



OPINION

# EU-UK Youth Engagement (own-initiative opinion)

ANNEX

**Technical Report in Support of the Own-Initiative Opinion  
on EU-UK Youth Engagement**

REX/580



European Economic  
and Social Committee



## OPINION

### **EU-UK Youth Engagement**

(own-initiative opinion)

**REX/580**

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## 1. Conclusions and recommendations

- 1.1 As the European house of civil society, the EESC is convinced that civil society organisations (CSOs) in both the European Union and the United Kingdom are uniquely placed to aid and facilitate EU-UK youth engagement, and thus stands ready to play its role, as reflected in this own-initiative opinion.

### Youth mobility

- 1.2 Given that Brexit-induced changes to mobility arrangements between the UK and the EU have had a disproportionately negative impact on young people, the EESC first and foremost urges the European Commission (EC) to approach the UK Government (UK) about the possibility of negotiating an ambitious reciprocal youth mobility partnership. This partnership should aim to set out conditions for entry and stay for purposes such as research, study, training and youth exchanges.
- 1.3 That notwithstanding, the EESC urges the EC to strengthen negotiations with the UK for the full reintegration of the UK into Erasmus+, a position which is officially backed by the European Youth Forum<sup>1</sup> and British Youth Council<sup>2</sup>, as well as by many other youth CSOs across the UK<sup>3</sup> and the EU.
- 1.4 The EESC calls on the EC to confirm that the UK is welcome to negotiate to re-join Creative Europe at any time. It also encourages the EC to actively promote the issue of cross-cultural learning in its diplomatic exchanges with the UK.
- 1.5 Recognising that Brexit has had a hugely negative cultural and economic impact on touring artists<sup>4</sup> and thus also on cultural relations between the EU and the UK, and that this issue has been raised both by the House of Lords European Affairs Committee<sup>5</sup> and at recent EU-UK Parliamentary Assembly meetings<sup>6</sup>, the EESC encourages the Commission to proactively engage with the UK to address the barriers to mobility of creative professionals, possibly including a reciprocal visa waiver for creative industries or a ‘cultural exemption’ from the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youthforum.org/files/231207-PP-Erasmus.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.byc.org.uk/uk-young-ambassadors/2024/advocating-for-erasmus-in-parliament-and-beyond> [Note: Amid the uncertainty created by the British Youth Council’s insolvency announcement on Thursday, 21 March 2024 (see point 3.2), all mentions to the organisation from here on out shall remain directed to them so long as it stands. In the event that the legal entity fully collapses, the opinion’s mention to the British Youth Council shall be re-interpreted to focus on the elected pool of international ‘UK Young Ambassadors’ and their successor structure.].

<sup>3</sup> <https://1.yem.org.uk/embrace-erasmus>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/aug/22/music-industry-workers-no-work-in-eu-since-brex-it>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9658/>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/d-uk/activities/inter-parliamentary>.

- 1.6 Recognising that the large decline in school visitors to both the UK and the EU<sup>7</sup> has had a considerable negative cultural and economic impact on both sides of the Channel, the EESC petitions the EC to negotiate with the UK on reciprocal travel arrangements for school visitors. This should include the introduction of a school group travel scheme that would not require pupils travelling on organised school and other types of young people's visits to the UK or to the EU to carry individual passports. A positive first step was the decision of 28 December 2023, whereby French and EU nationals at schools in France who cross the Channel for a language-learning holiday will need to carry only a simple identity card, removing the requirement to obtain a costly visa<sup>8</sup>.

### Structured engagement

- 1.7 The EESC urges the EC to negotiate with the UK to construct reciprocal youth advisory structures resembling the EU's Youth Sounding Board initiative<sup>9</sup> within each side's respective diplomatic mission.
- 1.8 The EESC strongly supports the creation of a structured engagement between the EU, UK-level authorities and the devolved nations, with robust involvement of youth, including youth work and non-formal learning, to strengthen youth civil society dialogue and cooperation.
- 1.9 The EESC strongly recommends that structured inclusion of youth in existing engagement structures be established on both sides. Structured and regular inclusion of UK youth sector should be enabled, promoted, and adequately funded in, for example, the EESC's annual *Your Europe, Your Say*<sup>10</sup> youth event, the European Parliament's annual *LevelUp!*<sup>11</sup> and *European Youth Event*<sup>12</sup> gatherings, the *EU Youth Dialogue* process<sup>13</sup> and similar initiatives.
- 1.10 The EU and the UK should jointly consider creating and funding an EU-UK youth coordination forum, consisting inter alia of representatives of the European Youth Forum<sup>14</sup>, the British Youth Council<sup>15</sup>, Young Scot<sup>16</sup>, the Northern Ireland Youth Forum<sup>17</sup>, and Urdd<sup>18</sup>, which would have a regular dialogue to discuss the most pressing issues in the area of EU-UK youth relations. These

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7 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/749799/EPRS\\_ATA\(2023\)749799\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/749799/EPRS_ATA(2023)749799_EN.pdf).

8 [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2023/12/28/uk-lifts-brexite-obstacles-for-french-students-and-schoolchildren\\_6382995\\_7.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2023/12/28/uk-lifts-brexite-obstacles-for-french-students-and-schoolchildren_6382995_7.html).

9 [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/youth/youth-sounding-board\\_en#current-youth-sounding-board](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/youth/youth-sounding-board_en#current-youth-sounding-board).

10 <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/initiatives/your-europe-your-say>.

11 [https://youth.europa.eu/news/join-us-level-i-care-i-vote\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/news/join-us-level-i-care-i-vote_en).

12 <https://european-youth-event.europarl.europa.eu/en/previous-editions>.

13 [https://youth.europa.eu/get-involved/eu-youth-dialogue/previous-eu-youth-dialogue-consultations\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/get-involved/eu-youth-dialogue/previous-eu-youth-dialogue-consultations_en).

14 <https://www.youthforum.org/>.

15 <https://www.byc.org.uk/>.

16 <https://young.scot/>.

17 <https://niyf.org/>.

18 <https://www.urdd.cymru/en/>.

actors should be considered in the EESC's opinion-making process through the implementation of the EU Youth Test in the EESC.

- 1.11 The youth sector is not represented in either the EU or the UK domestic advisory groups (DAGs) under the TCA. Thus, the EESC calls on the EC to facilitate full and active participation of EU youth sector representatives, removing any financial barriers to participation in the EU DAG. The EESC also calls on the EC to engage with and encourage the UK to facilitate the participation of the UK youth sector in the UK DAG. Recognising the voices of young people in this body is essential to its long-term survival as a structure for furthering bilateral relations.
- 1.12 The EESC welcomes the British Council's EU/UK Youth Stronger Together project<sup>19</sup>, offering young people aged 15-30 from the EU and the UK opportunities to connect and cooperate. The EESC believes that this project should serve as an excellent best practice model for facilitating future EU-UK bilateral youth initiatives to connect, empower and train youth.

### **Other forms of youth engagement**

- 1.13 The EESC recommends a mapping of opportunities for young people to be carried out. This could be very helpful in building capacity to educate on the practical opportunities available to them. Clear career pathways should be articulated, with a need to deliver expert knowledge to young people through schools, cooperatives, and career advice. A programme on apprenticeships, for instance for farming, should be included, based on best practice<sup>20</sup>.
- 1.14 The EESC calls for the establishment of a centralised and accessible information hub for young entrepreneurs, who continue to be impacted by Brexit by the stringent new rules governing the movement of goods and services across the Channel, and uncertainty around market access.
- 1.15 The EESC recommends improved structured peer-to-peer learning, useful for CSOs, but also a model that could be replicated by local authorities and government departments. Although connections to EU networks remain generally intact in Wales, they need to be strengthened to ensure the longevity of cross-border knowledge sharing continues. A positive example is that a Welsh representative is chair of the EU-level Rural Youth Forum. However, young farmers groups are now excluded from being CEJA<sup>21</sup> members, with the exception of NFU Next Generation<sup>22</sup>, which represents England and Wales.

### **EU Settlement Scheme and youth**

- 1.16 EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) procedures have had unwelcome implications also for young people. Each child must have their own EUSS application, generally filed by their parents. In some cases this requirement has not been complied with for various reasons, leading to serious

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19 <https://www.britishcouncil.be/programmes/education/stronger-together>.

20 <https://www.wwf.org.uk/wales/land-of-our-future>.

21 <https://www.ceja.eu/home>.

22 <https://www.ceja.eu/who-we-are/people>.



consequences for children. These consequences could be avoided or mitigated by more user-friendly guidelines and possibly an awareness-raising campaign.

- 1.17 Complications continue to arise in relation to the EUSS in the UK and in some EU Member States, which may have implications for children and young people. Advocacy organisations are signalling the danger of a ‘Windrush Effect’ in the UK. This is because the ‘digital only’ system may result in incidents of failure to register children among some vulnerable groups. There is a need for a backup physical support and a 24-hour helpline.
- 1.18 In the EU, the data is still not up to date, especially as regards applications for residence cards to evidence Withdrawal Agreement status in countries with declaratory systems. Consequently, there is currently no way of knowing how many children and young people might face difficulties proving their status in future. There is even uncertainty in certain countries around registering children or if they need to hold cards and the process for obtaining them. Different issues are also emerging around family reunification in a number of countries. Public funding for advocacy is either non-existent or being phased out, notwithstanding a continuous and increasingly complex caseload.
- 1.19 The EESC therefore urges the Commission to liaise with the UK to revisit the issue of providing a physical backup and to maintain funding to enable community groups, advocacy organisations and public authorities to provide support for as long as cases continue to emerge. The EESC welcomes the news that British in Europe will be funded for a capacity building and awareness raising project covering groups across 11 EU countries for the next 20 months under the EC's CERV programme<sup>23</sup> but notes that the need for funding will also apply in EU Member States for as long as cases continue to emerge.

### **Unique circumstances of Northern Ireland**

- 1.20 Lack of funding and lack of a coordinated approach and local expertise in the allocation of funding means that, combined with cuts, youth groups and community groups are not being resourced. For example, the European Social Fund (ESF) was distributed based on local expertise by local authorities. This has proven a resilient and reliable funding model for groups like Disability Action NI<sup>24</sup>. These initiatives are now facing closure. All this exacerbates the risks to peace in Northern Ireland. The EESC is therefore firmly convinced that these issues should be addressed with urgency to prevent young people resorting to other entities, including paramilitary organisations, for community-level support.
- 1.21 The EESC encourages the EU to liaise with the respective UK and Irish governments and the Northern Ireland Executive to join forces in raising awareness of the mission of the cross-border PEACE PLUS programme designed to support peace and prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. In this context, all parties must be acutely aware of the fragility of the peace in Northern Ireland, which amplifies the importance of the EU's support to the PEACE

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<sup>23</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/citizens-equality-rights-and-values-programme\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/citizens-equality-rights-and-values-programme_en).

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.disabilityaction.org/>.

PLUS programme. The role that the EU has played in supporting this peace cannot be underestimated. As part of this, the EESC calls on all invested parties to proactively promote the merits of PEACE PLUS, communicating its vast funding opportunities through accessible and youth-friendly language.

## **2. Context**

- 2.1 Political relations between the EU and the UK have improved significantly following the adoption of the EU-UK WA, the EU-UK TCA and the Windsor Framework. At a civil society level, relations have remained strong and amicable, based on good faith and cooperation.
- 2.2 This dynamic is reflected in the exceptional relations between the EESC and CSOs across the UK since 2021, which has resulted in the EESC signing memorandums of understanding with Civil Society Alliance UK, and subsequently with the Scottish Advisory Forum on Europe. It is also reflected in the visits to London, Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff carried out as part of the drafting of this own-initiative opinion, the 2023 Information Report on the Implementation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement<sup>25</sup>, and in other formal and informal meetings between EESC members and UK CSOs. Additionally, the EESC has developed very good relations with the relevant representatives of the UK Mission to the EU, Scotland House, Wales House and the Northern Ireland Executive Office in Brussels.
- 2.3 Key structures to monitor the implementation of the EU-UK TCA and the Windsor Framework are in place, but lack youth sector representation. A broader issue of regional representation and resources to facilitate participation in these structures (notably the DAGs) has been identified.

## **3. Specific comments**

- 3.1 The definitive issue impacting the EU-UK relationship in the field of youth stems from the UK's decision to exit the Erasmus+ programme. As major business, labour and third-sector stakeholders attest, re-joining Erasmus+ should be without prejudice to the UK Turing Scheme, the Welsh Taith programme and similar UK post-Brexit mobility arrangements, which are much narrower in scope and much less funded, and which could thus complement rather than replace Erasmus+.
- 3.2 Although the UK sought to implement alternative models to Erasmus+, including across the national and devolved levels, youth sector representatives maintain that these do not match the voluntary youth mobility and non-formal learning opportunities nor the operational grant funding that Erasmus+ previously granted the UK youth sector. While Erasmus+ used to provide substantial structural and project-based funding to youth CSOs annually to carry out non-formal exchanges and other activities – (for instance, just under EUR 7 million spread across a total of 201 organisations in 2020), the subsequent Turing Scheme (by solely focusing on mobility for higher education students) has left a financial gap for youth CSOs previously dependent on Erasmus+. These include the British Youth Council (the UK's national youth council), which in the immediate aftermath of Brexit saw a 40% reduction in its annual budget, including the entirety

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/information-reports/implementation-eu-uk-withdrawal-agreement-including-protocol-ireland-and-northern-ireland>.

of its international-focused budget, due to losing access to Erasmus+. As reported, the loss of this funding stream and the lack of an adequate replacement over the long term are partly to blame for the organisation's insolvency announcement on Thursday, 21 March 2024. They also accentuate the dire financial conditions experienced by the UK youth sector as its National Youth Council - one of Europe's oldest and most prominent - faces the risk of total collapse after 75 years of youth service.

- 3.3 The loss of Erasmus+ has led to the development of two replacement schemes: the UK-wide Turing Scheme and the Welsh-specific Taith scheme. Lessons from both of these highlight that they do not offer the same variety of opportunities as Erasmus+, and operate with a smaller budget. By virtue of having a comparatively greater youth uptake, the Taith scheme offers a good example of how to improve the accessibility of applying for Erasmus+ funds – an issue many EU stakeholders continue to highlight. Lessons could also be drawn from the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015<sup>26</sup>, which requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, and could be considered as comparable to the EU Youth Test. Additionally, in this context, Wales has appointed a Future Generations Commissioner for Wales<sup>27</sup>.
- 3.4 Erasmus+ has been identified as being perceived as a fund for the privileged - inaccessible to many, difficult to apply for and lacking a contact person to answer fundamental questions during the application process. This perception is not necessarily a fair reflection of reality but needs to be addressed, and has been highlighted by the effectiveness of the Welsh Taith scheme.
- 3.5 Additionally, the EU should facilitate, possibly through co-funding with willing UK partners, renewed participation of young Brits in programmes, including in volunteering and non-formal learning opportunities, such as Erasmus+ until such a time that a future UK government re-joins the scheme. Inversely, the UK could do the same in its current programmes for young people inside the EU.
- 3.6 UK youth CSOs express regret regarding the UK's decision to exit Erasmus+ - a decision which they say has hindered not only the UK youth sector's access to vital financing, but also to renowned schemes like the European Solidarity Corps and the European Union Youth Dialogue Conference - two schemes where the UK used to be a top participant.
- 3.7 UK youth CSOs also reported that while they wish to see the return of Erasmus+, the scheme could be made more accessible and effective if, like Taith, it were more tailored to geographic specificities and distributed by more localised actors.
- 3.8 A general desire to have the scheme's non-formal education components better promoted was also expressed by youth CSOs, who worried that the lack of promotion of these by the EC threatened to advance the false perception that the scheme is solely accessible for middle-class students.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/>.



- 3.9 Given that EUR 89.5 million in funding had been dispersed amongst 376 UK-based cultural and creative organisations between 2014 and 2018<sup>28</sup>, the UK's exit from the Creative Europe scheme has significantly diminished cultural relations between the EU and the UK and its devolved administrations<sup>29</sup>.
- 3.10 Increased structural engagement of youth CSOs from the devolved regions of the UK is required to improve the effectiveness and overall representativity of both the joint EU-UK DAG and the Civil Society Forum.
- 3.11 The EU Youth Strategy<sup>30</sup> states that 'Member States should encourage youth and other stakeholders to set up joint initiatives, for example in education, employment, digital, sport, sustainability and international cooperation, using the full potential of EU funding'. This section of the new EU Youth Strategy could serve as a basis for devising relevant joint initiatives between EU and UK youth.
- 3.12 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is the government's domestic replacement for the European Structural and Investment Programme. The UKSPF is a fund worth GBP 2.6 billion. However, the UKSPF cannot be compared to ERDF or ESF funding (to which Northern Ireland no longer has access due to Brexit), where these programmes were developed in partnership with local authorities, all of which have direct knowledge of the real issues on the ground. On the other hand, the UKSPF does not involve local authorities in the development of the programme, which is potentially detrimental for addressing local issues.
- 3.13 Initiatives like PEACE PLUS and the Shared Island Youth Forum have been instrumental to maintaining stability in Northern Ireland by funding civil society groups and youth organisations. However, increased paramilitary activity<sup>31</sup> has been reported in Northern Ireland despite these schemes, resulting from Northern Irish youth feeling increasingly left behind, especially on a community level. This has been also recently highlighted by the UK Parliament's Northern Ireland Affairs Committee<sup>32</sup>, and is a sentiment which was evident in the EESC's interactions with key Northern Irish stakeholders and in the survey data collected for this opinion report.
- 3.14 The unique situation in Northern Ireland means that issues around rights are particularly sensitive. This may be most appropriately addressed through the establishment of a sub-group on rights within the UK-EU Joint Consultative Working Group. This might be able to contribute to addressing concerns around non-diminution of rights, as specified in the GFA/Belfast Agreement.

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28 <https://www.ietm.org/en/node/11501>.

29 [https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/webstreaming/cult-committee-meeting\\_20240124-1430-COMMITTEE-CULT](https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/webstreaming/cult-committee-meeting_20240124-1430-COMMITTEE-CULT).

30 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0269>.

31 <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/paramilitaries-grooming-young-and-preying-on-single-mothers-report-finds/a23525029.html>.

32 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmniaf/43/report.html>.

Brussels, 24 April 2024.

*The President of the European Economic and Social Committee*  
Oliver Röpke

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ANNEX

**Technical Report in Support  
of the Own-Initiative Opinion  
on EU-UK Youth Engagement**

REX/580

# Technical Report in Support of the Own-Initiative Opinion on EU-UK Youth Engagement

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## 1. Introduction

Based on the EESC Bureau decision of September 2023, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has drawn up an Own-Initiative Opinion (OIO) on EU-UK Youth Engagement. The opinion presents the views of representatives of youth organisations, young individuals and various other stakeholders from across the UK on the state of play of EU-UK youth relations and how to move forward. Input has been collected also from EU youth organisations, such as the European Youth Forum. Furthermore, recognising the European Committee of the Region's (CoR) work on youth and more generally on EU-UK relations, the EESC invited a representative of the CoR-UK Contact Group, who has contributed to the opinion, to its fact-finding mission to Belfast. The opinion is accompanied by a technical report annexed to the OIO. It summarises all inputs and findings, while also referring to the Information Report on the Implementation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement<sup>1</sup>, adopted by the EESC plenary in January 2023.

The overarching objective of the OIO is to prompt the EU institutions to facilitate engagement between EU and UK youth, particularly taking into account that "the loss of free EU movement and people-to-people contacts arising from the UK's decision not to remain in EU programmes such as Erasmus+ are two of the most negative and undesirable consequences of Brexit. It is clearly regretted by young people in the UK and their peers across the EU. It is important for the EU and UK to find a way to reopen the opportunity for young UK citizens to participate in Erasmus+ and other youth programmes"<sup>2</sup>. The OIO also aims to shed light on other forms of youth engagement with potential to be enhanced.

Finally, it aims to embolden both the European institutions and the UK Government to re-engage in a joint reflection on the future relationship between young people in the EU and the UK, which the EESC believes has the potential to be an important stepping stone to an ever-better overall post-Brexit relationship between the EU and the UK. It will thus be shared with the European Commission (EC), the European Parliament (EP), the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Council, and other relevant EU and UK stakeholders, including political and other stakeholders at UK level and at the level of its devolved nations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/information-reports/implementation-eu-uk-withdrawal-agreement-including-protocol-ireland-and-northern-ireland>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/information-reports/implementation-eu-uk-withdrawal-agreement-including-protocol-ireland-and-northern-ireland>



## 2. Background

The UK is a closely situated EU neighbour, which shares the EU's fundamental liberal democratic values. A highly developed economy, it accounted for 13% of the population of the EU, and 15% of EU GDP upon its withdrawal from the EU. Its population is one of the youngest in Europe, ranked by reference to median age<sup>3</sup>.

The UK Office of Budget Responsibility estimated that "the post-Brexit trading relationship between the UK and EU, as set out in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) that came into effect on 1 January 2021, will reduce long-run productivity by 4 per cent relative to remaining in the EU the economic cost of leaving the EU at 4% of total economic output"<sup>4</sup>.

A majority (**51.89%**) voted to leave the EU in the UK referendum held on 23 June 2016<sup>5</sup>. Extensive polling analysis concluded that the propensity to vote "Leave" increased with age, (according to Statista, the three oldest age groups voted "Leave" while the three youngest voted "Remain"<sup>6</sup>). The referendum did not pronounce on what "Brexit" should ensue. That remained to be decided by Parliament.

The UK Conservative Party won a commanding parliamentary majority in parliament in the 2019 general election, campaigning on a hard "Get Brexit Done" manifesto platform. General elections in the UK are conducted on an exclusively "first past the post" geographic constituency system of voting<sup>7</sup>. Notwithstanding the impressive result for the Conservative Party, a majority (**52.1%**) of 2019 general election voters actually opted for parties which had advocated a "Remain" position in the referendum.

