

National Assembly for Wales
Enterprise and Business Committee

EU funding opportunities 2014-2020

July 2014



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
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Wales

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Enterprise and Business Committee

The Committee was established on 22 June 2011 with a remit to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising its expenditure, administration and policy, encompassing economic development; transport and infrastructure; employment; higher education and skills; and research and development, including technology and science.

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South West Wales



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The Committee's Recommendations

The Committee's recommendations are listed below in the order that they appear in this report. Please refer to the relevant pages of the report to see the supporting evidence and conclusions. Our recommendations are directed at the Welsh Government unless specified.

Recommendation 1. Ensure that the new EU strategy sets clear objectives to maximise participation in all EU programmes available to Wales, including requirements on Welsh Government departments to champion engagement within their remit, and drawing on the considerable experience and expertise on EU policy and funding that exists in Wales and with Brussels-based representatives. (Page 19)

Recommendation 2. Consider establishing an "EU Funding Champion" in Wales to provide leadership in driving forward the delivery and implementation of the new EU strategy and in providing a focal point for EU matters within Wales. (Page 19)

Recommendation 3. Establish a central contact point for organisations within Wales and for those outside Wales looking for Welsh partners. (Page 19)

Recommendation 4. Develop specialist, tailored support for the youth, education and transport sectors along the lines of the MEDIA Antenna model for the cultural sector. (Page 19)

Recommendation 5. Cultivate partnerships between stakeholders across the higher and further education sectors, business and the third sector to share expertise, resources and good practice. (Page 19)

Recommendation 6. Review the representation in Wales House in Brussels to address current gaps, notably how its services can be accessed by businesses, further education, the third sector and the creative and cultural sectors. (Page 19)

Recommendation 7. Set clear objectives for all higher education institutions in Wales to engage more with the UK-wide strategy for outward student mobility including: a campaign to promote the benefits of studying and working abroad, providing language learning courses, assisting with short-term accommodation provision,

internationalising curricula and providing commensurate capacity and funding. (Page 26)

Recommendation 8. Explore with higher education institutions the creation of a Wales-wide alumni network for international students, including Erasmus students, who have studied in Wales and Welsh students who have studied abroad, to maximise the impact of their international contacts. (Page 26)

Recommendation 9. Bring together the further and higher education sectors and national agencies such as British Council, Ecorys and organisations such as ECTARC to develop synergies, share best practice, and build links to access separate strands of funding and engage with the centrally run programmes within the European Commission. (Page 27)

Recommendation 10. Monitor trends in student mobility, including British Council data on its Erasmus+ and youth programmes, and ensure the outcomes and impact of engagement and participation by the youth sector are systematically captured. (Page 29)

Recommendation 11. Consider providing core strategic funding for youth organisations in Wales to work together in drawing down more EU funding for international youth work and volunteering. (Page 30)

Recommendation 12. Work with local government to bring together people who have the relevant expertise to develop an action plan for strengthening and promoting the participation of local authorities directly in the broader development and initiation of European policy and funding streams and for integrating the different funds to maximise the outcomes for the people of Wales. (Page 35)

Recommendation 13. Champion the Welsh creative industry sector within Europe, to ensure that Welsh companies are not disadvantaged in applying for funding under the Creative Europe programme because they are considered part of a strong UK audio-visual industry as a whole. (Page 38)

Recommendation 14. Review and learn from past engagement with DG MOVE and the TEN-T Executive Agency in Brussels, particularly the negotiation of the recent TEN-T and CEF Regulations and the absence of Welsh applications to the 2007-13 programme. (Page 45)

Recommendation 15. Develop a close working relationship with DG MOVE, the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency and the TEN-T Coordinators to maximise benefits to Wales from the CEF. (Page 45)

Recommendation 16. Work with Welsh stakeholders, Department for Transport and core ports in other Member States, particularly Ireland, to raise awareness of opportunities and develop a pipeline of appropriate projects. (Page 45)

Foreword

1. In this inquiry we examined a range of EU funding programmes that fall within the remit of the Enterprise and Business Committee. The inquiry complements our previous reports on EU Structural Funds and on Horizon 2020, and it resonates with a number of the key findings and recommendations from the recent report by the National Assembly's Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee into Wales's role in EU decision-making.¹
2. With some notable exceptions, we found that these other EU funding programmes are not well exploited in Wales, and they largely play second fiddle to the EU Structural Funds and Rural Development programmes. Yet they are worth in the region of €42 billion for the 2014-20 period and the benefits they can bring to individuals, to organisations and to Wales as a whole are compelling reasons for increasing Welsh engagement and participation in the future.
3. One explanation for the lower level of engagement in these EU programmes is the complexity in how they are managed. Unlike the Structural Funds and Rural Development programmes they are allocated through competitive bidding rounds managed from outside Wales. In many cases management comes centrally from Brussels and in the majority of cases it involves partnership working with organisations from other EU countries and even farther afield.
4. There is also great diversity in the level of support available to facilitate participation, the range of actions supported, the policy fields they cover, and the rules and processes that apply. Accessing the funding therefore requires significant investment of time and effort, and considerable knowledge, understanding and expertise, not to mention the ability and resources to find and develop partnerships and contacts outside of Wales.
5. Strong commitment at the institutional and individual level is a pre-requisite – although not a guarantor – of successful participation. There are some clear examples of such commitment: the achievements of the further and higher education sectors in Wales, and the excellent work of Professor Colin Riordan, President and Vice Chancellor of

¹ Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee, Wales's role in the EU decision-making process, March 2014

Cardiff University, in promoting greater outward mobility of higher education students in spite of a lack of engagement from the Welsh Government in this agenda.

6. On the other hand, there is evidence too of commitment lacking, notably in Welsh local authorities, despite the reasonably high level of resources they dedicate to supporting EU activities, and in the private sector.

7. We heard compelling evidence that tailored support – which can involve relatively small levels of resources – can make a significant difference to participation levels. The support provided by the Welsh Government’s Media Antenna, for example, is highly valued by the creative and cultural sector.

8. Yet we also heard that availability of support tends on the whole to be ad hoc, programme-specific and narrow in focus. There is no central contact or resource in Wales for general information and advice on accessing the wide range of EU programmes. Similarly, there is no obvious contact point for organisations outside Wales looking for partners for projects or Wales’s engagement in EU activities.

9. Once again we heard how Ireland and Scotland have a more joined-up and proactive approach to engagement with EU programmes, echoing the evidence in our Horizon 2020 inquiry.

10. One of our key conclusions is that there needs to be a coherent strategy for *all* EU policy and funding programmes, which can maximise engagement from Wales and create synergy with Welsh Government priorities and initiatives. This is very much in tune with the views expressed in the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee’s EU inquiry. Such a strategy should be developed in an open and transparent way, drawing on the experience and expertise of EU policy and funding that clearly exists in Wales and with Brussels-based representatives. The strategy should also look at the question of appropriate support mechanisms in Wales to address the current gaps and provide a comprehensive, expert and joined-up structure to facilitate participation in EU funding programmes.

11. We also agree with the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee that there needs to be a stronger, broader and more visible Welsh presence in Brussels to raise Wales’s profile and better place us in the partnerships, networks and policy negotiations that matter.

12. Wales therefore needs to embark on a steep learning curve and more importantly a cultural shift, to increase engagement in these programmes across the board, and specifically local government and the third and business sectors. Some organisations we spoke to during this inquiry are taking a strategic view and approach to accessing EU funding but there is no question that the UK generally, and Wales in particular, is not capitalising on the opportunities.

13. The Welsh Government needs to provide strategic leadership for accessing European funding in its entirety. We were therefore encouraged to hear from the Minister for Finance, Jane Hutt AM, that she welcomed our inquiry and that her “aspiration is to increase the take-up of funding from all EU funding programmes because they can help to deliver our objectives, particularly in terms of growth and jobs”.²

14. We trust that when the Minister comes to review and revise the Welsh Government’s EU Strategy, as she said she is committed to do, our recommendations will be taken on board. We believe that the investment will ultimately be worthwhile.

² Record of Proceedings paragraph 531, 20 March 2014

Introduction to the inquiry

15. This inquiry focused on those EU programmes of most relevance to our remit, excluding Structural Funds and Horizon 2020 as we have recently reported on those initiatives. The inquiry's full terms of reference are set out in Annex A.

16. The programmes covered have a combined EU funding allocation of around €42 billion for the seven-year period 2014-20. They provide support for a range of different projects and activities, covering education, training, sport, youth, culture, creative industries, transport, SME finance and other fields of interest (see Annex B for a brief description of each):

- Erasmus+ (€14.7bn);
- Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)/Trans-European Networks Transport (TEN-T) (€15bn);³
- Territorial Cooperation (INTERREG) Programmes (€8.7bn);
- Creative Europe (€1.46bn);
- Competitiveness of SMEs (COSME) Programme (€2.03bn).

