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[Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes](#)

[The Enterprise and Business Committee](#)

21/10/2015

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Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cynnwys Contents

- 4 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions
- 5 Sesiwn Ddiweddarau ar Horizon 2020 ac Erasmus+
Update Session on Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+
- 23 Sesiwn Ddiweddarau ar Horizon 2020 ac Erasmus+
Update Session on Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+
- 40 Sesiwn Ddiweddarau ar Horizon 2020 ac Erasmus+
Update Session on Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+
- 49 Sesiwn Ddiweddarau ar Horizon 2020 ac Erasmus+
Update Session on Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+
- 65 Papurau i'w Nodi
Papers to Note
- 65 Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o
Weddill y Cyfarfod
Motion Under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public
from the Remainder of the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn
ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

The proceedings are recorded in the language in which they were spoken in
the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation
is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Rhun ap Iorwerth	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Mohammad Asghar	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur Labour
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
William Graham	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Conservatives (Committee Chair)
Eluned Parrott	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Andrew Clark	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr Addysg Bellach a Phrentisiaethau, Llywodraeth Cymru Deputy Director for Further Education and Apprenticeships Division, Welsh Government
Berwyn Davies	Pennaeth Swyddfa, Addysg Uwch Cymru Brwsel Head of Office, Welsh Higher Education Brussels
Iestyn Davies	Prif Weithredwr, ColegauCymru Chief Executive, CollegesWales
Yr Athro/Professor Richard Davies	Is-Ganghellor, Prifysgol Abertawe Vice Chancellor, Swansea University
Siân Holleran	Cydlynnydd Rhyngwladol, ColegauCymru International Coordinator, CollegesWales
Julie James	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Dirprwy Weinidog Sgiliau a Thechnoleg) Assembly Member, Labour (the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology)
Huw Morris	Cyfarwyddwr Sgiliau, Addysg Uwch a Dysgu Gydol Oes, Llywodraeth Cymru Director, Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong

	Learning, Welsh Government
Michaela Renkes	Uwch Reolwr Cynllunio a Chyllido Addysg ôl-16, Llywodraeth Cymru Senior Post-16 Education Planning and Funding Manager, Welsh Government
Jenny Scott	Cyfarwyddwr, British Council Cymru Director, British Council Wales
Yr Athro/Professor David Shepherd	Dirprwy Is-Ganghellor (Ymchwil a Menter), Prifysgol Bangor Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), Bangor University
Ruth Sinclair-Jones	Cyfarwyddwr, Asiantaeth Genedlaethol y DU ar gyfer Erasmus+, British Council Director, Erasmus+ UK National Agency, British Council

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

Rachel Jones	Dirprwy Clerc Deputy Clerk
Gareth Price	Clerc Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:30.
The meeting began at 09:30.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **William Graham:** Good morning and welcome to this session of the Enterprise and Business Committee. I have received apologies from Gwenda Thomas, Dafydd Elis-Thomas and Mick Antoniw. The meeting is bilingual. Headphones can be used for simultaneous translation from Welsh to English on channel 1, or for amplification on channel 2. The meeting is being broadcast, and a transcript of the proceedings will be published later. May I remind Members, and particularly witnesses, that there's no need to touch the microphones; they will come on automatically. In the event of a fire alarm, would people please follow directions from the ushers? Are there any Members who need to declare an interest in relation to any of the topics we

are going to discuss today? Eluned.

[2] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you. I would like to declare an interest, in that my husband works in a higher education institution.

[3] **William Graham:** Thank you very much.

09:31

Sesiwn Ddiweddarau ar Horizon 2020 ac Erasmus+ Update Session on Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+

[4] **William Graham:** Could I ask the witnesses please just to give their names and titles for the record?

[5] **Mr B. Davies:** Good morning. My name is Berwyn Davies, and I head the Welsh higher education office in Brussels.

[6] **Professor Davies:** My name is Richard Davies, and I'm the vice-chancellor at Swansea University.

[7] **Professor Shepherd:** I'm David Shepherd, and I'm now deputy vice-chancellor at Bangor University.

[8] **William Graham:** Thank you very much, and thank you for coming today. Our first question is from Keith Davies.

[9] **Keith Davies:** Diolch, **Keith Davies:** Thank you, Chair. Good Gadeirydd. Bore da ichi. Fe wnaif i morning to you. I will be asking my ofyn yn y Gymraeg. O edrych ar y question in Welsh. In looking at the ffigurau nawr am Horizon 2020, Horizon 2020 figures, I note that we rwy'n sylwi nad ydym ni yng in Wales aren't performing as well as Nghymru yn gwneud cystal ag Ireland and Scotland. For example, lwerddon na'r Alban. Er enghraifft, Ireland state that they have a target mae lwerddon yn dweud bod of £1.25 billion. This year, in the first ganddyn nhw darged o £1.25 biliwn. call, they have received almost £120 Eleni, yn y galwad cyntaf, maen nhw million. Scotland—what was the wedi cael bron i £120 miliwn. Mae'r figure that I have seen—have Alban wedi cael—beth oedd y ffigur a accessed £111 million. And we in welais—£111 miliwn. Ac rydym ni Wales have only had £30 million. yng Nghymru dim ond wedi cael £30 What are the reasons behind that,

miliwn. Beth yw'r rhesymau am and what can we do to improve that hynny, a beth y gallwn ni ei wneud i situation? I was surprised when I saw wella'r sefyllfa hon? Roeddwn i'n those figures. synnu pan welais y ffigurau hynny.

[10] **Professor Davies:** I think, Chairman, there are two issues here: one, the suggestion of relative underperformance in Wales; and the other, what can we do about it?

[11] Mae'n ddrwg gen i ateb yn y I apologise for answering in English. Saesneg. Nid wyf yn hollol hapus eto I'm not entirely comfortable yet in yn y Gymraeg. answering in Welsh.

[12] The issue of performance—. We get very sensitive to accusations of underperformance on research. For historical reasons, and the evidence is clearly available from many analyses, we have far less STEM—science, technology, engineering, medicine—in Wales per head of population than most other countries. That's an accident of history. Part of the solution is correcting that imbalance. The Welsh Government has been investing through Sêr Cymru and structural funds, building up capacity in Wales; and universities are investing, trying to correct that imbalance. The example I always give is that Scotland has got five medical schools. We've only recently had a second medical school. That is one of the major draws for research funding—medical schools. So, you can see the scale of difference.

[13] This is not to say that we are not ambitious in Wales. We can do significantly better. We are working in a variety of ways to do that. The critical issue to us now, in terms of going to the next level of performance, is the technical support, specialised support, within universities to make sure that you've got absolutely top-quality applications. Too many applications are failing because they are academically excellent, but they fail in terms of meeting all the requirements on impact and implementation, which are specialised requirements, which are different from the research councils of the UK. Academics are not used to this. If we look at universities that are successful in European funding, University College London is an example, they've got 15 staff in the university supporting the academics, many of them specialised and working alongside the academics, helping to write the projects. Bristol—nine. We've got one and a half in Swansea. I think Cardiff's got four or five. It's expensive. We're trying to get around this currently with consultants. We've got feedback from projects that were unsuccessful and we're using consultants to help us deal with the specialised issues that are

important for European funding. We've also put in place a lot of support networks and support structures in Brussels. Berwyn is in a very good position to talk about that.

[14] **Mr B. Davies:** I ateb eich cwestiwn chi, ym Mrwsel, un o'r rhesymau pam fod rhywle fel Iwerddon yn llwyddiannus yw achos eu bod yn wladwriaeth eu hunain. Felly, maen nhw'n medru eistedd ar bwyllgor y rhaglenni fel aelod-wladwriaeth, fel y Deyrnas Unedig. Felly, mae ganddyn nhw lais llawer cryfach, wrth gwrs, pan mae'n dod i benderfynu ar y prosiectau yn y pen draw a fydd yn cael eu hariannu. Mae gan yr Alban hefyd, wrth gwrs, lais cryf—nid yn unig o ran y Llywodraeth, ond hefyd gyda Scotland Europa. Rydym ni mewn nifer o rwydweithiau gyda nhw ym Mrwsel. Felly, fel mae Richard yn dweud, lle'r ydym ni ar hyn o bryd ydy adeiladu'r nerth yna yn y rhannau hynny o ymchwil arbennig yng Nghymru a thrio manteisio ar y cryfderau hynny ar gyfer y galwadau yn y dyfodol.

Mr B. Davies: To answer your question, in Brussels, one of the reasons why somewhere such as Ireland is successful is because they are a member state themselves. So, they can sit on the programme committees as a member state, as can the UK. So, they do have a far stronger voice, of course, when it comes to deciding on the projects that will ultimately be funded. Scotland also, of course, has a strong voice—not only in terms of the Government, but also through Scotland Europa. We are involved in a number of networks with them in Brussels. So, as Richard has said, where we are at present is we are building that strength in those particular sectors of research in Wales and trying to take advantage of those strengths where they exist for future calls.

[15] **Professor Shepherd:** Just to comment on some statistics, this is not being offered by way of excuse, but I think it's a way of interpreting what can be just a headline statistic as well, and looking at the data behind the statistic—. It's worth pointing out that, if you look at the European Research Council in coming to the UK, the UK is the biggest winner of European Research Council funding. But if you actually look at it, 33 per cent of the UK's income from the ERC goes to three universities and 56 per cent goes to eight universities. So, you begin to see straight away the disproportionate—. Seven of those eight universities are in England and one of them is in Scotland. The one in Scotland accounts for 10 per cent in its own right. So, you've got to understand that it's a very non-linear system. It goes back to Richard's point about the scale and depth across the UK.

[16] The other interesting thing—in my preparation for this meeting—which I didn't know until I prepared for it, is to recognise that the success of some of the universities I've just cited to you isn't just simply a case of their academics writing more and better proposals. Actually, fully half of the money that goes to those universities is brought on the back of European nationals who write their proposals elsewhere in Europe and then, having got the money, have the mobility to go to any university they choose to go to in Europe. They choose the obvious ones to go to, because they want to put themselves into a career context. In southern Europe, academic careers are not as healthy as they might be at the moment. One needs to understand that there's a complex mobility issue and a great disproportionality. So, it isn't just about those universities doing better; it's about them also having the historical reputation, if I can put it that way, to attract people from across Europe that have got mobility and their own funding in pocket. No university will turn somebody away who has got an ERC grant in their pocket that covers all their costs plus other costs and so on. So, it's the detail behind the statistics we always have to be mindful of.

[17] **Keith Davies:** Perhaps I should declare an interest, Chairman.

[18] **William Graham:** Okay. Bit late, Keith, but—.

[19] **Keith Davies:** My son has just left Swansea University and is doing a doctorate in Imperial College London and is being looked after by an eastern European.

[20] **William Graham:** I'm not sure you shouldn't leave the meeting now. *[Laughter.]*

[21] **Professor Shepherd:** That's not offered as an excuse; it's just important that we understand from where those statistics derive, and the disproportionality.

[22] **Keith Davies:** Mae beth **Keith Davies:** What you said, Berwyn, ddywedoch chi Berwyn, a beth and what you said, Richard, is also ddywedoch chi Richard yn bwysig important, because it's not only hefyd, achos nid o Horizon 2020 yn Horizon 2020 that gives us funding unig y gallwn gael arian. Roeddech yn opportunities. There are also the sôn am y cynghorau ymchwil. Nid wyf research councils and you mentioned yn credu ein bod yn cael ein rhan deg those. I don't think that we're getting

o'r rheini hefyd. A ydy hynny'n wir? our fair share from those either. Is that the case?

[23] **Yr Athro Davies:** Nid yw **Professor Davies:** That is not the case hynny'n wir ar hyn o bryd. at this time.

[24] When you look at the research councils in the UK, you've got to realise that most of the funding goes to medicines and science and technology. So, if you allow for the fact that we've got proportionately less science and technology, you'd expect us to get less than our share of the population in terms of research council funding, and that is what happens. Analysis after analysis has shown that that explains the discrepancy with other parts of the UK in getting lower research council money. It's just that we've got less of the relevant activities. But that's now. We are changing, and there is very considerable investment, and Sêr Cymru was a significant investment for Wales, but universities are also ploughing money back in to grow the science and technology areas, and there is an example of this in Swansea, with a whole campus based on engineering, doubling the size of our engineering school in the process. These are major developments. It takes time for this to work through. And that's structural funds investing in infrastructure, which, in due course, will increase our scale and increase our capture. I think we're doing the right thing for Wales, and when I say 'we', I mean all universities.

[25] **William Graham:** Quite so. Good. Eluned and then Jeff.

[26] **Eluned Parrott:** Two points, really: the first is that there is a truism in academia, as I recall, that money follows money, and, when a research body of some description funds you once, they're far more likely to do so again, either because your academics are used to writing the proposals in such a way as they will find them acceptable, or, alternatively, because that research body trusts you and sees what you do with that money. So, I wonder if I could have your comment on that.

[27] The second thing was that you talked about one potential reason for a lack of proposals coming through Horizon 2020 being the historic lack of science. One area where Wales is perhaps above its weight is in social sciences, and yet I see in the Horizon 2020 calls that, of the three arms that they're publishing calls on, one third, one entire arm, is on societal challenges. You have things like 'Europe in a changing world—Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies'; you have integrated transport, you have 'Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing'. They are social science

challenges. Are we being proactive enough in looking for the opportunities for humanities and social sciences to inform the science calls as well?

[28] **Professor Davies:** Again, I think you need to look at those questions one at a time, but, starting at the end, there are opportunities in the social sciences and humanities. They are much fewer than they seem from those titles, because, within those titles, a lot of the challenges are around technology, and the big issue for us in universities is the way that, in order to get really engaged with European funding, you need multidisciplinary research teams. So, the social scientists in particular tend to go in with the scientists as part of teams much more than being able now to draw down money in their own right. And you see huge activity on that. I haven't got the figures in front of me, because we have relatively small social science in Swansea, but I think that my colleagues may be to say something about this.

[29] **Mr B. Davies:** Yes. It's correct to say that there are opportunities there for the non-STEM subjects to get involved, and we are working with networks in Brussels to identify the calls that do require social sciences to be within the consortia. It's quite right to say that a lot of the calls do also cover things like consumer acceptance, consumer behaviour, as part of the calls, particularly in things like energy and transport, and we've been identifying those calls with other European partners. So, we're doing things like brokerage events as part of—for example, there's an energy brokerage event at the end of November, so what we're going to try to do is to get some of the social scientists out to talk to the, kind of, 'hard scientists' to look at common areas of interest to then build up consortia that way. And we know we do have strengths in Wales in psychology in particular at Bangor and also at Cardiff. In fact, one of the energy projects Horizon 2020 funded in 2014 at Cardiff University is done through the school of psychology there. So, that is something that we are looking at.

09:45

[30] **Professor Davies:** Before asking David, in terms of the first question, I would rephrase it: I don't think money follows money, because I don't think there's anything around peer review that is supporting your friends. I mean, it's all designed to prevent that happening. But it is true that, in all submissions to the research councils in the UK—and I've been involved in that and sat on committees for many years on that and the same in Europe—the track record is critical. How do you know somebody's going to deliver? Well, if they've delivered in the past, that is a very big plus. That's one of the

reasons. It takes time to build up confidence, and people do need a track record in other sources of funding to be able to go forward with confidence to Horizon 2020.

