

Memorandum

From: Dr Joe Carson, Chair, University Council for Modern Languages (Scotland)
UCMLS Committee Members:
Professor Paul Bishop, University of Glasgow
Professor Edward Welch, University of Aberdeen
Dr Sylvia Warnecke, The Open University in Scotland
Dr Carlos Soler Montes, University of Edinburgh
Professor Stephen Forcer, Head of the School of Modern Languages and Cultures,
University of Glasgow
John Cleary, Coordinator Languages Exchange Programmes, Heriot Watt University

To: First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon
Cabinet Secretary for Education, John Swinney MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Europe, Mike Russell MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture, Fiona Hyslop MSP
Minister for Children and Young People, Maree Todd MSP
Minister for Europe, Jenny Gilruth MSP

re.: The UK's withdrawal from Erasmus+ and the replacement Turing Scheme

In its capacity as an organization dedicated to promoting the learning and teaching of languages at all levels, UCML Scotland was heartened by the Welsh Government's decision to provide additional funding to fill the gaps left by the UK Government's decision to withdraw from Erasmus+ and replace it with the Turing Scheme. Those gaps are numerous, but the most notable in our view are the invaluable reciprocal staff and student exchanges that the Turing Scheme will not fund.

We very much hope that the Scottish Government will commit to providing funding along the lines of that announced by its Welsh counterpart. In the context of Brexit and a pandemic that has seen young people unable to access learning and development opportunities in a sustained and fair fashion, we fully agree with Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford's assessment that such funding would represent 'a downpayment on our young people's futures, offering opportunities to all, from all backgrounds'

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/21/wales-sets-up-its-own-erasmus-programme>.

UCML Scotland has been extensively involved with the Scottish Government and Education Scotland in the development and implementation of the 1+2 policy. It is represented on the 1+2 Strategic Implementation Group, as well as the Scottish Association of Language Teachers, Languages Scotland and the Scottish Centre of Innovation in Language Teaching. Within the context of continuing the successful implementation of the 1+2 policy, our chief concern, among many, is the loss of mobility for primary teachers who were enabled by Erasmus+

to study abroad to enhance their language and intercultural skills as part of their Career-Long Professional Learning.

According to regional information on Erasmus+ in Scotland for the period 2014-2018 available from the British Council, in terms of Mobility (Key Action 1), 425 projects at school level were funded to the tune of €3.4m, with a further 32 Strategic Partnerships (KA2) receiving €5.0m. The loss of roughly £8m in funding for Scottish schools is catastrophic.

The funding provided by Erasmus+ played a massively important role in creating confident and competent Modern Languages teachers who can realise the 1+2 objectives in their professional settings, and inspire the young people of Scotland to become multilingual and outward looking citizens, in line with the four pillars of the Curriculum for Excellence. We consider it imperative to compensate for the loss of this mobility, which was embraced as a positive by primary and secondary teachers across Scotland. We fear that this loss has the very real potential to impact negatively on 1+2, which is a ground-breaking initiative on which the Scottish government has already spent £35.6m.

UCML Scotland is committed to the continued success of 1+2 as a hugely important contribution to the learning, social and cognitive development of Scotland's youngest learners who will in time go on to be Scotland's leaders on the world stage. As a result, we see it as vitally important that primary teachers continue to be empowered by the mobility which was previously offered by Erasmus+.

We are keen to work with Education Scotland and other national stakeholders to develop 1+2 into the future and help shape professional learning opportunities at primary and secondary levels, building on the up-skilling initiatives already offered by the Open University in Scotland. While government investment in digital learning initiatives for language learners would be welcomed, we are firmly of the opinion that nothing replaces linguistic immersion in target-language countries.

The loss of Erasmus+ will also be felt keenly in the tertiary sector. Staff and students in Scotland's Universities and FE Colleges benefited massively from the mobility afforded by Erasmus+ and the inter-institutional, inter-cultural and interdisciplinary opportunities it opened up. Since the pandemic, Erasmus+ has helped educators bring the world into their classrooms through funded virtual exchanges. More than just about language proficiency, they develop digital and intercultural skills and are accessible by everyone from everywhere.

The decline of foreign language learning is marked in Scotland as it is in the rest of the UK. However the decline is not as steep in Scotland, thanks to several years of successful partnership working involving UCML Scotland, SCILT, LANGS and SALT. Uptake of Spanish

in particular at Higher and Advanced Higher levels is rising. For Scotland's place on the world stage in the future, it is imperative to support language proficiency and inter-cultural exchange as much as possible. Following the Scottish parliamentary elections, we look forward to working with a new Scottish government to safeguard our young learners' and our Nation's place on the European and world stages.

cc.:

The Scotsman, The Courier, The Herald, The Scottish Daily Mirror, The Daily Record, The Nation, The Guardian, The Independent, TES, THES, Walesonline