17. We received 21 written responses to our call for written evidence, which closed at the end of January 2014. We took oral evidence from 13 panels of witnesses. We also went on a two-day fact-finding visit to Brussels on 12-14 February where we met relevant Directorates General (DGs) in the European Commission, and national, regional and other Brussels-based representatives. Our aim was to better understand the different programmes and the approaches other countries have adopted towards accessing EU funding.

18. On 6 March we held round-table discussions at the Cyncoed College Campus of Cardiff Metropolitan University with staff and students of Cardiff Metropolitan and Cardiff Universities, focusing in particular on the Erasmus mobility programme in higher education. The summary of our discussions is included as Annex C.

³ Not including the €11.3bn top-sliced from the Cohesion Fund that will support TEN-T projects under the CEF budget in the Cohesion Fund countries, as this is not relevant to Wales/UK

Strategic engagement

Overall engagement/participation from Wales

19. The evidence submitted to our inquiry revealed a wide range of information on projects and participation by Welsh organisations in the different EU programmes during 2007-13, the “predecessors” to the programmes for the 2014-2020 period.

20. The bulk of the participation has been in the Lifelong Learning Programme, Media Programme, Youth in Action Programme and INTERREG Programmes,⁴ with some involvement in the Culture Programme and to a lesser extent the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme. There were no applications and no funding was secured by Wales during 2007-13 under the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).

21. Wales appears to have performed well in a number of these EU programmes. For example, written evidence from Welsh Higher Education Brussels described Cardiff Metropolitan University as having an “outstanding track record” for participating in Erasmus Mundus. There has also been some impressive participation by the Welsh creative industries sector in the Media Programme, and engagement by the youth and voluntary sector in the Youth in Action Programme.

22. A recurring theme to emerge from the evidence,⁵ however, is that the high priority given to Structural Funds and Rural Development Programmes in Wales has had the knock-on effect of limiting participation in the other EU programmes.

23. Another theme to emerge during our inquiry was the diversity in support and capacity to participate in EU funding programmes within organisations in Wales. There are European officers based in local government and coordinators based in further and higher education, together with a Brussels presence for both, but this is not the general picture in the youth, voluntary or business sectors. Where such roles exist these are often narrowly focused on EU Structural Funds and Rural Development, with little attention or interest in other EU programmes; this was notably the case in Welsh local government.

⁴ INTERREG are territorial cooperation programmes

⁵ Written evidence from Welsh Local Government Association, Gwynedd Council, Isle of Anglesey County Council, Wales Council for Voluntary Action and National Museum

24. Yet there was resounding feedback about the benefits to be gained from participating in EU funding programmes: the impact on individuals – skills, experience, learning, growth, confidence and enhanced employability; the impact on organisations – capacity, skills, profile; the development of valuable and lasting international partnerships and project management experience; and outputs in terms of activity, education, culture, film, tourism and community projects.

25. In particular, there is a need to more fully understand the intricacies of the structures and processes of the different programmes on offer and the links between them, especially where programmes are managed centrally from Brussels and where they are allocated through the UK’s national agencies.

Strategic role for the Welsh Government

26. One of the main issues to emerge from this inquiry was the key role played by the Welsh Government, and the role it could play in future.

27. When we scrutinised the Welsh Government on its record on EU funding we were told several times that rather than “chasing the cash” the Government was prioritising its efforts and was “being realistic about how best to target our resources”.⁶ The impression we were left with is that there will be, in the Minister’s words, a “focus on the bigger fish”.⁷

28. It was interesting to hear from the European Enterprise Network at Swansea University that another reason might be because:

“The COSME funds and Erasmus, in some respects, are harder to win; the Structural Funds are slightly easier to win. I wonder if that is why the emphasis is the way that it is. I believe there is a big opportunity through COSME.”⁸

29. The Minister made it clear that she expected other players such as the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), Colleges Wales, Higher Education Wales, Federation of Small Businesses, Confederation of British Industry and local government through the WLGA to resource

⁶ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 566-568, 20 March 2014

⁷ Record of Proceedings paragraph 577, 20 March 2014

⁸ Record of Proceedings paragraph 198, 26 March 2014

EU activity and help support smaller organisations. However, she was **willing to consider a role for the Welsh Government in filling any “gaps”**.⁹

30. This is an important point and we agree with the Minister that to optimise participation from Wales in the range of EU funding programmes for 2014-20 there is an onus on all key organisations and sectors to play their role in supporting engagement. This includes looking at synergies across organisations, including pooling of resources and expertise, and better partnership working.

31. We noted from the Welsh Government’s evidence that it intends to review and revise its Territorial Cooperation Strategy although no timeframe has yet been suggested. We are aware that the Assembly’s Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee has recently called for the Welsh Government to review and revise its EU strategy through open and formal consultation to engage key interests and expertise within Wales. We very much support this call and underline the importance of a new EU Strategy to cover the 2014-20 funding period.

32. There is also a strategic job to be done in terms of monitoring and evaluation. Dr Liz Mills¹⁰ told us:

“It is very good to capitalise on what you have done before, but we also need to learn at a strategic level what these programmes are delivering, because that is something that we are not doing so well.”¹¹

33. The point was echoed by Dr David Llewellyn:¹²

“With the WECAN project, we have developed many things that could perhaps shape the way that Welsh Government does things in the future. However, so far, we have not seen where the Welsh Government and perhaps other partners have taken advantage and the opportunity to do that. It is developing, but

⁹ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 569 and 579, 20 March 2014

¹⁰ Dr Liz Mills is an independent consultant based in Cardiff specialising in EU funding programmes

¹¹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 452, 20 March 2014

¹² Dr David Llewellyn is an independent consultant with experience of INTERREG projects such as WECAN (Working together for Economically prosperous Communities through Assets of Natural Heritage)

it perhaps has to be more strategic to see what we have learnt and how we can take that forward in the mainstream.”¹³

34. Dr Anne Howells¹⁴ commented that:

“The quality of the applications could be improved if a group of experienced evaluators and reviewers could be established so that we could share best practice across Welsh higher education and get a higher success rate in funding grants.”¹⁵

35. This suggestion was supported by Dr Mills, and it was a point made by Welsh higher education who recommended the creation of a “European Community of Practice” to bring together experts in writing and evaluating European proposals to support future engagement.

36. We cannot stress too strongly the importance of drawing on individual experience and expertise in driving forward projects and institutional change. The Welsh Government has a key role to play in bringing those people together and providing them with a wider stage on which to weave their magic.

37. We heard during our meetings in Brussels how the Irish Government, for example, has developed a national strategy to maximise participation in EU programmes for 2014-2020 and that each government department has been tasked with driving that agenda forward within their respective policy areas. We also heard about the successful experiences of Denmark - how it links its Brussels arm with its partners back in Denmark - and of Regions such as Northern Ireland and Kent.

38. Dr Mills praised the work of Scotland Europa in that they are “more joined up in the way that they collaborate, for example, with the Brussels office”.¹⁶ Dr Mills also raised the lack of awareness and engagement in Wales in the URBACT programme:

“The URBACT programme, as I wrote in my note, has not been used in Wales very much at all. I think that people have not quite twigged the link between that programme and the current preparation of the mainstream Structural Funds programmes,

¹³ Record of Proceedings paragraph 454, 20 March 2014

¹⁴ Dr Anne Howells is European Development Officer at Aberystwyth University

¹⁵ Record of Proceedings paragraph 492, 20 March 2014

¹⁶ Record of Proceedings paragraph 459, 20 March 2014

which now have specific urban instruments that we are supposed to be using. However, we are not really doing it terribly effectively at the moment in Wales. We are not quite on message. I think that it just reflects our lack of engagement, partly at least, with this programme. This is going to happen more and more. For example, the new INTERREG Europe programme will be much more specifically focused on using the collaborative work to improve the design of the mainstream programmes in later rounds. So, in a way, it will constrain what we can do. However, it is intended to make the spending of the main funds a lot more effective.”¹⁷

39. Dr Mills spoke about the need for “understanding the architecture of the European system”; for engaging more with the policy community and organisations eligible for funding; and bringing people into the European system “more actively”. She argued for a broader, more strategic body to pull everything together:

“It would be good if the strategy pulled things together a bit more than it does. In terms of organisational arrangements, we do not really have one body tasked with an overview of all the funding programmes at the moment. We have the Welsh European Funding Office, with a very strong focus on the mainstream Structural Funds and the administration of some of the territorial co-operation budgets, and it is now bringing in Horizon 2020, with a new unit dealing with this. However, it is not doing the same kind of job as is done in other European regions, which have a much more outward facing way of working and are capable of brokering projects, for example.”¹⁸

40. She added that there needed to be a “smarter link” between people responsible for the various policy agendas and those responsible for the money:

“WEFO is the managing authority with very specific duties in terms of audit and that kind of thing. So, it is money managing, but there is other work to be done in terms of smartly connecting policy in Wales and the needs of Wales to the European policy agenda and working out how the money fits with that. So, it is a different kind of role, really. There is also a