[31] **Professor Shepherd:** To follow that up, I think one of the challenges for us as we're looking forward is getting more and more of our early career researchers engaged with Europe, because it's that breaking into the European funding environment that's crucial to it, and that's probably where the kind of support that Richard talked about at the beginning is absolutely vital to make sure that we have experienced staff who can support early career people to build applications that are credible, not just from a scientific point of view but from a delivery point of view. To my mind, and it's true of the research career wherever, the biggest risk in any research career is that early career researcher who's got a relatively small window of time in which to make it. If they don't make it within a certain period of time, they're dead to the system because it's a hard and a cruel system. It rewards success and it punishes failure, and I think where we've got to get it right is supporting early career researchers through that threshold to be credibly funded in the future.

[32] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you.

[33] **William Graham:** Jeff.

[34] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. As you've raised the issue of STEM in response to the earlier question, I think it's probably appropriate, if I could, that I bring my question in now, and that is on the impact of science in Wales. I think you've made it quite clear, Richard and your colleagues, that, if we are lagging behind in any way, it is in those STEM subjects. You're quite right, of course. Welsh Government, I know, has an emphasis on developing more STEM learning because we need more engineers and scientists, and there is a logic to that. So, do you think that the plans that we have to improve the take-up of STEM subjects are adequate as far as they go? Are there areas in which we can improve that, and, therefore, perhaps, increase our drawdown of these grants? Then, when you've dealt with that, could I—? Maybe specifically looking at the marine energy sector as well, because that's not just an issue for Swansea but, in terms of the exploitation of the Irish Sea, it's a big issue and working with the Irish Government, indeed, on that.

[35] Then, a separate point: you mentioned as well, Richard, the issue of the structural funds. And, of course, Swansea, Bangor and other universities

are within the convergence areas. Is there some justification in saying that the application process for the awarding of the structural funds is a more straightforward process, and is that, in any way, responsible perhaps for the lower take-up of Horizon 2020?

[36] **Professor Davies:** On that final point, I do not believe that at all. I know there is some slight disagreement with Bangor, who have a slightly different perception here. We see structural funds as having quite a different purpose. Structural funds are not about actually doing the world-class science; it's providing the infrastructure that is going to be there in 20, 30 or 50 years' time. It's allowing us to get a step change in what we're achieving and what we're doing. Without that, having Sêr Cymru and these other initiatives can't work because you can invest in people but, without the facilities—and they've got to be internationally competitive facilities—you can't get anywhere. So, I strongly argue that these are different strands of funding and we need to grab the opportunity, as I think we have been doing, of structural—and Jeff knows that very well from his role in the past—

[37] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I only ask questions that I know the answers to anyway. [*Laughter.*]

[38] **William Graham:** Very wise, Jeff. [*Laughter.*]

[39] **Professor Davies:** So, we are using this wisely. We always want more, but we are ambitious, and I think that's what you want—an ambitious sector. My problem is that it will take time to actually get all that infrastructure fully functioning, attracting the people, getting them bedded in, and getting the students. Because, without student funding, we haven't got a sustainable operation. So, you're not going to see change overnight, but I can absolutely guarantee that there's already evidence of growing success as a result of these investments in the past. A big example is our medical school where all the research facilities were partly funded through structural funds, and their success is absolutely—. We now have three research-council-funded research centres in that medical school, only six to four years after the investment was made by structural funds.

[40] **William Graham:** Jeff, are you happy?

[41] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I'm happy with that part; then there's the other part on STEM.

[42] **Professor Shepherd:** Oh, sorry; I was going to just come in on that.

[43] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay.

[44] **Professor Shepherd:** Whilst Richard declares there's a slight difference, I think that where we do agree is that, and my feeling is that, I think the lag phase coming in from structural funds is a much longer payback, in that sense. I think that we can see that in Bangor, and in some ways we can answer some of the things about the marine energy sector point of view in terms of if we look at one of the big ERDF funding projects that Bangor runs in association with Swansea, which is, of course, the Sustainable Expansion of the Applied Coastal and Marine Sectors in Wales—and SEACAMS has been an extraordinarily successful programme of building relationships between the university and the marine energy sector. That is now at a point where we'll probably see the advantages of that prior investment coming in now as we see that unit acting as an interface between the marine energy industrial sector and Horizon 2020. So, my issue about the structural funds was that, actually, it has a long timeline to delivery of genuine product, which is the research activity that we want. So, I think we are in agreement in that sense.

[45] I think that we've used structural funds wisely. The original programme of structural funds, of course, was around building industrial partnerships and not about quality research. Quality research is something that's come into the new programme that wasn't in the previous programme. We used the moneys in the previous programme to build outward-facing industrial-linking activities, which we have done. I guess that that now puts us in good stead as we go into the quality science phase and go into Horizon 2020. SEACAMS, for example, is an excellent vehicle for brokering between the marine energy sector industries and the academia in the marine energy and marine environment sectors. So, I think we will see the benefits of that investment. So, whilst I might have felt that SEACAMS was a distraction at the time, its profit comes in the future, and I think that we'd all accept that. So, that would be my take on that and my variance on Richard's answer.

[46] **Professor Davies:** In terms of take-up of STEM, I'm passionate about this. I don't think the committee's got time for me to go through all that's happening and all my worries and anxieties about it. I think there is a problem. It starts at quite an early stage in schools, and all that's got to be brought together.

[47] **William Graham:** Professor Davies, you are preaching to the converted,

I assure you. Our report really shows that. Oscar, please.

[48] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you for that answer, panel. My question is just around strategic partnership and engaging businesses. What is the significance of developing strategic partnerships and structures with key players at EU level, and is Welsh Government strategic economic development aligned sufficiently to this?

[49] **Professor Davies:** These are very important issues because, at the end of the day, you want the research to work for the economy and society. We do understand that and appreciate that. I've been looking very carefully in Swansea University, and there is no problem as far as the academics, in preparing their bids, engaging with companies. Because all these research groups have got networks of companies, and that extends way beyond the shores of the UK. So, that has never been a problem. Of course, all the companies that they work with are very happy to be included in applications because they don't have to prepare them and they don't have to go through them. As far as the university bids are concerned, that is not the obstacle at all, and we are delighted by the partnerships that we have. We are getting much more professional about how academics link in across Europe. In the past, it's very much been academic research group to academic research group. We are working much more strategically, and that's true of the other universities, setting up long-term strategic relationships with individual universities on the continent. We've announced—. Grenoble is well known; there are some others developing we haven't announced yet. And we work routinely with them in developing projects and bringing in companies. I mean, why Grenoble? Well, Grenoble has a higher density of people working in R&D in the private sector than any other part of Europe. The university there is closely linked in with those. So, we work with universities with other close industrial links, but that is a business under way; that is something that we need to be wiser about and grow, but it is happening and it's happening in all universities.

[50] **Mohammad Asghar:** I'm very pleased with that development and the research and development going on in our universities in Wales. I'm sure there's a lot of competition among other universities and yourselves in Wales across the channel, and there must be competition and all the rest of it, but Welsh higher education—are they involved with the businesses and these sorts of initiatives?

[51] **Professor Davies:** Yes, we are involved. We take the lead, because with

smaller companies, very few of them have the resource and the interest, because there's a very low success rate in these bids, so, people are not—. Small companies can't put a lot of effort into something with a 13 or 14 per cent success rate, and they don't have the expertise. So, we bring them in, but they are people we are already collaborating with, normally. We do have a major European enterprise network run from Swansea with Innovate UK, which we can use to find more companies, but that is not an obstacle for us, particularly.

[52] I can also show you examples of companies we've worked with on the continent that have finished up relocating part of their operation to Swansea. We actually have a company working there, employing people only because of the work that we'd done as part of academic networks. So, we don't see business as separate from academia anymore; it's seamless.

[53] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you, Professor Davies. What it is—my final question, Chair—. The thing is, in Wales, one fourth of our area is covered with the sea and marine—you know, sea energy and development and innovation; there's a lot of potential there. What are universities doing, especially on the marine side of the energy sector to make—

[54] **Professor Davies:** If I could just say on marine, before asking David to come in, the marine, which I didn't deal with in Jeff's question—. It's very important for us to keep a portfolio of activity in alternative energy, and we've got very big initiatives, but they tend not to be specialised in one area. Marine has some distinctive challenges, but a lot of the engineering challenges are entirely generic and link through to other things. So, we've got the Low Carbon Research Institute, which works between Cardiff, Swansea and other universities bringing together a lot of expertise. The big issue here is building up mass to make a difference and their collaboration is important. We've got a major centre in Swansea, the Energy Safety Research Institute, where 'safety' means 'sustainability', and that's funded by a massive amount of money from the UK Government, as well as Sêr Cymru funding, and that has got—I can show you—a huge wave tank to look at offshore structures and they test them; it's over £1 million of investment. But it's part of photovoltaics and it's part of reducing energy consumption. These are integrated research groups working across all these areas. So, we do not separately identify research groups for funding within the marine energy area ourselves.

[55] **Professor Shepherd:** Just to add, clearly, again, Bangor has a

significant contribution to make in the marine energy sector. I think we see important opportunities. I would broaden it a little bit and it was even implicit within your question that I think we have to look at the marine sector itself, particularly the shelf sea sector. Actually, looking at Wales, there's enormous potential in Wales for the whole shelf sea arena between Bangor and Swansea. We've got enormous capability in our coastal seas, not just in terms of energy, but actually in terms of all other marine resource, as well—aquaculture and fisheries. I think we have an enormous expertise and there is an opportunity to make Wales a world-leading centre for shelf seas. We already work closely with our partners on the Irish Sea, at Liverpool, let's say, but also across the sea in Ireland. We have a number of collaborative programmes with them. I think it's something that is properly an under-realised potential—how our potential and our expertise in the shelf sea sector could see us being world leading. I think we should be wary of that.

[56] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Eluned.

[57] **Mr B. Davies:** I think at a—

[58] **William Graham:** Sorry, Berwyn, please.

10:00

[59] **Mr B. Davies:** At a European level, as well, it's possibly not by accident that Swansea was successful in 2014 in an ocean energy Horizon 2020 bid called MARIBE, marine investment for the blue economy. That's partly because the academics in Swansea have been engaged with the ocean energy forum, which is a Brussels and EU-wide network that has been responsible, in part, for writing the calls within the work programmes. So, again, engaging in those forums—. In fact, we've got a meeting with them again next week, with the ocean energy forum, with the marine cluster, which is part of the national research network, the Sêr Cymru programme. So, it's getting engaged with those forums as well within Europe; it does pay dividends in the end in terms of having successful bids in Horizon 2020.

[60] **William Graham:** Rhun, you had a point on this.

[61] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Yes, just very briefly. SEACAMS, which you've mentioned, is widely lauded as exactly the kind of project that we need to bring together research and the commercialisation of that research. SEACAMS 2 is still not yet under way. You would have thought that SEACAMS

would barely have to ask in order to secure the kind of funding that it needs, moving forward. It is, in actual fact, as you know, having to fight very, very hard and is unlikely to get exactly what it wanted. What does that tell you about the synergy between what universities can deliver and what the European funders see as their role? Shouldn't they be proactively encouraging SEACAMS to take on as much as possible—just as an example?

[62] **Professor Shepherd:** There's a whole risk I see around—I mean, we have the structural funds round at the moment, and I think, at the moment, we see delays in quite a few programmes coming forward. It's not just SEACAMS. I think one of the issues around the current round of structural funds is to build capacity and help us engage with Horizon 2020. I think we have to see the structural funds money put to work as quickly as possible. Delay, delay, delay—because, of course, there is a time lag in all these things. We're now well into the Horizon 2020 funding period, and yet the structural funds money that was presaged as being the initiation money for Horizon 2020—much of it still remains to be committed. I think there's a real risk to us in that—that the money that we have to go for Horizon 2020 is not being put to work soon enough. I think it's true within SEACAMS, but I don't think SEACAMS is in a unique position in that respect around the current round of structural funds.

[63] **William Graham:** On this point, Joyce?

[64] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, it's on the point of where we are in the place of Erasmus funding and Horizon participation, and the bang up-to-date announcements about the big foreign investment into our industry, and dealing with that to make sure that we're not squeezed out of the top jobs—I'll put it that way. So, in terms of your Erasmus and Horizon partnerships, it seems very obvious to me that engineering has a critical role to play and that, if we're going to deliver huge projects, the very best learning in engineering takes place in terms of the physical outcomes, and we're talking about business and universities working together. So, could I ask in terms of particularly the Horizon research: how central is engineering in those research bids that you will put forward?

[65] **Professor Davies:** Engineering is important, and I think—I'm looking to my experts here—about half of our successful projects in the current round are from engineering. That's approximately from Swansea University. But that's before we, you know, embrace the big expansion. Engineering has just moved, three weeks ago, into—well, it's the best equipped engineering

facility for a university in the whole of Europe now, and that's what the European Investment Bank say. And we're going to expand, and we'll be doubling in size very quickly. You know, I'm being summoned all around the world to talk about how we've attracted industry and industrial support, because well over half the funding for this campus has come from the private sector. So, you know, we really do; not only do we work with industry, but they give us money. So, this is being lauded. We've got to turn that into an engine for the Welsh economy, and that is integral to our plans, but, yes—. Well, I am passionate about engineering as somebody who started off in engineering, and I'm absolutely thrilled that I'm working in a university that has the opportunity, starting with one of the top 10 engineering schools in the UK, to grow it dramatically at a time when we're desperately needing engineers and to attract some of the best staff. So, thank you.

[66] **Professor Shepherd:** The corollary to that is that it goes back to the initial comments that Richard made at the beginning about the shape of the sector. This is a Bangor perspective, of course: we do not do engineering; it's not a discipline that's within our range. We have electronic engineering, yes, but some of the engineering we're talking about here just does not happen in Bangor for historical reasons. Again, I recognise the importance of engineering as a discipline within a university and important to invest—. But the cost to us—. Look how much money Swansea has had to invest to grow theirs. If you think about growing something from a zero base, the cost for investment to do that is colossal. So, from our point of view, again, it's about what Wales can present as a whole, and we need to recognise that the sector is in the position it's in for decisions that were made by our grandparents, in many cases.

[67] **William Graham:** Keith, very quickly from you.

[68] **Keith Davies:** I can't remember how many weeks ago it was, Chairman, when we had the EU funding ambassadors here—

[69] **William Graham:** Very true, yes.

[70] **Keith Davies:** —who were then going to spend a week out in Brussels. So, I just wanted to know about the contacts you've had with the EU funding ambassadors, because we thought that was brilliant. When we've been across, we can see all the Irish there, we can see—

[71] **William Graham:** And so are the Germans and everybody else.

[72] **Keith Davies:** So, I just wondered about your discussions with the EU funding ambassadors.