The UK Government had opted to pursue a "hard Brexit", accompanied by a legislative agenda to that end, including:

- the Bill of Rights Bill<sup>8</sup>, which would repeal and replace the Human Rights Act 1998 (withdrawn on 27 June 2023);
- the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act<sup>9</sup>;

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.worlddata.info/average-age.php>

<sup>4</sup> <https://obr.uk/forecasts-in-depth/the-economy-forecast/brexit-analysis/#assumptions>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/568701/brexit-results-by-nation/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/520954/brexit-votes-by-age/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/1/notes/division/3/3/2>

<sup>8</sup> <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3227>

<sup>9</sup> <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3340/publications>

- the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill<sup>10</sup>;
- the Procurement Act 2023<sup>11</sup>;
- the Financial Services and Markets Act 2023<sup>12</sup>;
- the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023<sup>13</sup>;
- the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill<sup>14</sup>;
- the Trade (Australia and New Zealand) Act 2023<sup>15</sup>.

Since 1998 the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has been going through an evolving process of asymmetric devolution. Governments have been established in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, each with their own specific devolved powers and responsibilities.

Scotland voted decisively for "Remain" (**62%**), with every Council Electoral Area returning a "remain" majority. In the constituency vote in the Scottish Parliament elections in 2021, **77.5%** supported parties that had advocated "Remain" in the referendum. The Scottish Government, which is promoting independence from the UK, strongly favours EU membership and close ties in the interim.

Although Wales voted "Leave" (**52.53%**), a majority of voters (**57.8%**) voted for parties that had advocated "Remain" in the 2019 general election and again in the 2021 Senedd (Welsh Parliament) election (**66.6%**). Whereas the Welsh Government accepts the referendum result, it strongly favours stronger ties with Europe and a constructive, cooperative, friendly relationship.

Northern Ireland voted "Remain" (**55.78%**). In the 2019 general election, a large majority (**66.2%**) voted for parties that had advocated "Remain", and **62.8%** supported such parties in the Northern Irish Assembly elections in 2022.

Northern Ireland is in a unique situation compared to Scotland and Wales. In accordance with the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (GFA), certain decisions of the Northern Ireland Assembly require cross-community consent.

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10 <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3182>

11 <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3159>

12 <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3326>

13 <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3167>

14 <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3322>

15 <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3152>

Northern Ireland is also different in the post-Brexit context owing to the specific arrangements found in the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland<sup>16</sup> attached to the EU-UK WA, and more recently in the Windsor Framework<sup>17</sup>.

Moreover, almost all persons born in Northern Ireland, regardless of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, either remain EU citizens or are entitled to be EU citizens by virtue of Irish citizenship. This is provided for by the Irish Constitution and under Irish legislation, and is endorsed and recognised by the UK in the 1998 Agreement. In addition, part of the constitutional governance arrangements for Northern Ireland are based on a treaty with Ireland, an EU Member State. Such arrangements are set out in Strand II of the GFA<sup>18</sup> and the bilateral treaties establishing (North-South) cross-border bodies.

The arrangements for the devolved legislatures are underpinned by the "Sewel Convention"<sup>19</sup>. Essentially, this provides that the UK parliament will "not normally" legislate on matters that are devolved without the agreement of the devolved institutions through a process of "legislative consent". However, the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020<sup>20</sup>, was enacted even though all three devolved legislatures had (for the first time) withheld consent.

The absence of any structured social dialogue in the UK does not help to address the challenge facing effective civil society intervention; e.g. the UK does not have an economic and social council of the type common in EU Member States. The National Economic Development Council, established in 1962 (by a Conservative government and referred to as 'Neddy') was abolished in 1992.

However, there is a strong culture of engagement among civil society organisations (CSOs) and youth organisations in the devolved nations, particularly in Wales, and also in Scotland. For example, the Welsh Senedd has enacted the ground-breaking Wellbeing of Future Generations Act<sup>21</sup>, and the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill<sup>22</sup>. The latter provides social partnership with a statutory footing in Wales. The "Third Sector Scheme"<sup>23</sup>, underpinned by statute, provides for ministerial engagement

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16 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5da863ab40f0b659847e0184/Revised\\_Protocol\\_to\\_the\\_Withdrawal\\_Agreement.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5da863ab40f0b659847e0184/Revised_Protocol_to_the_Withdrawal_Agreement.pdf)

17 [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/relations-non-eu-countries/relations-united-kingdom/eu-uk-withdrawal-agreement/windsor-framework\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/relations-non-eu-countries/relations-united-kingdom/eu-uk-withdrawal-agreement/windsor-framework_en)

18 <https://www.dfa.ie/our-role/policies/northern-ireland/the-good-friday-agreement-and-today/>

19 <https://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/sewel-convention/>

20 <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2517>

21 <https://gov.wales/well-being-of-future-generations-wales>

22 <https://gov.wales/social-partnership-and-public-procurement-wales-bill>

23 <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-01/third-sector-scheme-2014.pdf>

with and the promotion of voluntary organisations. In 2022 Wales also introduced Taith<sup>24</sup>, its own international learning and volunteering exchange programme.

### 3. Main Findings

Based on its analysis and synthesis of all inputs and feedback from various sources, the EESC has reached the main findings below.

**There is universal and unanimous support for negotiations between the EU and UK for the full reintegration of the UK into Erasmus+ to be strengthened**, a position that is strongly supported by young people on both sides of the Channel. **The voice of young people should be a key component of decision-making by both sides**, given that the UK's non-participation in Erasmus+ has diminished the opportunities and academic and cultural exchanges of both young Europeans and young Brits. With 73 percent of those aged 18-24 having voted Remain in the Brexit referendum, it is clear that young people are in favour of re-gaining access to the beneficial exchange opportunities offered and attached to Erasmus+.

**Similarly high support has been expressed for the UK to re-join Creative Europe<sup>25</sup>**, and for the EU side to actively promote the issue of cross-cultural learning in its diplomatic exchanges with the UK.

**There has been a recognition<sup>26</sup> that Brexit has had a very negative impact on touring artists**, and therefore also on cultural relations between the EU and the UK. This clearly calls for proactive engagement to address the barriers to mobility of creative professionals, many of whom are members of younger generations, possibly by introducing a reciprocal visa waiver for creative industries.

Evidence<sup>27</sup> shows that there has been a large decline in school visitors to both the UK and the EU, which had significantly and deleteriously affected the cultural and economic ties between the EU and the UK. **To minimise this negative impact, the EU and UK should negotiate on reciprocal travel arrangements for young people under 18**, potentially including **the introduction of a youth group travel scheme** that would not require pupils on school visits to the UK or to the EU to carry individual passports.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.taith.wales/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe>

<sup>26</sup> <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9658/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/how-does-brexit-affect-eu-school-trips/>

**Overwhelming support has been expressed for the structured inclusion of youth representatives in existing engagement structures on both sides.** This could take the form of regular inclusion of UK youth representatives in various EU initiatives, such as the EESC's annual *Your Europe, Your Say*<sup>28</sup> youth event, the EESC's "Meet the Champions of excellence"<sup>29</sup> flagship event, the European Parliament's annual *LevelUp!*<sup>30</sup> and *European Youth Event*<sup>31</sup> gatherings, and in similar initiatives.

Various stakeholders are also **strongly in favour of the creation of a new structured youth engagement between the EU, UK-level authorities and the devolved UK countries**, for the purpose of strengthening civil society dialogue and cooperation. One way to address this could be to **create and fund an EU-UK youth coordination forum**, consisting *inter alia* of youth representatives from both the EU and the UK, including from the UK's devolved countries. The mission of such a forum would be to pursue a regular dialogue to discuss the most pressing issues in the area of EU-UK youth relations. These actors should be also considered in the EESC's opinion-making process through the implementation of the EU Youth Test<sup>32</sup> in the EESC.

**Young people in the UK warmly welcome the British Council's EU/UK Youth Stronger Together project**, offering young people aged 15-30 from the EU and the UK opportunities to connect and cooperate. This project could serve as an excellent best practice model for facilitating future EU-UK bilateral youth initiatives to connect and empower young people.

The stakeholders consulted in Northern Ireland remarked that the European Social Fund (ESF) was distributed based on local expertise by local authorities, which proved to be a resilient and reliable funding model for groups like Disability Action Northern Ireland, providing transport for disabled individuals to access services. This and other initiatives are now facing closure. **Lack of funding and the absence of a coordinated approach and local expertise in the allocation of funding, combined with cuts, means that youth groups and community groups are not being adequately resourced. This exacerbates the risks to peace in Northern Ireland. This should therefore be addressed with urgency to prevent young people resorting to other entities, including paramilitary organisations, for community-level support.**

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28 <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/initiatives/your-europe-your-say>.

29 [https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/meet-the-champions-of-excellence?s=09#:~:text=%22Meet%20the%20champions%20of%20excellence,EESC\)%20and%20the%20European%20Commission](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/meet-the-champions-of-excellence?s=09#:~:text=%22Meet%20the%20champions%20of%20excellence,EESC)%20and%20the%20European%20Commission)

30 [https://youth.europa.eu/news/join-us-level-i-care-i-vote\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/news/join-us-level-i-care-i-vote_en).

31 <https://european-youth-event.europarl.europa.eu/en/previous-editions>.

32 <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/eu-youth-test>

The EESC registered a number of calls for a **mapping of opportunities for young people**. This could be helpful in building capacity to educate and raise the awareness of young people on the practical opportunities available to them. To this end, clear career pathways should be articulated, including the need to deliver expert knowledge to young people through schools and career advice. **A programme on apprenticeships should be included**, based on best practice.

The analysis also shows that it would be very useful **to establish a centralised and accessible information hub for young entrepreneurs**, who continue to be affected post-Brexit by new rules governing the movement of goods and services across the Channel, as well as by uncertainty around market access.

**Consulted stakeholders raised the issue of youth groups not being represented in either the EU domestic advisory group or the UK domestic advisory group, enshrined and established under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.** For this reason, **the Commission should facilitate the full and active participation of EU youth sector, removing any financial barriers to participation in the EU domestic advisory group. The Commission should also engage with and encourage the UK to facilitate the participation of UK youth sector representatives in the UK DAG.** This could include targeted communication to raise the awareness of youth groups of the importance of expressing their views in the domestic advisory groups. Ensuring that the voices of young people are heard in these bodies is essential to their long-term survival as a structure for facilitating and enhancing bilateral relations.

Stakeholders also expressed their **desire for improved structured peer-to-peer learning, which would be useful for CSOs, but would also serve as a model that could be replicated by local authorities and government departments.** Although, for instance, Wales continues to have connections to EU networks, they need to be strengthened to ensure their longevity and to make sure that with a change of personnel engagement and knowledge sharing continues. One positive example is that a Welsh representative is chair of the EU-level Rural Youth Forum. However, young farmers groups from the UK are excluded from CEJA<sup>33</sup>, with the exception of NFU Next Generation<sup>34</sup>, which represents England and Wales.

**Stakeholder feedback also shows that there is a pressing need to address issues relating to children and young people under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS).** Under the UK's interpretation of the Withdrawal Agreement (WA), the status of each individual expires after five years (that can be extended

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33 <https://www.ceja.eu/home>.

34 <https://www.ceja.eu/who-we-are/people>.



by 2 years) if they fail to apply for ‘settled’ status. The situation may worsen if, for any reason, people omit to register dependents, e.g. their children<sup>35</sup>. For instance, due to long EUSS processing times, families are separated for extended periods of time. The digital-only status remains a serious issue, particularly for vulnerable and digitally excluded groups, such as the UK Roma community, which comprises a large number of young people. **The Commission is therefore encouraged to liaise with the UK Government to develop programmes to enable community groups, organisations and public authorities to provide ongoing digital support when issues arise.** This would include training to help those in need to access, use and keep their digital status up-to-date<sup>36</sup>.

**Regarding Northern Ireland, a need was expressed for the EU to liaise with the respective UK and Irish governments and the Northern Ireland Executive to join forces in raising awareness of the mission of the cross-border PEACE PLUS programme designed to support peace and prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.** In this context, all parties must be acutely aware of the fragility of the peace in Northern Ireland, which amplifies the importance of the EU’s support to the PEACE PLUS programme. The role that the EU has played in supporting this peace cannot be underestimated. As part of this, the EESC calls on all invested parties to proactively promote the merits of PEACE PLUS, communicating its vast funding opportunities through accessible and youth-friendly language.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/information-reports/implementation-eu-uk-withdrawal-agreement-including-protocol-ireland-and-northern-ireland>.

<sup>36</sup> [https://www.romasupportgroup.org.uk/uploads/9/3/6/8/93687016/statement\\_on\\_the\\_impact\\_of\\_the\\_eu\\_settlement\\_scheme\\_digital\\_only\\_status\\_on\\_roma\\_communities\\_in\\_the\\_uk\\_final.pdf](https://www.romasupportgroup.org.uk/uploads/9/3/6/8/93687016/statement_on_the_impact_of_the_eu_settlement_scheme_digital_only_status_on_roma_communities_in_the_uk_final.pdf).

## **4. Methodology and Data-Collection**

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) collected the views of youth and other relevant stakeholders via several sources: fact-finding missions across the UK (London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast), a targeted online survey, and written contributions received from various CSOs and other stakeholders. This information is complemented by secondary data in the form of previous work done by the EESC on the topic, as well as other relevant publications.

### **4.1 Fact-Finding Missions**

The fact-finding meetings included semi-structured interviews with youth organisations, other CSOs and representatives of public authorities. The fact-finding meetings took place in the following locations:

- London, 25 October 2023, University College London
- Edinburgh, 9-10 November 2023, Royal Society of Edinburgh and COSLA Conference Centre
- Belfast, 10 January, Queens' University Belfast
- Cardiff, 11-12 January 2024, Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Welsh National Voluntary Youth Organisation)

### **4.2 Survey**

The online survey aimed to gather insights from UK youth organisations and individuals on the state of play of UK and EU youth relations, as well as suggestions how to move forward. Spanning a two-week period, the survey was distributed across the UK, seeking to provide an understanding of young people's perceptions regarding the post-Brexit EU-UK relationship. Through outreach efforts via various networks, the EESC's survey successfully engaged 191 respondents.

The survey generally targeted individuals with expertise and experience relevant to EU-UK youth matters, ensuring the inclusion of those who could provide relevant and valuable insights. Additionally, snowball sampling was utilised to engage participants through referrals from existing respondents, particularly during the EESC's fact-finding missions to the UK.

The topics and questions covered by the survey were designed using various sources. One significant source was the Youth Gathering<sup>37</sup> hosted in London on 25 October by the EU Delegation to the UK in the premises of University College London, attended by a strong EESC delegation. This Youth

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[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/united-kingdom/eu-delegation-uks-youth-gathering-2023\\_en?s=3225#:~:text=The%20Youth%20Gathering%20also%20saw,being%20created%20across%20the%20country](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/united-kingdom/eu-delegation-uks-youth-gathering-2023_en?s=3225#:~:text=The%20Youth%20Gathering%20also%20saw,being%20created%20across%20the%20country)

Gathering brought together youth representatives from across the UK from diverse backgrounds to discuss the main challenges young people face and how they see current EU-UK relations. Key questions addressed at the gathering included:

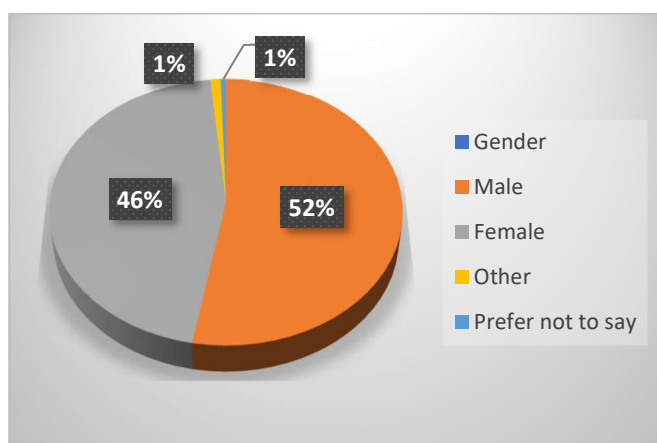
- What are the primary concerns of young people in the UK?
- What challenges do they face?
- How do they envision the future relationship between the UK and the EU?
- Is ongoing dialogue between UK and EU youth necessary, and why?

Additionally, participants were asked about their interest in learning more about youth engagement in the EU and what specific information they sought. Insights from the Youth Gathering, covering topics such as youth mobility, Erasmus+, school trips and citizens' rights, were therefore valuable inputs for designing the survey. Furthermore, a variety of online sources on the current state of youth engagement between the EU and the UK were analysed and used as a basis to formulate the questions in the survey.

The survey combined closed-ended, open-ended, and matrix questions, primarily containing closed-ended questions to keep the completion of the survey within a reasonable time.

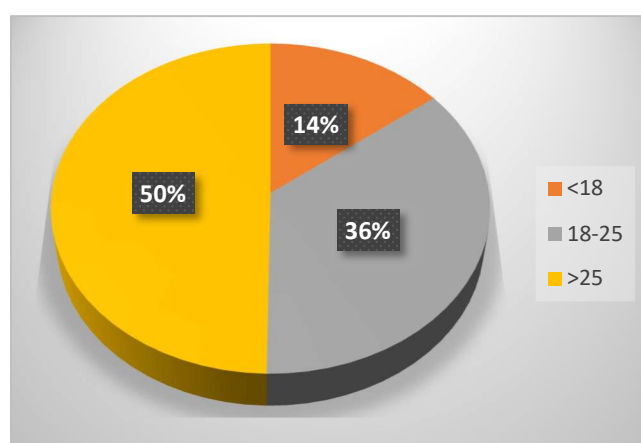
### 4.3 Respondents Breakdown

Figure 1 shows the gender distribution among survey respondents, with 100 (52%) males, 88 (46%) females, 2 (1%) other, and 1 (1%) preferring not to disclose their gender, totalling 191 completed responses. Figure 2 presents the age distribution of survey respondents across three age brackets. The majority, comprising 95 respondents (50%), fall into the upper-range segment, aged 25 or above. Additionally, 68 respondents (36%) were between 18 and 25 years old, while 28 respondents (14%) were below 18 years old.

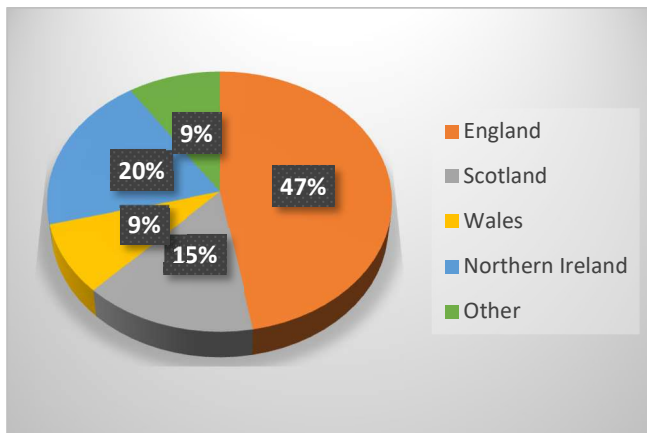


**Figure 1** – Gender distributions among survey respondents.

\* Total number of respondents: 191

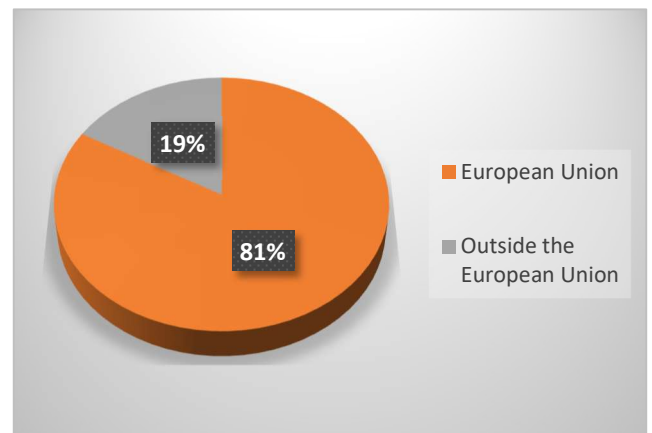


**Figure 2** – Age group survey respondents.



**Figure 3** – Country of origin respondents.

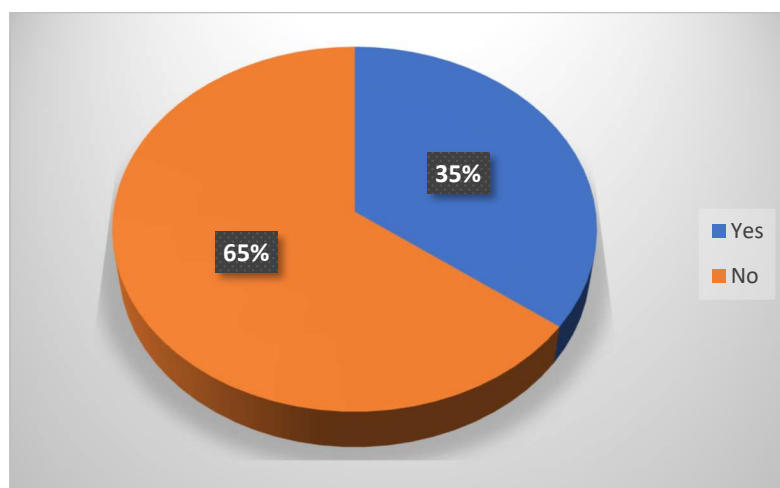
\*Other refers to outside of the UK.