¹⁷ Record of Proceedings paragraph 464, 20 March 2014

¹⁸ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 485-487, 20 March 2014

possibility of conflicts of interest. In most of the centrally managed EU programmes, there is a clear separation between project development support and the people who make the decisions about who gets money. In WEFO, you have to think about which civil servants are tasked with doing project development type of work and which are responsible for the audit side. The same person should not really be doing both jobs. So, you do need to make sure that you have staff with a relevant range of capacities and job descriptions.”¹⁹

41. We were concerned to hear from Dr Llewellyn that in all his dealings with INTERREG funding he had not dealt with WEFO at all, and had barely had any contact with the Welsh Government’s Brussels office. He contrasted this with other countries and regions such as Ireland and Lorraine in France which were much more “switched on”.²⁰

42. Dr Mills argued for a clear contact point for people outside Wales looking to work with Welsh partners. Both Dr Mills and Dr Howells suggested that WEFO’s SCoRE Cymru scheme (Supporting Collaborative Research and Innovation in Europe) could be extended to include match funding in support of applications and to cover INTERREG projects.²¹

43. It was interesting to hear from the European Enterprise Network (EEN) at Swansea University that a stronger Welsh Government role in the EEN - and from the Government’s innovation department in particular - was crucial to its success:

“EEN has a limited resource envelope. The reach of the EEN is limited by its resource investment. That is why we have to ensure that it is co-ordinated with the rest of the delivery in the regions and that is really important. That is why, for me, a partnership with the Welsh Government over the next six years is fundamental to the success of not just EEN, but Wales, in fact, when we look at grant capture from Europe. Partnership is the way forward.”²²

44. Finally, we heard a lot about the barriers and costs to participation, such as the time taken to put together a bid and

¹⁹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 489, 20 March 2014

²⁰ Record of Proceedings paragraph 493, 20 March 2014

²¹ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 491 and 512, 20 March 2014

²² Record of Proceedings paragraph 200, 26 March 2014

coordinate multiple partners, especially the resource challenges and lack of support for small organisations in the third and private sectors. Dr Llewellyn suggested that:

“The Welsh Government could support smaller organisations or partners of whatever size to spend time and a little bit of money in making robust applications...consequently we fail to get the results out of it at the end, compared with some other countries.”²³

45. All the port bodies we spoke to were supportive of the idea of strengthening the voice of Welsh industry at Wales House in Brussels, as were other witnesses such as the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport and European Enterprise Network at Swansea University. It was interesting to hear from the European Enterprise Network that there had not been any conversation about the higher education sector expanding its representation to include business.²⁴

46. The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) Cymru Wales spoke about the lack of a current strategy on communication with SMEs regarding engagement in EU funding opportunities and the need to raise awareness of the programmes “in a language that they understand as SMEs”.²⁵

47. The European Enterprise Network suggested that:

“Ultimately, it is about a partnership between organisations such as universities and the Welsh Government, working together to be able to communicate the messages of how businesses can access the funding and ensuring the right support is there to allow companies to make these applications for funding in a streamlined way.”²⁶

48. The recommendations that follow are therefore designed to develop and enhance the Welsh Government’s strategic role in increasing participation in the EU funding programmes as a whole. The recommendations introduce themes that are explored in more detail within the remaining chapters of this report.

²³ Record of Proceedings paragraph 510, 20 March 2014

²⁴ Record of Proceedings paragraph 181, 26 March 2014

²⁵ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 163 and 171, 26 March 2014

²⁶ Record of Proceedings paragraph 178, 26 March 2014

Recommendations 1 and 2: the Welsh Government should

Ensure that the new EU strategy sets clear objectives to maximise participation in all EU programmes available to Wales, including requirements on Welsh Government departments to champion engagement within their remit, and drawing on the considerable experience and expertise on EU policy and funding that exists in Wales and with Brussels-based representatives.

Consider establishing an “EU Funding Champion” in Wales to provide leadership in driving forward the delivery and implementation of the new EU strategy and in providing a focal point for EU matters within Wales.

49. We would also like the Welsh Government to explore and develop with key stakeholders new support structures to facilitate participation in EU funding programmes, drawing on the many good ideas suggested in our inquiry.

Recommendations 3, 4, 5 and 6: the Welsh Government should

Establish a central contact point for organisations within Wales and for those outside Wales looking for Welsh partners.

Develop specialist, tailored support for the youth, education and transport sectors along the lines of the MEDIA Antenna model for the cultural sector.

Cultivate partnerships between stakeholders across the higher and further education sectors, business and the third sector to share expertise, resources and good practice.

Review the representation in Wales House in Brussels to address current gaps, notably how its services can be accessed by businesses, further education, the third sector and the creative and cultural sectors.

International mobility

Erasmus+

50. Erasmus is the brand name associated with mobility in higher education within the EU over the past 30 years. The programme was named after the Renaissance philosopher but also stands for European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students.

51. For 2014-2020 the “Erasmus” brand will be expanded into Erasmus+ and will primarily focus on three key actions: individual learning mobility (which will receive the bulk of the funding); cooperation projects focused on innovation (strategic partnerships and knowledge/skills alliances); and support for policy reform. The new programme will include actions in school education (previously the Comenius Programme); adult education (previously the Grundtvig Programme); higher education (previously the Erasmus Programme); vocational and work-based training (previously the Leonardo Programme); youth mobility, volunteering and citizenship actions (previously a separate Youth in Action Programme); as well as the continuation of Jean Monnet actions.

52. Much of the new programme will be delivered as “decentralised actions” managed by National Agencies in each Member State. For the UK this will continue to be the British Council (providing support to the whole of the UK from its office in Cardiff) and Ecorys.²⁷ The “centralised actions” will be managed from Brussels, by the Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture.

53. The British Council told us that:

“For all aspects of the lifelong learning programme...Wales is at least attracting its share of the budget in relation to the population size...In the case of youth, further education and schools, 7% or 8% of the budget is going to Wales, whereas the population size I would say is 4.8%, or something just under 5%...If Wales had greater demand, it could have even more, potentially, because the UK is seen as a whole.”²⁸

²⁷ Ecorys is an international provider of research, consulting and management services focused on the development, delivery and evaluation of public policy

²⁸ Record of Proceedings paragraph 37, 12 March 2014

The benefits of Erasmus

54. As we learned from our round-table discussions with Erasmus students and staff at Cardiff and Cardiff Metropolitan Universities, international learning experience is important for personal development, increasing confidence, employability and self-esteem. Professor Colin Riordan, President and Vice Chancellor of Cardiff University referred to “very convincing evidence that it increases [students’] employability, and even improves their grade point average”.²⁹

55. ECTARC, the European Centre for Training and Regional Cooperation based in Llangollen, told us that the results are “quite staggering”:

“Every year, we send 100 to 120 graduates. We analyse the results of what they are doing now in the following six months: 61% are in full-time employment; 14% have gone on to professional training - a post-graduate certificate in education or equivalent; 13% are studying for a Master’s degree; 8% are employed abroad; 2% are in part-time freelance work; 1% are in training and another 1% are working freelance. No-one was unemployed six months after returning. These are staggering figures.”³⁰

56. Erasmus also brings benefits to institutions and their reputations. Professor Russell Deacon, Lecturer in History and Politics at Coleg Gwent, highlighted the considerable benefits from having Erasmus students study in Wales, such as the impression students have of Wales and the overseas networks that can be developed as a result.³¹ He believed that:

“With the right joined up thinking the Erasmus programme could be adapted to Wales’s economic benefit to the potential of tens of millions of pounds in exports and inward investment. It could also substantially increase the learning experience of students studying in Wales by effectively internationalising the curriculum and drawing on this substantial international resource.”

²⁹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 7, 3 April 2014

³⁰ Record of Proceedings paragraph 87, 12 March 2014

³¹ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 35-38, 12 March 2014

The barriers to Erasmus

57. Welsh universities received over €11 million in grant funding during 2006/7 to 2012/13 and 5 per cent of UK students participating in mobility actions came from Welsh universities. Cardiff University was the highest performer. However, we heard from the British Council that “there are still nearly twice as many students coming into the whole of the UK, including Wales, as there are going out.”³²

58. Written evidence and research articles submitted by Professor Deacon highlighted a discrepancy in performance between pre-1992 universities and the new universities created in 1992: a student from a pre-1992 university was 17 times more likely to participate in Erasmus.³³ He attributed this decline primarily to the fact that participation before 1992 was a mandatory requirement for around 50 per cent of students compared with less than 10 per cent after 1992.

59. Professor Deacon also attributed lower take-up rates in Erasmus to a host of factors such as lack of awareness and understanding of the opportunities; perceived language barriers; concerns over impact on studies; personal factors such as the influence of parents and peers; financial restraints; and lack of confidence. In his oral evidence he also referred to the difficulty that students faced in finding short-term accommodation,³⁴ and also that there is a lack of recognition of international experience in many degrees.