[73] **Mr B. Davies:** Yes. When they were out at Brussels two weeks ago, yes, I had meetings with them—with Hywel Ceri Jones and Grahame Guilford. I'm actually in quite constant contact with Grahame Guilford, particularly, on the health side, because he's very much interested in getting the life sciences hub and the companies there engaged. So, I'm working with him and also with our groups, particularly our health co-ordinating group, for research, so that our bids are making sure that they're linking in, where possible, with any of the businesses that Grahame has got links with as well. I have been actually discussing with Hywel, as well, and he concentrates more on Erasmus and the cultural side. So, I know that he's in contact with universities on Erasmus, and, in fact, they're having an event, I believe, on 11 November to look at Erasmus here in Cardiff. So, I've been talking to the universities to make sure that they will be attending that event on 11 November.

[74] They also attended the launch—not the launch, but the update to the Brussels audience of the Swansea science and innovation campus back in March. I believe all three ambassadors were at that lunch, so they were aware of what Swansea was doing there as well.

[75] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Eluned.

[76] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you, Chair. I wanted to ask about support structures that are available to you and I do hope you'll forgive me, Berwyn, if I'm asking you, occasionally, about the support you're providing. But, if I may start with the role of WEFO's Horizon 2020 unit, can you give me just a brief outline of what you see their role as currently being and if there are any areas that you'd like to see them address that they don't currently offer?

[77] **Professor Davies:** The big role they appear to have at present is raising awareness, and they are doing that. A major part of their brief is, of course, to deal directly with companies and industry, and we're not aware of that; we haven't got information on what's happening there and how that is going.

[78] We do feel that, as well, in terms of organising meetings, they can be very, very helpful and useful, which is rather more than raising awareness; it's making contact and so on. We feel that they could develop the role in

terms of co-ordinating with the national contact points. The very big problem we've got is the national contact points, and you were comparing earlier with Ireland. Smaller countries in Europe have tremendous advantage if they mobilise their national contact points, because they're right in there in framing the bids and they're right in there fighting for their projects at the final stages. So, they're very proactive. Ireland is just phenomenal—very, very proactive national contact points. National contact points in Britain have tended to work much more on a civil service—you know, rather distant, objective and not getting too closely engaged with any one applicant and so on and haven't had a proactive role. That's improved, because they've gone full time; they've got full-time contact points now.

[79] Through the WEFO group, we feel Wales could engage and influence those contact points more, but we don't want that to replace our direct contact with them. In the past, we've complained that we haven't seen the contact points; now they are coming to Wales, they're addressing meetings, they're meeting academics, and, so, things are improving and we think WEFO can do more.

[80] But what I really have to say is that the overwhelming problem we've got are the specialists. WEFO are generalists; the overwhelming problem we've got are specialists who can talk in particular areas with the academics and help them frame the applications. They've got to be embedded in universities because they've got to be talking to these academics all the time. That's where we're having difficulty; allocating enough money to do that.

[81] **Eluned Parrott:** So, those don't exist—those specialists aren't in place.

[82] **Professor Davies:** No. We get some funding to support consultants via WEFO and that's very, very welcome. We get some funding for travelling across Europe to prepare bids; that's very welcome. So, most of the support structures and information flows are there; the real gap is the universities basically being able to afford enough specialists within their operation, and it's a size business. If you're the size of Bristol, or University College London or something, you can have these big teams. There is definitely a size issue. I'm embarrassed to say that we only have one a half people in Swansea doing this. We probably need four or five specialists to be able to spend time with the academics.

[83] **Eluned Parrott:** And is that a different role to, for example, the people in research and consultancy departments, who support funding bids in other

areas?

[84] **Professor Davies:** In terms of the support staff, and the professional support staff we fund, they are divided across supporting a whole series of funding streams; you're quite correct. We've actually increased the prioritisation of Horizon 2020, compared with framework programme 7, because it's becoming more important in terms of the scale of the opportunities. So, we have been reallocating resources within that group. There's a great danger that, whenever I talk to any body in Wales, I'm going to whinge about a lack of funding. But some things do come down to how much you can afford to do certain things, and it takes investment to get success. That's where the gap is, not in the size of the WEFO team or something like that; the gap is in the universities.

[85] **Professor Shepherd:** Just to pick up on what Richard's saying, it's that switch between generalist and specialist; we have a broad team that supports research grant application across all of the funding streams, but, by that nature, the individuals have got to be able to speak to different formats of funding for the different sources of funding. I think Europe is one of the ones where you need that specialist, because there is a real skill and an art to European funding that's different from Research Council UK, for example. So, our research support teams often tend to be more on the generalist side, because they've got to support applications across the spectrum, and it's this specialism around Europe that is particularly acute.

[86] **Eluned Parrott:** Can I ask about the role of the WHEB office in Brussels? We've heard good feedback, you'll be very pleased to hear, I'm sure, Berwyn, about the role that you currently perform, but I'm wondering if there are opportunities within that Wales House operation to be adding value to what you can do. For example, one of the things that's been identified previously is that there isn't, say, a business-focused team working in Wales House, and it seems to me that you've been working on the brokerage between businesses and higher education, as well as between higher education and higher education. Is that something that you would like to see expand?

[87] **Mr B. Davies:** Yes. We've been doing that primarily in the context of Swansea's work with Innovate UK, with the Enterprise Europe Network, and we are providing the partner search element for that, so businesses can see what Welsh universities are doing, and seeing if there are opportunities to link up that way. We do work with the Welsh Government office, and there's also the Welsh local government office in Brussels. There is more that we

could do there, absolutely. For example, there was an info day on the energy work programme, and I just happened to know that there was somebody from Cardiff county council there, but there's a lot that researchers need to be doing with local authorities, for example, in putting bids together on things like district heating and cooling, for example, where you'd need demonstration sites for that type of activity.

[88] I think we're starting to gear up now, in better collaboration within Wales House, with the Welsh Government's office there as well. We've mentioned already that Grahame Guilford is coming out more regularly on that business side, and I'm in regular contact with him on that as well. But there is more that we could do potentially in terms of making sure that we are prioritising, across the Wales House operation, our linkages for Horizon 2020, in particular.

10:15

[89] **Eluned Parrott:** And is it the size of the resource or the size of the bureaucracy that's been a barrier?

[90] **Mr B. Davies:** It's more the resource.

[91] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay. Thank you.

[92] **William Graham:** Jeff, a very quick one.

[93] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Very quick. Coming back to the issue of the specialists, first of all, I understand, obviously, the logic that bigger institutions can afford more. If you could afford them, are they available and what about—? I attended that excellent event yesterday morning about the contribution of higher education to the Welsh economy. There was good collaboration there. Do HEIs collaborate together in terms of specialists like this? You said that you had one and a half—and I think four or five, you said, in Cardiff. Do they collaborate or are they dedicated just to that institution?

[94] **Professor Davies:** The actual staff we have just work for an institution and, of course, there's a lot of confidentiality and competition involved in drawing up bids, and you'd expect that. But we do collaborate quite dramatically and, talking about the Brussels office, if I can use the horrible term, we really sweat the limited resource in the Brussels office, because not only do they provide this hugely important link through to all the activities in

Brussels, but they also manage these four networks set up across the Welsh universities, which link to the Welsh Government Grand Challenge areas. This is an exceptionally important way in which we collaborate to explore opportunities together, to see where we can add mass together in terms of bids, and this is all managed by the Brussels office.

[95] **Mr B. Davies:** We have meetings, actually, this afternoon on the advanced manufacturing group, where we have actually two of the national contact points in nanotechnology and advanced materials here in Cardiff talking to our advanced manufacturing group. We also have an energy group meeting on Friday where we'll be looking at some of the policy drivers that are going to be feeding into the 2016–17 work programme, but also working together on identifying areas that we think need to be funded in the 2018, 2019, 2020 work programme, and finding ways in which we can feed that into the Brussels decision-making procedure.

[96] **William Graham:** Thank you. Joyce, did you have any more questions?

[97] **Joyce Watson:** No.

[98] **William Graham:** Fine, thanks very much. That brings us to the end of our session. Thank you very much for your attendance today, and I hope that the questions were helpful to you too in forming your opinions in the future. The committee will break for 10 minutes and come back at 10:30.

[99] **Professor Davies:** Thank you very much.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:18 ac 10:29.
The meeting adjourned between 10:18 and 10:29.*

**Sesiwn Ddiweddarau ar Horizon 2020 ac Erasmus+
Update Session on Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+**

[100] **William Graham:** Welcome back to our item 3. We welcome Iestyn Davies and Siân Holleran. Could I ask you give formally your names and titles for the record?

[101] **Mr I. Davies:** Thank you, Chair. I'm Iestyn Davies, chief executive of ColegauCymru.

[102] **Ms Holleran:** Siân Holleran, international co-ordinator, ColegauCymru.

[103] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. The meeting is bilingual. Headphones can be used for translation on channel 1, and the meeting is being broadcast. I'm going to start the questioning, if I may, on participation in Erasmus+. Your ideas about the ambitions of the Welsh further education sector, please: is it performing well, and are there areas where we'd like to see more improvements?

[104] **Ms Holleran:** Shall I start? I think the first thing to say, really, is that, obviously it's the second year of Erasmus+. Between 2014 and 2015, for the FE sector in Wales—which means a centralised application that CollegesWales submits, as well as individual applications by FE colleges—we've seen a 55 per cent increase in the funding that we've had for key actions 1 and 2, which are the mobility of learners and staff and strategic partnership funding through Erasmus+. We have some highlights: the College Merthyr Tydfil, which got the third largest UK vocational education and training application for funding, with over €600,000 going to Merthyr college. That's going to enable over 270 learners to take part in work placements overseas across a range of vocational areas.

[105] In terms of our ambitions, I did attend yesterday, in Brussels, a seminar on regional approaches to VET mobility. It was led by one of the director generals of Erasmus+—not Erasmus+, sorry. Erasmus+ has now passed from the director general of creative and education to employment and social inclusion. The key message coming out of that, really, is they're looking for much more engagement from businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises in Erasmus+. Now, obviously, as part of our applications, we can include full-time vocational learners as well as apprentices, but engagement from employers is tricky. So, I think one of our future moves, really, to improve our applications is to look at how we can engage with small and medium enterprises and include them in our applications. I think, with Iestyn on board, maybe that's something we can definitely look at for our future centralised applications that we submit.

[106] **Mr I. Davies:** I think, Chair, the trajectory's clearly up. If you look at the evidence we submitted, there's an increase of 55 per cent in total project value in 2015. So, clearly, as a nation, and obviously with the support of Welsh Government, and helping them to realise their ambitions here, we're going in the right direction. But, as Siân has said, if we were to widen the remit to those who we could see as potential beneficiaries and include work-based learners, SMEs, people who have a considerable amount of contact

time in a workplace although they are FE students, then we could increase the participation, hopefully quite substantially. The key to doing that from our point of view is the fact that we have a central co-ordinator, so particularly for those colleges that don't want to embark on that themselves—although some do—we can support them. There is obviously a great difference in size, and, if you like, economy-of-scale factors when it comes to the FE sector. So, I think that's the key to success: accept what we have done, and done well, to support the Welsh Government and, indeed, more widely, FE colleges, to achieve that exposure, but there's more than could be done, and that's certainly where we would like to be going in the future as ColegauCymru.

[107] **William Graham:** There's a lower level of participation in Welsh education. How do you hope to increase that?

[108] **Mr I. Davies:** I think it's going to be difficult. You will call to mind, obviously, the conversation we had previously with you as a committee. With a decrease in the overall numbers, even an increase in the percentage will mean fewer people from that particular learning sector having the exposure abroad that we'd like them to have via Erasmus+. So, again, it's one of those consequences of a decrease in adult continuing learning, and something that we will try our best to address.

[109] **Ms Holleran:** It is actually a much smaller pot of funding that's available for adult education through Erasmus+. I have spoken at a NIACE conference, and this was when it was the old lifelong learning programme, before Erasmus+, but there's no doubt that it does take commitment and effort to really be ahead of the game with Erasmus+ and attend all the different meetings that they organise to promote awareness. I think the role that I have at ColegauCymru obviously helps our colleges to be more aware and anticipate what's coming up as part of Erasmus+.

[110] **William Graham:** Thank you. Eluned.

[111] **Eluned Parrott:** I just wanted to drill into the figures a little bit. Obviously, the 55 per cent increase is fantastic, but I'm wondering if you can tell us how that breaks down between staff and students, because obviously it's the mobility of both groups we're talking about. In terms of students, what kind of programmes are they engaged in when they are able to take advantage of Erasmus opportunities?

[112] **Ms Holleran:** In terms of the breakdown between learners and staff, we only started, as ColegauCymru, putting in centralised applications for staff mobility in 2014. So, we've had about €40,000 for two staff mobility projects, really. The first one has already taken place, and 15 of our senior teaching and learning staff from further education colleges, along with a representative from Welsh Government and two from Estyn, went to Finland to explore the status of VET education in Finland, and how they perform so well in PISA, really. That was one of our visits, and we have another one that is due to take place in the next 18 months, to the Basque country, looking at regional approaches to innovation and how that links between the VET sector and SMEs. So, quite a small proportion, really, in terms of staff mobility at the moment, but again, that is something that only really became possible as a pan-Wales approach through Erasmus+, because they introduced something called a consortium application, so CollegesWales can be the lead partner in the project and pull in expressions of interest or participation from colleges across Wales. So, in a way, we take the onus for developing those types of project.

[113] I forgot the second bit of your question, sorry.

[114] **Eluned Parrott:** How many students take advantage of mobility programmes, and what kind of courses do they tend to be studying?

[115] **Ms Holleran:** The learners that we focus on are primarily level 2 and 3 full-time vocational learners or apprentices. When we first started the project in 2010, when it was Leonardo, we had a real focus on involving apprentices. That has decreased slightly, but again, the focus from Europe is now looking back at apprentices, so we're looking to move forward on that. They come from a wide range of vocational areas. We've got hair and beauty, hospitality and catering, mechanical engineers, plumbing, graphic design, childcare—a real wide range of curriculum areas that participate. In terms of numbers of learners, ColegauCymru's project this year is going to involve 92 learners. Merthyr Tydfil, which I've mentioned, has over 270. So, I would think in the region, for the 2015 applications, of about 500 vocational learners in total. But that's an approximate figure, really.

[116] **Mr I. Davies:** It's obviously a very small percentage of the overall learners in both FE and work-based learning. You're talking about a two-week placement, and again, if you look at the example of the project from Merthyr, there are 270 vocational learners across the spectrum of trades-based professions, essentially, as well as business administration. It's still a

small number, so we would hope, to be ambitious, that we could increase both the number and volume of students going into these programmes.

[117] **William Graham:** Good. Jeff.

[118] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes, thank you. I wonder whether I could ask you about structural funds, really, linking into here. Many of your member colleges are in convergence areas as well, and I have heard it suggested that working with structural funds is easier—there's an easier application process than Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 and what have you. Do you share that view?

