



T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Clare Adamson MSP
Convener
Education and Skills Committee

(es.committee@parliament.scot)

Our ref: INT/HES
25 January 2021

Dear Convener,

I am writing to you to provide an update on Erasmus+ following the end of the EU/UK transition period and the decision by the UK Government not to associate to the programme.

As you are aware the Scottish Government has always been of the view that participation in Erasmus+ is in the best interests for the whole of the UK. I was deeply disappointed to learn of the UK Government's decision.

Scotland has benefitted enormously from our participation in the programme – we sent proportionally more participants abroad under the scheme than any other country in the UK, and attracted proportionally more participants from across Europe in return. Our participation in Erasmus+ has helped transform the lives of thousands of our students, schoolchildren, teachers, adult learners and young people.

Participation in an Erasmus+ mobility has been proven to improve self-confidence, cultural awareness, second-language learning ability and employability; what's more, these improvements have been most noticeable in those participants from our most disadvantaged communities. Furthermore, our participation in the programme has proven to have had a net positive benefit financially, with each incoming higher education participant contributing £3,000 on average to the Scottish economy.

On the basis of the limited information the UK Government have provided their proposed alternative, by comparison, appears to be a lesser imitation of Erasmus+. The Turing Scheme, funded at £105 million for one year, pales in comparison to the EU programme, which has now had its budget for the next seven years increased to €26.2 billion.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot



Turing will offer no funding to the international partners that are needed to allow mobilities to take place unlike Erasmus+, where both parties are awarded funding to facilitate the exchange of learners from one country to another. Turing will also fail to support any of the strategic partnerships currently supported by Erasmus+, which help to build relationships with partners in Europe.

Furthermore, Turing will offer no support whatsoever for our adult education or youth work sectors, while support for our colleges, schools and vocational education and training sectors will be significantly reduced, with limited amounts of funding being made available to each. In doing this the UK Government is sending a message that these areas are not deserving of full support, and that those in other forms of education – often from our most deprived communities – are not. They are taking away opportunities from our most vulnerable learners, and in doing so reinforcing pre-existing inequalities.

It is all the more unacceptable then that the UK Government is looking to impose this inadequate scheme upon Scotland through the UK Internal Market Act - legislation that overrides the devolved nature of education. We have been clear that what they are proposing is simply not good enough, and that instead any replacement funding for Erasmus+ should be given in the first instance to the Scottish Government, to allow us to exercise our right to deliver educational services within Scotland, and for the Scottish Parliament to be afforded its own right oversee this activity.

In looking to address this issue I have reached out to the European Commission, to see what level of access to Erasmus+ we may be able to secure for Scotland. I spoke with Commissioner Mariya Gabriel on 13th January, where we had a useful discussion and agreed on the need to explore what creative solutions might be possible.

I have also spoken with leading MEPs, who have expressed sympathy and support for Scotland's place in Erasmus+. A letter sent to the Commission and signed by over 145 MEPs expressing a desire for our participation in the programme to continue is greatly encouraging, and something I am deeply thankful for. I am also in contact with my counterpart in the Welsh Government – we have agreed to keep in touch as this activity progresses.

My officials and I will continue to explore ways in which Scotland can remain closely involved with Erasmus+. The benefits it has provided our learners, our past success in the programme, and the message it sends about who we are as a country: internationally-minded, open, and European – are things the Scottish Government values immensely.

RICHARD LOCHHEAD

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Accredited
Until 2020