**Figure 4** – Respondents who answered 'other'.

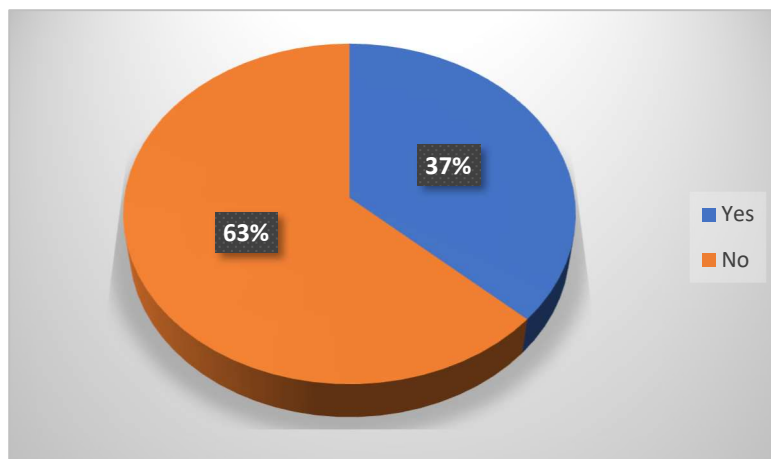
Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of respondents by country of origin. The majority, i.e. 91 respondents (47%), came from England, followed by Northern Ireland with 38 respondents (20%), Scotland with 29 respondents (15%), and Wales with 17 respondents (9%). Additionally, 16 respondents (9%) were from other regions. This distribution was in line with expectations, considering England's larger population compared to other parts of the UK.

Furthermore, Figure 4 shows the country of origin of respondents who answered 'other'. Of the 191 respondents, 9% (16 respondents) were from a country of origin outside the UK. Most of the 'other' respondents were from the European Union (81%), compared to outside the European Union (17%).



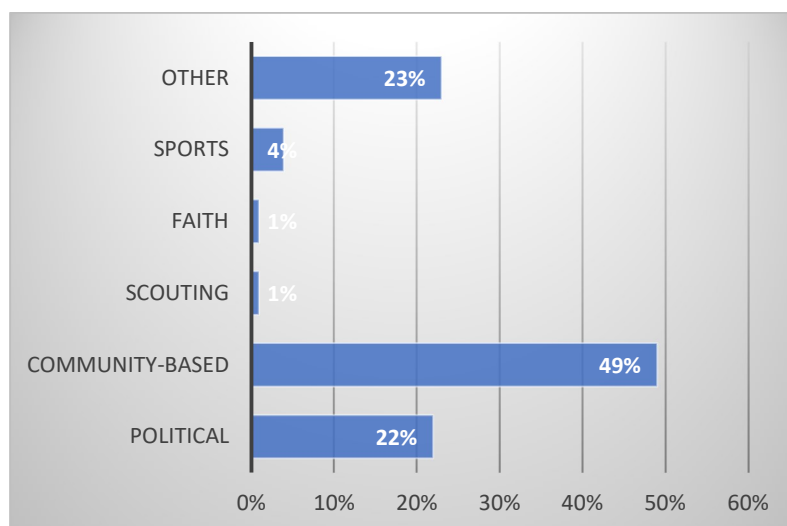
**Figure 5** – EU national or not.

Figure 5 shows whether the respondents are EU or non-EU nationals. Out of 191 respondents, 65% are non-EU nationals, and 35% are EU nationals.



**Figure 6** – Do you represent or are you a member of a youth organisation?

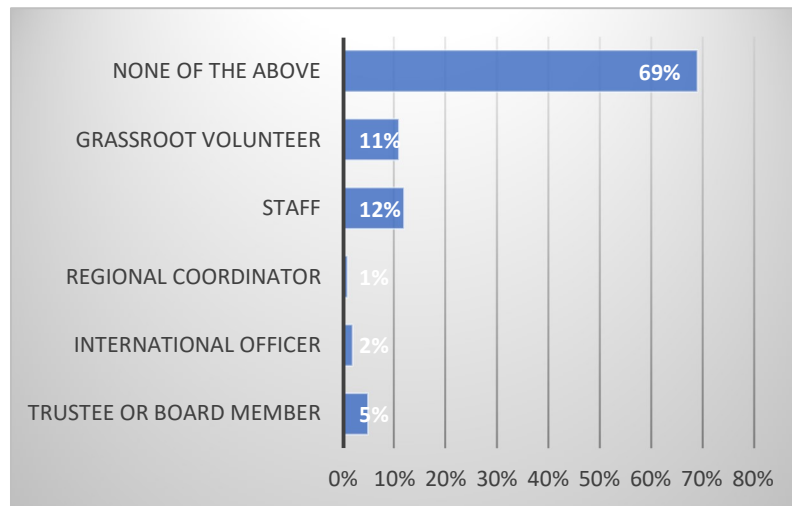
Figure 6 shows the (non)affiliation of respondents to youth organisations. The chart shows that 63% (121 respondents) did not represent or were members of youth organisations, while 37% (70 respondents) were members or represented youth organisations.



**Figure 7** – If the respondent answered 'yes' as indicated in Figure 6, what category of youth organisation does the respondent represent?

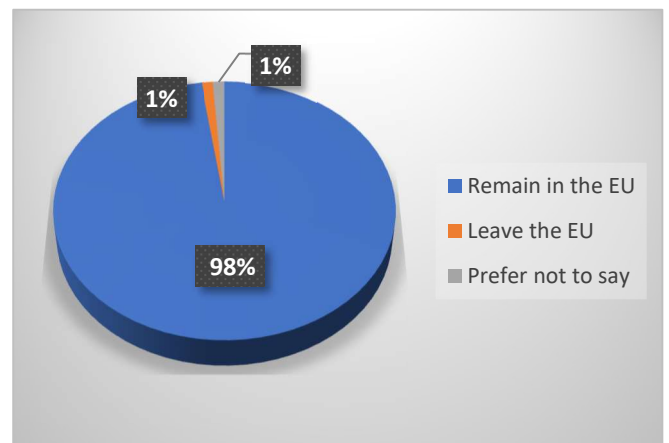
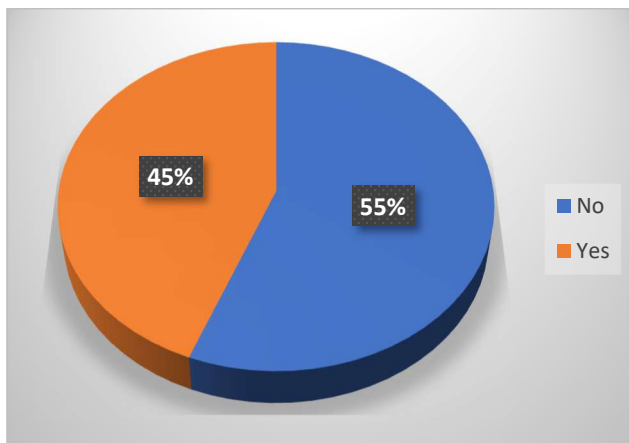
*\*Multiple answers possible.*

This question allowed multiple answers per respondent. Of the 71 respondents who answered 'yes' in Figure 6, there were 77 answers. Of those 77 answers, 49% were part of a community-based youth organisation, 22% other, and 23% political. Only 4% of respondents are part of a sports-oriented youth organisation, 1% faith-based, and 1% scouting.



**Figure 8** – Which function aligns with you the most within a youth organisation?

In Figure 8, out of all respondents, an overwhelming majority (69%) answered that they had no function or role within a youth organisation. This was expected, given that most respondents (63% Figure 6) did not represent or were members of youth organisations. 12% replied that they were part of staff, and 11% that they had a grassroots volunteer role.

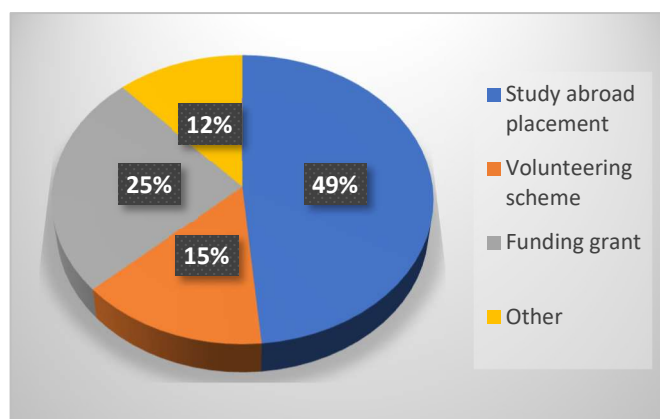
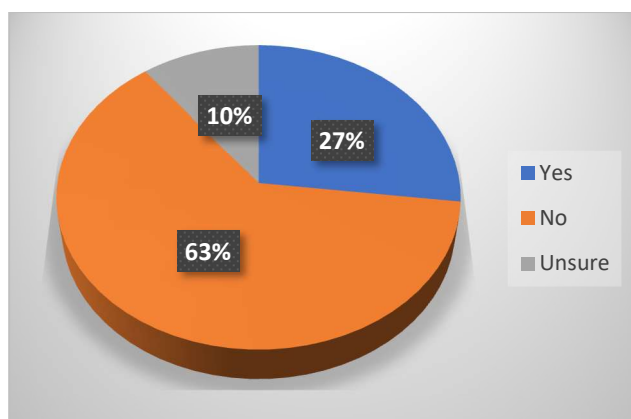


**Figure 9** – Where you able to vote for the Brexit-Referendum in 2016? & **Figure 10** – What did the respondents vote who were allowed to vote for the Brexit-Referendum?

Of the 191 respondents, 55% (106 respondents) were not able to vote in the Brexit referendum in 2016, and 45% (85 respondents) were able to do so. Of the 85 respondents who voted for the Brexit Referendum (Figure 10), 98% voted to remain in the EU, while only one respondent voted to leave the EU. One respondent preferred not to disclose how they voted. In a follow-up question, all respondents (100%) confirmed that they still stood by their original vote.



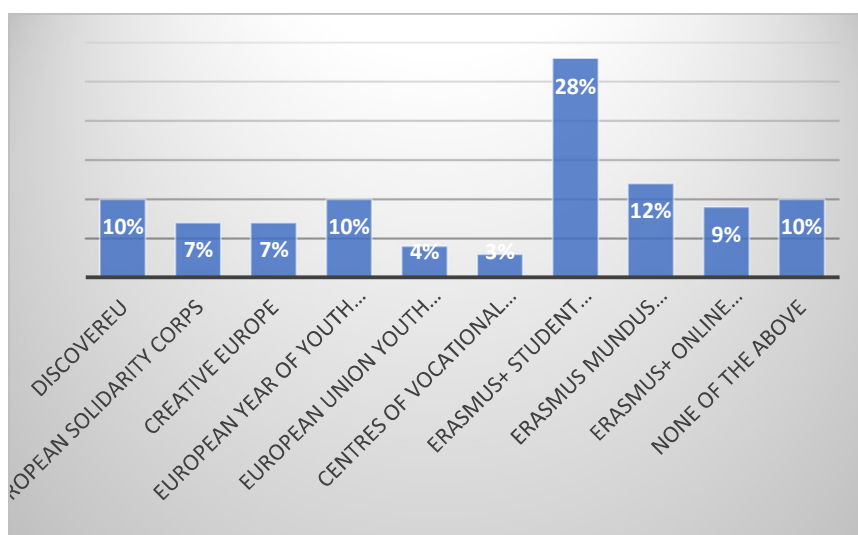
## 5. Survey results



**Figure 11** – Have you or your organisation participated in Erasmus+? & **Figure 12** – If the participant said 'yes' to participating in Erasmus+, what type of participation? (multiple answers possible in Figure 12)

Figure 11 gives an overview of the number of respondents (or their organisations) who have participated in Erasmus+. 27% of the respondents (51) have participated in Erasmus+, while 63% (120 respondents) have not. 10% (20 respondents) were unsure whether they or their organisations participated.

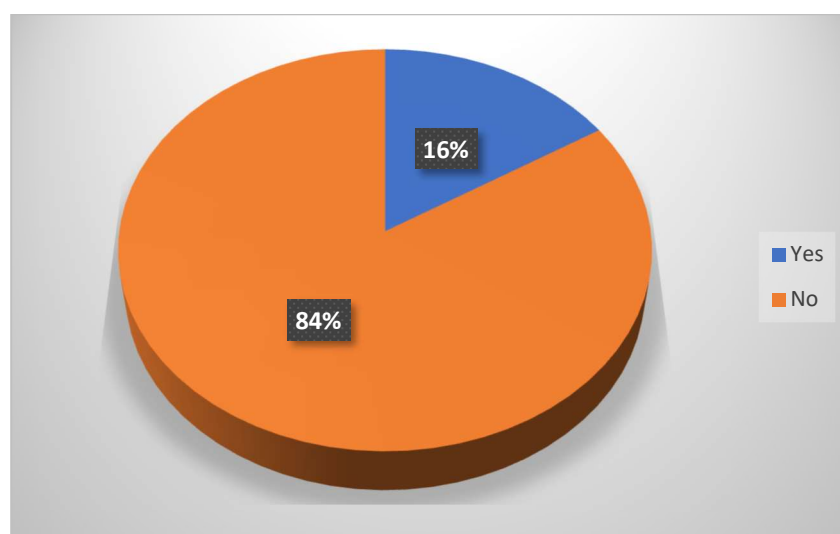
Furthermore, for Figure 12 multiple answers were possible. Out of the 51 respondents who answered 'yes' in Figure 11, there were 68 answers. Figure 12 shows that 49% (33 answers) participated in a study abroad placement, followed by a funding grant with 25% (17 answers), volunteering scheme with 15% (10 answers), and 12% with other (8 answers). The high number of participations in a study abroad placement by respondents is unsurprising as this is what Erasmus+ is most known for (see figure 13).



**Figure 13** - Which of the following elements have you heard of?

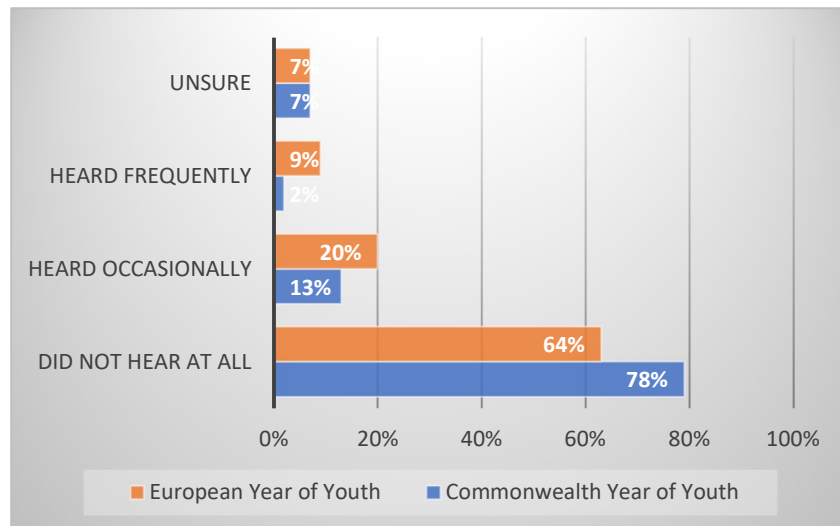
\* Multiple answers possible.

This question allowed multiple answers per respondent. Between the 191 respondents, there were 466 answers. Figure 13 shows the respondents' awareness of various youth initiatives associated with the EU. The Erasmus+ student exchange programme was by far the most recognisable, with 28% (131 answers) indicating familiarity with it. Other programmes, such as the Erasmus Mundus Programme (56 answers; 12%), DiscoverEU (46 answers; 10%), European Year of Youth 2022 (46 answers; 10%), and Erasmus+ Online Language Support (41 answers; 9%), were less recognisable. Furthermore, the European Union Youth Dialogue Conference (20 answers; 4%) and Centres of Vocational Excellence (14 answers; 3%) received much lesser recognition, most probably due to their niche focus. A total of 10% (47 answers) were not familiar with any of the listed initiatives.



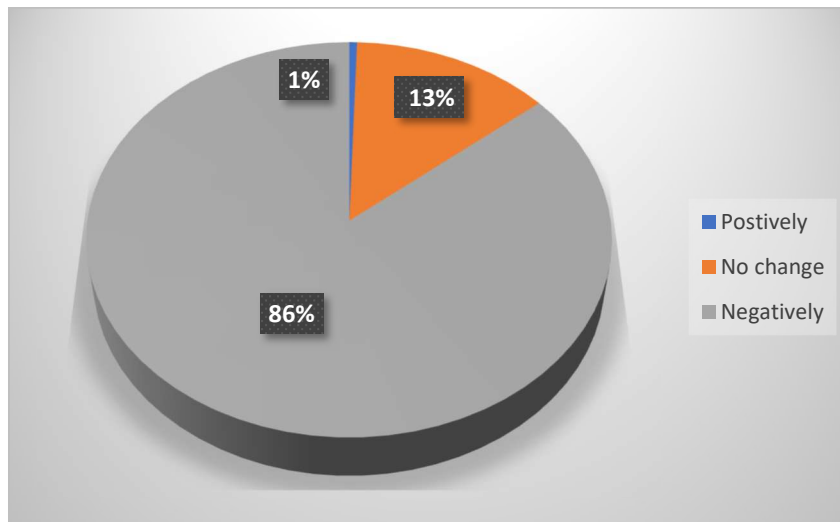
*Figure 14 - Are you aware that 2023 was the Commonwealth Year of Youth?*

Figure 14 shows the respondents' familiarity with the Commonwealth Year of Youth 2023. The vast majority of respondents (161 respondents; 84%) were not aware that 2023 was Commonwealth Year of Youth, with a much smaller percentage (30 respondents; 16%) being aware of this.



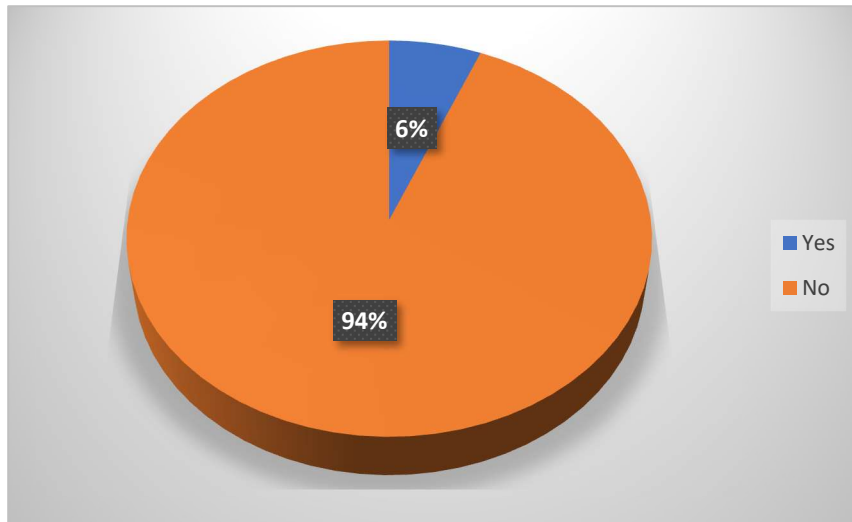
*Figure 15 - How frequently did you hear about the Commonwealth Year of Youth compared to the European Year of Youth?*

A large majority of respondents (150 respondents; 78%) reported that they did not register any promotion of the **Commonwealth Year of Youth**. Only 13% of respondents occasionally heard of the Commonwealth Year of Youth, and a very small share (2%) frequently heard about it, with 7% being unsure. The figures for the **European Year of Youth** show that most respondents (121 respondents; 64%) did not hear about the European Year of Youth. 20% of respondents had occasionally heard of the European Year of Youth, 9% frequently, and 7% were unsure.



*Figure 16 - How has Brexit affected your perception of the UK's student and voluntary mobility opportunities available for young people?*

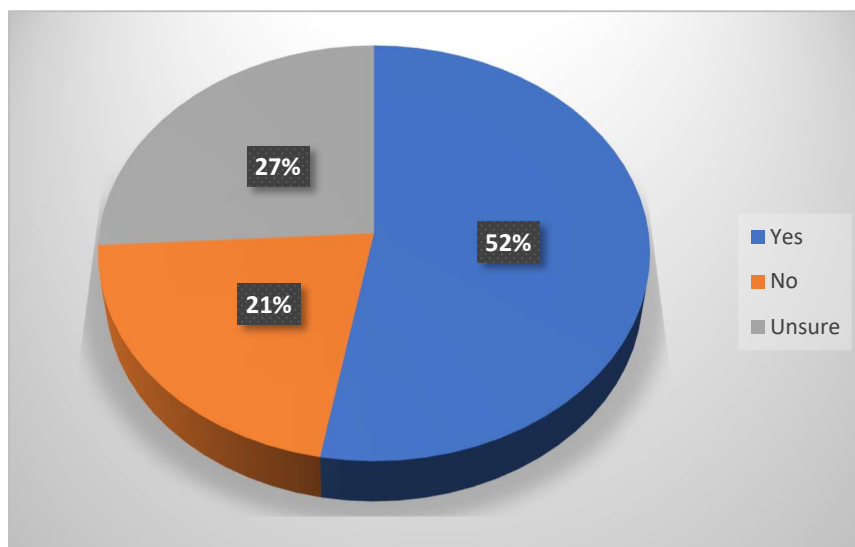
An overwhelming majority (86%) of respondents were of the view that Brexit negatively affected UK's student and voluntary mobility opportunities available for young people, followed by 13% who experienced no change, and 1% who claimed that Brexit had a positive effect.