[119] **Mr I. Davies:** Well, there was a recent meeting of our European managers' network, and I think it's fair to say that you're dealing with subject or practice experts who know how to navigate European structural funds because they've been with us for such a long time. FE colleges have played a key role in delivering some of these ESF projects in particular. So, what we have there is an accumulated knowledge over time on how to engage with the structural funds. I think what we'd all like to see as a sector is an increased awareness of how to get the best value, not just the best numeric outcomes, if you like, of the ESF programmes. That's where the sector is trying to lead practice: not only do we know how to access the funds, but we know how to use them for the best value for the economy and the communities that we're working with. That hasn't always been part of what WEFO and other distributors of European funding have been considering, but it's something that has, I think, come to light during this most recent programme with a very clear steer from the Minister and, indeed, from various chairs, that business as usual is not an option when it comes to the European structural funds. So, that message is clear. The extent to which that then is adopted by the programme sponsors and deliverers is, I think, another challenge, but as far as the sector's concerned, they understand how to use the funds, how to navigate the system, and actually what 'good' could look like in the future. Now, whether or not we see that being realised is probably down to the monitoring and ongoing performance management of the programmes themselves.

[120] **Ms Holleran:** If I could say something on Erasmus+ in light of what you mentioned about maybe the complexity of the application process, one of the things I have spoken to the UK national agency about is that there is a gap between the information sessions that they put on, which are very superficial—'these are the programmes you could apply for'—and then the actual business of completing an application form, and the terminology

that's used. So, there's maybe room for more guidance, not just for people in the education sector. I think if they're trying to encourage businesses to get involved, there needs to be more guidance and support given on the actual intricacies of the application form.

[121] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Do you think that's a specialist role, then, or is it a question of upskilling existing staff?

[122] **Ms Holleran:** I think it's a bit of both, if I'm honest, really. I've probably been in this job now for five years. I've attended almost every single session you can go to on Erasmus+ and so would consider myself to be a bit of an expert, maybe. In terms of our curriculum staff getting involved in colleges, you also have to put in the time constraint that they are operating under. We are looking to curriculum staff for their expertise for these projects, because one of the areas they're looking to develop more and more is the recognition of the learning that takes place, even on a two or three-week work placement overseas, so it's not just seen as a hairdresser going to Spain for two weeks. What learning outcomes have been achieved while they've been on that two-week visit? So, we need curriculum staff engagement, but I think, in terms of time constraints for those staff, the people I deal with on these projects—when I get e-mails from them, they're normally about 11 or 12 o'clock at night. They're doing it in addition to their normal teaching and day jobs, really. So, I think it's a bit of both. It's a little bit of needing someone in a specialist role, but also very clear support and guidance for people who want to get involved.

[123] **Joyce Watson:** We've looked at this before, as you know, as a committee, and I think that there seemed to be a suggestion at that time that, in terms of putting pupils forward for Erasmus programmes, they were mostly putting pupils forward who had language skills, and they weren't looking at what you've just described—people needing an experience to further their skills in all areas. Has that changed?

[124] **Ms Holleran:** I think seminars that I've attended where that has been mentioned have primarily been focused on HE students, maybe at university, undertaking a year overseas, and they're language graduates, really. We're talking about vocational learners who, maybe, have given up studying a language at 14. So, what we're looking at, really, is—yes, they can improve their technical skills and they can learn some of the language, but we're also looking at the soft skills they can develop while they're overseas, as well. The language issue needn't be a barrier to that, necessarily. There used to be

funding available through Erasmus+ to prepare students to go overseas, culturally and linguistically. That pot of funding has been taken away now, and I think we might see some of our colleges looking at more vocationally-based courses, really, to prepare those students for that visit overseas.

[125] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you.

[126] **William Graham:** Rhun, please.

[127] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Diolch yn fawr iawn ichi. O ran y cymorth sy'n cael ei ddarparu gan yr asiantaeth genedlaethol, British Council ac—maddeuwch imi o ran yr ynganiad—Ecorys—

Rhun ap Iorwerth: Thank you very much. In terms of the support that's provided by the national agency, the British Council and—forgive me in terms of the pronunciation—Ecorys—

[128] **Ms Holleran:** Ecorys.

[129] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** —Ecorys maen nhw'n ei alw fo. Sut fyddech chi'n disgrifio natur a safon y gefnogaeth rydych chi'n ei derbyn gan yr asiantaeth?

Rhun ap Iorwerth: —Ecorys is how it's pronounced. How would you describe the nature and the standard of the support that you receive from that agency?

[130] **Ms Holleran:** Diolch yn fawr am y cwestiwn.

Ms Holleran: Thank you for your question.

[131] Obviously, as you're aware, the UK national agency is made up of British Council and Ecorys. Ecorys is responsible for the vocational education and training budgets of Erasmus+, so the main element of support that the FE sector gets is from Ecorys. It's always been of a high standard. You're always allocated a project manager for your particular project. In terms of the events that they organise, they have, I think, twice a year, a country advisory group that pulls together representatives from ColegauCymru, the schools, HE and third sector organisations, where we look in a bit more detail at how effective the promotion of the programme has been in Wales. We can feed in our comments to that. They also have what are known as sector consultative groups; there's one taking place tomorrow in London, where, again, the different strands of funding are looked at in more detail, with discussions as to how we can move forward—maybe by the participation of apprentices in those programmes. So, the level of support that's given to us by the UK

national agency is, I would say, very high. But you do need to make that commitment yourself to attend the events that they actually organise.

[132] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Mae'r Dirprwy Weinidog, digwydd bod, yn ei phapur hi i'r pwyllgor, wedi dweud y bydd Ecorys yn cynyddu ei weithgareddau marchnata a chefnogaeth yn y cyfnod sydd i ddod. A ydy hynny'n awgrymu bod yna le i wella eto, er eich bod chi'n dweud bod y gefnogaeth ar lefel gymharol uchel yn barod?

Rhun ap Iorwerth: The Deputy Minister, as it happens, in her paper to the committee, says that Ecorys will increase its marketing activities and support in the forthcoming period. Does that suggest that there is still room for improvement, even though you say that the support is at a comparatively high level at the moment?

10:45

[133] **Mr I. Davies:** Mae'n amlwg o'r rhaglenni yma i gyd, y gorau yw'r cyfathrebu a'r perthnasau, y gorau yw'r deilliannau, nid yn unig i'r grwpiau ac asiantaethau ond, wrth gwrs, yn y pen draw, i'r unigolion—y myfyrwyr a'r dysgwyr. Ond, mae yna gwestiwn o sicrhau, fel y mae Siân wedi crybwyll yn barod, bod pobl ar gael sy'n rhydd i fynychu cyfarfodydd i gael y sianeli cyfathrebu i fodoli er mwyn cymryd y pethau yma ymlaen. Os edrychwch ar y nodyn rydym wedi ei roi yn barod, pan oedd diffyg eglurder ynglŷn â rhaglen Erasmus+ yn y gorffennol, gwnaeth hynny greu problemau lle nad oedd asiantaethau yn mynd am yr arian a oedd ar gael. Felly, roedd yn rhaid gwella hynny. Ond, rwy'n gobeithio bod y wers wedi cael ei dysgu ac fe wnawn ni sicrhau bod cyfathrebu a'r dod at ei gilydd yn weithredol. Ond, cofiwch ein bod ni'n ariannu rôl Siân allan o'n harian craidd ni, o'r nawdd rydym yn ei

Mr I. Davies: It's clear from all of these programmes, that the better the communication and the relationship, the better the outcomes, not only for the groups and agencies but, ultimately, for the individuals—the students and learners. But, as Siân has already mentioned, we do have to have people available who can attend meetings and to keep those communication channels open in order to take these things forward. If you look at the note that we've provided, when there was a lack of clarity in terms of the Erasmus+ programme in the past, that created problems in terms of agencies not applying for the funding that was available. So, that needed to be improved. But, we do hope that the lesson has been learned there, and we will ensure that the communication channels are in place. Bear in mind that we fund Siân's role

chael gan ein haelodau. Felly, heb unigolyn yn y rôl yma, byddai ein cyfraniad ni, ac felly Cymru, yn y sector FE ar ei golled, buaswn i'n meddwl.

[134] **Ms Holleran:** Rwy'n credu mai un o'r pethau a gafodd ei gyflwyno yng nghynhadledd Erasmus+ lan yn *Edinburgh* oedd bod Cymru yn mynd i fod yn flaenoriaeth o ran hybu'r rhaglen, ond o safbwynt ysgolion yn cymryd rhan yn y prosiect—felly, o safbwynt *key action 1* o brosiect Erasmus+. Felly, nid wyf yn credu mai'r flaenoriaeth oedd ein sector ni, efallai.

[135] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Sut ydych chi, te, fel ColegauCymru, yn trio dylanwadu ar y strategaeth? Rwy'n cymryd y byddwch chi'n cymryd rhan yn y gyfres o weithgareddau a chynadleddau fydd yn digwydd dros y cyfnod nesaf, ond faint o ddylanwad sydd gennych chi dros deilwra'r hyn y mae Ecorys yn ei wneud i anghenion penodol Cymru?

[136] **Ms Holleran:** Mae'r Llywodraeth yn eistedd ar y *country advisory group*, sy'n cael ei drefnu gan Ecorys yng Nghymru. Felly, mae'n eistedd ar y bwrdd yna.

[137] **Mr I. Davies:** O'i gymharu, efallai, â'r rhaglen monitro cronfeydd ESF ac ERDF, mae yna strwythur pendant yna i sicrhau bod y rhanddeiliad, yn ogystal â'r

from our core funding, from what we receive from our membership. So, without an individual in this role, our contribution, and Wales's contribution, in the FE sector would lose out, I would have thought.

Ms Holleran: I think one of the things that was presented at the Erasmus+ conference in Edinburgh was the fact that Wales was going to be a priority for promoting the programme, but in terms of schools participating in the project—so, in terms of key action 1 of the Erasmus+ project. So, I don't think that the priority was our sector, perhaps.

Rhun ap Iorwerth: How are you, then, as ColegauCymru, trying to influence the strategy? I assume you will participate in the series of events and conferences that will take place over the ensuing period, but how much influence do you have in terms of tailoring what Ecorys actually does so that it does meet the specific needs of Wales?

Ms Holleran: The Government does sit on the country advisory group, which is arranged by Ecorys in Wales. So, it sits on that board.

Mr I. Davies: Compared with, perhaps, the ESF and ERDF monitoring programmes, there is a specific structure there to ensure that stakeholders, as well as the

Llywodraeth a gweision y Comisiwn, yn gallu cyfrannu at y rhaglen ar lefel y PMC. Nid yw'n teimlo, i fi, fel rhywun sy'n edrych ar hwn ar ddechrau ei rôl yma yn ColegauCymru, bod yr un strwythur yn bodoli ar lefel Erasmus+. Rydym yn dibynnu i raddau helaeth ar y Llywodraeth yng Nghymru i fod yn rhan o'r cynllun hwnnw. Gall hynny weithio, rwy'n siŵr, yn iawn.

Government and Commission staff, can contribute to the programme at the PMC level. It doesn't feel to me, as someone who is just beginning his role in ColegauCymru, that the same structure exists in terms of Erasmus+. We depend, to a great extent, on the Government in Wales being part of that scheme. We can make it work, I'm sure.

[138] **Ms Holleran:** I think one of the things to point out as well is, obviously, the programme guide for Erasmus+ does come from Europe. So, it's not just influencing the UK national agency, there is a European level that needs to be influenced as well. We do have two Welsh Government representatives who sit on the board of Erasmus+ who can also feed back any of our issues or concerns to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and to the programme board of Erasmus+.

[139] **Mr I. Davies:** We are also, Chair, as ColegauCymru, the holders of a national contact point—I'm learning my new acronyms, now; it's NCP, but it's not a car park, it's national contact point—for the whole year of transferability, mobility and quality of the European qualifications. So, we can use some of that funding and capacity towards the wider aim of ensuring that we are better networked, but that's a three-year funding profile that is coming to an end in March. It's a useful funding profile that we're looking to add value to. So, I'm saying perhaps we shouldn't look in isolation just at the work we do with Erasmus+, but more widely on the European agenda. The deputy chief executive sits on the PMC for the wider structural funds. So, it's about being able to understand the extent and breadth of these programmes, and how they tailor together. But, clearly, from what we have seen already, some improvements in how we function some of the Erasmus+ at a programme level might help with greater participation by our learners, FE learners from Wales.

[140] **Rhun ap Iwerth:** I'm sure we'll look at the development of national contact points in subsequent questions.

[141] **William Graham:** Thank you. Keith.

[142] **Keith Davies:** O edrych trwy'r papurau, rwyf eisiau sôn am ddatblygu partneriaethau a'r ffordd rydych yn cydweithio gyda Thŷ Cymru ym Mrwsel. Yn eich adroddiad chi rhywle, roedd yn dweud bod 11 o'r 40 coleg addysg bellach yn rhan ohono fe, ond yn yr *appendix*, lle rydych chi'n sôn am *successful Erasmus projects 2014-14*, dim ond tua thri choleg sydd yna. Nid wyf yn deall. Rydych chi'n dweud yn un man bod 11 o'r 40, wedyn wrth edrych ar y manylion, lle mae sôn am Ferthyr yn cael dros €600,000 a phethau felly—

Keith Davies: After looking through the papers, I want to talk about developing partnerships and how you collaborate with Wales House in Brussels. Somewhere in your report, you say that 11 of the 40 further education colleges are part of it, but in the appendix, where you mention successful Erasmus projects in 2014-15, there are only about three colleges. I don't understand. You say in one part that there are 11 out of 40, but in another area that looks at the detail, where it talks about Merthyr receiving over €600,000, and things like that—

[143] **Ms Holleran:** Diolch am y cwestiwn. Gwnaf egluro sut mae hynny wedi digwydd.

Ms Holleran: Thank you for the question. I will explain how that has happened.

[144] What we've listed there are the successful applications in 2014-15, one of which is the ColegauCymru learner application, and that's a consortium application. That will take in the colleges that might not submit their own applications for funding.

[145] **Keith Davies:** Rydych yn sôn hefyd am ddatblygu partneriaethau gyda cholegau dros y byd. Felly, sut ydych chi'n gwneud hynny 'te?

Keith Davies: You also mention developing partnerships with colleges across the world. So, how are you doing that then?

[146] **Ms Holleran:** When I first started in my role at ColegauCymru, I was put in touch with some regional Government departments in Catalonia, in the Basque Country, in Tuscany, in Baden-Württemberg. These are all regions that are members of an organisation called EARLALL, which is the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning, and one of their aims is to promote the mobility of learners and workers across Europe. So, my initial contact with those Government departments started off a network, really, of organisations that I can go to to develop the project further. So, they are able to put, say a college in Wales, through me, in touch with a college in Catalonia, which has the links with local employers. So, with

our learners who go on work placements overseas, we don't connect directly with employers overseas; we connect with the vocational colleges that have links to the employers. So, we're constantly just building up that network of people we can use for these types of projects. Part of going to Brussels yesterday was that we've already picked up another couple of partners that we can use for our projects going forward.