60. Professor Deacon’s comments about the barriers faced by potential Erasmus students chimed with those expressed at our round-table discussions with Cardiff and Cardiff Metropolitan Universities (see Annex C), particularly those surrounding finance and having to pay for accommodation both at home and abroad. When we asked Professor Riordan about this problem for he told us he was not aware of it, but he promised to look into it because “if there are barriers, I want us to do whatever we can to remove them”.³⁵

61. Professor Deacon also raised concerns about the lack of engagement by academics, which in turn affects student participation levels:

³² Record of Proceedings paragraph 68, 12 March 2014

³³ Professor Russell Deacon written evidence page 2

³⁴ Record of Proceedings paragraph 9, 12 March 2014

³⁵ Record of Proceedings paragraph 13, 3 April 2014

“The biggest barrier that I have come across in the institutions is that the institutions do not facilitate or encourage academics to engage within the programme...So, what happens is that you lack expertise within the institution. So, students are obviously quite concerned that very few people go out there. They do not want to experiment on themselves; they want to see students who have been successful and gone on it, and they also want academic processes to know that it can be successful.”³⁶

62. We heard during the inquiry that countries such as Germany have a high participation rate in Erasmus and also a highly organised Erasmus programme for students arriving from abroad.³⁷ Professor Deacon told us:

“In Germany, often, for example, when we connected with departments for teacher training, the students were unable to gain employment unless they did spend a period abroad. So, it was compulsory, and if it was not compulsory, they would not expect to get an opportunity in employment. The more people that go on it, the more it encourages others and others feel concerned that they have stayed behind.”³⁸

63. We were concerned to hear from ECTARC that because its co-funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales has been cut it will struggle to find the funds to continue to send 200 graduates a year to Europe. ECTARC also told us:

“It has been difficult for an organisation like ours to find the right route and who to speak to about it because it is higher education, but it is also careers and people in the labour market. The target group that we work with is very cross-cutting. I have had to go through our local AM and the Deputy Minister to find a route to get to speak to the right people in the Welsh Government to say, ‘How can we get co-funding for this project?’”³⁹

64. Written evidence from Colleges Wales underlined the importance of participation in EU programmes to the further education sector in Wales. The paper described engagement in EU programmes as part of

³⁶ Record of Proceedings paragraph 24, 12 March 2014

³⁷ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 23 and 27, 12 March 2014

³⁸ Record of Proceedings paragraph 23, 12 March 2014

³⁹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 140, 12 March 2014

the sector's "core business" in promoting economic revival and skills enhancement.⁴⁰ Colleges Wales itself plays a leadership role in helping Welsh colleges to engage with the programmes, particularly the Leonardo programme and in future, collaborative projects under INTERREG.

65. We were very interested to hear that Colleges Wales had appointed an International Coordinator in 2010, which was funded by the Welsh Government for the first year and subsequently by Colleges Wales, to encourage participation by Vocational Education and Training learners and staff in the Leonardo Programme. Colleges Wales has also supported engagement with partners outside the UK, from Catalunya, the Basque Country and Ireland, for example. We believe that hubs of expertise such as this are essential for harnessing the activity and effectiveness of the sector in accessing funding opportunities.

66. Colleges Wales highlighted the fact that some of the centrally administered funds in Brussels were not being exploited even though "there is real money there".⁴¹

67. We believe that Wales therefore needs to develop a more strategic approach to capitalising on the benefits that programmes such as Erasmus+ can offer individual students and institutions as a whole.

Targets for increasing mobility

68. Professor Colin Riordan has been a pioneer at Cardiff University and at a UK level to increase the profile and priority given to outward mobility for UK students not only in the EU but also globally. He chaired a Joint Steering Group on Outward Student Mobility in 2011 which culminated in the adoption of a new UK Strategy on Outward Mobility in December 2013. In the two years he has been in post in Cardiff he has set a target for 17 per cent of the University graduating students in 2017 to have undertaken some form of study abroad as part of their course. This target is being supported by an outward mobility bursary scheme worth £1.6 million over four years, a Languages for All programme, and a new global opportunity centre, which will be a one-stop shop for students who want to go abroad, to advise and support them.

⁴⁰ Colleges Wales written evidence paragraph 2

⁴¹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 77, 12 March 2014

69. Professor Riordan told us:

“When we looked at it in Cardiff it turned out that we already had 12% of our students going abroad, and I set a target of 17% by 2017, which is **slightly whimsical** in a way, but the idea of that was so that it would stick in people’s minds, and it actually has. We certainly want to go well beyond that, so I hope that before 2017 we will hit that target and then we will set much more ambitious ones.”⁴²

70. Cardiff University’s target received a general welcome from many of our witnesses. The British Council told us:

“For institutions to set targets like this and set some of their own challenges really encourages them to think what the barriers are that they can address themselves by making some changes in their approach and curriculum.”⁴³

71. However, from our discussions with Cardiff University and Cardiff Metropolitan University we heard that some courses such as languages and medicine have much higher outward mobility rates than others such as engineering, where the curriculum is not so internationalised.

72. While Cardiff may be in the vanguard of Welsh and English universities in this respect, it is still way short of countries such as Germany, which is aiming at a 50% target. When we asked Professor Riordan to describe the level of engagement of Welsh Government in the UK outward mobility strategy and whether it was afforded the right level of status, he responded with the memorable phrase, “Low and no”.⁴⁴

73. Professor Riordan was, however, encouraged by the “sea change” in the UK, which is now more positive towards outward mobility in higher education:

“We would be very happy to advise and assist other universities that want to go down the same route. However, it depends on the resources of the particular university. They may not be able to put in the same resource in that we can. However, there is

⁴² Record of Proceedings paragraph 5, 3 April 2014

⁴³ Record of Proceedings paragraph 75, 12 March 2014

⁴⁴ Record of Proceedings paragraph 51, 3 April 2014

plenty of support out there from the European Union and other sources.”⁴⁵

74. We heard from Professor Riordan that the Higher Education Funding Council for England is contributing £2,250 for each student studying abroad (not just in the EU). The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales is not able to follow suit because of financial constraints, which means that Welsh universities would have to fund that amount themselves. Professor Riordan estimated an equivalent contribution might be in the region of about £1 million to £2 million.⁴⁶

75. We recognise the considerable influence and impact of individuals in providing the driving force for student mobility, but we believe there also needs to be a corporate and strategic commitment across the education sector. As Professor Riordan stated there are “major issues confronting” Welsh universities but “that should not stop us from doing it.”⁴⁷

Recommendations 7 and 8: the Welsh Government should

Set clear objectives for all higher education institutions in Wales to engage more with the UK-wide strategy for outward student mobility including: a campaign to promote the benefits of studying and working abroad, providing language learning courses, assisting with short-term accommodation provision, internationalising curricula and providing commensurate capacity and funding.

Explore with higher education institutions the creation of a Wales-wide alumni network for international students, including Erasmus students, who have studied in Wales and Welsh students who have studied abroad, to maximise the impact of their international contacts.

Support mechanisms

76. Colleges Wales suggested there could be a one-stop-shop or single point of contact in the Welsh Government for lifelong learning programmes.⁴⁸ The European Enterprise Network at Swansea University

⁴⁵ Record of Proceedings paragraph 16, 3 April 2014

⁴⁶ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 26-29, 3 April 2014

⁴⁷ Record of Proceedings paragraph 53, 3 April 2014

⁴⁸ Record of Proceedings paragraph 127, 12 March 2014

also saw a leadership role for the Welsh Government in bringing partners together to access funding opportunities.⁴⁹

Recommendation 9: the Welsh Government should

Bring together the further and higher education sectors and national agencies such as British Council, Ecorys and organisations such as ECTARC to develop synergies, share best practice, and build links to access separate strands of funding and engage with the centrally run programmes within the European Commission.

77. Colleges Wales also pointed out that co-operation between the vocational education and training (VET) strand and the higher education strand is difficult because they are separately funded, with different criteria and different managing agencies in the UK - Ecorys for VET and the British Council for Erasmus+ as it relates to higher education. Colleges Wales admitted there was far more that could be done to maximise lifelong opportunities in the future, and although there was no clear-cut need for a Brussels-based representation, it was an idea worthy of consideration.⁵⁰ This is an issue we return to later in this report.

International youth working and volunteering

78. We believe that opportunities to study and work abroad should be available not only through the vocational and higher education streams but for all young people, including those who are not in full-time education, employment or training and from communities or families where travelling abroad and having an international outlook is not a normal part of growing up. The Youth in Action programme is therefore an important vehicle for providing those kinds of opportunities.