*Figure 17 - Are you a touring artist or does your organisation cover touring artists?*

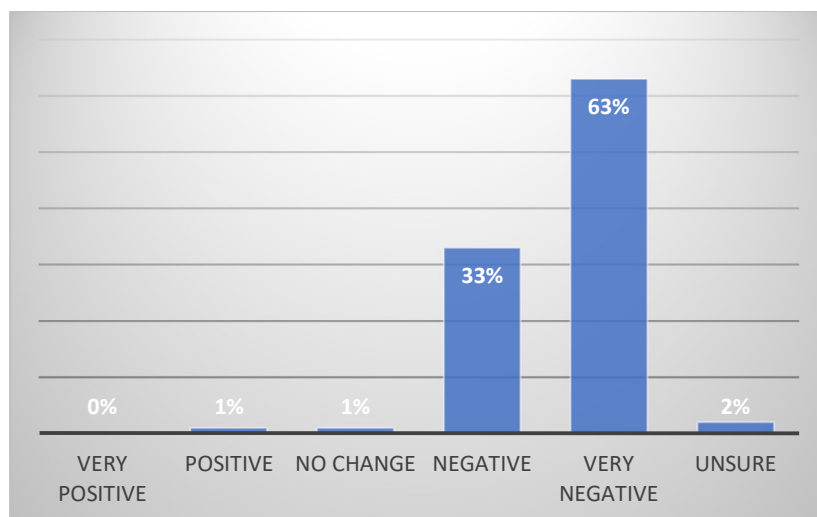
Among the 191 respondents, 94% are not touring artists or affiliated with organisations that involve touring artists, while 6% (12 respondents) are. Of the 12 respondents who are touring artists, 50% mentioned that changes in visa and work permit requirements have had a very negative impact on the ability of British touring artists to perform in European countries. Additionally, 34% expressed a negative impact, 8% stated a very positive effect, and 8% were unsure.

Furthermore, 68% of respondents who are touring artists (6% Figure 17) indicated that there are obstacles in accessing funding and support for British touring artists participating in European events and festivals. Moreover, 16% mentioned it was a partial hindrance, while another 16% expressed uncertainty on the matter.



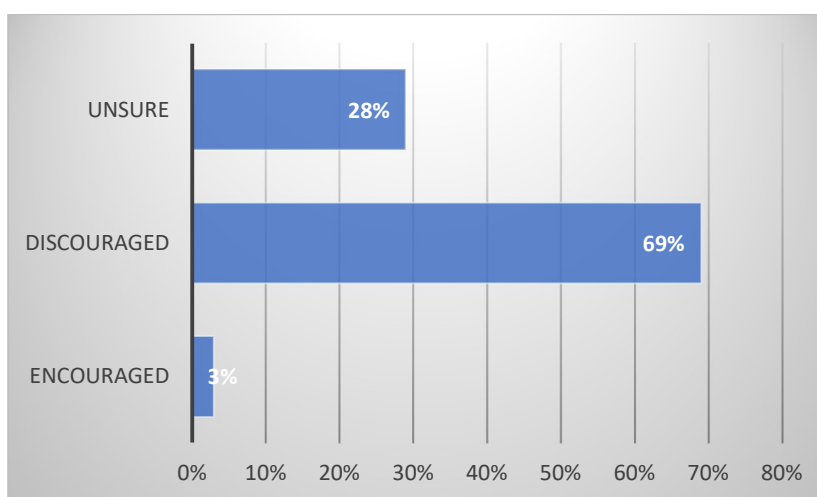
*Figure 18 - Have changes in visa and entry requirements affected the ability of yourself, friends, or relatives to go on educational trips in EU countries?*

Most respondents (52%) believe that changes in visa and entry requirements have indeed affected the ability of yourself, friends or relatives to go on educational trips in EU countries, while 21% believe this is not the case. 27% of respondents were unsure. Whether this is perceived as positive or negative (so if respondents answered 'yes') is depicted in Figure 19.



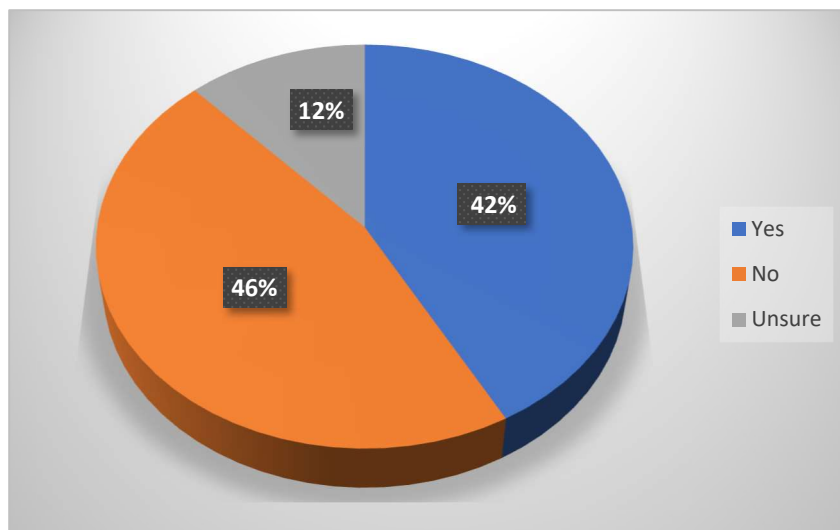
**Figure 19** – If the respondents answered 'yes' in Figure 18, how have changes in visa and entry requirements affected the ability of yourself, friends or relatives to go on educational trips in EU countries?

Out of the 52% respondents who answered 'yes' in Figure 18, most perceive the changes in visa and entry requirements to go on educational trips in EU countries as negative (33%) or very negative (63%). 1 respondent viewed it as a positive change, another perceived no change, and 2% were unsure.



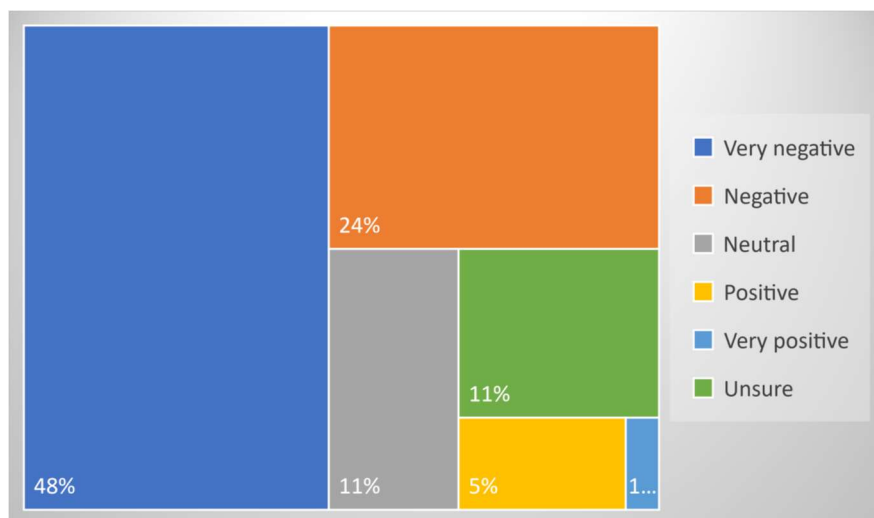
**Figure 20** - Have the new rules discouraged or encouraged you, friends, or relatives to participate in cross-channel trips?

Figure 20 shows that 69% of respondents were discouraged to go on cross-channel trips due to the new rules following the Withdrawal Agreement. 28% were unsure, and 3% were encouraged to do so.



**Figure 21** - Have you heard of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill?

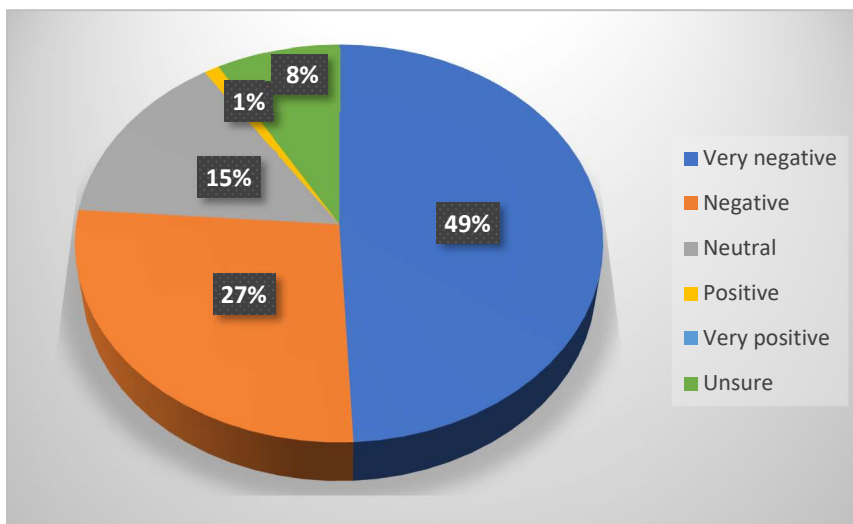
Nearly one half of all respondents 46% have not heard of the Retained EU Law Bill, while 42% have heard of it. A total of 12% of respondents were unsure whether they heard of it. Taking 'no' and 'unsure' together (58%), a significant majority of respondents do not seem to be familiar with the Retained EU Law Bill.



**Figure 22** – If said 'yes' in Figure 21, what is your perception of the impact of this bill on British society including young people?

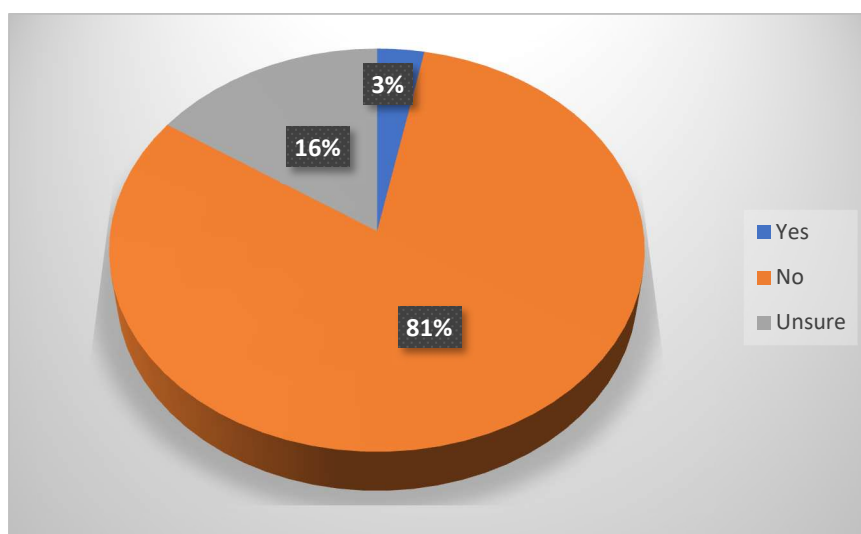
Of the respondents who answered 'yes' (46%) in Figure 21, 48% believe that the impact of the Bill on British society including youth has been very negative and 24% claim that it has been negative. A share of 11% of respondents were neutral, 5% positive, 1% very positive, and 11% unsure.





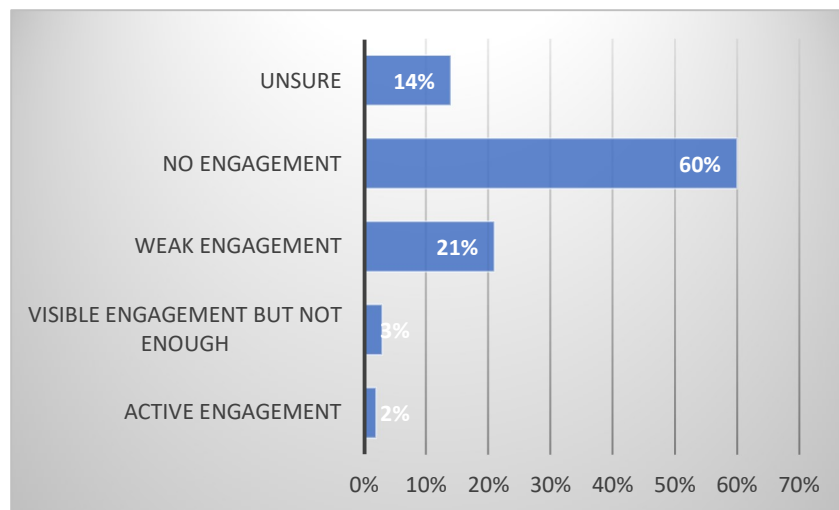
**Figure 23** - How has Brexit affected your perception of the civil rights and freedoms of young people and vulnerable groups in the UK?

94 respondents (49%) believe that Brexit has very negatively affected civil rights and freedoms of young people and vulnerable groups in the UK, and 27% negatively, giving a total of 76%. A very small share of 1% of respondents were positive, and none were very positive. 15% of respondents were neutral, and 8% unsure.



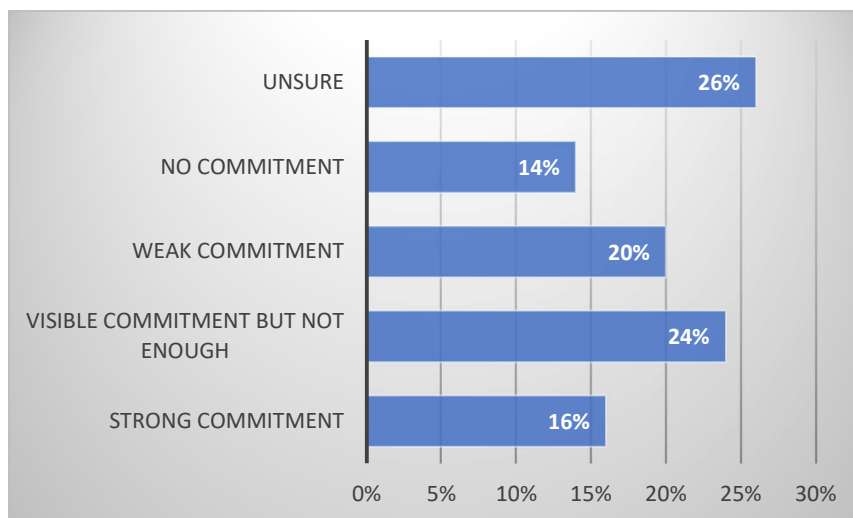
**Figure 24** - In your opinion, has the UK government done enough to protect and properly safeguard young people's human rights post-Brexit?

An overwhelming majority (81%) of respondents stated that the UK government has not done enough to protect and safeguard young people's human rights post-Brexit. In contrast, only 3% of respondents believe the UK Government has done enough, while 16% were unsure.



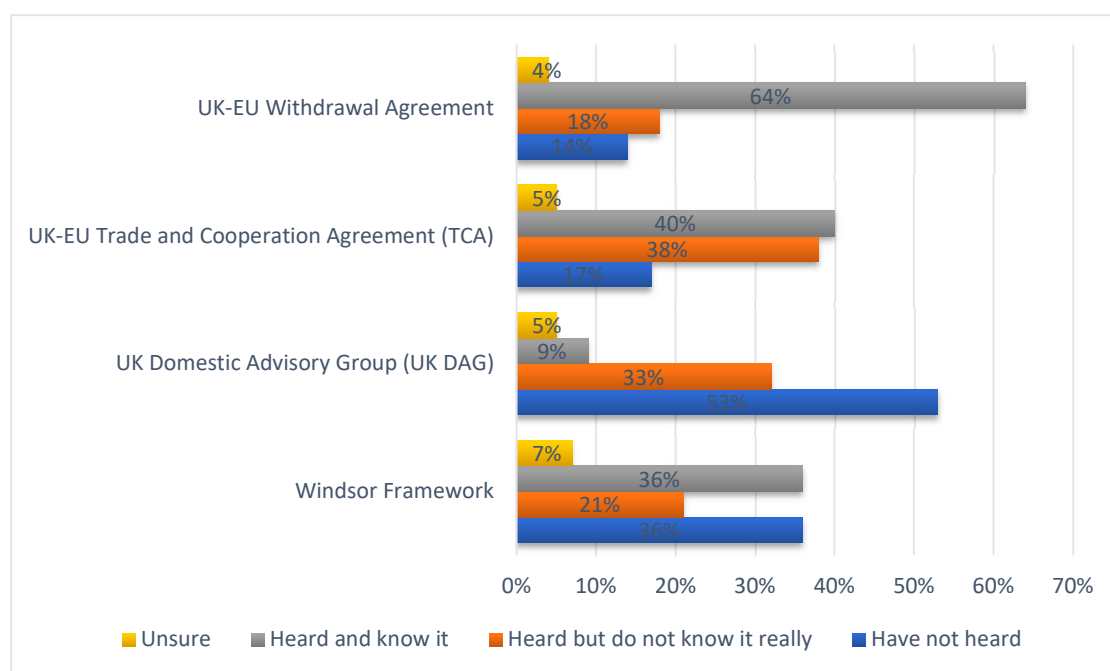
*Figure 25 - To what extent has the UK government engaged young people in discussions surrounding safeguarding civil rights and freedoms since Brexit?*

A high proportion of respondents (60%) believe there is no UK government engagement with young people in discussions related to civil rights and freedoms since Brexit. Additionally, 21% of respondents perceived weak engagement, while 3% believe there was some but insufficient engagement, and 2% stated that there was active engagement. A share of 14% of respondents were unsure.



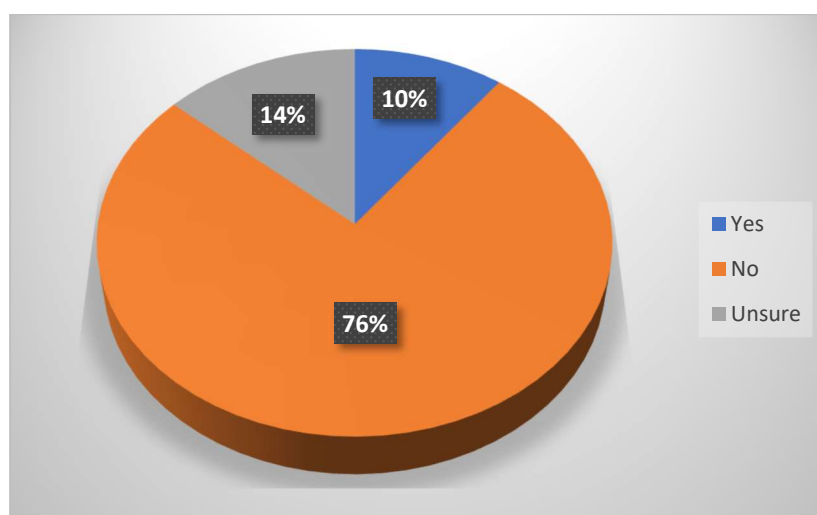
*Figure 26 - In relation to the UK, how do you perceive the EU's efforts in the field of including youth in the process of upholding fundamental rights?*

On the question of "how do you perceive the EU's efforts in the field of including youth in the process of upholding fundamental rights", views were mixed. Most respondents were unsure (26%), followed by visible commitment but not enough (24%) and weak commitment (20%). 16% of respondents answered that there was strong commitment from the EU, and 14% stated that there was no commitment.



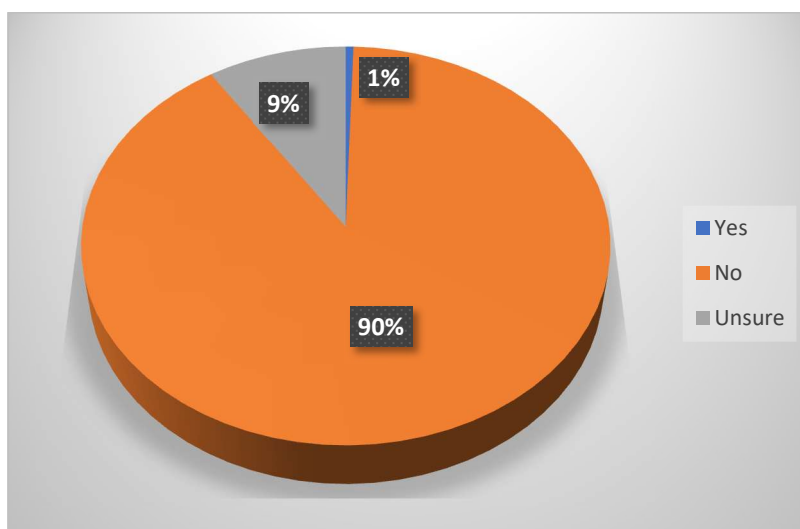
*Figure 27 - To what extent have you heard of the following EU-UK structures?*

Figure 27 shows the extent of respondents' knowledge about existing EU-UK structures. A majority of 53% respondents had not heard of the **UK Domestic Advisory Group (DAG)**. Some 64% of respondents had heard of and know the **UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement**. Furthermore, 36% of respondents had not heard of and know the **Windsor Framework**, the same proportion as those who had heard of and knew it. Some 21% had heard of it but did not really know it. Additionally, the **UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA)** was known to 40% of respondents, while 38% had heard of it but did not really know it.



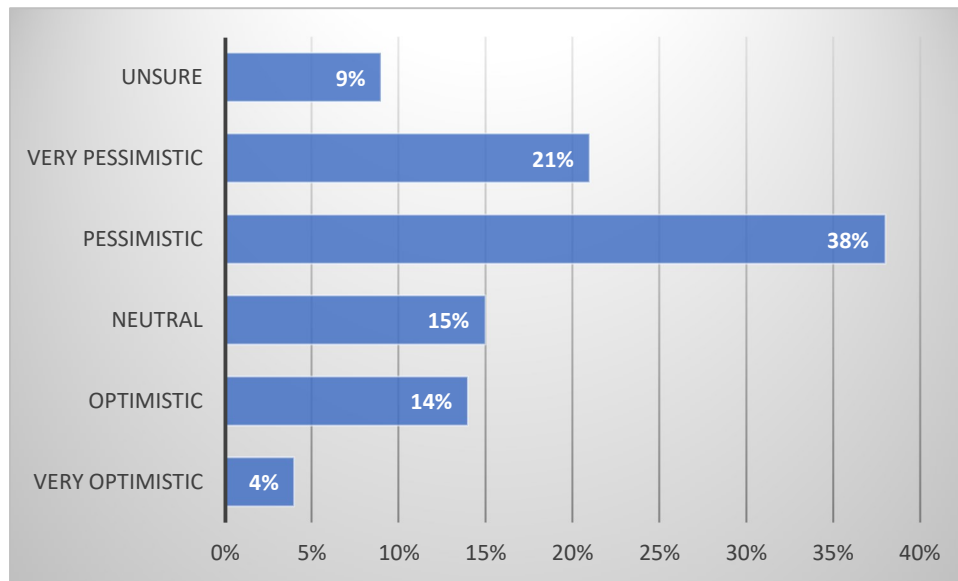
*Figure 28 - Are you aware that the UK Domestic Advisory Group (like its EU counterpart) is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the TCA and expressing the voice of civil society?*

Figure 28 goes more in-depth into the UK DAG, asking respondents whether they were aware of the DAG's scope of work. A very large majority (76%) of respondents were unaware that the UK DAG is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the TCA, expressing the voice of civil society. Only 10% of respondents were aware of this, and 14% were unsure. Those who said 'yes' had a follow-up question asking whether they believed that youth voices were sufficiently represented in the DAG. Of those 20 respondents, 85% answered no and 15% were unsure.