[147] **Keith Davies:** Pan oeddwn i'n gwneud rhywbeth â bagloriaeth Cymru, roedd nifer o'r colegau yn mynd mas i ogledd yr Eidal neu rywle i weithio mas fanna, ac rwy'n credu bod hynny'n bwysig iawn.

Keith Davies: When I was doing something with the Welsh baccalaureate, a number of the colleges were going to northern Italy or somewhere to work out there, and I think that that's very important.

[148] **Mr I. Davies:** Rwy'n credu ei bod hi'n bwysig i gofio eich bod yn delio fan hyn â defnyddwyr a rhanddeiliaid—myfyrwyr sydd, efallai, ddim yn meddu ar yr un cyfalaf cymdeithasol, y *social capital*, sydd gan lot o bobl, efallai, sy'n mynd i'r prifysgolion, a hefyd, wrth gwrs, ddim yn meddu ar yr un rhwydweithiau chwaith. Felly rhan bwysig o'r gwaith rydym yn ei wneud, ac un o'r pethau rwyf eisiau ei ysgogi a'i gymryd ymlaen, yw sicrhau bod gan unigolion sy'n byw mewn cymunedau fel Merthyr, fel ardaloedd Coleg Gwent a thu hwnt, yn cael ffordd o lywio eu ffordd nhw i orwelion llawer mwy eang nag sydd gyda nhw ar hyn o bryd. Ac, i fi, yn nhermau gwerthuso ein mewnbwn ni fel corff, yr adborth rydym ni yn ei roi yn ôl i aelodaeth ein colegau yw bod hyn yn rhoi cyfleoedd na fyddai modd i unigolion eu cael petaent jest yn bodoli y tu mewn i'w coleg addysg bellach bach nhw, mewn ardal fach o Gymru.

Mr I. Davies: I think it's important to bear in mind that you're dealing here with users and stakeholders—students who, perhaps, don't have the same social capital that many others who go to universities, perhaps, do have, and also, of course, don't have the same networks in place either. So, an important part of the work that we do, and one of the things that I want to stimulate and take forward, is to ensure that individuals who live in communities such as Merthyr, and the Coleg Gwent areas and beyond, do have a route by which they can steer their own path to far broader horizons than they currently have. And, for me, in terms of evaluating our input as a body, the feedback that we provide back to our member colleges is that that provides opportunities that individuals could never have accessed if they simply remained within their own small FE college, in a small area in Wales.

[149] **Ms Holleran:** And we've got plenty of anecdotes of life-changing opportunities that these work placements have given some of our learners—some learners who've taken part who didn't have a passport before they were actually selected to take part. And there is a selection process of learners; it isn't just a teacher saying, 'You, you and you.' We set it up almost like a mock interview for a job really, so they create a CV, they have a panel interview, they give their motivations for why they want to be involved—almost as if they've earned the privilege, and get a lot more out of the opportunity.

[150] **Keith Davies:** Yn y sesiwn gyntaf a gawson ni y bore yma, roedd y prif athrawon, y penaethiaid, yn sôn am arbenigedd, ac roedden nhw'n credu bod eisiau'r arbenigedd, efallai, yn y colegau i weithio ar hyn—neu'r arbenigedd yn Nhŷ Cymru ym Mrwsel. Ble ydych chi'n credu y dylai'r arbenigedd fod, a beth sydd wedi bod o help i chi?

Keith Davies: In the first session that we had this morning, the headteachers were talking about expertise, and they believed that that expertise was, perhaps, needed in the colleges to work on this—or the expertise in Wales House in Brussels. Where do you think the expertise should lie, and what has been of assistance to you?

[151] **Mr I. Davies:** Byddai'n hawdd i mi ddweud y dylai'r arbenigedd fodoli rhywle yn y swyddfa yn Nghongwynlais, lle mae ColegauCymru. Dyna'r ateb hawdd. Beth rydym yn sôn am fan hyn, wrth gwrs, yw cael rhwydweithiau, a bod rhanddeiliaid ar bob lefel, ac mae hynny'n bwysig. Byddai'n hawdd iawn i ni fod yn eithaf mewnblyg yn y ffordd rydym yn ystyried hwn. Nid ydym eisiau gweld cwtogi ar rôl a dyhead addysg uwch, er enghraifft, yn nhermau Horizon 2020 na'r prosiectau eraill. Ond beth rydym yn ei weld, yn nhermau Erasmus+, yw bod hyn yn creu cyfleoedd arbennig, unigryw i fyfyrwyr a dysgwyr, sydd efallai heb y cyfalaf cymdeithasol

Mr I. Davies: It would be easy for me to say that the expertise should exist somewhere in Tongwynlais, where ColegauCymru is situated. That's the easy answer. What we're talking about here, of course, is getting networks in place, and that there are stakeholders at all levels, and that's important. It would be very easy for us to be quite introverted in our consideration of this. We don't want to see a decrease in the roles and aspirations of FE, for example, in terms of Horizon 2020 or the other projects. But what we see, in terms of Erasmus+, is that this provides excellent and unique opportunities for students and learners who perhaps don't have that social

hynny.

[152] Rwy'n credu bod elfen lle y gallwn gyfrannu at lwyddiant Horizon 2020 a phrosiectau eraill. O siarad ag un o lysgenhadon ffynonellau ariannu Ewropeaidd, Grahame Guilford—. Rwyf wedi sôn yn barod sut mae sicrhau bod technegwyr ar gael, er enghraifft, er mwyn gweithio y tu mewn i FE ac HE, er mwyn sicrhau bod y wybodaeth HE yna ar flaen y gad ac yn medru treiddio i lawr i'r lefelau technegol i'r sawl sydd yn gweithio y tu mewn i labordy neu y tu mewn i ffatri. Felly, mae'n bwysig bod strwythur gyda ni, ac nad ydym yn gweld y rhain fel *silos* technegol neu *silos* addysg bellach, addysg uwch ac yn y blaen, ac, fel rydym wedi'i ddweud yn barod, ein bod ni hefyd yn cymryd cyfrifoldeb i weithio gyda darparwyr y *work-based learning* a'r prentisiaethau hefyd i sicrhau bod y cyfleoedd ar gael ar gyfer eu dysgwyr nhw.

[153] **Keith Davies:** Beth rwy'n credu sy'n bwysig, ac rwy'n eich canmol chi am hyn mewn ffordd—. Pan fuom ni'n edrych ar yr Erasmus+ y llynedd, roeddem yn gallu gweld bod gan Brifysgol Caerdydd darged—y llynedd, roedd yn rhywbeth fel 18 y cant—ond nad oedd gan y colegau addysg uwch eraill yng Nghymru darged o gwbl. Ond gallaf weld eich bod chi'n gweithio ar ran y colegau i sicrhau bod gymaint o fyfyrwyr â phosibl yn gallu cael y profiad sydd ei angen.

capital.

I think there is an element where we can contribute to the success of Horizon 2020 and other projects. In speaking to one of the European funding ambassadors, Grahame Guilford—. I've already mentioned how we can ensure that technicians are available, for example, in order to work within FE and HE, in order to ensure that that HE information is at the forefront and can permeate down to the technical levels for those working within a laboratory or within a factory. So, it's important that we have a structure, and that we don't see this in terms of technical silos or FE silos and HE silos and so on, and, as we've already said, that we take responsibility to work with providers of work-based learning and apprenticeships as well to ensure that the opportunities are available are available for their learners.

Keith Davies: I think what's important, and I'd like to praise you for this in a way—. When we were looking at Erasmus+ last year, we could see that Cardiff University had a target—last year it was something like 18 per cent—but that the other higher education colleges in Wales didn't have a target at all. But I can see that you're working on behalf of the colleges to ensure that as many students as possible can have the experience that's needed.

[154] **Ms Holleran:** A hefyd rydym yn canolbwyntio ar y staff, achos heb *enthusiasm* y staff, nid oes ffordd i'r dysgwyr gymryd rhan. Felly, rwy'n credu ein bod wedi gweld rhyw fath o *unintended consequence* o gael—.

Ms Holleran: And we're also concentrating on the staff, because without the enthusiasm of the staff, there's no way for the learners to participate. So, I think we have seen unintended consequences of having—.

[155] I'll carry on in English; sorry. I thought I'd try, but it's not working. [*Laughter.*] Really, involving the staff—. Because of health and safety risk assessments with young learners going overseas, we need accompanying members of staff with these learners. If we don't get the curriculum staff enthused about developing networks overseas, we aren't going to get the learners involved. So, that's part of our reasoning for getting more staff involvement, too.

[156] **Keith Davies:** And, of course, we're not talking about modern language experts now; we're talking about vocational people, which is great. Thank you.

[157] **Mr I. Davies:** I think it's only fair, Chair, to say that I think that commitment and that enthusiasm for what this can achieve is shared by both officials and the Deputy Minister. There's no doubt about that—I think we're all on the same page—but it does actually come back to this very fundamental question of where do we want the balance and the focus to be for our learners: do we want it to be on those minorities who might be in HE, or do we want to have a much more integrated approach so that everybody has an opportunity to have this kind of exposure? We're talking two weeks here, not six months, so these are quite modest, achievable targets that we believe we can actually raise and further and extend.

[158] **William Graham:** A short question—Oscar.

[159] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair. What it is, just from this list here, Siân—. My question to you, because you're the international co-ordinator, and the fact that it is 'education, education, education', which is one of the best mottos or slogans that a party leader has used—. Education in Wales is not up to that level on the other side of the channel, like in Oxford, Cambridge and other universities and colleges around the globe. So, basically, those universities are not poor at all—you know, they're

very rich, the financing is very sound and everything. Where we are lacking in Wales, we're asking for funding from the Government, which, yes, you deserve, but the fact is that there are loads of other parts of the world, like Brazil, India and China—all these—where the people only need learn to English and you can boost your economy massively. There's immense potential there. You're talking about Brussels; I agree with that—yes, Brussels, if you want to be part of Europe—but the fact is that there are also things beyond. So, why don't—?

[160] **William Graham:** Oscar, we're running out of time. If somebody could give an answer to that, please.

[161] **Ms Holleran:** We do engage with other parts of the world. We obviously didn't include this in here, but we have received funding in the past, only this year, from British Council Wales for an international professional learning community of, again, senior teaching and leading members of staff from the colleges to go to Canada to look at their approach to embedding literacy and numeracy strategies, narrowing the gap between, you know, attainment and deprivation. So, we do engage—we've got a consortium of colleges that works in collaboration with China. So, there are other activities that we do across the world, and part of my role as well is to continue developing those partnerships further afield in Europe.

[162] **William Graham:** Thank you. And our last question is from Jeff Cuthbert.

[163] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I don't think so, Chair.

[164] **William Graham:** I apologise. Maritime inquiry? Joyce, please.

[165] **Joyce Watson:** I'm really keen to understand how the Welsh FEIs work with the CITB, the Construction Industry Training Board, to support the construction sector. So, if you have something to add to that, because if there's one area of growth that's really needed to support our economy, this is it.

[166] **Mr I. Davies:** I'd probably need to get back to you on that in a bit more detail. It's an avenue of enquiry that I'm seeking to open up between ColegauCymru, individual colleges and the CITB as a pan-UK but obviously as a Wales body here in Wales, and it's something that I've committed to do, and I do need to follow it up in more detail. I think I'll be able to give

feedback to the committee when we know exactly what that relationship looks like in terms of numbers, and where any gaps might exist. We're very conscious of large-scale projects coming into Wales, but also the need, day in, day out, for elements within the foundation economy, such as house building, house repairs and renovations, and, of course, support to the social housing sector. So, I think we'd be better equipped to give you an answer to that in some months' time, rather than actually just express what I feel at the moment. It's a very important question to answer.

11:00

[167] **Joyce Watson:** Okay, and because time is going to defeat us. Also engineering—those apprenticeships—if we could have that. Have Welsh FEIs given any thought to developing strategic partnerships with countries like Ireland and Scotland, and other parts of the EU within this field as well? I know that you talked earlier about partnerships.

[168] **Ms Holleran:** Yes. One thing I'll quickly mention—and I'm sure that Iestyn has got a more strategic answer than mine—we have worked with the West of Scotland Colleges' Partnership, who organised a Celtic seminar over in Ireland, which a number of our colleges attended, looking at opportunities for funding through the Wales-Ireland programme. So, that is quite a strategic partnership in a way, and we have got some projects in the pipeline from Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, based on that seminar that took place in Ireland. So, it's in its infancy, maybe, but we are looking at further developing those.

[169] **Mr I. Davies:** Going back to the point I made about the Welsh Government offices in Brussels, Brussels is a good, if you like, demilitarised zone to meet colleagues from the other Celtic countries as well. That resource is something that I did start to explore with the Federation of Small Business branches and I'm very keen to take forward. I have always valued the individual contributions made by staff in the office, and I know that Siân was saying exactly the same, following on from yesterday's meeting in Brussels. So, that creates a physical space to have that conversation as well.

[170] **Joyce Watson:** Okay.

[171] **William Graham:** Splendid. Thank you very much. We're grateful for your attendance today. You will be sent a copy of the Record in due course. Thank you for coming.

11:03

**Sesiwn Ddiweddaru ar Horizon 2020 ac Erasmus+
Update Session on Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+**

[172] **William Graham:** Can I welcome Jenny Scott and Ruth Sinclair-Jones? Would you please just give your names and titles for the record first, please?

[173] **Ms Scott:** I'm Jenny Scott, and I'm director of the British Council in Wales.

[174] **Ms Sinclair-Jones:** Ruth Sinclair-Jones, and I'm director of the UK National Agency for Erasmus+ at the British Council.

[175] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Just to explain, the meeting is bilingual, and headphones can be used for translation on channel 1. The meeting is being broadcast. Our first question is from Eluned.

[176] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you, Chair. I want to dig into participation rates, but before we do that I wonder if you could just very briefly outline what the British Council and Ecorys's role is in terms of promoting Erasmus+ and how that compares with the Welsh Government's role in the programme?

[177] **Ms Sinclair-Jones:** Well, the British Council and Ecorys together are a partnership and we are the UK National Agency for Erasmus+. So, we are one of a group of 33 national agencies across the European Union and participating countries. Our role is to facilitate access and manage projects under the decentralised actions. In other words, those parts of the Erasmus+ programme that are decentralised to the UK to manage Ecorys and the British Council together are designated to manage those. So, principally, that is the key action. One activity is in mobility—individual mobility—across the five sectors of the programme, and strategic partnerships between institutions, again across the five sectors of the programme, and also youth policy dialogue. Those are the areas of the programme that we directly manage. We do also provide information about the centralised actions, but we don't have any direct role in managing any of those as a national agency.

[178] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you. In terms of the Welsh Government's contribution to promoting Erasmus participation, how do you see that?

[179] **Ms Sinclair-Jones:** I suppose that's something we'd be interested to

hear from this group about how you might see that. But I think it's very much about working in partnership and I'm pleased that both Jenny, on behalf of British Council Wales, and I, on behalf of the programme itself, are here, because we both, in our different ways, I think, have roles to play in working with members of the Welsh Government and key stakeholders across Wales.