79. UNA Exchange⁵¹ supports participation in the European Voluntary Service, which was part of the Youth in Action Programme and which will be incorporated into Erasmus+ for 2014-20. UNA Exchange spoke passionately to us about the benefits of the scheme for increasing young people's motivation and aspiration and the need for:

⁴⁹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 194, 26 March 2014

⁵⁰ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 120-121, 12 March 2014

⁵¹ UNA Exchange is a charity based in Cardiff which supports people to volunteer on projects in over 60 countries

“Investing in longer term support mechanisms and seeing this as part of an on-going programme of youth work, so that European opportunities have a role to play within a wider youth work offer.”⁵²

80. Connect Cymru⁵³ told us that there was a need for a more strategic approach to drawing down EU funding for international youth work opportunities, and held up Northern Ireland as a good example:

“Groups, such as that in Northern Ireland, which is very well-organised strategically in this area, seem to be able to draw down, or there are groups within the country that seem to be better organised to draw down, significant amounts of funding that other nations do not draw down. So, for example, if we were working on something like the Barnett formula, Northern Ireland probably brings in somewhere in the region of three to four times the amount of funding that it would probably be allocated otherwise.”⁵⁴

81. We were informed by Connect Cymru that the British Council no longer wished to work in partnership with Connect Cymru as an Information Provider in Wales, or with YouthLink Scotland and the National Youth Agency. Connect Cymru considered this was “potentially a threat to the autonomy of devolved administrations in terms of how they want this European funding to be best utilised within a national setting”.⁵⁵

82. When we questioned the British Council about this we were told that it was “extremely keen to continue working with Connect Cymru” but its arrangement for Connect Cymru to provide a “low-level information service” would not continue as it was restructuring this service (e.g. the website, social media and events and seminars) for the whole of its work in the UK:

“We will manage those as a single piece, rather than having small pieces of it delegated out in these little contracts, which, although they have been effective, we feel given the size and

⁵² Record of Proceedings paragraph 178, 12 March 2014

⁵³ Connect Cymru promotes international youth work opportunities and is the Information Provider in Wales for the Youth strand of the Erasmus+ programme, undertaken through a memorandum of understanding with the British Council

⁵⁴ Record of Proceedings paragraph 173, 12 March 2014

⁵⁵ Record of Proceedings paragraph 184, 12 March 2014

scope of the programme, there is a better way of doing this. We want our relationship with Connect Cymru to be a partner relationship to understand and better the links with Welsh Government policy on the youth service and to work with it and others. We know that there are hundreds of youth and voluntary organisations in Wales, and we want to be sure that we are properly connected, listening to and engaging with the voice of the youth sector in Wales.”⁵⁶

83. We find it hard to comment on the impact that the British Council’s change in policy will have because of the recognised lack of evidence of achievements by organisations in this area.⁵⁷ We do welcome the British Council’s comments, however, about “recruiting an impact and assessment and evaluation resource to create a framework within which we will more systematically assess and evaluate the benefits of these programmes”.⁵⁸ We believe that a reporting structure from the British Council’s Advisory Committee for Wales into the Welsh Government could help in this respect.

84. We also note that the European Commission keeps data on overall participation by the UK for the Erasmus higher education mobility programme but not below Member State level.

Recommendation 10: the Welsh Government should

Monitor trends in student mobility, including British Council data on its Erasmus+ and youth programmes, and ensure the outcomes and impact of engagement and participation by the youth sector are systematically captured.

85. We heard from UNA Exchange and Connect Cymru⁵⁹ that the increase in funding for the Youth strand of the new Erasmus+ programme, if accessed and used strategically, could help offset the cuts to local authority youth services in Wales. The point was well made that even a small injection of resource could have a disproportionate multiplier effect in benefiting hard to reach groups of young people.

⁵⁶ Record of Proceedings paragraph 19, 12 March 2014

⁵⁷ Record of Proceedings paragraph 192, 12 March 2014

⁵⁸ Record of Proceedings paragraph 58, 12 March 2014

⁵⁹ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 202-203, 12 March 2014

Recommendation 11: the Welsh Government should

Consider providing core strategic funding for youth organisations in Wales to work together in drawing down more EU funding for international youth work and volunteering.

International cooperation

INTERREG

86. The INTERREG programmes for 2014-20 of most relevance to Wales are still under preparation. It is not therefore possible at this stage for us to make an informed assessment of the potential opportunities that the programmes will present to organisations in Wales. We do intend to hold further evidence sessions once the detail of the programmes becomes available, either later in 2014 or early 2015.

87. The Welsh Government's paper noted that Welsh partners were involved in 89 INTERREG projects during the 2007-13 period, resulting in around €41.5million of EU funding coming to Wales. The largest share is under the Ireland-Wales programme (41 projects), then the two Transnational Programmes, Atlantic Area (17 projects) and North West Europe (16 projects). Wales has 13 Interregional Cooperation programme and two URBACT projects.⁶⁰

88. According to Colleges Wales, INTERREG programmes are more challenging than the mobility programmes because in order to access the funding streams, there needs to be a multinational alliance of colleges and technology institutes across a relatively broad range of European countries.⁶¹ There is also the challenge of sustaining those partnerships not only during a project but also beyond its lifetime.

89. We heard from Colleges Wales that:

“It is very important that the INTERREG programmes form a coherent part of any Welsh Government strategy for European funding generally: that they are not seen as a separate part of it; and that there should be an identification of areas where INTERREG can contribute fully to Welsh Government policy and where there are those synergies with Welsh Government policy ...with sustaining partnerships, there could be an opportunity for the next round of programmes to have more involvement and more dissemination of information through events and

⁶⁰ Welsh Government written evidence Annex A

⁶¹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 112, 12 March 2014

communication to try to engage more organisations within the INTERREG programme in particular.”⁶²

90. The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) Cymru Wales told us that INTERREG could be used to fund projects such as extending the Bwcabus⁶³ concept to more areas of Wales or as a knowledge transfer to, say, Ireland, through the Ireland-Wales scheme.⁶⁴ However, while CILT highlighted a number of potential projects, it also felt “there has been a lack of engagement by Welsh organisations from the transport and logistics industry” in INTERREG in the 2007-13 period.⁶⁵

91. Additionally, Milford Haven Port Authority detected a lack of private sector focus:

“Much of the emphasis and availability of EU funding has, historically, been geared to the needs of the public and third sectors: little thought appears to have been made to the value of engaging private sector interest and investment to identify and support potential projects.”⁶⁶

Local authority involvement

92. We received written submissions from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Isle of Anglesey County Council and Gwynedd County Council and we took oral evidence from the County Councils of Powys, Carmarthenshire and Conwy. We invited Gwynedd to provide oral evidence, but our invitation was declined.

93. One of the key messages to emerge from that body of evidence was that while some Welsh local authorities have participated in programmes such as Leonardo, Youth in Action and INTERREG, most have focused primarily on the main Structural Funds and Rural Development Programmes: participation in other EU programmes has been limited and fragmented. The WLGA commented that the main reason for this focus was that “these programmes have seemingly

⁶² Record of Proceedings paragraph 130, 12 March 2014

⁶³ Bwcabus is a commercial demand-response bus network in Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion

⁶⁴ Record of Proceedings paragraph 83, 26 March 2014

⁶⁵ CILT written evidence

⁶⁶ Milford Haven Port Authority written evidence

offered the best opportunities for local authorities to access European funding”.⁶⁷

94. Other factors were identified, however, including lack of leadership, strategy and vision; lack of a single contact point in the Welsh Government to provide advice and guidance; the perception of overseas visits as being wasteful and not adding sufficient value; lack of sharing of good practice and low awareness of the opportunities available.

95. Conwy County Council told us it did “not have the resources to dedicate in the same way to undertake the other European programmes”.⁶⁸ The Council also made the telling point that:

“We are very much driven by our own local authority and our own local strategies from our elected members. So, we do have to focus - they always want to see something at the end of the project. However, that is not always possible with INTERREG-type projects. While they are obviously very valuable in their own right, they do not put a building at the end of the street.”⁶⁹

96. In contrast, Powys County Council told us that it had had a significant involvement in INTERREG IVC:

“It was the first time that the Council had been involved in this type of project, so it was a steep learning curve to begin with...However, we have seen some significant positive outcomes at the end...We found that, rather than reinventing the wheel, we could talk to partners across Europe and use the projects to focus on common problems and find out about the solutions that other local authorities and public sector organisations have found...At the same time, we have been able to share our experiences with them.”⁷⁰

97. One of the key ingredients for success with these projects has been political buy-in and engagement:

⁶⁷ WLGA written evidence paragraph 6

⁶⁸ Record of Proceedings paragraph 219, 12 March 2014

⁶⁹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 239, 12 March 2014

⁷⁰ Record of Proceedings paragraph 217, 12 March 2014

“We have built from the very beginning of the programming period involvement at leadership level with the Cabinet member and the chief executive.”⁷¹

98. Powys County Council made a similar point to Conwy about the problem with political buy-in:

“It is a bit more difficult to explain the benefits and the long-term sustainability of the results that can be achieved through INTERREG, compared...to building a road or having a tangible output at the end of the project. What we have found, as a result of our involvement with the INTERREG projects in particular, is that the capacity of the officers within the authority and within the organisations that we work with has benefited the most. That provides a long-lasting, but less easily measurable, benefit within the authorities.”⁷²

99. The WLGA’s written paper suggested a number of actions to improve this situation in the future, such as enabling joint working across organisations and sectors; the creation of regional specialist teams made up of key partners, which is being considered with WEFO; and promoting the benefits and good practice in transnational partnership working. The WLGA was critical of the Welsh Government’s 2012 EU Strategy.

