

Cross-Party Group Minutes

Meeting Minutes:

Cross Party Group Title:	Wales International
Date of Meeting:	#
Location:	Senedd Cymru, Tŷ Hywel, Pierhead St, Cardiff CF10 4PJ

In attendance:

Name:	Title:
Abigail Doyle	Project Support Officer, British Council Wales
Brooke Webb	Communications and Parliamentary Affairs Officer, Senedd Cymru
Heledd Fychan	Member of Senedd
Howard Batey	Consultant, HE Systems and Internationalisation, British Council
Ruth Cocks	Country Director, British Council Wales
Thomas Davies-Lyons	Education Manager, British Council Wales
Alexandra Long	Welsh Government
Amanda Morgan	Project Manager, International Links
Andrew Cornish	Chief Executive Officer, Coleg Sir Gar
Angharad Penny Evans	International Education, Welsh Government
Anna Christoforou	Senior Media and Campaigns Manager, British Council
Anna Dukes	Director of Global Engagement, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Anna Lohse	Postdoctoral researcher, Technical University Berlin
Anna Miller	No job title or organisation provided
Anne Morgan	Head of International Partnerships, Cardiff University
Barbara Ryan	Deputy Head of School, Optometry and Vision Sciences, Cardiff University
Berwyn Davies	Welsh Higher Education Brussels, Universities Wales
Carol Weighell	International Education, Welsh Government
Catherine Marston	Welsh Higher Education Brussels, Universities Wales
Christine Monks	International Exchanges Officer, Bangor University
Christy Anson Harries	Director of Learner Recruitment, Progression and Partnerships, Coleg Sir Gar
Claire Gorrara	Dean of Research and Innovation
Claire Richardson	Project Officer for Adult Education and Schools, Taith Programme
Clare Naylor	Head of Innovation & Programmes, University of South Wales
Daniel Mapatac	WCIA
David Warren	Head of International Engagement, Welsh Government
Elid Morris	Head of Operations, Taith Programme
Elin Arfon	Research Fellow (Language Subject Leadership), University College London
Ellie Bevan	Head of Programmes, Policy and Engagement, Taith Programme
Gerard Pitt	Senior Policy Manager, Welsh Government

Gill Peace	Senior Institutional Funding Officer, British Red Cross
Glynn Downs	Chair of Global Futures (by Welsh Government)
Richard Gordon	Senior Manager for Funded Programmes & Bids, Cardiff and Vale College
Gundija Zandersona Gough	Executive Director, Kokoro Arts LTD
Gwilym Roberts-Harry	External Affairs and Policy Manager, Amgueddfa Cymru
Hannah Clayton	International Mobility Officer, University of Wales Trinity Saint David
Héloïse Perrin	Scientific Advisor Higher Education, Movetia – Exchange and Mobility
Huw Davies	Senior Consultant HE Partnerships, Innovation and Business Development, British Council
Ioan Teifi	Senior Consultant, Wavehill
Jaime de Villota	Head of Citizens, Social and JHA, EU Delegation to the UK
Jane Racz	Director Erasmus+ National Agency, British Council
Jonathan Morgan	Principal & Chief Executive, Coleg Y Cymoedd
Karen Jones	Head of International, Wrexham University
Kay Smith	Head of Research, Development and Campaigns, Learning and Work Institute
Kerry Bevan	Senior Lecturer in Teacher Education & Professional Learning (MFL), Cardiff Metropolitan University
Kirsty Williams	Chair of Taith Advisory Board
Laura Davies	Director of Communications, Marketing and Student Recruitment, Cardiff University
Laura Shanahan	Project Manager Global Outreach, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Leah Doherty	Senior Project Manager, International Learning Exchange Programme, Cardiff University
Lisa Davies	Associate Director Internationalisation and Admissions, University of South Wales
Luce Dayle	Senior Youth Development Officer, Cardiff Youth Service
Maddalaine Ansell	Director of Education, British Council
Mali Thomas	Director of International Affairs, Urdd
Manon Edwards	Welsh Government
Marina Sáez Lecue	Central South Consortium
Morgan Rhys	No job title/organisation
Noelia Cantero	Director, European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning
Paul Stock	Finance Manager, International Links
Pauline Wick	Project Coordinator, Goethe-Institut London
Rachel Cable	Director of Policy and Public Affairs, Colegau Cymru
Ramakanta Patra	Senior Lecturer, Cardiff Metropolitan University
Rebecca Booker	Senior Associate, Equal Education Partners
Rebecca Wilson	WCIA
Rhodri Huws	Welsh Government
Rob Humphreys	Chair, British Council Wales Advisory Committee
Rosalind Gould	Media and Campaigns Manager, UK, British Council
Rose Matthews	Head of Global Opportunities, Cardiff University
Rowena Kidger	Global Opportunities Manager, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Rubén Chapela-Orrí	MFL Student Mentoring Departmental Lead LFA Tutor Coordinator, Bangor University
Samantha Vallin	Regional Manager, International Recruitment and Development, Aberystwyth University
Sara Morgan	Senior Research Officer, Welsh Parliament, Welsh Government
Sarah Bradney	International Mobility Officer, University of South Wales
Sharon Davies-Smith	College Director, Swansea University
Sharon Flint Wood	Co-Executive Director, Dolen Cymru (Lesotho)
Sian Edwards	Director of International, School of Modern Languages, Cardiff University
Sian Holleran	Project Manager, Colegau Cymru
Susana Galván Hernández	Director, Taith Programme
Tom Weiser	Volunteer Projects Manager, WCIA
Vicky Thomas	No job title/organisation provided
Walter Brooks	Programme Manager – Further Education, Vocational and Higher Education, Taith Programme

