

Chair, David Rees AM
External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

1st February 2018

Dear Chair,

Wales' future relationship with the European Union

Thank you for the opportunity to feed in to your recent Stakeholder Event on the above consolation.

As stated at that event, there are a range of challenges facing the education sector, in light of the planned exit of the European Union. We have set out some of those below.

The 21st Century Schools and Education Programme

The 21st Century schools programme has already helped to upgrade, and in some cases entirely rebuild, the school and college estate in Wales. According to the European Commission website, this Public Private Partnership (PPP) will bring significant European funds to the next phase; a further “£500m/630m to build new school and college facilities in Wales” from January 2019 until 2024.¹

We would wish to seek clarification of where alternative funding will be sourced to replace this once we leave the EU, as many of our school and college estate would benefit from work.

Further (and Higher) Education

Whilst we don't organise in the Higher Education (HE) sector, we do have some members teaching HE courses in an Further Education (FE) setting. As already mentioned, the FE estate receives ESF to help rebuild aging campuses. The FE sector also benefits from Erasmus+ funding, helping to support students and staff to visit countries in the EU and share good practice and learning.

One of our members who is a manager in FE said:

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/eipp/desktop/en/projects/project-134.html>

“FE utilises Erasmus for students and staff mobility and this is going to be a real loss to us. ESF work allows us to focus on areas that general funding does not. How are we to carry these necessary areas out without the focused funding? If it goes into a general pot there is a risk it will be swallowed up and not happen!”

Adult learning in the wider sense also supports people back into work and to gain qualifications which they would otherwise be unable to obtain.

European Social Funds and European Structural Funds work schemes have supported projects since 2007 to:

- Supported 229,110 people to gain qualifications
- Helped 72,700 people into work
- Created 36,970 (gross) jobs and 11,925 enterprises
- £85m for 33,000 apprenticeships and 12,000 traineeships across Wales at employers including Airbus, Admiral and GE Aviation
- £2.1m to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths among young people through the STEM Cymru project

Research and Innovation

WEFO currently has currently got a funding call out for ERDF ‘accelerating world-class collaboration in research and innovation’². Our members in the post-compulsory sector would be concerned about opportunities for students to study good quality courses close to home, should there be a withdrawal of funds from this sector. We realise some of the changes planned in the Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales (TERCW) are meant to mitigate some impacts on the post-compulsory sector. However, structures alone will not be enough.

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)

TTIP was a major concern for us as a union, and animated many of our members about the concerns which it raised. In short, whilst we recognise that the UK will be looking to undertake trade negotiations outside of the European Union, once leaving, we would be very concerned should anything mirror some of the concerns which TTIP threw up.

² <http://gov.wales/funding/eu-funds/2014-2020/?lang=en>

In short, TTIP is a threat to education because it includes education within the negotiated 'services' sector, and limits what the UK Government, let alone the Welsh Government, can do:

“[TTIP] is bad for democracy because TTIP seeks to put the interests of transnational companies above citizens and democratic structures, such as local authorities and the national regulations, laws and courts. The proposed 'Regulatory Cooperation Council' is an example of this. It is designed to give business an 'early warning' of new regulations in the EU before they become law – so that business can challenge them. This has been referred to by campaigners as an institutionalisation of corporate lobbying in the EU.

National government will likely have reduced ability to determine to what extent education can be a public service, and to set and regulate standards. Regulatory standards are essential for governance, accountability and probity, but local government procurement policies in support of social or environmental goals might be deemed a barrier to free trade.

For instance, our ability to set social priorities, such as ensuring equal opportunity for all using the 2010 Equalities Act, could be restricted.”³

We note that the Wales (Act) 2017 does not include employment law within devolved competence, never-the-less, such issues as raised by TTIP which have an impact on terms and conditions for our members are of significant concern.

We would appreciate any opportunities to share our members' concerns and to look in detail at proposals which are relevant to our members across education in terms of withdrawal from the European Union.

Yours sincerely,

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³ <https://www.atl.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/policy-posts/transatlantic-trade-and-investment-partnership-ttip>