100. The call for a more coherent and joined-up approach was echoed in the evidence submitted by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), Welsh Higher Education Brussels, Theatr Cynefin, Connect Cymru and Colleges Wales.

101. Our conclusion from the evidence is that there is not only a lack of strategic approach towards EU funding within local government in Wales but also a lack of ambition. There is some good practice, but overall the picture is fragmented. To our minds, this is in marked contrast with the further education sector, where there is far more cooperation and impact yet with far fewer resources. It is essential that the WLGA should now show leadership in this area and that the resources deployed to support EU activity in local government should be organised to much greater effect for the 2014-20 period.

⁷¹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 280, 12 March 2014

⁷² Record of Proceedings paragraph 240, 12 March 2014

102. We were encouraged to hear the Minister for Finance's announcement on 11 April⁷³ that responsibility for managing the Ireland/Wales programme for the period 2014-2020 will pass to the Welsh Government (WEFO), working in partnership with the Irish authorities. The total programme value is also set to increase to around €92 million (around £75 million). We believe this represents a real opportunity to drive forward Welsh priorities.

Recommendation 12: the Welsh Government should

Work with local government to bring together people who have the relevant expertise to develop an action plan for strengthening and promoting the participation of local authorities directly in the broader development and initiation of European policy and funding streams and for integrating the different funds to maximise the outcomes for the people of Wales.

⁷³ Written Statement by the Welsh Government, 11 April 2014

Creative Europe

103. The Creative Europe Programmes are managed centrally from the European Commission's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. There are "National Desks" whose role it is to facilitate participation in the programmes, although they are not involved in the application and assessment process: this is all centralised in Brussels.

104. The European Commission's Media programme provides support for film productions from pre-production through to distribution, primarily in the form of direct grants to companies and organisations. For 2014, three new initiatives will be available - Audience Development and Film Literacy, International Co-productions and Video Games.

105. In Wales, Fiction Factory's recent "Hinterland/Y Gwyll" television drama series was supported through the Media programme. Fiction Factory told us that it had already sold the series to more than a dozen countries across the world, which had succeeded in raising the profile of the company and of Welsh drama generally. The company told us:

"The ambition of the series was greater than the money that was available from the local broadcasters, from S4C and BBC Wales. Therefore, it was crucial for the project that we received that European funding, and it will be crucial for future projects."⁷⁴

106. In the UK the National Desk for the Media sub-programme is the British Film Institute and for the Culture sub-programme it is the British Council. There are Antennae that come off the Media desk, which are run in the separate nations. Media Antenna Wales is run within the Welsh Government by the creative industries team. Its role is to support audio-visual companies in Wales in applying for funding to work more internationally.

107. We were impressed with the Welsh Government witness from Media Antenna Wales. She spoke about the importance of seeking new partners, of being integrated into the wider creative industries team, and of seeking to make Welsh companies more sustainable after the initial funding for productions:

⁷⁴ Record of Proceedings paragraph 98, 20 March 2014

“The beauty of the way that we deliver Media Antenna is that it sits within a creative industries team that is responsible for the delivery of the economic growth of the creative sector throughout the whole of Wales. So Media Antenna does not exist in isolation; it exists with all of the work that is going on to support the creative industries sector. So, all of it is completely integrated all the time. So, we are constantly looking out for new partners and new ways of working.”⁷⁵

108. In their oral evidence both Fiction Factory and Chapter Arts Centre commented on the significant time and resources it takes to put together applications and collaborations under the Creative Europe programme. They praised the proactive, tailored support of the Media Antenna and the support of Wales Arts International and UK Cultural Contact Point in helping them with the paperwork and administration involved.⁷⁶

“Having a massive pile of papers to fill in, in order to get a bit of funding, can be frustrating. I think that that is one of the things that Judy, who runs MEDIA Antenna, is really good at. She sits with companies for quite extended periods of time and helps them to fill in their application forms and helps them to make sure that, by the time that the application form goes forward to Brussels, it is right and correct, so there is not lots of to-ing and fro-ing. So, she always checks the forms and helps companies to fill them in.”⁷⁷

109. We believe that Media Antenna Wales is a successful and well respected model to emulate for encouraging engagement in EU funding in other sectors (see Recommendation 3 above). We were encouraged to hear that for 2014-20 the Welsh Government will provide similar support for participation in the Culture sub-programme of Creative Europe. We would stress the importance of ensuring that the post-holder can bring expertise and knowledge of the arts sector in Wales to give credibility to the post.

110. The lack of any Brussels presence for the Welsh media industry was not seen as a problem for either Fiction Factory or Chapter.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Record of Proceedings paragraph 29, 20 March 2014

⁷⁶ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 111-113 and 138-151, 20 March 2014

⁷⁷ Record of Proceedings paragraph 64, 20 March 2014

⁷⁸ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 118-119, 20 March 2013

However, we did hear that the media industry in Wales may be disadvantaged in applying under the Media programme compared with newer Member States because it is part of the UK and therefore considered to have a strong audio-visual industry.⁷⁹

Recommendation 13: the Welsh Government should

Champion the Welsh creative industry sector within Europe, to ensure that Welsh companies are not disadvantaged in applying for funding under the Creative Europe programme because they are considered part of a strong UK audio-visual industry as a whole.

⁷⁹ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 33 and 114, 20 March 2014

Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T)

TEN-T and Connecting Europe Facility Regulations

111. Two new EU Regulations setting out European Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network and establishing the Connecting Europe Facility have both entered into force in 2014.

112. TEN-T is a set of strategically significant road, rail, air and water transport networks that have been identified by the European Union as being of particular importance to promote the smooth functioning of the internal market and to strengthen economic and social cohesion.

113. Wales is included on the core and comprehensive TEN-T networks established by the new TEN-T regulation. These must be delivered to defined infrastructure standards by 2030 and 2050 respectively. However, Wales is not included in any core network **corridors**, the administrative structures established to support delivery of the core network, even though this had initially been proposed by the European Commission.

114. The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) is the EU financial instrument to support the development of the transport, energy and telecoms sectors between 2014 and 2020. In this inquiry we have focused on transport elements of the CEF.

115. 80 to 85 per cent of CEF funding is reserved for projects listed in Annex 1 of the CEF Regulation. While the majority of those projects are linked to core network corridors, Welsh projects do feature in the annex, being classified as projects related to “other sections of the core network” that are not included in a corridor. Wales may also submit projects under other “horizontal priorities” included in the annex.

116. CEF funds will be centrally managed by the European Commission and allocated in two streams: grants and innovative financial instruments. The grants are administered through the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA, formerly the TEN-T Executive Agency) and awarded on a competitive process. Proposals must be submitted by Member States, although international organisations, joint undertakings, or public or private undertakings or bodies

established by Member States may submit bids with Member State agreement.⁸⁰ Any grant applications from Wales must first be approved by the UK Department for Transport.

117. The Innovative Financial Instruments are managed by means of partnerships established by the Commission with the European Investment Bank and other financial institutions.⁸¹

Wales's omission from the core network corridor

118. On 21 November 2013, we held an evidence session with officials from the European Commission's Directorate General Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) to explore the implications of Wales's exclusion from the corridor network, as well as the purpose and impact of the Regulations and the potential benefits for Wales.

119. The European Commission told the Committee that while the UK Government led the negotiation on the UK maps, "experts from Wales" were involved.⁸² This was confirmed by the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport when we scrutinised her on 5 December 2013 regarding the Welsh Government's role in the negotiations on the TEN-T network.

120. The European Commission official also stated that the UK Government had been "very attentive to the position of Wales". He stated that both Milford Haven and the North Wales Mainline had been added to the core network at the request of the UK Government.⁸³

121. The European Commission official told the Committee that:

"The corridors are only an implementation instrument. They are not a priority, as such, in the Connecting Europe Facility. The corridors re-group projects together that are in the core network, but they do not form a third layer of prioritisation. So there is only a distinction made between the comprehensive and core [networks]."⁸⁴

⁸⁰ European Parliament and Council, [Agreed text: Regulation establishing the Connecting Europe Facility](#), November 2013, Article 7

⁸¹ European Parliament and Council, [Agreed text: Regulation establishing the Connecting Europe Facility](#), November 2013, Article 14

⁸² Record of Proceedings paragraph 175, 21 November 2013

⁸³ Record of Proceedings paragraph 164, 21 November 2013

⁸⁴ Record of Proceedings paragraph 150, 21 November 2013

122. He continued:

“If you are in a corridor, you will of course have access to information from other Member States from other Regions across the corridor, whereas not being included in such a corridor of course prevents you from having this tool, though it does not prevent you from applying in any call for proposals for any of the projects that would situate themselves in the core network.”⁸⁵

123. However, when we asked him whether the position of a Regional Government applying for funding would be weakened by not having direct access to data and information via a corridor network, he agreed. He also offered European Commission support for those areas not included in a corridor.⁸⁶

124. We were particularly concerned that Holyhead was not included in TEN-T as a core port. On 5 December the Welsh Government official stated that he was not clear why Holyhead was omitted from the core network. He suggested it might have been because of a tonnage threshold or because of the obligations that inclusion would have imposed on the port. However, he was unsure because he said neither he nor the Minister for Economy, Science and Technology were responsible for transport when the maps were prepared and he had not been able to “find any paperwork”.⁸⁷ We find this account deeply unsatisfactory.