[180] With Erasmus+, under the governance arrangements for the programme, we have a country advisory group for Wales, which is led by one member of the Ecorys staff and one member of British Council staff who specifically focus on Wales. British Council Wales also attends those groups and the aim there is to have not only Welsh Government representatives, but also, again, the key stakeholders across the sectors of the programme that relate to Wales. So, through those country advisory groups, that's the principal way in which we would support and listen to what the Welsh Government's intending to do. And we do try to keep track and listen to what's happening. Something like the Global Wales initiative, for example, is obviously something we would like to speak about: how can we bring that into the programme and its relevance? Anything happening with the Welsh schools' curriculum, for example, again, towards internationalisation, is also of great interest to talk about in terms of how we can both increase the quality and the quantity and the impact of Wales's participation in Erasmus+.

[181] **Ms Scott:** We've also had—. I've had meetings along with Erasmus+ colleagues with the EU funding ambassadors to start to discuss, to look at the programme and how participation can be increased in Wales. There have also been recent meetings with the Welsh Government and Erasmus+ colleagues here in Cardiff, again to look at participation, to look at how, maybe, we can get greater awareness raising, and to look at some of the barriers that may be preventing institutions from taking part in Erasmus+ programmes.

[182] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay. Thank you. That's really interesting. I think, looking now at participation rates themselves, clearly, we've seen, I think, an increase in Wales's participation in Erasmus+. However, we're starting from a relatively low base if we look at the funding amounts that have been accessed. We have—let's have a look—76 successful applications within the last two years, worth €11.6 million. Scotland drew down €25.9 million and Northern Ireland, which has a smaller population than we do, drew down €12.9 million. So, what actions have been taken to increase the participation rates to make sure that Wales isn't lagging behind other nations in the UK?

[183] **Ms Sinclair-Jones:** Yes. It's interesting, always, to look at the statistics and see what they're telling us, and, I think, important to recognise that Wales is outperforming England in terms of the programme, if you just look at the population measures. It's only if you compare Wales with Scotland and Northern Ireland where the amount by which Wales is exceeding, is outperforming, is less. You could say, in 2014—again, the stats are very crude, but you could say for 2014 Wales was attracting less than its population percentage share of the funding for the programme, but in 2015, to date, Wales is attracting 5.8 per cent of the funding available, with 4.8 per cent of the UK population. So, Wales is outperforming; it's just not outperforming as much as Scotland and Northern Ireland. And we are looking at the reasons for that and what we can do about it.

[184] We're making Wales a priority for 2016 in order to work with Welsh representatives to try to increase both the quantity and the quality of applications from Wales. I'll just say that quality is not so much of an issue: Wales has the highest success rate of any of the four UK countries, with an over 60 per cent success rate. That is the highest success rate. So, quality doesn't seem to be the issue for Wales; it's that we need more applications and higher application volumes, perhaps. So, more application numbers or applications for larger amounts of money, or a combination of the two.

[185] What we can see, as you'll all be aware, are some differences in policy between the Governments of the devolved administrations. In Northern Ireland, for example, as you will know, the Assembly there has specific targets for drawing down EU funding, and, when we meet with the Northern Ireland representatives, that's very much the subject of the conversation. It's their targets for increases in EU funding that drives their whole approach to the programme and, I think, goes some way to explaining their relative high success. In Scotland, we've seen new initiatives in the school sector with the new Curriculum for Excellence and the 1+2 language learning, which appear to have a correlation with the higher application numbers and certainly, from Scotland, we see a lot of school applications that focus on language learning, and Erasmus+ is an attractive option for that reason. So, as things change in Wales, looking at the national curriculum for schools in Wales, we may see some changes in terms of how Welsh Assembly policies may impact on the attention that people are giving to the programme and the relevance that they see for it. I would also say that having targets helps. That's something we've been talking to the HE sector about. We can see it, I think—. We may come on to talk about some of the HE experience, but where people have targets—something that's going to be measured—it inevitably focuses

attention and will tend to cause an increase in participation to achieve those targets.

[186] **Eluned Parrott:** This committee met with Cardiff Metropolitan University and Cardiff University some time ago, and one of the things we were very impressed by was Cardiff University setting a very stretching target of, I think, 30 per cent in the medium term, which is obviously very welcome. But what are you expecting that other Welsh stakeholders can do to increase participation rates? If we look at the proportionality that you did against our population proportion, we are doing okay in terms of higher education, though not as well as Scotland, and we are doing well in terms of youth projects—almost double our population. But if we look at things like adult education projects, for example, at just 1.3 per cent of the share of the UK total, that clearly is—. Is that an area of concern, or is that being tackled?

[187] **Ms Sinclair-Jones:** The adult education sector of the programme runs in a particular way, which can make the stats sort of jump very significantly from one year to the next, because most of the adult education budget goes on strategic partnerships. Therefore, if Wales were to have one more strategic partnership worth, say, €0.25 million, which is the scale of these things, then it would suddenly be way up. So, just one or two more strategic partnerships in the adult field would make a massive difference, whereas, with the other sectors, the bulk of the budget goes on mobilities, where we tend to have larger numbers of low-value applications and, therefore, the statistics tend to be more regular year on year. So, no: adult education is not a concern for Wales. But, clearly, we would like to see those one or two more strategic partnerships coming through successfully in the adult sector, which would bring Wales automatically back up to its population level in adult education.

[188] **Eluned Parrott:** That's great. Thank you.

[189] **William Graham:** Oscar.

[190] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair. I think part of my questions have already been answered, but I still—. What specific support do you provide to youth organisations and schools in Wales to encourage participation?

[191] **Ms Scott:** Shall I take schools? I think, in terms of schools, part of the feedback that we've had when I've talked to schools is that they don't feel

that they have the support or the capacity to take part in some of these programmes. Partly that's due to budget cuts. So, there was previously a network of international school linking officers in local authorities. Those have generally been cut. It is a fairly complex process, applying for the grant, and staff feel that they don't have the capacity or the understanding, and the necessary knowledge of the procedures, to be able to put in the applications. One way that we're working with schools to try to mitigate this is that we've actually just started a programme with the City of Cardiff Council, which has a foreign languages adviser, Emily Daly, whose role it is to advise schools. We've started a programme with her where, effectively, schools will pay a small sum of money, and we have now got two new school linking officers—one based in south-east Wales, and one based in mid-Wales to cover mid and north Wales. That's specifically to help schools through the application process—to, effectively, hand hold them through that process—because we've found that, in areas like Scotland, where that's been part of the process, schools have done significantly better in terms of attracting funding. The schools are paying for this, and I've agreed that we will underwrite any shortfall, if there is any shortfall, in funding. So, we've agreed to underwrite that. But it is, unfortunately, because of budget cuts in local authorities that we are seeing that. So, that's one way of working with schools.

[192] The other area—and Ruth mentioned it earlier—was around languages, and this awareness and priority within schools for international work. It's embedded within the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence. It's something that schools are monitored and assessed on. That language process is, we feel, very important. When we've done research recently this year with students, looking at the key barriers to outward student mobility for UK students, the two key barriers were funding and languages.

11:15

[193] If students have that, if young people have that, in the classroom—that language learning and awareness of international opportunities—they're coming to university or college and it's not a completely new thing to them; they know what's available, and they feel they've got at least a basic skill in a language to be able to take that opportunity and study overseas. So, we feel it is part of a process. One of the things, certainly, that Scotland has is an outward-mobility strategy that covers all of the sectors, not just higher education. And it does bring together all of the work they do across the different sectors to encourage internationalisation and outward mobility. So,

there is something there that I think could potentially be considered.

[194] **Mohammad Asghar:** On a similar point, how do you identify the potential opportunities for further and higher education on Erasmus, please—Erasmus+?

[195] **Ms Sinclair-Jones:** Well, with higher education, the higher education institutions themselves are very closely involved in this. The UK's outward-mobility strategy has been very important and the British Council was involved in that from its conception as part of the consultancy stage. We very much support its implementation and we work with the HEIs and with the UUK International Unit on that basis. But it's encouraging to see the HEIs themselves have that level of energy and are setting their own targets for internationalisation, in the context of not only the outward-mobility strategy, but broad internationalisation targets as well. So, with the HEI sector, I think our role is more about facilitating what they're doing, minimising the bureaucracy as far as we can, sharing best practice among the HEIs, and supporting the co-ordinators in what they're doing. But the message is very much there and the HEI sector is very heavily involved.

[196] With the FE sector, I think they're equally committed to this, but perhaps face more barriers in terms of capacity, in terms of the funding available to them to support this kind of activity, and just the sheer complexities of getting young apprentices abroad for experiences. So, with the FE sector, we need to be aware the programme is for the benefit of the FE sector and for the benefit of apprentices; it doesn't mean all the work has to be done by FE colleges. So, we do see other groups coming in. The Welsh Football Trust has come in with its apprenticeship scheme to benefit from this funding—also benefitting young people in Wales. We have some private training organisations coming in—also benefitting young people in Wales. We have examples such as Cardiff University working with the further education sector on a strategic project. So, I think it's different ways in which the FE sector can be supported to make the most of the programme. It's not always that easy for them, I think. But they are doing extremely well in Wales, as you can see, outperforming in terms of population share at this stage.

[197] **William Graham:** Keith, on this point.

[198] **Keith Davies:** Yes. Morning. Reading your papers, on the stakeholder engagement, one of the concerns I've got there—. Because we've just had CollegesWales talking to us, and with CollegesWales there are good links

between the colleges and overseas colleges with apprentices, et cetera, but in your paragraph here on stakeholder engagement, it's clear that schools don't play a big part in it. I just wonder, when I look at who's going to be at your meeting on 27 November—I can't see school representation there. And I've just—

[199] **Ms Sinclair-Jones:** Yes. It's a good point. We always aim to have the appropriate stakeholder bodies there and, if there are any other recommendations about who we might invite, we will do that. But we do have Estyn there. We do have schools representation. We have languages, as well, represented. Jenny, you had some points on that.

[200] **Ms Scott:** Yes. I think part of this as well is we're currently working with the Department for Education and Skills on their Global Futures modern languages programme, which tried to increase participation and take-up of modern languages. As part of that group, we work with the regional education consortia. In fact, at the last meeting, at the end of September, we had a briefing by somebody from the Erasmus+ team, because, as part of that Global Futures programme, the British Council has agreed, and agreed with Erasmus+, to go to the regional education consortia and to work with them to raise awareness and understanding of the Erasmus+ programme and how schools in their area can access that. That will link in with the international school officers that we're working with to not only raise awareness, because you can have awareness of the programme, but if you then can't find your way through the guidelines—. So, it's really a stepped process. So, we raise awareness of the programme. It's not hard to convince schools of the benefits of this, but I think part of it as well is that, in a sense, there's a bottom-up approach, but there does need to be a top-down approach here as well. Schools are under a lot of pressure; they have a lot of things they have to deliver on and a lot of priorities. So, if 'international' isn't seen as a priority, it's going to fall to the bottom of the pile, because they simply have so many other things that they have to deliver on. But I think, you know, what we want to do is effectively work with the regional education consortia and then provide them with support to go through the application process.

[201] **Keith Davies:** I'm glad you're involved with the educational consortia. I was talking to a parent on the weekend in a secondary school in south Wales, where the history group of children are actually going to New York for a week, because that's part of the GCSE history curriculum that they're actually pursuing. So, I hope that the educational consortia might get involved a bit

more than they have, you know, to date. Thank you.

[202] **William Graham:** Joyce, please.

[203] **Joyce Watson:** You touched briefly on language as a barrier to outward mobility under the UK outward mobility strategy, and yet we've had evidence this morning that language shouldn't be a barrier to taking part in an Erasmus programme. So, could you explain?

[204] **Ms Scott:** It's a perception. It's a perceived barrier, because, even though a student might go to France and be taught in English, they're going to live in France, and so it's that perception and that fear that not speaking French, or not speaking German et cetera, is a barrier. That's the feedback that we've had from students, which is that it is one of the largest barriers to take-up of mobility, and that's the direct feedback that we had from students. When they come back, they realise it isn't as much of a barrier. But, you know, perception is reality in this case. Therefore, we've found that, where students have had—so, like Cardiff offering the Languages for All programme—the opportunity to get a basic grounding in a language and they have the opportunity to talk to students that have come back, it is less of a barrier. But, you know, the reality is that languages are in decline in the UK—language learning is in decline in the UK—and, therefore, students do feel at a disadvantage.

[205] **Ms Sinclair-Jones:** But the student numbers are going up every year. So, although these barriers are there, they're clearly not insurmountable, and one of the new features of the Erasmus+ programme, compared with its predecessor, is the online language support that's offered to every student in all the major European languages, which should encourage them to get over that first hurdle and be able to operate at least at that basic level of living in a foreign country, even if they're studying in English.

[206] **Joyce Watson:** The barrier; does that exist in the minds of those who might select or encourage the students, as well as within the students themselves?

[207] **Ms Sinclair-Jones:** That's a very interesting question. We would hope that higher education bodies at all levels—at faculty level as well—are encouraging their students to take this opportunity and to leap that language hurdle. We would hope very much that that's what they're doing, so that students are enabled to look beyond the fact that they don't speak a

particular language and take the opportunity that will be so beneficial for them.

[208] **Ms Scott:** I think the sad fact now is that over 20 per cent of students in Wales don't do a language at GCSE. So, the numbers are very low, of students that are now taking languages. So, in a sense, from a very early age, they don't have that grounding and they don't have that confidence that they can actually speak a language, or at least learn a language if they don't speak a language, and that is a barrier. But it's not insurmountable. I think programmes that Cardiff are offering—and the universities are offering now, like the Languages for All programme—are one way, but, obviously, if they are learning at a younger age, it's better.

[209] **Joyce Watson:** Okay.

[210] **William Graham:** Could I just ask—? This committee made a report last year on EU funding opportunities. One of our recommendations was that organisations, particularly the British Council, should monitor trends in student mobility on Erasmus+ and youth programmes, and ensure that the outcomes and impact of engagement and participation by the youth sector are systematically captured. Have you any information to give us on that?

[211] **Ms Sinclair-Jones:** Yes, I do have an update for this committee on that. In terms of the student mobility numbers, we sent a paper through to the committee on the statistics for 2007 up to 2013–14, which is the previous programme, but we now have the complete picture for the previous programme.

[212] We don't yet have the full statistics for 2014–15, as students are still on their way back, as it were, but in terms of application numbers, the numbers were up very much in 2014 and there was a similar level in 2015 as there was in 2014. So, it's something we do monitor very closely. Something that the committee may like to be aware of is that, from 2017 to 2020, the programme funding will be increasing substantially year on year. The budget has been back-loaded, as it were, so the funding will be increasing substantially year on year from 2017. So, we are very keen to monitor an increase—we need to see that increase so that the maximum number of students can benefit from the programme.

[213] With youth, our national agency is part of the network across all 33 participating countries into research and analysis of youth participation. It's a

very detailed and structured process for collecting data on the impact of the programme on young people and youth professionals, and youth leaders as well. We're starting the first surveys now, so we'll start to get some data coming through about the impact of the youth strand as well.