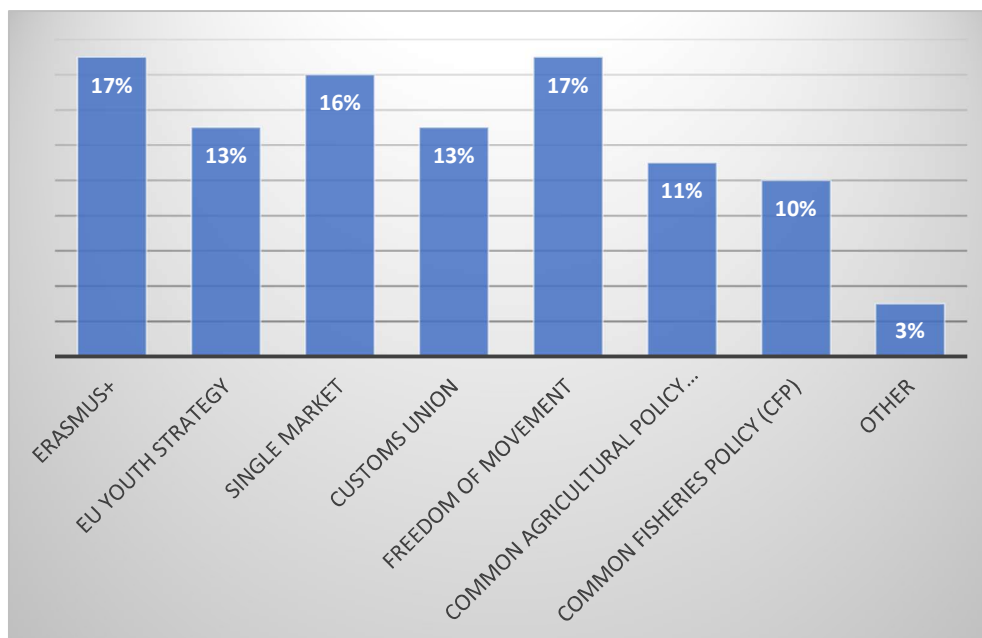
*Figure 29 - Have you ever been contacted by the UK Domestic Advisory Group or been encouraged to apply to register as a member organisation?*

Figure 29 shows that a vast majority of respondents (90%) have never been contacted by the UK DAG or encouraged to apply as a member organisation. Only 1 respondent reported they had been contacted, while 9% were unsure. The respondent who participated or was contacted (answered 'yes') indicated that the UK DAG had not been successful in giving a voice to UK youth. Subsequently, the respondents who answered 'no' (172 respondents) were asked if they would be interested in participating in the UK DAG. The responses were distributed fairly evenly: 37% answered 'yes', 28% no, and 35% were unsure.



*Figure 30 - Looking ahead, how optimistic are you about the future relationship between the UK and the EU?*

Examining future prospects, Figure 30 shows what respondents expected from the future EU-UK relationship. Specifically, 38% of respondents expressed pessimism, 21% were very pessimistic, and 15% (28 respondents) remained neutral. In contrast, only 14% of respondents replied they were optimistic, while 4% answered that they were very optimistic. Additionally, 9% of respondents indicated uncertainty regarding the future relationship.

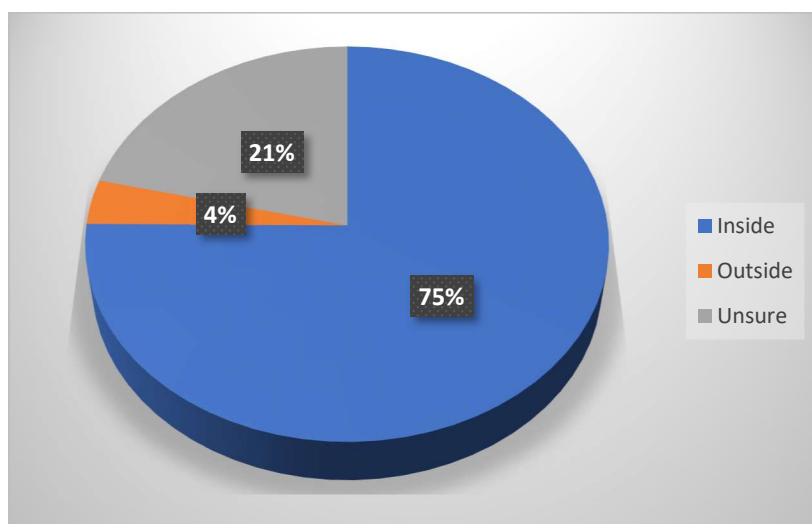


*Figure 31 - Are there specific EU policies or initiatives that you miss or believe the UK should consider re-joining?*

*\* Multiple answers possible.*

The following question allowed multiple answers, where the total of 191 respondents supplied 923 replies. When asked about specific EU policies or initiatives that the UK should consider re-joining, respondents expressed their preferences. **Notably (and predictably), Erasmus+ and Freedom of**

**Movement received the most support, each receiving 151 positive answers (17%), which reflects the significant positive impact these initiatives had on UK youth.** The Single Market (144 answers; 16%), Customs Union (131 answers; 13%), and EU Youth Strategy (125 answers; 13%) also attracted substantial attention. In contrast, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) were selected less frequently, though still significantly, with 100 (11%) and 97 (10%), respectively.



*Figure 32 - Does the UK's future lie inside or outside the European Union?*

When asked about the UK's future relationship with the EU, 75% of respondents replied that they see the UK's future inside the EU, while 4% answered that the UK would be better off outside the EU. Some 21% were unsure.

## 6. In the spotlight

### 6.1 Spotlight on UK

#### 6.1.1 Turing Scheme

The Turing Scheme was introduced by the UK as a replacement for Erasmus+. The table below describes the funding amounts and numbers of approved projects of the Turing Scheme in 2021/22, 2022/23, and 2023/24<sup>38</sup>.

38

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9141/CBP-9141.pdf>

Turing Scheme funding amounts and number of approved projects								
Funding amounts in £ million, not adjusted for inflation								
	Higher education		Further education		Schools		Total	
	Funding	Projects	Funding	Projects	Funding	Projects	Funding	Projects
<b>2021/22</b>								
England	56.04	111	21.65	101	5.77	106	83.46	318
Wales	3.01	7	1.55	2	0.56	4	5.12	13
Scotland	6.95	17	0.98	7	0.38	5	8.31	29
Northern Ireland	0.94	4	0.65	9	0.00	0	1.59	13
<b>UK total</b>	<b>66.94</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>24.83</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>6.71</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>98.48</b>	<b>373</b>
<b>2022/23</b>								
England	53.06	103	32.01	93	6.93	69	92.00	265
Wales	2.16	8	0.17	1	0.12	1	2.45	10
Scotland	5.81	16	2.65	11	0.56	3	9.02	30
Northern Ireland	1.08	4	1.52	7	0.00	0	2.60	11
<b>UK total</b>	<b>62.11</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>36.35</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>7.61</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>106.07</b>	<b>316</b>
<b>2023/24</b>								
England	51.40	99	28.00	138	9.10	164	88.50	401
Wales	1.80	6	1.20	3	0.28	2	3.28	11
Scotland	5.60	15	3.60	17	0.74	11	9.94	43
Northern Ireland	1.20	4	1.70	12	0.15	3	3.05	19
<b>UK total</b>	<b>60.00</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>34.50</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>10.27</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>104.77</b>	<b>474</b>

Figure 33 - Turing Scheme, Funding results [2021/22](#), [2022/23](#), and [2023/24](#).

The number of Turing Scheme project applications has increased steadily, reaching 619 for the 2023/24 academic year, up from 412 in 2021/22. Despite a decrease in approved projects in 2022/23, a record 474 projects were approved for 2023/24.

Furthermore, school projects saw a significant rebound, surpassing further and higher education projects for the first time, with 180 approved projects. However, approved higher education projects have declined annually, particularly in England.

While overall funding increased by 7.6% in cash terms from £98.5 million to £106.1 million between 2021/22 and 2022/23, it slightly decreased to just under £105 million in 2023/24. The further education sector experienced the most substantial funding increase, with grants to vocational education and training providers rising by nearly 50% to £36 million.

Despite a slight decrease in approved projects, the number of participants in further education projects increased by nearly 40% to just under 10,000. In contrast, funding for school projects reached over £10 million for the first time in 2023/24, while funding for higher education projects decreased to £60 million<sup>39</sup>.

39

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9141/CBP-9141.pdf> p.19-20

## 6.2 Spotlight on Scotland

Scotland views itself as a close partner of the EU, seeking to enhance its connections. First Minister Humza Yousaf has emphasised this strong bond, reaffirming Scotland's European identity and dedication to promoting close relationships with fellow Europeans. He states that the Stay in Scotland campaign continues to assist EU citizens in obtaining settled status, emphasising Scotland as their home. The First Minister further emphasises that Scotland remains open, connected and outward-looking, with a rich history of global exchange. The Scottish Connections Framework, supported by cross-party consensus in the Scottish Parliament, enhances engagement with Scotland's diaspora, extending our reach across the world<sup>40</sup>.

### 6.2.1 Scotland and Erasmus+ vs Turing Scheme

Scotland's exclusion from the Erasmus+ programme appears to have deprived thousands of students, schoolchildren, teachers, adult learners and young people of life-changing opportunities<sup>41</sup>. For example, between 2013/14 and 2022/23, over 20,000 Scottish higher education students and staff participated in studying, training and teaching in the EU under the Erasmus + programme. And over €140 million in Erasmus+ funding was awarded to over 1,100 Scottish projects between 2014 and 2020. Erasmus + UK National Agency<sup>42</sup>.

EU membership facilitated transformative experiences through Erasmus+, allowing participants to immerse themselves in diverse cultures, improve language skills, expand social networks, enhance career prospects and foster personal growth. The programme particularly benefits individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with non-traditional educational paths, significantly boosting their employability and opening doors to new opportunities<sup>43</sup>.

In 2020, Scottish organisations were granted €27.8 million through Erasmus+ funding, equivalent to approximately £24.2 million (based on a conversion carried out on 7 November 2023, when €1 converted to around £0.87 and rounded to two decimal places)<sup>44</sup>, constituting 12.2% of the UK's total allocation. However, in 2022-2023, Scotland only received £9 million from the UK government's Turing

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40 <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2023/09/programme-government-2023-24/documents/equality-opportunity-community-programme-government/equality-opportunity-community-programme-government/govscot%3Adocument/equality-opportunity-community-programme-government.pdf>

41 <https://erasmusplus.org.uk/results-and-statistics.html>

42 <https://erasmusplus.org.uk/results-and-statistics.html>

43 [Erasmus+ higher education impact study - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

44 [XE.COM](#)



Scheme, representing an 8.5% share. While the Erasmus+ budget for 2021-2027 stands at €26.2 billion<sup>45</sup>, the Turing Scheme, funded by the Westminster government, is currently allocated £110 million annually<sup>46</sup>.

Erasmus+ had a significant impact in Scotland, with a higher proportion of Scottish students participating compared to any other UK country. In the academic year 2021/22, over 82,000 students from 180 countries studied at Scottish universities, comprising a quarter of the total student population. Despite Scotland's continued appeal as an international study destination, the number of EU entrants to Scottish higher education institutions decreased by 45% in 2021/2022 following the UK's exit from the EU and withdrawal from the Erasmus+ programme<sup>47</sup>.

Unlike Erasmus+, the Turing Scheme does not offer funding for young people to travel to Scotland. Additionally, it lacks support for inward or outward staff mobility, adult education, youth work, sports sectors, and strategic partnerships aimed at building relationships with European partners. Consequently, support for various sectors such as colleges, schools, vocational education and training has been notably diminished<sup>48</sup>. By eliminating these opportunities previously provided by EU membership, the Westminster government has maintained existing inequalities within sectors excluded from the Turing Scheme. Community Learning and Development are included in the Erasmus+ programme but excluded from the Turing Scheme. As a result, the absence of Erasmus+ will impact on the Community Learning and Development, which predominately supports disadvantaged groups.

### 6.2.2 Scotland-Europe Initiative

During the 5th Scotland-Europe Initiative<sup>49</sup> workshop on Higher Education, various speakers shared their thoughts on the impact of leaving Erasmus+. Key points highlighted include the significant disruption to student mobility caused by the termination of Erasmus+, the limited funding and outbound-only options provided by the replacement Turing Scheme, and the pressing challenges related to movement restrictions and expenses encountered by performing artists in Europe. Specifically, musicians, musical tours, and the recruitment of Continental students have faced substantial setbacks due to recent developments. Additionally, endeavours within the Conservatoire sector aimed at

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<sup>45</sup> [Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme brings over €26.2 billion to support mobility and cooperation](#)

<sup>46</sup> [CBP-9141.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#) and [Turing Scheme to continue for further three years](#)

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/education-children-and-young-people-committee/correspondence/2023/scottish-education-exchange-programme.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> [U.K. finally rejoins Horizon Europe research funding scheme](#), and [“Horizon Europe news comes not a moment too soon”](#) and [UK’s years out of EU Horizon programme did ‘untold damage’, say scientists](#), and [UK joins Horizon Europe under a new bespoke deal](#)

<sup>49</sup> <https://rse.org.uk/expert-advice/scotland-europe-initiative/>

establishing Europe-wide networks and organisations have been impeded by the increased costs and regulations introduced<sup>50</sup>.

### 6.2.3 Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP)

In its Programme for Government 2021-22, the Scottish Government pledged to “*develop a Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP) to support the international mobility of staff and learners, and work to re-secure Scotland’s access to the Erasmus + Programme*”<sup>51</sup>.

In September 2023, the Scottish Government published its new Programme for Government 2023-24, confirming their objective to: “*Launch a new Scottish Education Exchange Programme building on an initial test and learn project that we are delivering in 2023-24, prioritising placements for disadvantaged groups and further demonstrate our commitment to EU and global partnerships with schools, colleges and universities including through working with these sectors*”<sup>52</sup>.

Graeme Dey, Scottish Minister for Higher and Further Education and the Minister for Veterans, highlighted the Scottish government's collaboration with stakeholders across various education sectors. This includes higher and further education, schools, vocational education and training, youth work, adult education and sports. The focus is on addressing gaps in the Turing scheme, particularly in youth programmes, adult learners and community learning, based on feedback from stakeholders. The Scottish Government is also exploring options to support bilateral exchange arrangements between educational institutions to mitigate the lack of a multinational framework in the Turing scheme<sup>53</sup>.

In 2023-24, the Scottish Government is piloting a project to replace some Erasmus+ opportunities not covered by the Turing Scheme. It aims to facilitate student and staff exchanges and strengthen partnerships between educational institutions. Insights from this pilot will guide future programme development, with a focus on prioritising placements for disadvantaged groups and enhancing EU and global partnerships.

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50 <https://rse.org.uk/resources/resource/blog/horizon-opens-but-erasmus-stays-closed-scotlands-higher-education-landscape/>

51 <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2021/09/fairer-greener-scotland-programme-government-2021-22/documents/fairer-greener-scotland-programme-government-2021-22/fairer-greener-scotland-programme-government-2021-22/govscot%3Adocument/fairer-greener-scotland-programme-government-2021-22.pdf>

52 <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2023/09/programme-government-2023-24/documents/equality-opportunity-community-programme-government/equality-opportunity-community-programme-government/govscot%3Adocument/equality-opportunity-community-programme-government.pdf>

53 <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/education-children-and-young-people-committee/correspondence/2023/scottish-education-exchange-programme.pdf>

Additionally, Minister Dey underlines that the Scottish Government will engage closely with the Welsh Government regarding their Welsh equivalence Taith and use this learning experience to support the development of a Scottish exchange programme<sup>54</sup>.

As of today, no Scottish equivalent of Erasmus+ has been initiated, and there is currently no specified timeline for the launch of such a replacement scheme<sup>55</sup>.

## **6.3 Spotlight on Wales**

### **6.3.1 Taith Scheme**

Taith is an international learning exchange initiative designed to provide individuals in Wales with opportunities to learn, study and volunteer worldwide. Taith integrates an international perspective across all levels of the Welsh education system, ensuring accessibility to individuals from every region of Wales and across various educational settings. Eligible sectors for funding include schools, youth programmes, adult education, further education and vocational training, as well as higher education encompassing both education and research domains<sup>56</sup>. Taith was created by the Welsh Government to replace Erasmus+, when the UK Government decided to opt-out. The following information on Taith will provide insights into Taith as a whole, and the changes in funding post-Erasmus+.

Taith offers two Pathways: Pathway 1 (the mobility of individuals) and Pathway 2 (international strategic collaboration). Erasmus+ has Key Actions 1 (mobility of individuals), Key Actions 2 (cooperation among organisations and institutions), and Key Actions 3 (Support to policy development and cooperation). Even though it is difficult to compare Taith and Erasmus+, one can say that Pathway 1 aligns with KA1, and Pathway 2 with KA2. Taith does not offer a Pathway which aligns with KA3, though there may be crossover with Pathway 2.

Organisations can only submit one application per pathway under Taith, whereas they could submit multiple different applications under Erasmus+ Key Actions.

The data below is for funded projects at the point of approval. It does not take into consideration any projects which subsequently did not take place. Included are the three most recent years of Erasmus+

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54 <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/education-children-and-young-people-committee/scottish-education-exchange-programme--13-june-2023.pdf>

55 <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9141/CBP-9141.pdf>

56 <https://www.taith.wales/about/>

funded projects – 2018 – 2020. The first table shows the total number of organisations who received funding from Erasmus+ and Taith. P2 2023 is still missing as this period is still being assessed.

	Erasmus+			Taith	
	KA1	KA2	KA3	P1	P2
2018	3	2	3		
2019	1	1	1		
2020	4	0	2		
2022				13	4
2023				14	
<b>Total</b>	17			31	

*Figure 34 - The total number of organisations who received funding from Erasmus+ and Taith.*

As noted, Erasmus+ permits multiple applications per organisation within a Key Action, whereas Taith allows only one Pathway per year. To facilitate comparison, each organisation has been counted once per Key Action per year. If organisations were counted only once for funding regardless of the funding call or year, Erasmus+ funded 13 different organisations over three years, whereas Taith funded 22 different organisations over two years.

Funding allocated to the youth sector in both programmes is in the table below – it is in Euros for Erasmus+ and GBP for Taith.

	Erasmus+	Taith
2018	€ 200,808	
2019	€ 360,766	
2020	€ 718,857	
2022		£1,372,251
2023		£1,012,467
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 1,280,431</b>	<b>£2,384,718</b>

*Figure 35 - Funding allocated to the youth sector in Erasmus+ (in euros) and Taith (in pounds).*

The following figure illustrates the number of Welsh organisations that received funding from Erasmus+ compared to the total number of UK organisations, providing a comparison of engagement from the UK with a specific focus on Wales.

	2018		2019		2020	
	No of funded projects (UK)	No of funded projects (Wales)	No of funded projects (UK)	No of funded projects (Wales)	No of funded projects (UK)	No of funded projects (Wales)
<b>KA1</b>	183	5	129	1	186	5
<b>KA2</b>	40	1	25	1	17	0
<b>KA3</b>	17	3	17	2	15	2

*Figure 36 - The number of Welsh organisations that received funding from Erasmus+ compared to the total number of UK organisations.*

Furthermore, Taith Pathway 1 crosses over with European Solidarity Corps. In 2020 there were 50 funded projects of which 3 were in Wales. All 3 projects were run by Welsh Centre for International Affairs. No other Welsh organisation received ESC funding that year.

## 6.4 Spotlight on Northern Ireland

### 6.4.1 Turing Scheme

Under an agreement being finalised with the Irish Government, higher education students in Northern Ireland will maintain access to placements across Europe through the Erasmus+ programme. This access will complement their eligibility for the Turing Scheme<sup>57</sup>.

The Irish Government has announced plans to implement a scheme enabling Northern Irish participants to temporarily register with an Irish higher education institution for Erasmus+ placements. Under this scheme, Northern Irish students would apply for Erasmus+ funding through the Irish institution, then return to their Northern Irish institution after completing the placement<sup>58 59</sup>. The estimated cost of this arrangement is approximately €2.1 million per year. Additionally, the Irish Government expressed interest in extending similar arrangements to further education students in Northern Ireland in the future<sup>60</sup>. This achievement of allowing Northern Irish participants to take part in Erasmus+, was made

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-55455532>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ee9f4-further-and-higher-education-and-brexite/>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/speech/2c0eb-seanad-committee-on-withdrawal-of-uk-from-the-eu-monday-26-april-2021/#erasmus-and-ni-students>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2021-11-17/170/?highlight%5B0%5D=northern&highlight%5B1%5D=ireland&highlight%5B2%5D=erasmus>

possible, in part, due to effective advocacy efforts from NSoA<sup>61</sup>, the European Apprentice Network<sup>62</sup>, NUS-USI<sup>63</sup>, and USI<sup>64</sup>.