125. On 16 January we scrutinised Robert Goodwill MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport and his officials on how decisions on Welsh core and comprehensive network infrastructure were taken, why Wales no longer features in a core network corridor and how the Regulations will be implemented.

126. The responses we received to our questions confirmed to us that the whole negotiation process on the TEN-T maps and corridors between Cardiff, London and Brussels has been confused and opaque. We therefore wrote to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport and to DG MOVE to seek further clarification on the issues raised and the lessons learnt. The Minister responded on 5 February and the

⁸⁵ Record of Proceedings paragraph 152, 21 November 2013

⁸⁶ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 172-173, 21 November 2013

⁸⁷ Record of Proceedings paragraph 139, 5 December 2013

European Commission on 6 February. We also spoke to DG MOVE during our visit to Brussels in February.

Future engagement in TEN-T/CEF

127. In the context of the uncertainty about the negotiation process for the new Regulations, we were concerned by figures provided by the Department for Transport. These highlighted that as of January 2014 no applications for funding had been submitted by the Welsh Government in the last TEN-T programme (2007-13). In contrast, Transport Scotland had submitted 8 applications, although none had been successful, while Northern Ireland had submitted 11 applications of which 7 had been successful. We conclude this suggests a lack of engagement with the programme by the Welsh Government and a significant missed opportunity for Wales.

128. On 21 November 2013 the European Commission official recommended to us that in order to maximise benefits to Wales from the CEF the Welsh Government and the Committee should engage with Commission officials over applying for funding from the CEF and he offered support in developing a project pipeline.

129. The Minister for Economy Science and Transport subsequently wrote to all Assembly Members on 25 November 2013 to state that:

“The Welsh Core Network includes the Crewe-Holyhead mainline and we are already developing a business case for investment. Discussions on the possibility of TEN-T funding to support the development of this project have already started.”

130. During our visit to Brussels in February we met officials from DG MOVE and from the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA). They made a number of recommendations on how to benefit from CEF, including:

- Development of a pipeline of mature projects with clear strategic objectives, closely aligned to the programme / call priorities and which demonstrate EU value added;
- Engagement with DG MOVE and INEA officials who can provide advice and support. We heard that Scotland and Northern Ireland were developing their relationship with the INEA but there had been no recent contact from the Welsh Government;

- Consideration of a two-stage approach to project development beginning with studies of possible projects before moving to the projects themselves; and
- Engagement with the European coordinators who will support delivery of the TEN-T network.

131. During our later oral evidence sessions, the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) Cymru Wales criticised Wales's use of European funding for the transport sector as limited and particularly concentrated in the passenger as opposed to the freight sector.

132. The Port of Milford Haven stressed the significance of TEN-T and CEF to Wales:

"We are seeking to engage extensively with the Welsh Government and the UK Government to inform that process. I am sure that the Committee will be aware of the numbers associated with TEN-T; we think that there is about €26 billion to be allocated. There are 104 large core ports in the TEN-T network. If you do the math, that works out as a very large amount of money that Wales should be targeting, between its three TEN-T ports. My simplistic calculation would say that we should be trying to come up with £750 million to £1 billion-worth of projects. We have been submitting thoughts on investment plans to the Welsh Government. In the past, we have generally been successful in getting access to funding, but on a much smaller scale than the opportunity offered by TEN-T."⁸⁸

133. Stena Line Ports agreed that "infrastructure is where we feel the funding is needed going forward."⁸⁹ Yet we detected a potential blockage, which Milford Haven explained as follows:

"I think the Welsh Government has been quite proactive in trying to engage with us and we are trying to participate. I think the issue is that we realise that it is very much at the behest of the Welsh Government to liaise with the UK Government in order to try to move it forward."⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Record of Proceedings paragraph 8, 26 March 2014

⁸⁹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 10, 26 March 2014

⁹⁰ Record of Proceedings paragraph 14, 26 March 2014

134. CILT also suggested that the Welsh Government should support strategic transport projects (such as cross-country rail links) outside Wales:

“It is a case of not just looking at what we are doing internally, but looking at what has been put forward from Westminster, and to have discussions with the Government at Westminster as to how this would have a benefit for Wales, so that when it does a cost-benefit analysis, the widest range of benefits are included.”⁹¹

135. During our visit to Brussels we heard from DG MOVE and INEA officials about the opportunities presented by Motorways of the Sea (MoS) projects. Officials thought that MoS projects could be wide-ranging, from Liquefied Natural Gas projects to “classic” projects such as those which shift freight from road to rail.

136. An opportunity to develop projects with Irish ports was clearly identified. In particular it was explained that Holyhead could benefit from participation in projects with a core network port such as Dublin, despite its not being included in the core network itself.

137. While EU Officials thought it might be “logical” that Liverpool would be favoured over Holyhead - as it was a core port that featured on a corridor and had a greater volume of traffic - it would not be possible to consider the corridor connection between Dublin and Liverpool without considering Holyhead. The MoS Coordinator would therefore be interested in looking at opportunities from Welsh infrastructure, including Holyhead. The DG MOVE official thought that electrification to Milford Haven might also appear on the MoS project list.

138. We heard from representatives from the Welsh ports sector that there has been virtually no engagement in the EU’s Motorways of the Sea programme because in their view projects tended to be more appropriate for longer sea distances.⁹² However, the clear advice from DG MOVE and the INEA was that there were opportunities for Wales to benefit.

⁹¹ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 92-94, 26 March 2014

⁹² Record of Proceedings paragraphs 42 and 49, 26 March 2014

139. Our conclusion from this body of evidence is twofold: first we are very concerned about the Welsh Government's historical involvement in previous TEN-T programmes as well as the development of the TEN-T and CEF Regulations and the lack of a clear paper trail of decisions made when and by whom. We believe that Ministers and officials should still be held to account over those historic negotiations.

140. Secondly, we are even more concerned that the Welsh Government and potential partners appeared so unclear and uninterested about their role in engaging in the new TEN-T and CEF programmes and bidding for future projects. Correspondence⁹³ from the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport during our evidence gathering stated that she has now asked officials to follow up opportunities with the European Commission and other partners. We look forward to hearing the outcome of those discussions.

Recommendations 14, 15 and 16: the Welsh Government should Review and learn from past engagement with DG MOVE and the TEN-T Executive Agency in Brussels, particularly the negotiation of the recent TEN-T and CEF Regulations and the absence of Welsh applications to the 2007-13 programme.

Develop a close working relationship with DG MOVE, the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency and the TEN-T Coordinators to maximise benefits to Wales from the CEF.

Work with Welsh stakeholders, Department for Transport and core ports in other Member States, particularly Ireland, to raise awareness of opportunities and develop a pipeline of appropriate projects.

⁹³ Letter to the Chair, dated 28 January 2014

Annex A - Inquiry terms of reference

The terms of reference for the inquiry were to:

- Understand the main opportunities for organisations in Wales from EU funding programmes for 2014-20 falling within the remit of the Enterprise and Business Committee.
- Consider the extent to which Wales takes an effective approach to maximising the opportunities available from such funding, including the Welsh Government's EU Strategy, the extent to which EU funding is planned into the budgetary cycle of the Welsh Government and other public authorities in Wales.
- Identify individuals and organisations with a track record of success in participating in EU projects/programmes/initiatives, and explore how their experiences and abilities could be used effectively during 2014-2020.

Annex B - Programmes covered in the inquiry

Programmes	Brief description
Erasmus+	<p>Programme to support education, training, youth, and sport. Includes: (i) Learning mobility of individuals (school, FE, HE, youth, work-based placements); (ii) cooperation for innovation and exchanges of good practice (through strategic partnerships, knowledge/sectoral alliances (iii) support for policy reform (modernisation of education and training systems).</p> <p>Replaces the Lifelong Learning Programme and Youth in Action Programme, plus some others. Sport included for the first time.</p>
Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)/TEN-T	<p>Support for transport infrastructure investments across EU. (Note: the inquiry did not look at the digital infrastructure and energy strands of CEF.)</p> <p>New maps for 2014-20 introduced based on Core and Comprehensive Networks. Core to be completed by 2030; Comprehensive by 2050.</p>
COSME (Competitiveness of SMEs)	<p>EU's programme to support SMEs and SME policy. Actions to support: (i) access to markets (including European Enterprise Network); (ii) access to finance; (iii) entrepreneurship, better regulation.</p>
Creative Europe	<p>Programme to support cultural and creative industries sector. Two sub-programmes: Culture and Media.</p>
Territorial Co-operation (INTERREG Programmes)	<p>Structural Funds (ERDF) to support 'territorial co-operation'. Three types of co-operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross-Border (Wales/Ireland Programme). To be managed by WEFO. - Transnational (NW Europe Programme; Atlantic Area Programme). Management authorities not yet announced. - INTERREG EUROPE (whole of EU territory - best practice learning). <p>Plus some thematic areas (e.g. Urbact III Programme).</p>

Annex C - Stakeholder event, 6 March 2014

Members present: Keith Davies, William Graham, Rhun ap Iorwerth, Eluned Parrott, Joyce Watson

Purpose

The aim of this event was for Members of the Committee to hear the views and experiences of students, staff and academics from Cardiff University and Cardiff Metropolitan University about the European Union's Erasmus programme. This scheme enables higher education students to study or work abroad as part of their degree, and staff to teach or train in other European countries.

