup> data from the Erasmus Public Dashboard <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/eacdashboard/sense/app/c553d9e9-c805-4f7a-90e4-103bd1658077>

<sup>6</sup> data from <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20241115122143/https://www.turing-scheme.org.uk/>

<sup>7</sup> data from [www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-funding-and-assessment-outcomes-2024-to-2025/turing-scheme-funding-allocation-and-assessment-outcomes-for-the-2024-to-2025-academic-year](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-funding-and-assessment-outcomes-2024-to-2025/turing-scheme-funding-allocation-and-assessment-outcomes-for-the-2024-to-2025-academic-year)

<sup>8</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-international-placements-2025-to-2026/overview-of-the-turing-scheme-2025-to-2026](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-international-placements-2025-to-2026/overview-of-the-turing-scheme-2025-to-2026)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/education-children-and-young-people-committee/correspondence/2023/scottish-education-exchange-programme-test-and-learn-project.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> 2023/24 SEEP “Test and Learn Project” Application Guidelines circulated to Universities via Universities Scotland.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-25681>

<sup>12</sup> [www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-education-exchange-programme-test-and-learn-project/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-education-exchange-programme-test-and-learn-project/)

<sup>13</sup> [www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-education-exchange-programme-test-and-learn-funded-projects/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-education-exchange-programme-test-and-learn-funded-projects/)

## Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee – Colleges Scotland Submission – 30 January 2025

### Introduction

Colleges Scotland is the collective voice for the college sector in Scotland, representing its interests and ensuring that colleges are at the heart of a world class education sector that is recognised, valued and available to all. As the membership body, Colleges Scotland represents all 24 colleges, which deliver both further education and 13% of the provision of all higher education in Scotland.

We welcome the opportunity to provide this submission ahead of joining the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee on 30 January 2025.

### Colleges in the International Context

As anchor institutions in their communities, Scotland’s colleges play a vital role in providing education and training opportunities with a diverse range of courses and world-class training facilities. Many colleges utilise and offer their courses and training to international students. The amount of international work being done by colleges varies between institutions across Scotland. This variation is due to numerous factors including institutional priorities, staffing capacity and the respective financial positions of institutions against a financially challenging context for the sector.

There are numerous benefits to college students and staff being given opportunities to learn abroad or improve professional practice by learning from other countries. Historically, colleges were able to be competitive within the international market, however due to visa restrictions put in place in January 2021 colleges are now less attractive, with restrictions placed on hours of work allowed for international students enrolling on a two-year course (10 hours per week) and the inability to bring dependents with them.

In advance of the last UK General Election, Colleges Scotland set out our asks for international work as part of our [manifesto asks](#).

### Brexit

The end of freedom of movement between the UK and the EU led to a decline in the number of EU students enrolling onto courses at Scotland’s colleges. From 769 in Academic Year 2018/19 to 410 in 2022/23.

### Overseas Students

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Europe (including EU)	503	769	267	305	238	410
International (outwith Europe)	616	867	709	1,012	759	1,140
Rest of UK	843	1,376	1,253	1,800	1,794	2,060

### Turing, and loss of Erasmus+

For many colleges the biggest loss in the international space has been the inability to access the Erasmus+ scheme. This led to the loss of well-established partnerships and collaborative working, both domestically and with international institutions. There was also the withdrawal of reciprocal student mobilities. Scottish colleges do have the ability to be involved in Erasmus+ projects, but only as receiving institutions, due to post-Brexit arrangements, which has meant that it is not possible to enable matched mobility from the Scottish institution.

The Turing Scheme which is the UK Government's domestic alternative to Erasmus+ has provided positive outcomes for college learners. With that said, there are significant differences between Erasmus+ and Turing. An example of this difference is the inability to continue and/or create collaborate projects using Erasmus+. Turing has allowed for some partnership working, but not to the extent of Erasmus+, and those partnerships which did exist have had to be discontinued. There is very limited staff mobility included when compared to Erasmus+, there is also less focus on youth and adult mobilities.

Colleges have also raised issues relating to the administration involved, with technical problems related to both UK Government and the outsourcing companies used to manage applications. Moreover, the administrative burden that is a consequence of submitting applications is significant for smaller institutions.

## **Change to Visa Routes**

A change to the visa landscape would be welcomed by the college sector as it would allow an increase in international students. An extension in the number of Student Visas (formerly known as 'the tier 4 visa') available would allow colleges to expand the number of international students coming to Scotland for technical and vocational training and education, moving towards parity of esteem with universities.

Reform of the Student Visa would help colleges become a more attractive option for international students. The current situation means that it is more financially viable to apply to a university place. A two-year HND college course only allows for that student to work 10 hours per week, whereas a similar qualification of two years at a university allows the learner to work for 20 hours. A review of these visa conditions could help Scotland's colleges benefit from attracting international students to their specialist courses, especially in the TVET and skills for a green economy space.

In light of the First Minister's recent comments on the development of a Scottish Graduate Visa, it would be valuable to Scotland's college sector if the Scottish Government could work with the UK Government to help create a differentiated immigration policy which takes into account Scotland's needs and ambitions.

Additionally, if a Scottish Graduate Visa is to be developed then expanding the number of visas available regionally to attract international students who in turn would be able to stay for longer in Scotland after their course of study, aiding demographic and labour shortage issues in some parts of the country. Attracting these students not only adds value to the economy but also to the culture of Scotland.

A change to Student Visa applications could also include a reassessment of the paperwork itself, some colleges have now abandoned them as the administrative burden was too much.

## **Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP)**

The SEEP is assisting colleges to make new international partnerships, as well as strengthen existing ties to overseas institutions. The work being done is immensely valuable in building global



relationships but more importantly it helps knowledge exchange and staff development. The amount of work being carried out across the sector through this scheme has demonstrated that there is a willingness within the sector to be outward looking and create benefits for their local communities. From a standing start eight colleges submitted 11 applications, and all were granted. This funding will benefit not only those colleges who are established in undertaking international work but also give confidence to those institutions who are less experienced in this space.

Going forward, Colleges Scotland is working with Scottish Government officials along with colleges to understand the ambitions of the sector. The increased applications for SEEP funding this academic year has demonstrated that there is desire from colleges to do more in this space. The focus has been on knowledge exchange with overseas institutions, as well as some colleges looking to increase their international business reach.

Further nurturing of these ambitions from Scottish Government, UK Government's Department of Business and Trade, British Council and other stakeholders will help to provide encouragement to the sector to pursue and grow their international work.

Colleges Scotland

January 2025



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

**Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> 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**

**Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

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

#### **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 6<sup>th</sup> 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](https://digitalyouthwork.eu) over the last few years has led to the creation of [digitalyouthwork.scot](https://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](http://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.