[214] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. On that encouraging note, I'll bring this session to a close. Thank you very much for your attendance today. You'll be presented with a copy of the Record in due course. Thank you very much.

11:30

Sesiwn Ddiweddarau ar Horizon 2020 ac Erasmus+ Update Session on Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+

[215] **William Graham:** May I thank you for your attendance today? Could I just ask you, Deputy Minister, if I may, and your officials, to give your names and titles for the record?

[216] **Julie James:** Certainly. I'm Julie James. I'm the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology.

[217] **Mr Morris:** I'm Huw Morris. I'm the director for skills, higher education and lifelong learning.

[218] **Mr Clark:** Andrew Clark, deputy director, further education and apprenticeships division.

[219] **Ms Renkes:** Michaela Renkes, senior planning manager.

[220] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Minister, you had something just to start.

[221] **Julie James:** I just wanted to explain to the committee that Horizon 2020's not actually in my portfolio area, but rather than just not answer the committee's questions, which I think are interesting questions, I brought the officials with me who cover those programme areas, and so hopefully we can answer at least most of the questions that the committee has today.

[222] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. That is immensely helpful to the committee. Our first question is from Rhun.

[223] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Bore da i chi i gyd. Rydym i gyd yn gytûn, rwy'n meddwl, ynglŷn â photensial rhaglenni Horizon 2020, Erasmus+, ac ati. Ond a allwch chi roi eich barn ynglŷn â phwysigrwydd rhaglenni o'r math yna wrth i'r Llywodraeth geisio cyflawni eu nodau strategol nhw? Lle mae'r cynlluniau yna yn chwarae i mewn i amcanion strategol y Llywodraeth?

Rhun ap Iorwerth: Good morning. We're all agreed, I think, about the potential of programmes such as Horizon 2020, Erasmus+, et cetera. But can you give us your views on the importance of such programmes as the Government are trying to achieve their strategic goals? Where do they play in to the strategic goals of Government?

[224] **Julie James:** Well, I think they're very well aligned to our strategic goals. Actually, the Welsh Government has a number of the goals that a lot of the programmes have set out in slightly different language, but you can see that they overlap. So, for example, higher skills to drive our economy, better access to a wider range of experiences for people from more deprived backgrounds, a science strategy for Wales, skills growth for Wales, a higher education sector that drives economic growth for Wales—all of those things align really well with a lot of the European programmes such as Erasmus, Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, and indeed other programmes that I don't think you're looking at in this inquiry; the Eureka programme, for example, being one of them. So, yes, it aligns very well with our strategic priorities, I think.

[225] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** What efforts are made, then, to integrate the potential of those programmes into the cross-departmental working of Government? How have the European ambassadors been able to perhaps promote that working within the Government?

[226] **Julie James:** I've met with the European ambassadors a couple of times now, and in particular the ambassador that's dealing with the Erasmus+ programme, because we're gearing up to ensure that our further education colleges take full advantage of that when it comes on stream. I'll ask Michaela to talk about that in a little bit more detail for you. I've met twice with them because we are very determined that young people, especially from more deprived backgrounds, will take advantage of those programmes, and also that we get our message out to our university and FE partners that this isn't just about modern foreign languages; this is about an exchange of skills right across the curriculum. I think that, with some exceptions—Cardiff University has very good programmes, for example—the universities have

been slow to realise that this isn't just about languages; that this is actually about an exchange of ideas and skills at all levels. But I think Michaela can explain a little bit more about how we're gearing up for Erasmus+.

[227] **Ms Renkes:** As you're aware, the funding for Erasmus+ is due to increase quite substantially from 2017, so the work we're doing currently is there to help kick start some of the interest from ColegauCymru, for example, and local authorities, who now are beginning to show more interest in getting involved with the schools sector and adult education as well.

[228] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** What about measuring the outcomes, then, and the impact that these programmes have? How sophisticated is the Government's ability to monitor what we're actually getting out—specifically, perhaps, when it comes to research capacity and quality within Wales?

[229] **Julie James:** Do you want to talk about how it's going to be monitored, Michaela?

[230] **Ms Renkes:** Yes, I'm happy to do so. As you're aware, we're looking at a number of areas around planning as a whole. So, what we're looking at currently is regional skills assessments, and demand and skills assessments as well. They should be identifying not just Government funding, but also other funding that goes in with that. It's in the very early stages, I agree, but there is a lot of work currently going on with that.

[231] **Julie James:** Okay, and I think Huw—

[232] **Mr Morris:** Just to say that, in each of the departments, there is an evaluation plan for all programmes of activity. We work closely with colleagues in knowledge and analytical services, so for each stream of funded European work, if it's of a sufficient size, there'll be an evaluation plan, and the initial construction of that project will be informed by relevant research. There will then be ongoing evaluation as the programme unfolds and, possibly, an interim evaluation report and a final report. So, that's the standard way in which we go about making sure that it's contributing to overall programme for government objectives.

[233] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** What about, then, the strength of the systems that you have to ensure that, where you identify, perhaps, outcomes that aren't at the level that you'd like, you are able, then, to adapt the way that the programme applies?

[234] **Mr Morris:** So, increasingly, with European structural fund programmes, there's a break point in a programme of funding that enables things to be recast, if that's what's found, and also to recognise that circumstances change, and that what happens within the economy and the demands of learners in industry alter.

[235] **Julie James:** From a political point of view, obviously, what we do is we realign the priorities according to the sectors that we're targeting the most. So, I mean, 'Events, dear boy, events', as they always say. At the moment, of course, the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport has been involved in the steel summits, for example, and we're involved in the industry in trying to support that. A lot of the research, skills and employability streams are reacting to changes in the labour market, for example, so we keep that under review as well.

[236] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** I'm glad you mentioned the way that you look at specific sectors. When the Government decides to concentrate on a specific sector, it might be steel, but, for example, let's look at marine energy, an emerging sector that we happen to have been looking at as a committee now. To what extent does the Government look at how Erasmus+ or Horizon 2020 can play into the development of those sectors?

[237] **Julie James:** I mean, we look across the programmes for all of the things that can support a particular sector. So, it's not just about Erasmus+ or Horizon 2020, it's also about ESF funding, ERDF funding and all the other things. We look to see how we can best put together a programme envelope, if you like, to support a particular sector and, sometimes, that's reactive. So, you know, the Murco task and finish group was entirely reactive because of the unexpected closure of Murco and the steel summit now is reactive. But, sometimes, it's very proactive, so, for example, we've been working with the tidal lagoon people for a very long time and we're working with Wylfa Newydd. Andrew's actually off on a plane up to north Wales after this to talk again with them about—well, actually, do you want to say what you're doing?

[238] **Mr Clark:** Well, the way we try to do it is that—some things are evolving demand and some things are sudden demand. So, if you have a project that's been known about for some time, such as the tidal lagoon, then you have a chance there to genuinely plan what provision is needed, because you have a project plan, you can identify how many workers and what sort of skills are needed, as the project develops, and you can talk to

the colleges and universities to make sure that they're aligning what they're delivering with the needs of that particular programme. That's part of what's happening.

[239] When I go up to north Wales tomorrow, I'll be talking to Grŵp Llandrillo Menai—the old Coleg Menai campus—so that they're aligning what they're doing with the needs of the Wylfa project, which is now emerging. It's always difficult to do, because it's never precise. The decision on whether or not to build Wylfa Newydd has not been taken, it won't be taken until 2019, but the chances are that it's going to go ahead, and you've got to lay your groundwork as best you can.

[240] Then you have the reactive stuff, which is more like the Murco—when something happens, and you have to respond to that as best you can in the timeline that's available. You do that by a focused attempt, if you like, to bring together the people who can make a difference, get them around one table in one room and then try and make that difference. Then, of course, you've also got all of the other stuff that's going on, which is part and parcel of normal education life in Wales, and you can't forget that either. But for each of these you try to bring whatever lever you can to bear, and one of those levers is European funding, in one way or another.

[241] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Obviously, I'm quite closely involved as a constituency Member in some of the projects that you mentioned up in Anglesey, but not once have I heard, for example, Erasmus+ being talked of as a tool, as Grŵp Llandrillo Menai tries to make sure that it's properly positioned to support Wylfa or other energy projects. Can we be sure that it's there?

[242] **Julie James:** I think we're in the process of gearing up for Erasmus+, so you certainly will be hearing about it. The committee inquiry is a little bit in advance of our gearing up for that. As Michaela was just saying, we're just engaging with all of the colleges to gear up for just that. If I could add as well: I think one of the other things that are very important is the general level of skills and employability. So, part of what we're trying to do is upskill the entire workforce, because we know that with all of the labour market intelligence that we've got, the requirement in the economy for low-skill or no-skill jobs is declining really rapidly, and the requirement in the economy for medium/high level skills is climbing very rapidly. It's one of those classic graphs you see where the line is doing this and going up. There's any amount of information out there; you can get it on the Careers Wales

website. We were talking about it at the Council for Economic Renewal only the other day that we need to gear up for that economy more generally, as well as these specific projects. So, it's a little bit of both, isn't it?

[243] **Keith Davies:** Just following on from that, Chair, we've had papers, obviously, from HE this morning and the British Council and ColegauCymru, and looking at the papers, I could see from Swansea University that they're doing a Master's in engineering. ColegauCymru looked as if they've got the post-16 and the colleges on apprenticeships going very well. We did question the British Council about the lack of school involvement and getting involved in partnerships. But a couple of weeks back, we talked of a youth strategy for Wales, so what are we doing about youth work—post-16 people in youth work? What department of Government should be looking at that?

[244] **Julie James:** I just made a statement—it's not quite in line with this inquiry—on the future of youth work in Wales and we talked about doing the preparatory work for a national strategy and we've got a group looking at that that's going to report very soon, now, in November, and we'll be taking that forward. That will align very nicely with the Qualified for Life work that the Minister is doing. The idea is, again, to join it all up together. A lot of the youth work is what you'd call just normal work that you do running youth clubs and running all that sort of stuff. But, increasingly, the youth work in Wales is aligned to the progression and engagement framework, so it's around targeting people who are likely to disengage and so on. Actually, coming back to the Erasmus point, one of the reasons I've been talking to the EU ambassadors so much, and, indeed, I think you had Richard Davies from Swansea University in this morning—

[245] **William Graham:** We did, yes.

[246] **Julie Morgan:** I hope he mentioned that at the last vice-chancellor's meeting, we had a full and frank exchange, I think, about their involvement in Erasmus, and my view that they could do a lot more. So, it does align with that very much, because what we need to get much better at is making sure that those people in our society who need it the most have the opportunity, as well as those children who have the opportunity because of their family circumstances and backgrounds. So, what Michaela was talking about with us gearing up is very much us gearing up to make sure that children from deprived backgrounds, women, and people from diverse backgrounds, generally, get the opportunity that we know that many middle-class students get because of their family circumstances.

[247] **Keith Davies:** It's a pity, actually, that we ran out of time with HE this morning, because as I went out with Richard Davies, he actually said to me, 'I'm sorry that you haven't asked me about Erasmus+.'

[248] **Julie James:** Well, I've had that discussion with him, I can assure you.

[249] **William Graham:** Eluned.

[250] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you. I want to dip into some more information on participation rates.

[251] **Julie Jams:** For Erasmus+.

[252] **Eluned Parrott:** For Erasmus+ now, yes, exactly. Clearly, the performance in 2014 was not great in some areas, as you've identified in your paper. Can I ask, you've just said to us that, in terms of some programmes with the colleges that we're gearing up for increased activity? Erasmus+ is a 2014–20 programme and it is now October 2015—why, a third of the way through this funding programme, are we still gearing up?

[253] **Julie James:** Because the 2016 call for applications has only just been released, and so that's what we're gearing up for now. So, that's the next—. It does it in phases. It's immensely complex the way that the centralised and decentralised funding works, and as Michaela was saying, they've only just released the 2016 call for applications, so we're gearing up to answer that call. It's a very complex set of—. I'm sure you've got the stats in front of you, Chair, but there's a whole set of complex stats about how you apply, what the success rate for that is and what the percentage funding is afterwards, and there's the complexity of whether it's the UK Government that match funds it, whether it's us, or whether—. It's very complicated. I'm sure Andrew here would be pleased to tell you for about 25 minutes about the complexities of centralised and decentralised streams. [*Laughter.*] But when we're talking about gearing up, we're talking about gearing up for the response to the 2016 call for applications that has just been released.

11:45

[254] **Eluned Parrott:** In terms of the performance in 2014 and 2015, clearly, as I say, as you've outlined in your paper, there is relatively low success rates in some places and better success rates in others. If we look at the statistics

you've given, you say that, in 2015, it was 4.1 per cent of all UK applications against a population share of 4.8 per cent of all applications. So, why has that been the case? Why do you feel that we are lagging behind our population share?

[255] **Julie James:** Well, it's a different strategy. So, if you look at the Scots, for example, they put in an enormous number of applications and they didn't have a very high success rate. We put in fewer applications but we've got a higher success rate for those applications. It is about the amount of time and money that institutions are prepared to put into the likelihood of getting these things. The process of application is itself quite resource-intensive.

[256] So, we had some very successful projects in 2015; I hope you know about them. So, we've got the City of Cardiff Council project, for example—its vision for schools in south Wales—which is €97,000, and we've got Cardiff Metropolitan University's partnership, which is some €252,000, which is a partnership with Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Lebanon and Morocco, for example, to share students. We have some very ambitious projects in Wales.

[257] One of the reasons we're gearing up for the next round, Eluned, is because we recognise that we could have done better in that round. It is immensely complex. It isn't something the Government does, so we have to facilitate partners to do it. We have to make sure that we share good practice, and we have to make sure that we engage with people so that they understand what the opportunities are, because we don't want a myriad of different FE colleges and universities all trying individually to do different things. So, we see our role as joining it together and facilitating it. This isn't a programme that we run and apply for ourselves. So, as Michaela was saying, the gearing up is around us sharing the good practice that we've got. We were successful in the applications that were made. We would like to see more, but we don't want to see a myriad of applications, on the Scots' model, that then fail because they weren't co-ordinated properly.

[258] **Eluned Parrott:** In fairness, though, in terms of the Scottish model, whilst they may have a lot of applications, if we look, for example, at higher education projects, they have been successful in claiming 16.6 per cent of the entire UK HE funding for Erasmus+. So, clearly, their model is working and that investment of time and effort is paying dividends. Now, it—

[259] **Julie James:** Well, I don't know, actually—. I hope you don't mind me

interrupting—I think, actually, you need to see a cost–benefit analysis of that, because I agree that they’ve got a big share, but they put in a lot of applications. I do think there is an issue about how much resource we’re prepared to put in to lever in money. Again, we’re talking about partner organisations here. It’s their resource, not ours. So, we’re talking about facilitating that.

