

[National Assembly for Wales](#)

[Enterprise and Business Committee](#)

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

Evidence from Prof Russell Deacon – EOU 18

Submission by Professor Russell Deacon to Committee Enquiry on EU funding 2014–2020

Although I am chair of the European Movement in Wales I am writing my comments with respect to the Committee's request for information in respect of my academic experience with the ERASMUS programme.

In many European countries, such as Germany in professions, such as teaching and business a period of study abroad is mandatory. In Wales less than one in hundred undergraduate students take part in the same study abroad period. This is not only a lost opportunity it is also frequently putting Welsh graduates at an economic disadvantage in an increasingly globalised world.

I worked for almost twenty years on the ERASMUS programme, mainly at Cardiff Metropolitan University but also visiting and studying the operation of the ERASMUS programme in universities across Europe. I was the only academic, I ever came across that was aware of the full processes of ERASMUS who also actually taught the students directly. Normally ERASMUS is separated between administrative functions and teaching. Having a substantial academic and practical knowledge of the ERASMUS programme and its practical aspects did not prove, however, to be of any real interest to academic institutions in Wales. For instance:

1. Cardiff Metropolitan University made me redundant and I believe have not operated the programme I was involved in to anywhere near the same extent.

2. Swansea University, with whom I worked for, for a year, also were not interested in using the experience and knowledge I had gained.
3. In addition, the British Council who administer the scheme had no interest in my experience, despite a number of efforts to speak to them on this.

The central reason for this lack of interest may well be that ERASMUS is seen as a loss maker and none of the substantial socio-economic and networking opportunities of ERASMUS are understood or even considered as a plus point.

In my last two years at Cardiff Metropolitan University I undertook substantial research on the benefits of the ERASMUS programme not only for Welsh students but also the positive and negative impact of incoming students to Welsh university degree programmes. I was able to discover the root causes of why UK students, outside of language programmes, failed to take up ERASMUS places. The research I undertook was able to identify the key factors in Welsh students failing to take up ERASMUS study abroad programmes. The research findings for Welsh students also indicate that unless you are on a languages course in a pre-1992 institution you are almost certainly never going to study for a period abroad using ERASMUS. I cite from my published work in 2011:

Of the post-1992 Welsh institutions, only three participate in the programme (UWIC, Glamorgan and Newport). The scale of the lack of participation of post-1992 Welsh institutions in ERASMUS is staggering. Here only one in every 1381 full time students takes part in the ERASMUS programme. Thus a student at a pre-1992 institution is 17 times more likely to take up ERASMUS than one in post-1992 institutions. When these figures are viewed on a geographical basis they illustrate the huge divide between neighbouring institutions. Students at Cardiff University, for instance, are more than 20 times more likely to go on an ERASMUS study period than students at UWIC, although both institutions are in the same city

These figures may be even worse than this now.

I was also able to ascertain the substantial benefits to Wales from incoming ERASMUS students. Most of which are never made use to Wales' own economic and educational detriment. Sadly this research was never published because of my redundancy. I firmly believe that with the right joined up thinking the ERASMUS programme could be adapted to Wales' economic benefit to the potential of tens of millions of pounds in exports and inward investment. It could also substantial increase the learning experience of students studying in Wales by effectively internationalising the curriculum and drawing on this substantial international resource.

Although nearly always a rewarding opportunity for those who go on an ERASMUS study period it has remained of a wasted opportunity for Wales in respect of gaining substantial economic and educational returns, which other nations have readily gained.

My published research can be found at:

http://educationstudies.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/russell_final_2.pdf

Prof Russell Deacon