In July 2023, Simon Harris, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science announced a €2 million funding allocation to higher education institutions in Northern Ireland to facilitate student mobilities across Europe<sup>65</sup>. This commitment is intended to be permanent, available for as long as there is demand from Northern Irish students or until an alternative mobility model is established. The support is expected to be implemented starting in September 2023.

#### **6.4.2 Creative Europe**

From 2014 to 2015, 15 organisations directly received Creative Europe funding in Northern Ireland totalling €1,927,707. This is split up into two sub programmes, namely CULTURE and MEDIA. CULTURE provides funding for the cultural and creative sectors and MEDIA invests in film, television, new media, and video games<sup>66</sup>.

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61 <https://nsoa.co.uk/>

62 <https://apprenticesnetwork.eu/>

63 <https://www.nus-usi.org/>

64 <https://usi.ie/about-usi/>

65 <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/29934-minister-harris-announces-mobility-funding-for-northern-ireland-higher-education-students/>

66 [https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/impact\\_of\\_creative\\_europe\\_ni.pdf](https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/impact_of_creative_europe_ni.pdf)

## Northern Ireland Creative Europe Beneficiaries

SUB PROGRAMME	SCHEME	PROJECT	COMPANY	TYPE	GRANT TO NI ORG
Culture	Cooperation Project - Small	<i>Mysteries &amp; Drills</i>	Festival of Fools	Partner	33000
Culture	Cooperation Project - Small	<i>Future Artist-Maker Labs</i>	The Nerve Centre	Lead	78091
Culture	Cooperation Project - Large	<i>CORNERS - turning Europe inside out</i>	Arts Council of Northern Ireland	Partner	113796
Culture	Cooperation Project - Large	<i>EU Collective Plays!</i>	Prime Cut Productions	Partner	116093
Culture	Cooperation Project - Large	<i>European Orchestra LABoratory II</i>	Ulster Orchestra Society	Partner	65531
Culture	Cooperation Project - Large	<i>Ceramics and its dimensions</i>	University of Ulster	Partner	60619
Culture	Cooperation Project - Large	<i>European Creative Rooftop Network</i>	Urban Scale Intervention	Partner	253055
					<b>€720,184</b>
MEDIA	Development: Slate	<i>Slate Funding 2016</i>	Dog Ears	Sole	165000
MEDIA	Development: Slate	<i>Slate Funding 2015</i>	Sixteen South	Sole	173291
MEDIA	Development: Video Games	<i>Mona Lisa</i>	Italic Pig	Sole	122501
MEDIA	Development: Video Games	<i>The Infinite Hotel</i>	Italic Pig	Sole	125000
MEDIA	Development: Video Games	<i>Quest Quest: The Quest for Quests</i>	Italic Pig	Sole	150000
MEDIA	Development: Video Games	<i>Hortalius</i>	Brain and Nerd	Sole	150000
MEDIA	Development: Video Games	<i>Tax-Force</i>	Outsider Games	Sole	140000
MEDIA	Audience Development	<i>The Film Corner</i>	The Nerve Centre	Partner	12250
MEDIA	Film Education	<i>Shortcut - Small Stories, Big Issues</i>	The Nerve Centre	Partner	50013
MEDIA	Film Education	<i>The Film Corner Reloaded - A Cultural Approach</i>	The Nerve Centre	Partner	7100
MEDIA	TV Programming (partner)	<i>Gladiators. A Different World</i>	Dercan Media	Partner	<sup>4</sup> proportion distributed to partners not applicable
MEDIA	Development: Single	<i>Lug: The Brodgar Boy</i>	Alt Animation	Sole	60000
MEDIA	Europa Cinemas Network	<i>Queen's Film Theatre</i>	Queen's Film Theatre	n/a	52368
					<b>€1,207,523</b>
					<b>TOTALS €1,927,707</b>

Figure 37 – Creative Europe 2014-2020 in Northern Ireland (Creative Europe Desk UK)

Creative Europe Desk also provide specifications on the MEDIA and CULTURE sub programmes, as stated below<sup>67</sup>.

### MEDIA

- €1,207,523 was awarded to Northern Ireland companies and organisations through MEDIA.
- This is 2.68% of the €45 million MEDIA funding awarded UK wide.
- 3% of MEDIA grants awarded to the UK went to Northern Ireland based organisations.
- 8% of the total amount awarded to UK production companies through the Slate Funding scheme went to two Northern Ireland based companies. Specifically, they were awarded 31% of the funding that went to the UK animation sector through this scheme.
- 18.5% of the total amount awarded to UK video game companies went to those based in Northern Ireland.

### CULTURE

- €720,184 was awarded to Northern Irish companies and organisations through Culture.
- This is 2.4% of the €30 million Culture funding awarded UK wide.
- 3.3% of Cooperation Projects the UK have been involved in included a Northern Ireland partner.
- 1.1% of all Cooperation Projects in Europe included a Northern Ireland partner.

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[https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/impact\\_of\\_creative\\_europe\\_ni.pdf](https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/impact_of_creative_europe_ni.pdf)

- Projects in Northern Ireland partnered with organisations operating out of 20 of the 41 participating countries in the Creative Europe programme: Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and UK (England).

#### **6.4.3 PEACE PLUS Programme**

Since 1989, the EU has provided financial support for the peace process in Northern Ireland through EU regional policy and contributions to the International Fund for Ireland (IFI). This support has included the PEACE I and PEACE II programmes from 1995 to 2006, followed by PEACE III (2007-2013) and PEACE IV (2014-2020). After the Brexit referendum, concerns emerged regarding the implications for the PEACE PLUS programmes and Northern Ireland.

The PEACE IV and INTERREG VA programmes received significant focus during the Brexit negotiations on the UK's withdrawal terms. An agreement was made to guarantee their continuation until their scheduled conclusion in 2023, as outlined in the Withdrawal Agreement between the UK and the EU. In this context, Regulation (EU) 2019/491 of the European Parliament and of the Council was enacted on March 25, 2019, with the objective of facilitating the continuation of the territorial cooperation programmes PEACE IV (Ireland-United Kingdom) and United Kingdom-Ireland (Ireland-Northern Ireland-Scotland)<sup>68</sup>.

The PEACE PLUS programme is a new cross-border EU programme to strengthen peace, reconciliation and cross-border cooperation between Ireland and Northern Ireland. It combines the previous INTERREG and PEACE funding strands into a new programme for the 2021-2027 programming period. The PEACE PLUS Programme aims to foster Peace and Prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, by capitalising on opportunities arising from the peace process to promote economic growth, social revitalisation, and greater social inclusion for marginalised groups.<sup>69</sup>

The Commission plans to allocate €235 million from the European Territorial Cooperation budget of the European Regional Development Fund. When combined with the UK's financial pledge and further national co-financing from Ireland and Northern Ireland, this will amount to a total investment of €1.1 billion in fostering peace and prosperity on the island of Ireland<sup>70</sup>. Vice-President for Inter-institutional Relations and Foresight, Maroš Šefčovič, said the following about the PEACE PLUS programme:

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<sup>68</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/102/northern-ireland-peace-plus-programme>

<sup>69</sup> [https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/2023-05/PEACEPLUS\\_Overview\\_24052023.pdf](https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/2023-05/PEACEPLUS_Overview_24052023.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/es/ip\\_22\\_4489](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/es/ip_22_4489)



*“The EU has proven time and again its commitment to the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement. Today is another concrete example of that support – together with the Irish and British governments, the new PEACE PLUS programme will provide around €1 billion to Northern Ireland and the border counties. Preserving the hard-earned gains of the peace process will always be of paramount importance to all Europeans.”*<sup>71</sup>

Chapter 3 in the PEACE PLUS Programme, *Empowering and Investing in Our Young People*, and specifically goes into the vital role of youth for long-term peace and prosperity in the Programme Area. Many young people still face challenges stemming from the legacy of conflict, including limited opportunities for cross-community interaction and socio-economic disadvantage. Building on existing initiatives like the PEACE IV Shared Education Programme and PEACE4Youth Programme, the report states that there is an opportunity to further develop cross-community partnerships in schools and extend shared learning opportunities to youth organisations. Additionally, investing in mental health support and addressing barriers to engagement will empower young people to contribute positively to their communities<sup>72</sup>.

#### **6.4.4 Shared Island Youth Forum**

The Shared Island Youth Forum is part of the Shared Island Initiative<sup>73</sup> and brings together 80 young people aged 18 to 25 from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, representing diverse backgrounds and identities. Over the course of a year, they will engage in discussions to emphasise their visions and values for a shared future on the island. With objectives including fostering dialogue, strengthening cross-border and cross-community interactions, and providing a platform for civic engagement, the Forum aims to contribute to the advancement of a shared future underpinned by the principles of the Good Friday Agreement.

Organized by the Department of the Taoiseach in collaboration with the National Youth Council of Ireland, the Forum will convene 6-8 meetings across the island throughout 2023 and 2024. The outcome document will inform the development of the Irish Government's Shared Island initiative and contribute to broader public and political discourse on the island's future<sup>74</sup>.

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71 [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/es/ip\\_22\\_4489](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/es/ip_22_4489)

72 [https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/2023-05/PEACEPLUS\\_Overview\\_24052023.pdf](https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/2023-05/PEACEPLUS_Overview_24052023.pdf)

73 <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c3417-shared-island/>

74 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8cb46-shared-island-youth-forum/>

Nominations for the Forum were collected from a variety of youth, civic and community organisations, in partnership with the National Youth Council of Ireland and Northern Ireland partners. The aim was to ensure representation from both the North and South, including diverse communities and backgrounds. Building upon the engagement fostered through the Shared Island Dialogue series, which involved over 3,000 citizens in the past three years, the Forum seeks to gather insights on promoting greater unity and collaboration across all island communities<sup>75</sup>.

## **6.5 Spotlight on UK business views on youth mobility**

In December 2023, the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) published a report, *Brexit At Three: Fresh Trade Challenges Growing*<sup>76</sup>, to assess the effectiveness of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement between the EU and UK from a business perspective. Among 733 businesses, including 97% SMEs, the challenges faced by British firms in utilising the TCA have persisted, with almost two-thirds (60%) of firms trading with the EU reporting increased difficulty compared to a year ago. Additionally, half (49%) of exporters do not believe that the Brexit deal is aiding them in expanding their sales. Moreover, a sizeable portion (41%) of firms exporting under the TCA are encountering challenges in adapting to its rules on buying and selling goods.

The report underscores the emergence of fresh challenges as UK and EU regulations diverge, further complicating matters for traders on both sides of the Channel. Notably, a considerable percentage of firms face difficulties in buying and selling services (35%), while issues related to the lack of recognition for professional qualifications concern 27% of firms.

Alarmingly, the survey reveals a widespread lack of awareness among businesses regarding upcoming changes in trade rules and regulations imposed by either the UK or the EU. More than 80% of firms surveyed have little to no knowledge of crucial legislation, including the Electronic Trade Documents Act, Export Health Certificate requirements, new labelling mandates, the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, and various other regulatory measures such as safety and security requirements for EU imports, UKCA and CE marking, and new EU VAT laws.

The BCC also made remarks on the impact of the TCA on youth. The absence of provisions for youth mobility in the TCA between the UK and EU is now widely regarded as a significant oversight by various stakeholders, including business, labour, and third sector organisations. This exclusion has far-reaching implications, affecting activities ranging from school trips and participation in the EU's

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<sup>75</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/b8cef-taoiseach-meets-with-shared-island-youth-forum/>

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.britishchambers.org.uk/news/2023/12/brexit-at-three-fresh-trade-challenges-growing/>

Erasmus+ scheme to summer employment opportunities across borders. In stark contrast, the UK has successfully negotiated a robust youth mobility scheme with Australia, allowing individuals under 35 to obtain visas for up to three years to work in either country. We call upon both the UK government and the EU to aspire to similar levels of ambition in facilitating youth mobility, thereby displaying the shared social, economic and cultural ties across the continent<sup>77</sup>.

Reviewing the medium term, there is an opportunity to address these issues through side agreements to the TCA during the initial review of its operation in 2025/26. It is imperative to negotiate comprehensive Youth Mobility schemes between the UK and EU, encompassing various aspects such as school visits, exchanges, associate membership of Erasmus+, and the ability for young people to work under time-limited visas. By proactively addressing these concerns and implementing mutually beneficial arrangements, the BCC can foster greater opportunities for young people to study, work, and explore the cultural diversity of each other's territories<sup>78</sup>.

## **6.6 Spotlight on EU Youth initiatives**

### **6.6.1 EU Youth Strategy**

The EU Youth Strategy, spanning from 2019 to 2027, is guided by the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018 and serves as the framework for EU youth policy cooperation. It emphasises maximising the potential of youth policy by promoting youth participation in democratic life, supporting social and civic engagement, and ensuring that all young people have the resources to actively participate in society.

Aligned with the principles of Engage, Connect and Empower, the strategy focuses on three core areas of action and encourages integrated implementation across sectors. Informed by a dialogue process involving young people from across Europe, 11 European Youth Goals were developed to address cross-sectoral issues affecting youth and highlight challenges. The EU Youth Strategy aims to realise these goals and support the aspirations of young people.

The EU Youth Strategy relies on various tools and mechanisms, including mutual learning activities, Future National Activities Planners, the EU Youth Dialogue, the EU Youth Strategy Platform, and

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<sup>77</sup> [BrexIt At Three: Fresh Trade Challenges Growing](#); p.14

<sup>78</sup> [BrexIt At Three: Fresh Trade Challenges Growing](#); p.41

Evidence-based tools. The European Commission appoints an EU Youth coordinator, serving as the visible reference point and contact for young people<sup>79</sup>.

### 6.6.2 EU Youth Test

The EU Youth Test/Check is a strategic foresight instrument whose purpose is to ensure the inclusion of youth voices in policy-making processes within the European Union. This tool ensures the inclusion of youth needs and expectations when developing policies that can impact them. The EU Youth Test is a key component of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, designed to harmonise youth policies across the EU by evaluating every issue from a youth perspective. This instrument is structured around three key pillars: consulting young people, conducting impact assessments, and developing mitigating measures in case of identified negative impacts<sup>80</sup>. To support the implementation of the youth check, the European Commission will initiate a series of youth mainstreaming roundtables involving youth organisations, EU Member States and other EU institutions, corresponding with the annual release of the Commission's work programme<sup>81</sup>. So far, EU Member States Austria, France, Germany and Belgium have implemented an EU Youth Test/Check with success<sup>82</sup>.

Additionally, the EESC is the first EU institution to introduce the EU Youth Test in its opinions by creating a new Youth Group. EESC President Oliver Röpke said the following about the EU Youth Test/Check:

*"I have made it my political priority to open the doors of the EESC to young people. The future of Europe is their future. I am very proud to announce that today we are delivering on that priority. The EESC will be the first EU institution to implement the EU Youth Test, and I am glad that we are leading by example. It is our testimony to the young EU citizens, that we can turn words into action, promises into reality and that this forum is their forum (Oliver Röpke)"<sup>83</sup>.*

Moreover, the EESC drew up an opinion on the EU Youth Test/Check emphasising its importance<sup>84</sup>.

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79 [https://youth.europa.eu/strategy\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en)

80 [https://youth.europa.eu/year-of-youth/young-journalists/eu-youth-testcheck-what-it-and-why-should-it-be-implemented-all\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/year-of-youth/young-journalists/eu-youth-testcheck-what-it-and-why-should-it-be-implemented-all_en)

81 <https://www.swisscore.org/eu-implements-youth-check-for-all-policies/>

82 [https://youth.europa.eu/year-of-youth/young-journalists/eu-youth-testcheck-what-it-and-why-should-it-be-implemented-all\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/year-of-youth/young-journalists/eu-youth-testcheck-what-it-and-why-should-it-be-implemented-all_en)

83 <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/news/eesc-first-eu-institution-introduce-eu-youth-test>

84 <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/eu-youth-test>

### **6.6.3 Your Europe Your Say! (YEYS)**

YEYS is the annual flagship youth event organised by the EESC. The event serves as a platform to engage young people from all EU Member States and candidate countries with the European Union. Since its beginning in 2010, selected participants have come together in Brussels to collaborate on creating resolutions that articulate their ideas, proposals and aspirations as European citizens. These resolutions are then shared with EU institutions and highlighted at prominent events. Each year, three representatives from every country are chosen to partake in YEYS<sup>85</sup>.

The 2023 YEYS event, themed "Youth Democracy Dialogues," saw 105 students from 35 schools across EU Member States, candidate countries and Brussels-based European schools engaging in debates and discussions. It aimed to foster consensus-building among young participants on engaging youth in democratic processes and promoting activism. Notably, schools from Ukraine and Moldova participated for the first time, actively engaging with other students<sup>86</sup>.

### **6.6.4 LevelUp!**

LevelUp! is a youth event organised by the European Youth Forum and funded by the European Union in which young people from across Europe develop skills, broaden networks, strengthen democratic values, and promote participation in the European Elections. Through a two-day event, young people get an opportunity to meet European Politicians and decision-makers, discuss ideas with experts, and develop action plans to promote democratic participation<sup>87</sup>.

### **6.6.5 European Youth Event (EYE)**

The EYE brings together young people at the European Parliament in Strasbourg and thousands of participants online across Europe and the world to share and shape ideas on Europe's future. Through EYE, young people have an opportunity to interact with experts, decision-makers, activists, and European politicians. Following an EYE event, the ideas, expectations, and concerns are collected in the Youth Ideas Report and given to MEPs<sup>88</sup>.

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85 <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/initiatives/your-europe-your-say>

86 <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/yeys-a4-long-report-en2.pdf>

87 [https://youth.europa.eu/youthweek/activities/levelup-2024-i-care-i-vote\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/youthweek/activities/levelup-2024-i-care-i-vote_en)

88 <https://european-youth-event.europarl.europa.eu/en>

On 9-10 June 2023, the 5th EYE brought together 8,500 young people to share and shape their own respective views on the future of Europe. Here, ideas such as ‘Don't Exclude Any Country from Erasmus+’ were put forwards. The importance of Erasmus+ in making society more interconnected and prosperous was stressed, and the European Commission was urged to ensure that young people are not adversely affected by political disputes between the European Union and any (former) Member State government. Additionally, political leaders should safeguard students from harm<sup>89</sup>.

#### **6.6.6 European Youth Week (EYW)**

EYW is organised by the European Commission and occurs every two years. It aims to inspire young people to engage in European activities and decision-making processes. EYW facilitates dialogue between youth and leaders, showcases their talents and promotes their projects. EYW takes turns with EYE organised by the European Parliament. EYW offers a platform for youth participation and collaboration.

#### **6.6.7 EU Youth Dialogue**

The EU Youth Dialogue serves as a crucial mechanism for facilitating dialogue between young people and decision-makers within the framework of the EU Youth Strategy. It aims to ensure that the opinions, views and needs of young people and youth organisations are considered when shaping EU youth policies. By focusing on the core areas of "Connect, Engage, and Empower," the EU Youth Dialogue supports the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 and promotes collaboration among EU member states on youth-related issues.

The EU Youth Dialogue operates in 18-month cycles, with each cycle focusing on a theme determined by the Council of Youth Ministers. The current theme, "Engaging together for a sustainable and inclusive Europe," aligns with Youth Goals 3 and 10. National working groups organise consultations and activities in each Member State, involving young people, youth organisations and policymakers. The Trio Presidency leads the implementation of the EU Youth Dialogue in collaboration with the European Commission, National Agencies, and youth civil society representatives.

Results from national and European activities in the EU Youth Dialogue are discussed at EU Youth Conferences, held twice a year by the country holding the EU Presidency. Youth representatives and policymakers collaborate to present a joint message to the EU. Conclusions from these dialogues are presented to the Council of the European Union, which may adopt a policy document reflecting the

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[https://european-youth-event.europarl.europa.eu/files/live/sites/eye/files/pdfs/eye2023-ideas-report\\_en\\_web\\_rgb\\_ok.pdf](https://european-youth-event.europarl.europa.eu/files/live/sites/eye/files/pdfs/eye2023-ideas-report_en_web_rgb_ok.pdf)

views of young people. For example, the creation of 11 Youth Goals in 2018 was added to the EU Youth Strategy after negotiations in the Council of the EU<sup>90</sup>.

In March 2024, following the invitation of Belgium's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the United Kingdom was invited to send a youth delegation to attend the EU Youth Dialogue Conference in Ghent, Belgium, for the first time since its exit from the Erasmus+ scheme.

### **6.6.8 European Year of Youth (EYY)**

The EYY, adopted on 20 December 2021, aimed to highlight opportunities for young people in the green and digital transitions; foster active citizenship among young people; promote available opportunities for youth; and bring a youth perspective to EU policies. The Council emphasised the importance of mainstreaming youth policy across all EU policies. The European Year featured conferences, events and promotional campaigns, with the involvement of young people and national coordinators from each Member State<sup>91</sup>.

The outcome of the EYY 2022 was a result of collaborative efforts involving EU institutions (European Parliament, European Economic and Social Committee, and Committee of the Regions), Member States, youth stakeholders, and young people themselves. Key highlights include the establishment of a group of national coordinators and contact points to ensure optimal coordination. Large-scale mobilisation and engagement occurred, with over 2,700 stakeholders contributing to activities across the EU and beyond. Collaboration with young people was emphasised, with 92% of national coordinators working with national youth councils. Increased interaction between European, national, regional and local institutions and young people stimulated a better understanding of the EU's value.

Opportunities for young people to voice their demands and ideas were provided, with close to 90% of stakeholders confirming the EYY provided such opportunities. Mainstreaming the youth perspective across EU policy fields was achieved, with contributions from over 30 departments and an estimated EUR 140 million allocated for implementing the Year's objectives<sup>92</sup>.