Apologies:

Name:	Title:
Anna Lewis	Research and Innovation Coordinator, Cardiff Met
Bethan Mumford	Education and Mentoring Project Officer - Modern Foreign Languages Mentoring Project, Cardiff University
Brian Weir	Director of Academic Services and Student Experience, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama

Carol Smith	Head of Exchange & Study Abroad, Swansea University
Catrin James	Head of Grants and Governance and Policy, Urdd
Catrin Roberts	Amgueddfa Cymru
Catherine Tryfona	Associate Dean Partnerships, Cardiff Metropolitan University
Charles Whitmore	Brexit coordinator for WCVA, Cardiff University's Wales Governance Centre
Charley Robinson	Head of Global Mobility, Universities UK International
Dr Carlos A. Sanz Mingo	Coordinator for International Exchange Programmes (Incoming), Cardiff University
Dr Ian Collen	Director of Initial Teacher Education, Queen's University Belfast
Dr Irina Neaga	Senior Lecturer, WISA
Eira Jepson	Research Associate, Open University
Erik Kruse	Policy Officer, Welsh Government
Gareth Morgans	Director, Carmarthenshire Council
Glesni Haf Owen	Operations Manager MFL Mentoring, Cardiff University
Ian Bassett	Head of International Business Development, University of Wales Trinity Saint David
James Knight	Headteacher, Brynhfryd Primary School
James Patrick	Project Manager, International Links Global
James Torrance	Assistant Headteacher, St Joseph's Catholic School & Sixth Form Centre, Port Talbot
Janet Hayward	Headteacher, Cadoxton primary School
Janet Ilieva	Director and Founder, Education Insight
Joe Yates	Vice Chancellor, Wrexham University

Kath Griffiths	International Mobility, University of Wales Trinity Saint David
Katrina Peters	Clyncollen Primary
Kelly Bladon	Deputy Head Teacher, Oak Field Primary School
Llyr Gruffydd	AS/MS: Gogledd Cymru, North Wales, Plaid Cymru
Lucy Jenkins	Project Director of the MFL Mentoring Project, Cardiff University
Madeline Phillips	Higher Research Officer for International Affairs, Welsh Government
Mari Luisa	Education Advisor, Spanish Embassy Education Office
Maria Garcia	Education Advisor, Spanish Embassy Education Office
Michelle Stewart	Chair of the Taith Finding Committee, Taith Programme
Mr. D. McGarvie	Headteacher, Pennar Community School
Najma Hashi	International Programme Coordinator, Office of the Future Generations Commissioner
Natalie Goodger	Events & International Coordinator, Coleg y Cymoedd
Nia Moss	European Affairs Adviser and External and Constitutional Affairs Research Team Leader, Welsh Government
Professor Elwen Evans KC	Vice Chancellor, University of Wales Trinity Saint David
Rebecca Payne	Project Officer (Schools), Taith Programme
Richard Gordon	Senior Manager for Funded Programmes & Bids, Cardiff and Vale College
Sara Novo Loureiro	Project Coordinator – Overseas, Coleg Gwent

Shannon West	Country Director Bangladesh, British Council
Sioned Harold	Curriculum Partner (Welsh in English medium settings and international languages), EAS
Vanessa Palmer	Assistant Headteacher, Ysgol Pen-y-Bryn
Victoria Ucele	Wales China Schools Project Manager - Cardiff University

Summary of Meeting:

Chair's Welcome

A brief introduction of the panel and a run-through of the agenda was given. The panel included Kirsty Williams, the Chair of the Taith Programme, and Jaime de Villota, Head of Citizens, Social and JHA of the EU Delegation to the UK.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM procedures were discussed. A vote and nominations were made for the position of the Chair and the Secretariat roles. Heledd Fychan was nominated to remain the Chair, while British Council Wales was nominated to remain the Secretariat.

International Mobility – The Welsh Context

The importance of international mobility for Wales' education sector was noted, particularly regarding the soft power element that international education brings to Wales.

The reason for why Taith came to exist was discussed: as the UK Government had decided not to continue with the Erasmus+ Programme after the UK's exit from the EU, it was important that Wales still had the opportunity to participate in an international mobility scheme. To prevent the Welsh Education sector from being disadvantaged by the withdrawal from the Erasmus+ Programme, the Taith Programme was created and funded by Welsh Government. Kirsty Williams also formally thanked Cardiff University for hosting and managing the programme.