[260] **Eluned Parrott:** And have you done a cost–benefit analysis of Wales’s—

[261] **Julie James:** That’s why we’re gearing up for it. We think we could have done better—I’m not making any bones about that—and we’re gearing up to share that, but I don’t think that putting in an enormous number of applications right across the board is the way to do it. We’re very keen on co–ordinated programmes that we get the best out of. That’s why I’ve been talking to the EU funding ambassador—it’s Jane Hutt’s portfolio that they’re supported under, but I’ve been talking to them a lot as well about our co–ordination. It’s all about the co–ordination.

[262] **Eluned Parrott:** I will accept that, obviously, the co–ordination between different programmes is important. I was going to say that Wales’s HE representation isn’t actually bad: it is above our population share. So, you cut me off perhaps a little earlier—

[263] **Julie James:** That’s what Huw was just showing me.

[264] **Eluned Parrott:** —than might have been helpful to you there, Minister. [*Laughter.*] Can I say that there are significant variations between the success rates of the different streams of this funding? One that is, maybe, a cause for concern—and perhaps you can explain it to us—is that whilst HE is doing well, whilst youth projects are doing very well, and are almost double our representation in terms of our population, with adult education projects we have the lowest share with just 1.3 per cent of the overall funding to the UK. I’m wondering why that is the case. What are you going to do to change it? Is there a correlation between this and the unfortunate situation with funding in adult education at the moment?

[265] **Julie James:** I’ll get Michaela to explain exactly what we’re doing with the detail that we’re gearing up, but that’s one of the things we’re recognising—that we do need to punch better in those areas. I know it’s not connected to their FE funding arrangements, but it’s much more about understanding what the opportunities are and getting the information out to

a sector that isn't used to being involved in those sorts of areas. So, a lot of our scaling up is about information sharing. So, Michaela.

[266] **Ms Renkes:** It's also around developing the case studies of understanding what has gone on in the past and everything else. The Erasmus+ programme is very different for adults to its predecessor programmes, and therefore I think sometimes it's been around the lack of knowledge and understanding of what the programmes are.

[267] **Eluned Parrott:** But it still doesn't explain why other parts of the UK have responded to that changing picture more successfully than we have, does it?

[268] **Julie James:** No, and I think that what we are talking about is gearing up for the 2016 programme, with a view to, as we said earlier, learning from our mistakes. So, this is a sector that hasn't been involved in this before and that didn't have that much information. A very large part of our response to it is to ensure that they do have it in the future. I'd go back to saying what I did: it's a burning issue for me that we make sure that we get a cross-section of our population to take these opportunities and get their horizons widened, which, after all, is what Erasmus+ is really about, and that we do that well right across all of our sectors, not just in the HE sector and the traditional modern foreign languages kind of areas. So, we have work to do; I'm not shying away from that. That's what we're talking about in terms of gearing up for this round. So, I hope that we will be back in front of you, after this round, telling you that we've been very successful in doing that.

[269] **Eluned Parrott:** But one particular challenge in the adult education field is that the nature of the projects isn't necessarily individual mobility, as it is in other parts of the stream. The nature of the projects is about encouraging dialogue between institutions, and, when those institutions are under pressure, and when members of staff are losing their jobs, the chances of them looking and focusing on international partnerships is probably much more limited, isn't it?

[270] **Julie James:** Well, no, I don't agree with that at all. I'm sure that ColegauCymru told you a different story for that, and Iestyn, who has just been taken on as the CEO, is very, very keen on developing this as an area. Actually, our FE colleges have been co-operating extremely well together. In fact, we're very proud of the amount of co-operation between them. So, I understand why you are painting that picture, but it's not a picture that we

recognise at all.

[271] **William Graham:** Rhun.

[272] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** It is a continuation of that. It is important to compare with situations in other parts of the UK. It's important so that we know how high we can set our bar and how responsible—we need to be responsible in where we set that bar. Can you share with us the results of your cost-benefit analysis of what's happened in Scotland, either exact or approximate?

[273] **Julie James:** Yes. Huw was just—. I'll let Huw do that. It's his forte.

[274] **Mr Morris:** I think that, as Michaela has said, the regulations are changing. Historically, a number of institutions have felt that the costs of engaging in some elements of Erasmus—the predecessor programme or the parallel programme—exceeded the benefits of engagement, and that they weren't adequately rewarded for the costs of mobility. We are aware of that. We don't have a formal study, but, picking up on the points that were made earlier, there's a lot of very good performance, and it has improved over the last couple of years. So, I think evidence that you've received from ColegauCymru demonstrates that the proportion success rate in Wales has increased between 2014 and 2015, and that, in a number of sectors, we are performing significantly above the corresponding proportion of population. You've mentioned higher education and youth, but that's also the case with vocational education and training. We're working closely with ColegauCymru and Universities Wales to establish networks of institutions in Wales, through Study in Wales, through Global Wales, through ColegauCymru and through NIACE and the National Training Federation for Wales, to ensure that they are in a good place to connect with those networks. Remember, Erasmus+ is a relatively new programme in terms of the overall range of schemes operated by the European Union.

[275] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** I'll just ask once more: can you share with us, can you find those figures for us on how wasteful Scotland has been in—

[276] **Julie James:** No, I didn't say that. What I said was that each institution needs to make a decision about the cost benefits of making the application and putting the resources in against what they see as the effects for us. I accept that, in Wales, we made fewer applications, but they were more successful. In Scotland, they made a lot of applications, and they had less

success compared to the number of applications they put in.

[277] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** But the cost benefit of that might be pretty solid.

[278] **Julie James:** The Scottish committee will, I'm sure, be looking at that. I'm sure you know there's a Scots committee that's doing a very similar piece of work to yourselves.

[279] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Just briefly, do you have targets for where you'd like to reach? Have you decided where you'd like to set the bar for what we can draw down in Wales?

[280] **Julie James:** No. We haven't got specific targets.

[281] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** The British Council was here just before you, and they said that having targets helps, because it's something specific, something solid to aim for. And it's something for us then to come back and compare with on how you've done.

[282] **Julie James:** I'm certainly happy to go away and have a look at whether it's worth having targets. But, as I say, because it's a distributed programme, I'm not sure—. I'm very against setting a target against which it's very difficult for us to influence, to be honest. But I'm more than happy to have a look and see whether there's something we can do. I think what you're really talking about is some sort of incentive to make people realise what could be achieved.

[283] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Absolutely.

[284] **Julie James:** I'm more than happy to look at that.

[285] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Jeff.

[286] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you very much, Deputy Minister. I do agree that, when we have limited resources, we need to focus our applications. To me, that's a no-brainer. I want to ask you some questions on Horizon 2020, and I note your original comments with regard to that. We did have an interesting session with representatives of HE. One of the issues that they raised is that they—certainly, they, particularly, and in terms of Swansea, wanted to focus far more on STEM subjects; they saw that as the future, and I can't disagree with that, and, that, really, because of capacity issues, accessibility to the

sort of specialists that they need to make good bids is holding them back, and they compared with larger institutions who could afford more. I'm wondering if you recognise that difficulty.

[287] **Julie James:** I'm going to ask Huw to answer that question, as it's not in my portfolio area.

[288] **Mr Morris:** Can I start by just going over something that was said earlier, that the responsibility for this area is effectively shared between three Ministers? So, primarily, that is the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, the Minister for Finance and Government Business and the Minister for Education and Skills.

[289] **Jeff Cuthbert:** So, you don't get in anywhere there.

[290] **Julie James:** No. [*Laughter.*]

[291] **Mr Morris:** Having said that, Horizon 2020 performance is improving along similar lines to those of other areas of European funding. We are aided greatly in that by the work of WEFO, the Welsh European Funding Office, who work closely with the chief scientific adviser on Wales's science strategy. There are four strands to that. They have a grid against which planned projects are mapped. So, whether that's life sciences, ICT, green technologies or what have you, that is closely monitored. Through that process, there's been a heavy emphasis on finding industrial partners for that work. In terms of the position of particular institutions and their bidding, institutions are being supported in that framework by staff from both of those offices. I don't know the detail of the bidding team that they have at Swansea, but many universities will employ professional bid writers or will contract with them to do that type of activity. We are trying to support the growth of that through the work of our Minister for Education and Skills. On 11 November, there's an event at City Hall called 'Global Wales', which will bring together the pro-vice-chancellors for research and innovation in each of Wales's universities. They will, at that conference, hear from officials and others from within the European Union about the opportunities that exist within Horizon 2020. Then, as a consequence of the work of Hywel Ceri Jones, who you will know was a former director general within the Commission with responsibility in these areas, there will be a workshop in the afternoon with the pro-vice-chancellors planning out how the bidding process can be better supported and improved. So, this is an area of active, at a high level, strategic engagement by a range of Ministers, working collaboratively to

improve performance.

[292] **Julie James:** I'd just like to add to that, because I do actually work very closely with all three of those Ministers. Although Horizon 2020 isn't in my portfolio area, what we do is we try to co-ordinate so we have seamless transitions between all of the skills and employability strands. So, I want to really make the committee aware of the fact that we work right across all the portfolio areas, but also right across the boundaries, if you like. So, although I look after FE, we're talking about a seamless transition through. So, we're very aware that we need to work collaboratively about it and that's why we've—.

[293] **William Graham:** Right. Thank you. Jeff.

[294] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Well, it is on the issue of collaboration. I have to say, despite those initial comments, when pressed, the representatives of HE felt reasonably optimistic about the future and that things were going to improve. One of the issues I asked was about that of collaboration. I appreciate this may cross other portfolios, but yesterday morning I attended a very, very good breakfast presentation on the contribution of HE to the Welsh economy. The issue there is about collaboration, because, clearly, there were good examples of collaboration there. To what extent—and I appreciate there may be issues of commercial confidentiality with each independent HEI, but nevertheless—could there be better collaboration from those institutions in terms of developing successful bids?

12:00

[295] **Julie James:** I think the short answer is 'yes', but we do a very good programme of collaboration, not just inside Wales, but across the UK and across Europe. So, I'm sure the university sector talked to you about their collaboration with universities right across Europe and, indeed, across the world. Many of our universities are global in that sense. I happen to know that the pro vice-chancellor of Swansea is out in Indonesia, speaking to the heads of state for all of the Indonesian islands as we speak, because I was at the opening of their splendid new bay campus last Thursday, and he told me that's what he was doing this week. So, you know, they do collaborate right across, but there's no doubt at all that collaboration is what the European Union is looking for and will be the key to success in the later programmes. Huw can tell you the detail, if you like.

[296] **Mr Morris:** I think yesterday's breakfast seminar was a good example of that collaboration, because all of the vice-chancellors were present for that event, mapping out the economic benefits. There are a number of bids in for Horizon 2020, but commercial confidences mean that I can't talk to you in detail about those. But they do involve a number of universities in Wales collaborating with one another for sizeable applications for funding to support important industries in Wales that align with the strengths that we have in different parts and the desire to develop in different components of Wales.

[297] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you.

[298] **William Graham:** Joyce.

[299] **Joyce Watson:** You've already touched on Global Wales, which is what I was going to ask you about, and, if you haven't got anything further to add, I think it might be useful to this committee, once you've had your first meeting, if we could have some feedback on how that went.

[300] **Mr Morris:** Very happy to do that. Yes, that would be helpful to us as well.

[301] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Oscar.

[302] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you, Chair. My question—*[Inaudible.]*—synergies with the structural funds programmes, actually. With regard to the ESF programmes, what work have you undertaken to look at synergies with projects under Erasmus+ and, potentially, Horizon 2020, which you're not involved with, including any discussion with the EU funding ambassadors?

[303] **Julie James:** Yes. Basically, we have a programme board. In the civil service, we have a programme board that looks across the piece at European ESF funded applications and other synergies. And, as I said earlier on in response to a question from, I think—was it you—Rhun, I've met several times with the EU funding ambassadors with a view to talking about pushing our priorities in the programme, them unlocking bits of their European bureaucracy that we need to fully understand to make sure that we're making the best of it, but also to discuss synergies across the programme. So, for example, on ESF bids, we have a number of ESF bids that are pushed forward by the Welsh Government direct, as the applicant, but we also have a number of ESF bids that are put forward by other sectors in Wales—HE, FE, the

regional skills boards, and so on—and, basically, we have a programme board that ensures that they align properly together and don't overlap. Because what you don't want is competing bids from two parts of the public sector against the same fund. So, yes, we have a complex programme board that does just that. I'm sure Huw can tell you the detail of that, if you want to hear more about it.

[304] **Mr Morris:** I chair that programme board, and we have a grid of all the activities aligned against European Union priorities and Welsh Government strategies. I'm sure we could share a version of that with you. We look to develop the same in other areas of structural funding and research funding. One of the general themes that lies behind that ESF project is a desire to build capability and resilience at a local level. We can't be confident that there will be another round of European social fund money after 2021, and so what we're trying to do is empower people at the local level through regional skills partnerships to take on the work for the longer term. We can anticipate that, if the UK remains in the European Union, research and innovation funds will extend for a longer period of time. So, there's a similar emphasis on building capability and capacity, but with longer-term support from Welsh Government.

[305] **Mohammad Asghar:** Is anything—? I can understand this synergy business when there are more than two organisations applying for one pot, but is there anything where one company or one organisation is much stronger than the other, or has more potential to get funding than others? So, is there anyone before that time to advise them of whether that is possible—which is the best possible route to go for to get it, or which is not good within that partnership and may reject the application? So, is there any way forward for your applications? I heard the Minister saying that Scotland has too many applications and few approved, and, in our case, we had few, but many. The fact is that when people join together—. So, what actually—? Do you really warn before or after, when the application is made?

[306] **Mr Morris:** Before—more than a year before. At the start of any programme, we will start talking to people about potential bids and we will promote collaboration and encourage people to withdraw bids when we think there's a stronger bid, or encourage people to merge. You can find evidence of the success of that by the volume of bids by region within Wales, which has decreased with each successive round, but that's at the end of a process where the numbers are quite large at the beginning. So, we can write to you and provide you with the numbers to support what I've just said, but that is

exactly what we aim to do.

[307] **Julie James:** And I will say, just to add to that, that's obviously with the overarching aim of maximising the amount of income that we get through these funding streams to Wales, but making sure that they're all allied with the programme for government, proper funding arrangements, and that we have a planned way of using the funds properly. So, it is a very highly co-ordinated approach.

[308] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you.

[309] **William Graham:** Minister, thank you very much, and your officials today. Thank you for your attendance in committee; much obliged.

[310] **Julie James:** A pleasure.

12:06

**Papurau i'w Nodi
Papers to Note**

[311] **William Graham:** We've item 6, papers to note.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o
Weddill y Cyfarfod**

**Motion Under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public
from the Remainder of the Meeting**

Cynnig:

Motion:

bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu that the committee resolves to gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y exclude the public from the cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog remainder of the meeting in 17.42(vi).

accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).

Cynigiwyd y cynnig.

Motion moved.

[312] **William Graham:** I move a motion under Standing Order 17.42 to

resolve to exclude the public for the remainder of our meeting. I hear agreement; thank you very much. The committee is now closed to the public.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 12:06.

The public part of the meeting ended at 12:06.