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90 [https://youth.europa.eu/get-involved/eu-youth-dialogue/what-eu-youth-dialogue\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/get-involved/eu-youth-dialogue/what-eu-youth-dialogue_en)

91 [https://youth.europa.eu/year-of-youth\\_en#:~:text=2022%20was%20the%20European%20Year,voice%2C%20and%20it%20was%20heard!https://youth.europa.eu/year-of-youth\\_en#:~:text=2022%20was%20the%20European%20Year,voice%2C%20and%20it%20was%20heard](https://youth.europa.eu/year-of-youth_en#:~:text=2022%20was%20the%20European%20Year,voice%2C%20and%20it%20was%20heard!https://youth.europa.eu/year-of-youth_en#:~:text=2022%20was%20the%20European%20Year,voice%2C%20and%20it%20was%20heard)

92 <https://youth.europa.eu/d8/sites/default/files/inline/files/Communication%20on%20the%20European%20Year%20of%20Youth%202022.pdf>

Unfortunately, the United Kingdom was not able to partake in the EYY 2022 celebrations and activities by virtue of no longer being a recipient to Erasmus+. On-the-ground feedback collected from youth civil society representatives suggests that the UK's inability to partake in the year-long initiative led to feelings of marginalisation and isolation among organised and unorganised elements of the UK youth sector.

### **6.6.9 European Rural Youth Summit**

The European Rural Youth Summit aims to create a space for dialogue between rural youth and decision-makers to discuss the challenges and opportunities in European rural areas. It also seeks to provide a learning and participatory context for rural young people to engage with experts and peers on rural development issues, developing their knowledge and skills while promoting their role in shaping Europe's future. Additionally, the event aims to raise awareness of the importance of rural development and support the development of recommendations and policy proposals to improve the situation of rural youth in Europe<sup>93</sup>.

An example of the European Rural Youth Summit was in Aroneanu village, Iași county, Romania, a former European Youth Village (September 2023). The event aimed to strategically develop the rural youth ecosystem in Europe by bringing together young people, youth workers, organisers and decision-makers from rural areas across Europe. It was organised by the European Youth Village Programme Governance, along with the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps National Agency, in collaboration with local authorities and young people from Panaci<sup>94</sup>.

## **6.7 Spotlight on the Committee of the Regions (CoR)**

### **6.7.1 CoR-UK Contact Group**

In 2020, the CoR established a contact group to redevelop its relations with representatives of UK local government and devolved administrations to ensure that the political dialogue with these representatives continue with the EU after the Withdrawal Agreement in 2020. The contact group provides a platform for discussing challenges and opportunities arising from the UK's withdrawal from the EU and enables UK representatives to engage in discussions on EU legislation affecting them post-Brexit. Various topics

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<sup>93</sup> [https://youth.europa.eu/events/european-rural-youth-summit\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/events/european-rural-youth-summit_en)

<sup>94</sup> [https://youth.europa.eu/events/european-rural-youth-summit\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/events/european-rural-youth-summit_en)



are being discussed, such as the PEACE PLUS Programme, the Green Deal and the movement of goods, persons and services between the EU and UK<sup>95</sup>.

On 24 January 2024, the CoR-UK Contact Group held a meeting, during which a more prominent role for the Trade and Cooperation Agreement was called for. The report Inquiry into UK-EU Governance<sup>96</sup> stated that the current UK-EU agreements lack territorial depth and called on the European Commission to adopt a more ambitious approach for the future of the relationship, particularly in light of upcoming elections to the UK and European parliaments. The study further revealed at the meeting highlighted significant declines in various sectors of Brittany's relationship with the UK post-Brexit, including trade, sales of agricultural goods, ferry travel, tourism, and notably, school trips. However, these declines were generally characterised as "not catastrophic"<sup>97</sup>.

### **6.7.2 New trade and economic relations between EU-UK: impact on regions and cities**

A CoR report<sup>98</sup> on the effects of Brexit on EU-UK relations regarding regions and cities states that Brexit has halted student and academic mobility between the UK and EU. In 2019, 18% of all academic staff and over 26% of research-specific staff in the UK were EU citizens<sup>99</sup>. Research by Amuedo-Dorantes and Romiti (2021) indicates a substantial decrease in EU-originating student applications post-Brexit, with a 14% drop in growth compared to applications from other regions<sup>100</sup>.

Brexit has notably affected EU applications, particularly in STEM subjects (these include medicine, subjects allied to medicine, biological sciences, veterinary science, physical sciences, mathematical science, computer science, engineering and technology, and architecture, building and planning), with a 17% decrease compared to a 13% decline in non-STEM fields. This trend could have significant implications for local earnings, productivity and innovation, given the importance of international talent in these areas. UK universities also may experience a loss in tuition fees<sup>101</sup>, while institutions in other

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95 <https://cor.europa.eu/en/about/Pages/cor-uk.aspx>

96 <https://senedd.wales/media/3jvbyvys/cr-ld16176-e.pdf>

97 <https://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/CoR-UK-Contact-Group-meets.aspx>

98 [https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/New%20trade%20and%20economic%20relations%20between%20EU\\_UK%20the%20impact%20on%20regions%20and%20cities.pdf](https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/New%20trade%20and%20economic%20relations%20between%20EU_UK%20the%20impact%20on%20regions%20and%20cities.pdf)

99 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13825577.2021.1918834>

100 <https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/14247/international-student-applications-in-the-united-kingdom-after-brexit>

101 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/958998/EU\\_exit\\_estimating\\_the\\_impact\\_on\\_UK\\_higher\\_education.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/958998/EU_exit_estimating_the_impact_on_UK_higher_education.pdf)

EU countries could become more appealing to EU students. Top alternative destinations include the Netherlands (49%), Germany (36%), France (19%), Ireland (16%), and Sweden (14%)<sup>102</sup>.

The report concludes that the TCA lacks provisions for mobility, impacting service sectors relying on people movement. OECD analysis<sup>103</sup> suggests the end of free movement between the EU and UK could result in 0.7% GDP loss for the UK and 0.2% for the EU in the medium term, with a total loss of 4.4% and 0.6% respectively due to the TCA. The migration impact remains unclear, but data shows negative EU net migration to the UK since 2020, with fewer EU job seekers and students applying to UK universities post-Brexit, exacerbated by the UK's non-participation in the new Erasmus+ programme<sup>104</sup>.

### **6.7.3 CoR opinion on Strengthening the EU-UK relationship at subnational level and remedying the territorial impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU**

The opinion recognises that Brexit's territorial impact spans various sectors across the EU, including economics, environment, society, culture and education. This impact ranges from trade disruptions at major ports like Antwerp, Calais, Cork, Dover, Dublin, Rotterdam, and Zeebrugge to challenges in student exchanges and collaboration in higher education for climate adaptation. Additionally, regional trade agencies are exploring alternative markets, while addressing citizen concerns regarding mobility and integration<sup>105</sup>.

The opinion also acknowledges the significance of educational exchanges for student mobility, collaborative research, language proficiency, and stimulating human connections. It also backs the initiatives of UK devolved administrations to forge new partnerships beyond the framework of the TCA<sup>106</sup>.

## **6.8 Spotlight on the European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education**

The European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) released its opinion on the implementation report on the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (2022/2188(INI)). In this opinion CULT emphasize significant concern and regret of the UK Government decision to unilaterally

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102 <https://monitor.icef.com/2021/03/new-analysis-projects-brexit's-impact-on-eu-enrolment-in-british-higher-education/>

103 [https://one.oecd.org/document/ECO/WKP\(2021\)49/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/ECO/WKP(2021)49/en/pdf)

104 [https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/New%20trade%20and%20economic%20relations%20between%20EU\\_UK%20the%20impact%20on%20regions%20and%20cities.pdf](https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/New%20trade%20and%20economic%20relations%20between%20EU_UK%20the%20impact%20on%20regions%20and%20cities.pdf)

105 [EUR-Lex - 52022IR0108 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

106 [EUR-Lex - 52022IR0108 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

withdraw from participation in key EU programmes such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe, and European Solidarity Corps. Despite the EU's willingness to negotiate, this move is seen by CULT as a missed opportunity for both the EU and the UK, depriving individuals and organisations of valuable opportunities for exchange and cooperation. Numerous stakeholders in education, culture and youth sectors on both sides have voiced their desire for the UK to remain associated with these programmes<sup>107</sup>.

*CULT "regrets the narrowness of the 'value for money' approach adopted by the UK Government regarding Erasmus+, which disregards the numerous benefits in terms of exchange of knowledge and skills for students, teachers and administrative staff, the contribution to diversity on campuses and in schools, and its contribution to broadening its participants' outlooks and opportunities"*<sup>108</sup>.

CULT further has concerns regarding Erasmus+' replacement, Turing Scheme, due its limitations, particularly its focus solely on outgoing student mobility and its exclusion of the youth and sports sectors<sup>109</sup>. While initiatives such as the Taith programme in Wales and similar efforts in Scotland and Ireland are welcomed, they do not fully address the void left by the UK's withdrawal from Erasmus+ and its associated programmes. The Turing scheme also falls short in supporting youth projects and cultural exchange, hindering opportunities for school-age children and artists<sup>110</sup>. Moreover, administrative hurdles and visa requirements create obstacles to school trips and cultural exchanges, necessitating the establishment of alternative schemes to facilitate youth travel<sup>111</sup>.

CULT notes that the decline in EU student enrolment at UK universities following the withdrawal from Erasmus+ underscores the broader consequences of this decision. It not only impacts educational diversity but also raises concerns about European sovereignty and competitiveness in strategic sectors regarding advanced technologies<sup>112</sup>. The absence of provisions for mutual recognition of professional qualifications and the lack of cultural provisions in the TCA further worsens these challenges<sup>113</sup>.

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107 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0331\\_EN.html#\\_section10](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0331_EN.html#_section10) p.4

108 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0331\\_EN.html#\\_section10](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0331_EN.html#_section10) p.5

109 <https://www.turing-scheme.org.uk/about/information-for-participants/>

110 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0331\\_EN.html#\\_section10](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0331_EN.html#_section10) p.7

111 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/lddeuaff/184/184.pdf>

112 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0331\\_EN.html#\\_section10](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0331_EN.html#_section10) p.6

113 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32005L0036>

## 6.9 Spotlight on the House of Lords European Affairs Committee

A report<sup>114</sup> was published on the future UK-EU relationship in which numerous important youth related elements were discussed.

### 6.9.1 School trips

According to research conducted by travel industry organisations, the number of students sent to the UK by European operators for school trips and other educational, cultural or sports-related group travel plummeted by 83% in 2022 compared to 2019, the last pre-COVID-19 pandemic year before the TCA was implemented<sup>115</sup>. The requirement for all pupils to have individual passports to enter the UK, whereas they could previously have entered under a group document through the EU List of Travellers Scheme or travelled with ID cards, was a major factor behind this decline. And unfortunately, a large majority of students do not possess a passport due to the hassle and financial costs<sup>116</sup>.

The decline in school visits to the UK has resulted in both economic and cultural losses. UKinbound projected a £875 million revenue loss and 14,500 job losses due to the decline<sup>117</sup>. Furthermore, the loss of soft power was emphasised, including young European children who would miss out on the formative experiences of travel in the UK. Problems for school trips to the EU have also been noted. The UK's exit from the EU's Erasmus+ programme also affected school travel. Rhammel Afflick from the British Youth Council noted that "almost none" of the projects previously funded by Erasmus+ for school-age children are now supported by the Government's Turing scheme<sup>118</sup>.

In order to mitigate the problems caused by the new border requirements, the report suggests changes to documentary requirements for inbound and outbound school trips in the form of a youth group travel scheme that would not require pupils travelling on school visits from any EU country to carry individual passports. It also recommends investing in campaigns to actively promote school trips, and to incorporate funding into the Turing scheme<sup>119</sup>.

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114 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/ldeuaff/184/184.pdf#>

115 [https://www.tourismalliance.com/downloads/TA\\_429\\_462.pdf](https://www.tourismalliance.com/downloads/TA_429_462.pdf)

116 <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/113153/pdf/>

117 <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/113142/html/>

118 <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/12486/html/>

119 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/ldeuaff/184/184.pdf#>

## 6.9.2 Higher education mobility

Since the conclusion of the post-Brexit transition period, there has been a significant shift in the composition of international students at UK universities. Official data shows a 53% decrease in newly enrolled students from EU countries from 2020/21 to 2021/22<sup>120</sup>. Conversely, there was a notable 32% increase in enrolments from non-EU countries, reaching a record high level. EU students are no longer able to benefit from home student fee rates at UK universities, as was the case until 2021, and they must also now secure student visas in the same way as other international students<sup>121</sup>. Changes post-Brexit have also impacted UK students seeking to study in the EU<sup>122</sup>.

To replace Erasmus+, the Turing Scheme was created. Turing differs from Erasmus+ as it has a global scope, funding shorter placements like summer schools rather than full academic years. It only covers outward placements, lacking reciprocity for inbound visits seen in Erasmus+. The Turing Scheme raised several concerns. These issues are the lack of support for staff mobility, restricted funding for non-university exchanges, and the requirement to submit new funding bids annually, often for similar projects, which Ms. Robinson deemed "highly burdensome"<sup>123</sup>.

Wales introduced Taith as replacement for Erasmus+, which has been relatively successful in providing mobility opportunities for Welsh and EU students. Taith has therefore been welcomed by the EU and the other UK countries. Ms Graham suggested introducing a similar reciprocal scheme across the UK<sup>124</sup>. Others leave the door open for the UK to seek to re-engage with Erasmus+, even at this stage<sup>125</sup>, possibly based on the Switzerland model under which participation in Erasmus+ is funded through its own budget<sup>126</sup>.

To mitigate the consequences of opting out of Erasmus+, the report suggests that the UK Government should work to ensure that barriers to enrolment such as challenges in obtaining visas are minimised. It is further suggested that the UK Government explores possibilities to include reciprocal elements into

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120 <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/19-01-2023/sb265-higher-education-studentstatistics/location>

121 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/lduaff/184/184.pdf#>

122 <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/12487/html/>

123 <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/12487/html/>

124 <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/12487/html/>

125 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/lduaff/184/184.pdf#>

126 <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/113107/html/> and <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/113109/html/>

the Turing Scheme drawing on experiences from Taith, and to ensure that Turing and Taith can run alongside Erasmus+<sup>127</sup>.

## **6.10 Spotlight on the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly**

The EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly is composed of a Delegation of UK Members of Parliament meeting together with a Delegation of Members of the European Parliament. It was established under the terms of the 2021 Trade and Co-operation Agreement and acts as a forum for parliamentarians to exchange views on the implementation and operation of the Agreement. The Agreement established a Partnership Council as a joint UK-EU body which will inform the PPA of its decisions and recommendations. The PPA may make recommendations to the Partnership Council.

The Rt Hon Sir Oliver Heald KC MP was appointed Leader of the Delegation and Co-Chair of the Assembly and Lord Ricketts GCMG GCVO and The Rt Hon Dame Angela Eagle DBE MP were appointed Vice Chairs of the Delegation.

The EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly meets twice a year, once in London and once in either Brussels or Strasbourg, issuing a report following each meeting<sup>128</sup>.

At its last meeting on 4 and 5 December 2023, the PPA focused, *inter alia*, on Touring Artists and Citizens' Rights.

### **6.10.1 Touring Artists**

The absence of an agreement on touring artists in the TCA is creating problems, especially for young and emerging artists. The Partnership Council should encourage the EU and the UK to negotiate a comprehensive agreement to allow artists to tour freely in the EU and the UK. In the meantime, the Partnership Council should look at steps that can be taken now to lessen the burdens that the current rules create<sup>129</sup>.

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<sup>127</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/lddeuaff/184/184.pdf#>

<sup>128</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/delegations/uk-eu-parliamentary-partnership-assembly-delegation/#:~:text=The%20Parliamentary%20Partnership%20Assembly%20meets,a%20report%20following%20each%20meeting.>

<sup>129</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/mps-lords--offices/offices/nato-expenses-2022-23-first-quarter/letter-from-the-co-chairs-of-the-ppa-to-the-chairs-of-the-partnership-council.pdf>

### **6.10.2 Citizens' Rights**

There should be no diminution of rights for citizens, noting the democratic deficit arising with a particular need to focus on citizens in Northern Ireland and the challenges they face.

The PPA notes the difficulties remain with the implementation of the EU settlement scheme, including the number and uncertainty of those with pre-settled status, engaging with the digital process and the lack of physical evidence of status; and we invite the Partnership Council to provide its own analysis of the current operation of the settlement scheme.

The PPA notes and welcomes the work of the Independent Monitoring Authority in the UK, and compare this with the lack of support for organisations advocating for British citizens in Member States.

The PPA notes that different nationalities are treated differently by the UK when applying for work visas, and in particular, invites the Partnership Council to set out if it has considered a future mobility scheme for young people between the UK and the EU<sup>130</sup>.

### **6.11 Spotlight on EU/UK Youth Stronger Together**

The British Council and European Movement International publish data<sup>131</sup> from their EU/UK Youth Stronger Together<sup>132</sup> report with priorities including stimulating a sense of European identity among Europeans in the UK, democratising youth engagement across borders, addressing Brexit challenges for UK youth, and promoting representation of BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in the UK) youths in EU collaborations.

They state that existing facilitators like the European Youth Parliament, Erasmus mobility programmes, and friendships between EU and UK youth enable communication and collaboration. A UK/EU youth network should provide practical education, promote dialogue and idea exchange, create inclusive opportunities for UK youths, and support funding for social-cultural and educational projects.

Policy recommendations include creating inclusive EU policies, consulting youth on inclusivity, allocating funds for collaborative initiatives, and advocating for UK participation in EU programmes.

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130 <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/mps-lords--offices/offices/nato-expenses-2022-23-first-quarter/letter-from-the-co-chairs-of-the-ppa-to-the-chairs-of-the-partnership-council.pdf>

131 <https://www.britishcouncil.be/programmes/education/stronger-together/youth-leadership>

132 <https://www.britishcouncil.be/programmes/education/stronger-together>

Additionally, advocating for freedom of movement for school groups and engaging with the EU Commissioner for International Partnerships are recommended.

### 6.11.1 Stronger Together for Youth Leadership Programme

#### Context

The EU/UK Youth Stronger Together project offers young people from the EU and the UK opportunities to connect, co-operate, influence, and implement change together on issues of common interest. It is a two-year project (2023-2025) implemented in co-operation with the European Movement International and co-funded by the European Union.

Ahead of the creation of a Network of UK and EU youth organisations and in view to forming a set of youth recommendations to policy makers we have been organising Focus Groups with representatives of youth organisations and young people across the UK to get their views and capture their needs, challenges, and prospects for future relations with organisations and youth in the EU.

*These focus groups have provided the platform where young people could share their thoughts, ideas and concerns and contribute to the future of EU / UK collaboration.*

#### Participants

These preliminary findings represent the voice of a total of **65** young people and representatives of youth organisations.

The responses documented here are a combination of the groups described here. These are colour-coded so readers can see which responses came from which groups.

3 online focus groups with **15 representatives of youth organisations** from across the UK (and 3 from EU organisations), and responses from **16** representatives from youth organisations at 3 events in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales.

2 online focus groups with **a specially recruited cross-section of young people, aged 18 – 24**, from across the UK. One for 7 females and one for 7 males, for a total of **14** participants. These participants were selected on the basis of their favourability towards the EU.

2 in-person focus groups with **20** young people and **15** youth organisations from across the UK at an EU/UK event in London (Youth Gathering organised by the EU Delegation at UCL, London)

It is important to note that whilst only 2 of the focus groups specifically targeted young people with positive views towards the EU, it is likely that most participants in the research will share some favourability towards the EU, having chosen to attend the events and focus groups.



## PART 1: THE EUROPEAN UNION AND EU/UK RELATIONS

What one word comes to mind when you hear 'European Union'?



*“To me it’s the feeling of belonging. The connection and partnerships, and then the agreements that come with it.”*

*“It’s not what you know but who you know, on a global scale”.*

**Is the EU important to the UK? Why? What does the EU mean to the UK?**

All focus group participants agreed that the EU was important to the UK, with many expressing strong feelings. These feelings were based on their knowledge of the relationship and their feeling of connection to the Union, but very much influenced by what they saw as the overwhelmingly negative fallout from Brexit.

Some reasons for why the EU is important included:

- It is our closet network of allied countries.
- For the feeling of community feel and free movement
- EHIC card and other perks
- Our historic relationship with the union as our neighbour
- The security that comes with the relationships
- Immigration and people coming here and supporting our development.
- Multiculturalism and the enrichment of society that comes from people from different places coming to the UK.

*“Being open to other people and opinions is healthy. It feels like we’re losing this”.*

*“We have always helped with each other’s strengths and weaknesses. If you don’t have those relationships your weaknesses are exposed.”*

*“Trade is obviously the key one. We rely on them.”*

## Is the EU important to young people in the UK? Why?

There were three themes that dominated the responses here: mobility, education, and employment.

- Freedom and opportunities to travel, study, work and connect with other people outside the UK, and the initiatives and programmes that support it. Semesters abroad and inter-railing were mentioned, and the importance of intercultural relationships and understanding. This was felt especially keenly by those who had taken these opportunities and were sad that young people now would not have the same opportunities.
- Education was seen to be narrowing in both content and approaches. School trips to Europe and language learning opportunities were mentioned, and the issue of there being less history content around Europe as well as the UK's colonial past.
- The EU was seen as important to young people's future employment opportunities – for both its impact on the UK economy and the opportunities in EU countries.