An update on Taith's current position was shared. The Programme has had 5 funding calls, more than 300 applications, and the involvement of 280 organisations from across Wales benefitting from Taith funding to date.

Taith has also reached a large demographic of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and underrepresented groups, giving them the international opportunities that they may not have had before. Mobility programmes are often dominated by the Higher Education sector, whereas Taith has looked to incorporate those in the Further and Vocational Education space, in schools, as well as the Adult Education and the Youth sectors.

The potential of the UK's rejoining the Erasmus+ Programme was raised. Feedback from those who have been involved with Taith was noted on this matter: there is concern that the unique

aspects of Taith and the Welsh approach behind this could be lost. It was further noted, however, that the Erasmus+ Programme has considered elements of Taith as best practice and are looking to adopt these.

It was noted that internationalism is currently declining due to the rise of nationalism. There is also a concern regarding future funding for Taith. Therefore, those working on the Taith programme are considering how they can continue to make the case and evidence that international mobility is worthwhile. They are looking at case-studies and feedback from participants of the programme.

An EU Perspective

This year marks the 5th year anniversary of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. Relations between the UK and the EU have advanced, especially since the signature of the Windsor Framework, the President of the European Commission is willing to strengthen relations with the UK further over the next 5 years.

After 'Brexit' came into force, there was a need to create a new fully-fledged EU embassy to the UK. Two agreements have structured the bilateral relation: the Withdrawal Agreement and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

It was noted that people to people contact between the EU and the UK has declined since the UK's exit from the EU. Statistics have shown that, in the year ending in June 2023, there has been 80,000 net emigration of EU citizens from the UK and there are at least 50% less EU students in the UK.

The new Labour government has expressed its willingness to re-set relations between the EU and the UK on issues of shared interest such as people-to-people contacts. The Prime minister and the President of the EU Commission were due to meet in Brussels the week this CPG took place. Work has also been carried out regarding briefings for states and consulates to improve the availability of information on international mobility (for example, with regards to visas).

Various Mobility Programmes were discussed:

- It was noted that there is no opportunity for inward mobility to the UK with the Turing Scheme.
- It was raised that Taith has reflected well abroad. Particularly regarding its successful output within such a short timeframe, the proactivity promoting the different pathways and not just higher education, and the value it places on equal opportunities.
- It was noted that, in 2022, Erasmus+ had a total budget of 4 billion Euros, with 26,000 projects, around 73,000 participating organisations and 1.2 million participants.
- It was further noted that, for the period 2021-27, the Erasmus+ funding is 26.2 billion Euros.
- The scale of Erasmus+, the networks and the multiplier effect of the programme were notes as particular benefits.

- It was also noted that Erasmus+ mobility has positive effects on educational, social, personal and professional development.

The potential of future opportunities was discussed:

- It was noted that 'Brexit' has had a huge impact on young people. The UK has shown interest to address mobility bilaterally with some Member States. It has also been requested by stakeholders on both sides of the Channel, but also in the UK such as the House of Lords European Affairs committee, the Mayor of London, British Chamber of Commerce, the European Conservative Forum among others.
- It was raised, however, that the EU has not yet made a formal offer to the UK regarding mobility.
- The UK has not expressed their formal interest in rejoining the Erasmus+ Programme, but the EU has remained open to assess a potential request from the UK to rejoin.

Floor opened to discussion at 12:40

Concerns around future funding for Taith were raised. It was noted that funding is only guaranteed until 2026.

In response to these concerns, it was highlighted that the team behind Taith are working on an evaluation of the Programme to make a case for its continuation. It was further highlighted that, if the UK government chooses not to rejoin Erasmus+, the conversations to be had between the UK and the EU could still be beneficial within the broader framework for youth mobility for the Taith Programme or any other programme and pathways forward, since there are practical issues still to resolve in terms of enabling youth mobility between the UK and EU countries.

It was also highlighted that some students applying for visas to participate in long-term mobilities through Taith have had their visa applications rejected due to a lack of knowledge about the Programme in the receiving country. However, Taith is still a new Programme, and it is continuing to build its brand. Taith staff have raised this concern with Welsh Government and hope to bring this discussion to Westminster.

The benefits of the Erasmus+ programme were discussed. It was highlighted that the Further Education Sector was also able to take part in the Programme, while staff of organisations could benefit too. It was noted that funding was generous.

It was queried whether Taith could work positively alongside Erasmus+ if the UK government decided to rejoin the Programme. In response, it was highlighted that Taith has worked well along the Turing Scheme and that communication between the two has been positive. However, if the UK government do decide to re-enter the Programme, the funding would be decided upon by the UK Treasury.

Conclusions and next steps

The chair reminded the attendees that the deadline for the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee's consultation of the Welsh International Strategy has been extended until December.

It was concluded that all were in agreement that international mobility is important, particularly for Wales, and that there is a need for cross-party collaboration to face the potential challenges which may arise going forward to get the best for Wales

Actions:

Concerns raised in the Q+A are to be taken to Welsh Government by the political representatives present at the CPG meeting.

The CPG concluded at 12:02.