

[National Assembly for Wales](#)

[Enterprise and Business Committee](#)

[Inquiry into EU funding opportunities 2014–2020](#)

Evidence from Connect Cymru – EYO 09

Dear Sir or Madam

**RE: Inquiry into EU funding opportunities 2014-2020**

The Connect Cymru Committee would like to provide this brief letter to inform you of our role in supporting applicants from the youth work sector in Wales to undertake projects under the Youth in Action programme and the current Erasmus+ programme.

**History Of Connect Cymru**

Connect Cymru was created in 1994 through a service level agreement between the Wales Youth Agency and the UK National Agency for the Youth for Europe Programme. Since this date the Connect Cymru Committee have been committed to promoting international youth work opportunities, supporting applicants and training youth workers to benefit young people within Wales. Connect Cymru are the Information Provider in Wales for the 'Youth' strand the Erasmus+ programme. This role is undertaken through a memorandum of understanding with British Council.

**Youth in Action Funding in Wales**

Since 2007 the Youth in Action programme in Wales has been awarded in excess of 3.5 million euros which has made a unique contribution to the development of young people in Wales.

In 2012 youth groups in Wales received 698,433 euros representing 7% of the overall budget whilst in 2013 this figure was 988,390 euros. These significant amounts reflect the confidence of youth and community sector professionals that experience gained through Youth in Action is recognised as a valuable part of their overall development.

**Wales could do more**

Connect Cymru are in a strategic position and have the expertise to lead the growth of International youth work in Wales and the associated benefits of diversity advantage such intercultural activities will bring to both communities and organisations in Wales

In 2013 Connect Cymru was provided with a grant for £12,500 from Welsh Governments 'International Education Programme' in order to promote the Youth in

Action Programme, support applicants from Wales and provide training for these applicants.

As a committee we feel that the amount of funding brought into Wales could have been significantly greater had the initial investment been greater. This small amount of additional funding has the potential to build the capacity of youth organisations to attract much more funding from Europe with the potential to replace some of the funds currently being stripped out of Youth Services in Wales.

The Youth strand of Erasmus + will receive a 70% increase in funds for 2014-2020 compared to the previous programme. The opportunity exists to significantly increase the amount of funding Wales receives from this fund. If Wales were to be better organised so that a small amount of core funding could be used to help, what has up until now been a voluntary effort, then the drawn down to Wales could well exceed 2 million euros for the sector at a time of uncertainty and reduced budgets.

Throughout 2014 we aim to continue our work but also promote this success story as sadly many politicians are unaware of this indirect contribution to youth work in Wales. We are proud that in 2013 this £12500 generated almost 1 million euros of youth in action project funding for Wales though frustrated that this wasn't more.

### **Further information on International youth work**

International youth work makes a significant and valuable contribution to young people within Wales.

International youth work approaches use participative and empowering methods, with the fundamental principle of its work with individuals and groups arising from mutual agreement between workers and young people. It does this by providing experiential learning opportunities for young people using a range of creative, challenging and fun activities such as, for example, sport, community aid projects, dance, theatre, visual arts, outdoor activities and music. International youth work also involves young people in a process of 'informal learning' through association with friends and adult youth workers, experiencing and making sense of new situations, different countries, ways of living, food, culture and values. This will often involve young people who have very limited experiences and may not have travelled outside their immediate community.

International youth work is an educational process and the learning arises from the youth worker seeing or creating learning opportunities in the everyday situations young people experience. If the main objective of youth work is to provide opportunities for young people to shape their own futures, then young people must be actively involved in the process, creators of the learning, not merely consumers, working together with youth workers to identify, plan, engage in and reflect upon what they do. It is a process that is recognised and well valued within the Youth in Action programme.

**Connect Cymru would actively contribute to this discussion further if requested to do so.**

Regards

**On behalf of CONNECT CYMRU**

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