Nineteen people took part in the event. Assembly Members facilitated discussion among five groups on the following three themes:

- What motivated students and staff to take part in an exchange programme; what their experience had been; and what impact it had on them personally and academically;
- The benefits and barriers to encouraging more graduating students to study outside the UK for a period of their studies;
- How Wales can better support the outward mobility of students and maximise opportunities from engagement in EU programmes like Erasmus.

Assembly Members summarised the main points from each group to the full group.

Summary of the main points made

1. Experiences and benefits of the Erasmus programme

- The Erasmus programme is a definite success story.
- Erasmus broadens horizons, outlooks and experiences – it gives students “the edge” and makes them “stand out” from the rest.
- Erasmus is important on a political level as it develops cultural understanding and builds institutional and personal networks and links, including lifelong friends.
- Erasmus promotes positive attitudes and closer bonds with the EU.
- Erasmus students achieve and perform better academically.

- Students who choose to go away are more likely to take up postgraduate education.
- Erasmus students come from a variety of degree courses - e.g. modern languages, business, medicine.
- There are several motivating factors (e.g. university, school).
- Erasmus students described the administrative support offered by Cardiff University as “excellent”, although they thought the choice of universities to study abroad was quite limited.
- There was support for Cardiff University’s target for 17 per cent of graduating students to study abroad, but better consistency needs to be achieved across different departments and courses, e.g. Erasmus is compulsory for language courses but often not possible in others because of their degree credit systems.
- Cardiff Metropolitan University does not currently have an outward mobility target but is not far off.
- Erasmus Mundus is important for promoting staff mobility to non-European countries.
- Cardiff Metropolitan University has been very successful in the Erasmus Mundus programme, participating in 12 projects and leading on 6, which is more than any other institution in the UK.
- As well as giving students a great experience, Wales needs to retain the benefits not just increase the export of Welsh talent.
- There are clear benefits for universities and businesses too, e.g. increased employability, marketing/attractiveness of universities, the relationships and networks offered to university staff.
- Mobility and studying abroad should be part of all degree courses and not the exception.

2. Barriers to encouraging more graduating students to study abroad

- It can be difficult to engage students in the Erasmus programme
 - The number studying is falling.
- Finances are probably the biggest barrier, especially where students have to pay for tuition fees and accommodation abroad as well as at home.

- Under Erasmus+ there will no longer be fully funded scholarships for Erasmus Mundus.
- There is a lack of awareness about Erasmus in schools and among students not studying a language at university.
- There can be cultural barriers to students studying abroad, such as lack of confidence or perceptions of other countries and languages, although many of the courses available at European universities are through the medium of English, and therefore lack of knowledge of a European language need not be a barrier for those wanting to study abroad.
- Parents can also be a major obstacle as they play a key role in decisions over undergraduate courses in particular.
- Healthcare students tend to be female and/or mature with family commitments, which limits their ability to study abroad for a long period of time.
- An extended period abroad can prove unsettling for some Erasmus students when trying to integrate back into life and studies at their home university.
- Much of the drive comes from the passion and enthusiasm of individual staff as opposed to a coherent strategy.

3. How Wales can better support outward mobility of students

- There needs to be a national mobility strategy.
- There could be more funding to promote and market the programme and the benefits of participating – perhaps facilitated from a single point for the whole of Wales.
- There could be funding available (means-tested perhaps?) to enable greater take-up of opportunities.
- Funding should also be available to academics and coordinators to facilitate networking and meetings with European partners.
- Awareness of Erasmus should be raised with younger students, say 14 to 15-year olds through schools and with the Careers Service, as well as universities.
- School children should all have the opportunity to experience foreign exchange visits.

- Erasmus students should be used as ambassadors for the programme and to share their experiences with other students through “lecture shouts” and fairs.
- Cardiff University is setting up an ambassador programme for its new centre this autumn; Cardiff Metropolitan University has been working with individual schools – some of whom are more engaged than others.
- There needs to be greater understanding and awareness of the benefits and value of participating in Erasmus, particularly among parents.
- The administration of Erasmus could be improved.
- More non-language students should be encouraged to participate in Erasmus.
- Monitoring, measuring, bench-marking and evaluation of student mobility could be better to capture all the activity that is happening and to have a full debrief of students’ experiences.
- It is important to keep in contact with Erasmus students through a database and to track their employability and longer-term destinations.
- More could be done to harness the links between Erasmus students and businesses.
- There needs to be impetus and drive at an institutional level, with a coherent strategy that has the buy-in from staff and students.
- There also needs to be individual commitment and drive – pioneers of change who can lever in resources and make things happen.
- There should be more targets for increasing the percentage of students studying abroad.
- There should be shorter, more flexible placements available (say 1 to 2 weeks) before students commit to longer-term exchanges, and funding allocated for that, e.g. a bursary scheme for exchange programmes during the summer.
- The European links developed through Welsh Government and National Assembly channels should be exploited to benefit exchanges for Welsh students and higher education.

- Language training should be offered to support Erasmus students.
- Learning languages should be compulsory in primary and secondary schools.
- University semester cycles and degree structures should be more compatible with Erasmus placement terms.
- Regulatory bodies should be more accommodating in their credit systems to recognise the value of students studying abroad.
- Erasmus students should be awarded extra credits.
- International mobility/activity could be included in the criteria for academic/staff promotion to encourage international exchange.

Witnesses

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed in full at:

www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=1307

12 March 2014

Professor Russell Deacon, Lecturer in History and Politics, Coleg Gwent

Sharron Lusher, Principal, Pembrokeshire College

Dr Greg Walker, Deputy Chief Executive, ColegauCymru

Sharon Thomas, Executive Director, ECTARC

Jessica Blair, Policy Analyst, Institute of Welsh Affairs

Simon Stewart, Senior Lecturer, Glyndwr University and Connect Cymru
Committee Member

Helen Wales, Director, UNA Exchange

Filippo Compagni, European Funding and Projects Manager, Powys County Council

Barbara Burchell, Principal European Project Development Officer,
Community Development Service, Conwy County Borough Council

Helen Morgan, Senior Manager, West Wales European Centre,
Carmarthenshire County Council

20 March 2014

Ruth Sinclair-Jones, Director, UK National Agency, Erasmus+, British Council

Natasha Hale, Head of Sectors, MEDIA Antenna UK, Welsh Government

Elaina Gray, Business Development Director, Chapter Arts Centre

Gethin Scourfield, Producer, Fiction Factory Films

Dr Anne Howells, European Development Officer, University of Aberystwyth

Dr Liz Mills, Independent Policy Analyst

Dr David Llewellyn, Independent Consultant

Jane Hutt AM, Minister for Finance
Damien O'Brien, Chief Executive, WEFO
Jeff Andrews, Specialist Policy Adviser, Welsh Government
Jane McMillan, Head of Programme Management (European Structural Fund)

26 March 2014

Ian Davies, Route Manager, Irish Sea South, Stena Line Limited
Alec Don, Chief Executive, Port of Milford Haven
Mark Andrews, Corporate Affairs Director, Port of Milford Haven
Callum Couper, Port Manager, Associated British Ports South Wales

Dr Andrew Potter, Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University
Martin Evans, previous chair of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport Cymru Wales and Board member of CILT

Ceri Jones, Department of Research and Innovation, Swansea University
Wyn Prichard, Wales Director, Construction Industry Training Board Cymru Wales

3 April 2014

Professor Colin Riordan, President and Vice Chancellor, Cardiff University

List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All written evidence can be viewed in full at:

www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=101

Organisation

Association of British Ports

British Council and Ecorys UK

Cardiff University

Colleges Wales

Connect Cymru

CITB Cymru Wales

Professor Russell Deacon, Coleg Gwent

European Centre for Teaching and Regional Cooperation

European Training Services

General Teaching Council for Wales

Gwynedd Council

Isle of Anglesey County Council

National Museum Wales

Network Rail

Port of Milford Haven

Stena Line Ports

Swansea University

Theatr Cynefin

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Welsh Higher Education Brussels and Higher Education Wales

Welsh Local Government Association