

Joan McAlpine MSP  
Convenor  
Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee  
The Scottish Parliament

20 December 2017

Dear Convenor,

Thank you for the invitation to present evidence to the Committee on 11 January 2018. In advance of the meeting it may be helpful to consider the information contained in this written submission, which cites data from Erasmus+ programme monitoring and evaluation as well as wider research conducted by the British Council.

### **Overview**

The British Council, in partnership with Ecorys UK, is the UK National Agency for Erasmus+. The programme has enabled 600,000 people from the UK to go abroad to study, train, or volunteer over the last 30 years. It is open to education, training, youth and sport organisations, including school education, further and higher education, adult education and the youth sector. The current programme runs from 2014-2020 with a budget of €14.7 billion across Europe. Almost €1 billion will be allocated to the UK over this period.

### **Erasmus+ in Scotland**

In 2017 Scotland received its highest ever allocation of Erasmus+ funding. Nearly €21m was awarded compared to €16m in the previous year. The funds benefited 159 Scottish organisations in the higher and adult education, schools, youth, and vocational education and training sectors.

From the overall €21m figure:

- €11.4m was received by Scotland's universities;
- €2.3m was received by Scotland's schools;
- €4.75m was received by Scottish organisations working in vocational education and training;
- €1.6m was received by Scottish organisations working in adult education;
- €756k was received by Scottish youth work organisations.

Taking these figures into account, at the halfway stage of the current Erasmus+ programme, Scotland has benefitted from €60m of funding across 700 individual projects since 2014.

Erasmus+ funding has enabled Scottish organisations to participate in projects which reach beyond Europe. In 2016, the number of Scottish higher education students and staff exchanging with wider international counterparts doubled to 544. This is largely due to institutions such as the University of Glasgow receiving more than €1m for exchanges with universities in Brazil, Chile, China, India, Kazakhstan, Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Palestine, South Africa and Thailand. The University of Edinburgh has also been one of the UK's biggest senders and receivers of students and staff through Erasmus+.

In addition, the number of young people and students from Scotland, as well as staff in education, training and youth work who benefited from Erasmus+ rose from 4,975 in 2015 to 6,190 in 2016.

### **The value of Erasmus+**

Erasmus+ leads to better job prospects and lower unemployment for participants:

- Young people who study or train abroad are twice as likely to find employment quickly.
- 75% of students that take part in Erasmus+ receive a first or upper second-class degree, compared to 60% of those who did not study or train abroad.
- Students who did an Erasmus placement are 50% less likely to experience long-term unemployment, and participants in vocational education and training have a higher employment rate (81% vs 68%) three years after the end of their stay abroad.
- Five to ten years after graduation, significantly more Erasmus alumni (64%) than non-mobile alumni (55%) hold a management position.
- Young people who participate in international opportunities return with increased foreign language and intercultural skills; and are more involved in research, development, and innovation upon their return, giving them greater impact in the workplace, and benefitting the economy.

Erasmus + raises standards in education and training:

- Each year over 2,200 UK university staff, 1,600 school staff, 500 vocational education staff and 300 adult education staff benefit from professional development abroad.
- Erasmus+ provides over € 3 million funding to UK universities each year for structured co-operation with universities in other European countries, working on projects related to the modernisation of higher education. Projects are wide-ranging, with an emphasis on areas such as teaching methods, the use of ICT, multilingualism and curriculum development.
- Erasmus+ encourages cooperation between sectors, and UK universities cooperate actively with colleges of further education and schools.
- These opportunities are of great importance as a means of facilitating the exchange of good practice in teaching methods, and of providing a new stimulus to staff in their

work. They also reinforce academic networks and other forms of institutional co-operation.

Erasmus+ supports social mobility and opportunities for all:

- 55% of UK young people awarded funding for volunteering or youth exchanges and 30% of UK vocational learners awarded funding for training abroad in 2014-15 were from disadvantaged backgrounds or had additional needs.
- The programme enables youth organisations to work together to share best practice and improve services for young people.

Erasmus+ contributes to UK economic growth and prosperity:

- In the UK, 91% of employees interact with colleagues from other countries, whilst 65% interact with international clients.
- 70% of UK employers believe intercultural skills to be 'very important' but only 16% of UK employers were happy that formal education alone met their intercultural skills needs.
- Erasmus+ provides international opportunities for young people from the UK to develop skills that are vital to the UK's success in the global market, such as communication, critical thinking and problem-solving.

Erasmus+ contributes to UK soft power and builds trust:

- By studying or working in the UK, participants coming from overseas learn about the UK and build relationships that last long after they return home.
- Participation in cultural activities such as educational exchanges is associated with an increase in trust. In a study of 10 strategically important countries, the average level of trust in the UK was 16 percentage points higher amongst those who had participated in cultural activities than amongst those who had not.
- Increased levels of trust are associated with an increased interest in doing business with the UK, visiting the UK as a tourist and studying in the UK.
- In 2015, 55 current world leaders, representing one in four countries globally, have been educated in the UK, giving the UK a long term boost to its global influence.

### **Current status of Erasmus+ in the UK**

The UK continues to be a full member of the EU until the point it leaves, as stated in the Prime Minister's letter triggering Article 50. The Prime Minister further stated on 14 December 2017 that the UK will continue to take part in Erasmus+ until 2020.

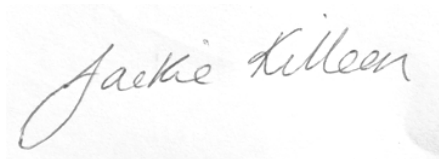
The European Commission has confirmed that during negotiations under Article 50 EU treaties and law continue to apply to the UK. The UK Government has confirmed that it will underwrite UK grant agreements for Erasmus+ signed while the UK is still a Member State, even if payments continue beyond the point of the UK's exit date. This means that UK organisations can prepare for participation as usual in the 2018 Erasmus+ application deadlines.

We cannot speculate on future scenarios following the UK's exit from the EU, but we note the UK Government position is that participation in some EU programmes may continue subject to negotiation. The British Council believes the UK should seek to remain a full Erasmus+ programme country after the UK leaves the EU. Full participation in this way would be based on a negotiated position as part of the withdrawal arrangements.

The UK Government has indicated that the UK could continue to participate in certain EU programmes after exit, and the European Parliament has indicated that it would welcome the UK's continued participation in programmes such as Erasmus+. The British Council and the UK National Agency, alongside dozens of sector partners across Europe, strongly recommend this option.

I hope this information will be of interest to the Committee and look forward to attending the session on 11 January 2018.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jackie Killeen". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

Jackie Killeen  
Director, Scotland, British Council