The value of the EU to young people was also discussed in relation to the wider geo-political situation. The EU was seen as a safety net and important to UK security - *“a cushion of support with all the countries together.”*

*“It's scary without this [relationship with the EU], especially now with all the wars going on. It would be nice not to worry about these things – it's a lot to think about at the back of your minds constantly”.*

*“It's important for young people to be exposed to difference and grow up less bigoted”.*

*“Those who voted leave have done that and settled. We have time ahead of us. We want to travel and see things.”*

Participants shared their personal feelings and experiences. This included:

- *“A collective mindset”*. Feeling that we are part of something bigger and connected with others. With this was a sense of loss of something that represented unity and positive values.
- Impact on health care. Workers are leaving the health care system, and they were seen as good for the system and good for the workers themselves. *“Now there's a kick out the immigrants mentality.”*
- The value of cultural exchange, and meeting people from different places. Being able to move and study in Europe was often stressed as so important for young people.

- Rights and freedoms. The groups felt that Brexit has had a negative impact on rights and freedoms in the UK and has also contributed to closing the space for dialogue, with people feeling less able to share opinions, particularly online.

*“My parents are European and grew up feeling very proud to be British and European and also felt like there were some freedoms the UK gave me that perhaps Europe didn’t. And I absolutely don’t feel that anymore.”*

*“Selfishly, my job has been made harder. And it’s [Brexit] made everything more expensive, more difficult, and more miserable.”*

*“I feel it in my personal life too. I can’t move. It’s not the same freedom to move and I really feel a sense of loss around that, and that our country is less diverse.”*

*“I have personal connections through family heritage, so feel loss. And I hear horrible things about immigrants – Brexit lit a fire under this. It’s brought out the nasty side in people.”*

*“I had a pen pal in France, we communicated in French, and I went to visit at 14. It was such an important opportunity for me.”*

**How would you describe EU-UK youth relations in one word?**



**Would you say the relationship between the UK and EU right now is...**

<b>Too close</b>	<b>Too distant</b>	<b>About right</b>
0	13	1

**Would you like to see relationship between the UK and EU...**

<b>Get closer</b>	<b>Get more distant</b>	<b>Stay the same</b>
12	0	2

Participants discussed the mutual benefit of closer relations for the UK and the EU, including the exchange of migrants and workers, easier trade and the opportunities for theirs and other young people's futures. This included:

- Future career opportunities
- Easier visa access for people in the UK
- Hope that Scotland becomes independent and joins the EU.
- Open up our borders more for migration in and out of UK.
- The desire to see more positive news coming out of EU and UK. *"Everything is about how things are worse"*.
- More collaboration between governments. Especially around trade, that was felt to have affected the cost of living.

There were a lot of mentions of the value of relationships with (young) people in Europe. When asked if the cultural exchange element was important to them, all participants agreed that it was.

*"I could let go of Brexit if I could see a net positive – or at stay the same at least."*

*"The attitude that, "we're Great Britain, we don't need anyone else" is an absolute farce!"*

**How would you like the relation between the UK and the EU to be in the future?**

Many participants identified a desire for closer relationship between the EU and UK in future. Some described the importance of developing a win-win mindset, with much closer alignment on shared interests such as sustainability, trade, freedom of movement. Some highlighted that EU policies in the UK political system would be reassuring.

Many participants expressed a desire of the UK to re-join the EU as the best possible course of action. Some participants described that if the UK re-joined the EU (even after a decade or two), it would be great marketing (publicity) for the EU. Others argued that it would not be easy and that opinions in the UK have to change drastically first. Misinformation about the EU in the UK would have to be tackled, including about EU voting as many people don't/didn't know all of the benefits of EU membership. For some there was concern that if the UK re-joins the EU, they won't be offered all of the 'special concessions' that they had before. Others expressed that letting the UK re-join the EU will set a precedent whereby other countries can leave and re-join at their political leader's whim. It was said that in that sense, the disaster following Brexit united Europe.

Alongside discussion about re-joining, participants expressed a desire for greater collaboration with the UK on EU programmes, focusing on cooperation and interconnectivity. This included collaborations like horizon; university home fees for EU students and better trade agreements with the EU to reduce are less shortages in food and pharmacy supply issues.

A key concern for many participants was re-joining Erasmus +. It was said that the majority of young people are pro-European, and loss of Erasmus was felt very deeply. Many wanted to know why the UK government was not engaging in Erasmus+, as this had led to UK students losing opportunity to get abroad as well as Turing being limited to specific groups of people.

Some participants highlighted that reinstating E+ on its own will not be enough to maintain relations, because people would not intend to stay afterwards.

Trade union representatives were keen for collaboration between UK and EU trade unions, in order to recognise that all workers are going through the same transformations regardless we are in the UK/EU and to strengthen and share young members.

There were specific needs expressed relating to the border in North Ireland, including the need to maintain free movement and communications between EU and Irish groups, as well as the need to maintain the feasibility of European students attending Northern Irish.

## Why do you think it is important to build a closer relationship between the UK and EU?

	Votes
<i>Freedom of movement of goods, services, and people</i>	7
<i>More exchange, learning, education, and cultural opportunities for young people – like the Erasmus Programme</i>	6
<i>Will improve the economy in the UK for a better standard of living for all</i>	4
<i>Will strengthen human and civil rights</i>	3
<i>Creates better opportunities for me &amp; my family</i>	2
<i>Will help solve important problems like Climate Change, crime &amp; terrorism</i>	1
<i>Creates more opportunity and prosperity for me &amp; my family</i>	1
<i>Makes peace and stability in the UK and Europe more possible</i>	1
<i>Increase trade</i>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>

### *Freedom of movement of goods, services, and people*

- It was recognised that this ties in with everything else. E.g., “*When we say ‘goods’, that’s people’s jobs as well*”.
- Provides opportunities for people and their families.
- There was a voice of concern that free movement should not just be for ‘high-skilled’ only, and other restrictions.
- Another person commented that perhaps there needs to be a balance with how what social support, e.g., housing can be provided. “*If we can’t support everyone then maybe we should consider pausing, building up NHS again, for example and then open up again.*”
- It was also recognised that movement of people supports cohesion.

*“This links to trade, links to migration, links to a more interconnected world and interconnected Europe and I think that’s what we need.”*

*“These freedoms are important to me personally.”*

### **Will improve the economy in the UK for a better standard of living for all.**

- Participants linked the rising cost of living with Brexit.
- Food prices and availability
- Impact on businesses
- Benefit with immigrants coming in to help boost the economy.

*I was thinking trade-wise. My mum's always going on about what's missing from the shops, and that links to the economy. People are in really difficult situations. Trade and job opportunities abroad with the EU could be essential."*

*"For example, Xmas tree market where I'm from, always run by Polish people who were brilliant. But now it's in danger. Lumping around Xmas trees might not be the most glamorous job, but something needs to be done and these guys were amazing. Now they have returned home and there's staffing problem."*

### **More exchange, learning, education, and cultural opportunities for young people – like the Erasmus Programme**

- Participants shared a lot of personal stories of the benefits of these programmes.
- Many of the groups talked about how they bring a sense of unity and importantly, helps broaden horizons and connect across cultures.
- One person notes seeing "funded by EU" on programmes which they thought were good.
- Trips to EU to understand the workings were mentioned as valuable, as they help young people see the value and get involved in opportunities.
- It was also noted how, after Covid, these opportunities are even more valuable.

*"The feeling of what we've lost - that sense of opportunity for young people. We were headed in a good direction, with people being open minded, and European values of inclusivity. We are regressing to a small island mindset and walls being put up – and the solution is exchange."*

*"It's a vicious cycle. The less opportunity, the less we explore and see the benefits of learning about other cultures and meeting other people".*

*"I was lucky enough to be in the last year of Erasmus. I know it was just a really incredible experience. It had a really significant impact on what I felt was available to me. I was the first generation in my family who could go and work and live abroad. I met so many wonderful people, it really helped my education and view on life."*

### **Will to strengthen human and civil rights.**

- There was a general feeling that Brexit has eroded human and civil rights and that being closer to the EU would help.

- People recognised the importance of EU values, and how these are upheld.
- One person noted how EU relationships can influence the UK in positive ways – with countries that are more welcoming to different people.
- The European Convention on Human Rights and the EU time directive were shared as valuable examples.
- The conversation focused mostly on the experience and rights of LGBTQ young people – although class and race were mentioned - and how these rights are supported by the EU, and how the situation has worsened post-Brexit.

The issue of worsening racism, xenophobia and homophobia in the UK was mentioned in different ways by all the groups.

*“These kinds of rules protect our wellbeing. “I think EU laws do protect us and that should be maintained.”*

*“When we were in Europe it didn’t feel like such a hostile place, but slowly it’s getting worse and worse. Queer / LGBTQ issues are what I am thinking of, but also race and class. Not perfect in Europe, but there is a sense of agreement about what’s OK and what’s not.”*

*“Eurovision is a good example. Feels great, but it’s not the reality any more for everyone”.*

No one chose the trade option specifically, but when questioned on this there was broad agreement about the value of the relationship for trade and the importance of the trading relationships for the UK, even if the language of ‘trade’ does not resonate or interest young people.

*“Trade doesn’t mean much to me personally. As long as I can get my things, I’m alright”.*

*“We have to take an interest in trade. We hear about the importance of trade agreements, etc. but for me it’s about getting freedom of movement in place first.”*

Other points made include:

- Climate change and the need to come together around this.
- The need to give young people an accurate view of history and culture, including about our historic and strong ties with Europe.



## PART 2: EU-UK COLLABORATION

**Do you think the EU is doing enough to ensure engagement between EU and UK youth?**

Yes	No	Not sure
1	8	3

**Do you have enough information about opportunities for EU / UK collaboration?**

Yes	No	Not sure
2	9	1

**Would you like more opportunities to network and collaborate with young people and organisations in Europe?**

Yes	No	Not sure
15	0	1

*“Yes! I love the opportunity to meet other young people working on issues such as climate and social justice to learn from them”.*

**Do you think that you could have more impact on your priority issues through European collaboration?**

Yes	No	Not sure
14	1	1

### **How would you like to know more about youth engagement in the EU? What would you like to know?**

There was a general desire to know more about what opportunities for engagement with the EU were available, and how specific events could be identified. It was stressed that there was a need to engage those who were not old enough to vote in the referendum and who need opportunities to travel to Europe.

Participants wanted more information about re-joining the Erasmus+ programme, or alternatives to E+. This included how to recreate the opportunities as youth organisations and maintaining and going forward.

In concrete terms, ideas were proposed for:

- Formation and continuation of existing youth alliances within UK politics, both EU and non-EU focused, with examples given of British Youth Council, and how the work each coalition does helps to connect and develop young political activists.
- Developing existing European focused youth networks and hosting meetings in person - said to be a key to building stronger relations and will be key to keeping dialogue open.
- Online campaigning and virtual networks which could keep continued communication and education going and coordinate people, for 'on-ground' action when it comes about.
- Funding for youth organisations.
- Roles being created with trade unions that relate to international / EU liaison.
- Outreach work that went beyond university conversations and also included conversation in workplace settings as well as community settings (e.g., the pub). This would enable inclusive, open debates and discussions as it was not enough just to select one delegate.
- EU youth delegations.
- Focus on social media.
- Integration of teaching on Europe in formal education.
- Adoption of the European Youth card (<https://eyca.org/>) across the UK- which is currently active in Scotland.

These ideas contribute to the discussion about the role and priorities of the proposed EU / UK Network of youth organisations. (See below)

### **Do the group think a continuous dialogue between youth in the UK and in the EU is still necessary, and why?**

There was wide support for continuous dialogue between youth in the UK and the EU.

For many, this was described as a bridge building exercise. There was said to be a need to create dialogue around the topic, to deal with what had occurred and identify future directions. It was said the EU-UK has not come to terms yet with the future of their relations. People were ‘stuck on mourning Brexit’ - and are not clear on a way forward for future relations.

It was said there was a need for young people from different environments to meet and talk about issues such as UK-EU mobility or how young people can be closer to Europe even in the current situation. Many felt it was important to have forums for young people to drive change. The discussion around EU connectivity must remain prominent, but misconceptions and high tempers around the topic need to cool down and be more calmly addressed, as it had become such a partisan issue. Some participants described how discussion around Brexit in the UK has disappeared and stagnated, many young people didn’t or still don’t understand the impact. Some described how young people are feeling forgotten (Brexit wasn’t ‘our’ choice) and were concerned the relationship with the EU was damaged or stagnating.

There was concern that Brexit had led to nationalism in the UK and there were issues in how the UK views the world and Europe. There was also said to be a need to explore the identity crisis - do British young people still feel European? Some people also felt further from the UK, particularly in Northern Ireland, where strong solidarity had been shown from other countries.

Some participants identified that continuous dialogue would help with issues of divergence and alignment. On both cultural alignment but also common concerns such as trade, security, and human rights.

Considering how dialogue might take place, participants highlighted that young people are still not quite connected enough overall. While events such as The EU Youth Gathering are important, more on-ground outreach and meaningful work must be emphasised as a way to reach out to those who are not currently actively involved. Education and information must be co-priorities. Outreach cannot afford to be closed off and limited to those already with access to greater education and opportunities. It was said to be important to target populations who are not in university and encourage ‘non-joiners.’ By giving opportunities to young people from minority groups a more meaningful idea of representation and participation could be developed. This included those in poverty, (e.g., facing food issues or being unable to heat homes) where the EU could help address these issues, as well as young people not engaged in youth organisations. It was said that avenues to engage young people within the EU must give young people a collective voice, give them responsibility, and influence no matter their level of political experience. However, some young people expressed confusion about why UK youth would be still engaged in EU youth political structures and programmes.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **What specific policy recommendations you would like to put forward?**

Representatives of youth organisations shared their specific policy recommendations. Some of these are familiar issues and reflect long held views and needs of young people, however, the context is changing, some of the needs are more acute, and some of the specific asks related to the issues are different.

There is broad agreement that Brexit has exacerbated these priority issues and made both the policy and practice environment more challenging.

### **Equality and Inclusion**

- Make Inclusive Societies a reality, based on the EU Youth Goal
- Youth inclusion in all levels of policy making of the EU (including on inclusion)
- Create more inclusive policies in EU.
- Racism and identity issues with young people in the UK – which is worse with the Brexit fallout.

We need:

- to support young people to have good conversations.
- positive coverage of different identities
- everyone's right to be heard to be upheld. There should be no secondary citizens in policy dialogue.
- to address the missing public narratives
- to actively tackle racism. "*This is a European thing*"
- Challenge the rise of the right / far right and the harmful narratives that come with it. We can tangibly do something by connecting people and need to show young people we are making a difference on these issues.

### **Enable youth mobility and exchange.**

- Resource it properly, and provide the help needed to "*get over the line*". The real costs are not always covered. (Can the network help here?)
- Include online opportunities, e.g., e-twinning.
- Remove passport and visa control / restrictions for young people.
- Bring Erasmus back.
  - Understand the specific context of youth work. E.g., remove the word school. Language matters for policy makers, e.g., around Erasmus

- Freedom of movement for school groups: Allow school groups to come to the UK for short educational stays without being subject to the heightened passport and visa measures introduced in the last few years.

### **Youth participation.**

- *“Hold the line, that there is nothing about us without us”.*
- Make Scotland’s signing up to UNCRC Article 12 real.
  - Ensure all UK nations also sign up.
  - This could be a way in for the network. Collaborate with network to reduce blind spots.
- Engage with EU Commissioner for International Partnerships and discuss ways a UK voice can be included in the EU's youth sounding board or other global youth initiatives.

### **Professional exchange and capacity building**

- Provide opportunities for training of the educators and multipliers, e.g., bilateral cooperation with youth workers.
- Promote and support Youth Work.
  - Uphold the role and value.
  - Supporting democratic participation and voice, supported through youth work. (This is a Belgian Presidency priority. Is there a chance to piggyback?)
  - This is important beyond EU. The Council of Europe has a conference on this next year.

### **Climate Change and sustainability**

- Pursue/push-for net-zero.
- Address specific environmental issues, e.g., fracking.
- Address post-Brexit environmental regulations. Young environmentalists are concerned that the EU’s role being watered down and there’s less funding available.

### **EU/UK Collaboration**

This is explored in depth in Part 2, however there was support from all youth organisations for greater collaboration between UK and EU organisations.

Suggestions included:

- Provide funds for collaboration and partnership initiatives around EU.
- Resource a sustainable network
- Encourage EU policy organisations to take part in the initiatives between UK and UK
- Create ways to engage young people in EU policy processes with their EU peers.

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## **6.12 Spotlight on the European Youth Forum**

The European Youth Forum states<sup>133</sup> that the financial consequences for the UK youth sector following the ending of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) funding are significant. Previously, substantial funding supported learning mobility opportunities and strategic partnerships, benefiting over 201 youth organisations. However, this funding has not been adequately replaced by the UK government, despite assurances of national schemes. The absence of youth-specific opportunities for international collaboration, exchange or volunteering has left organisations like British Youth Council struggling with the loss of funding and the ability to support their international initiatives.

Moreover, the cultural impact of losing access to Erasmus+ and ESC programmes is significant. These programmes facilitated mobility opportunities for thousands of participants, stimulating intercultural connections and community-building. The absence of such initiatives has deprived young people in the UK of valuable experiences and dialogues at the European level, impacting their personal and professional growth.

The loss of Erasmus+ (Key Action 2) has not only diminished the UK's perception as a thought leader but also hindered efforts to promote inclusion and diversity within the youth sector. Without mechanisms for sharing expertise and knowledge with EU counterparts, there is a notable decline in the UK's influence in this domain. Additionally, the absence of international programmes tailored to young people with fewer opportunities further exacerbates the loss of vital opportunities for this target group. Similarly, the imposition of higher tuition fees for EU students studying in the UK has led to a decline in enrolment, contributing to a loss of inclusiveness and cultural diversity on UK university campuses.

## **6.13 Spotlight on The case for greater devolved involvement in the UK-EU relationship, published in the UK in a Changing Europe<sup>134</sup>**

Huw Irranca-Davies, Chair of the Senedd's Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, presented the findings of the committee's recent report<sup>135</sup> on UK-EU governance, advocating for enhanced consultation and engagement with devolved governments and legislatures. The report highlights the

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<sup>133</sup> <https://www.youthforum.org/>

<sup>134</sup> <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/the-case-for-greater-devolved-involvement-in-the-uk-eu-relationship/>

<sup>135</sup> <https://senedd.wales/media/3jybyvys/cr-ld16176-e.pdf>

complexities of managing the UK-EU relationship post-Brexit, focusing on governance structures established under the Withdrawal Agreement and TCA.

It underscores concerns that decisions made within these structures could restrict the use of devolved powers without input from devolved decision-makers. The lack of transparency in these new structures is also emphasised, with calls for greater engagement of diverse voices from civil society and devolved governments.

The relevance of this article for EU-UK youth engagement lies in understanding the implications of governance arrangements for youth policies and programmes, and advocating for the inclusion of diverse voices, including those of young people, in decision-making processes concerning the future UK-EU relationship.

## **6.14 Spotlight on Apprenticeships**

### **6.14.1 Farming Apprenticeships**

The WWF conducted a report<sup>136</sup> analysing agroecological farming to help restore biodiversity and help tackle climate change and takes six farming case studies from the UK as examples of success. In chapter 5, the report discusses the creation of new sustainable farming and horticulture apprenticeship scheme.

Based on the outcomes of the Wales Future Farmer Training Programme<sup>137</sup> conducted by Lantra and the Landworkers' Alliance, the report suggests to establish a two-year apprenticeship programme for agroecological horticulture and farming. This initiative aims to support and guide new beginnings into agroecological farming, providing them with comprehensive training to manage their own enterprises or work as skilled employees. By integrating horticulture and sustainable farming, this apprenticeship offers year-round training opportunities, as opposed to the seasonal focus of horticulture alone, particularly during the summer and autumn months.

### **6.14.2 Other Apprenticeships**

The UK National Society of Apprentices (NSoA) was officially launched in February 2014. Currently, the society collaborates with over 120 training providers and employers, collectively representing more

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<sup>136</sup> [https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Jul23/WWFreportENGfullJULY\\_web.pdf](https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Jul23/WWFreportENGfullJULY_web.pdf)

<sup>137</sup> <https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/traineeship/>

than 150,000 apprentices across various sectors and industries throughout the UK<sup>138</sup>. The UK National Society of Apprentices aims to capture and advocate for the voices of apprentices both locally and nationally, stimulating improved apprenticeship provisions and heightened participation. Additionally, it conducts research to understand apprentices' needs, perspectives and experiences regarding their training and employment. The society also encourages apprentices to engage in civic participation and democracy, including voter registration, at both local and national levels. Furthermore, it strives to promote equal access to high-quality apprenticeships for all<sup>139</sup>.

### **The position of NSoA<sup>140</sup> on European Mobility**

The National Society of Apprentices (UK) welcomes any measures taken by Governments in the UK or EU to facilitate the mobility of apprentices. We are both workers and learners and as such need programmes from both areas to take our needs into account.

The apprentice that we have spoken to have appreciated the existence of the Turing Scheme<sup>141</sup> but echo some of the criticisms it has faced in the UK, including too little support for upfront costs, an insecure future and a complex and bureaucratic application system.

The four apprenticeship systems in the UK have changed substantially since 2014. It is the view of NSoA that some of the issues UK apprentices had with Erasmus+ and Erasmus Pro, namely our apprenticeships were frequently too short to fit into the application deadlines of Erasmus+, would be less of an issue as apprenticeship durations increase.

Speaking to apprentices in the UK, it is a concern that the concept of European mobility is already slipping from young peoples lived experience. A recent survey<sup>142</sup> of our members saw re-joining Erasmus+ as a good thing, but it had fallen down the agenda behind issues related to the cost of living crisis.

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138 <https://nsoa.co.uk/>

139 <https://nsoa.co.uk/about/>

140 <https://www.nsoa.org.uk/>

141 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-evaluation-of-year-1>

142 <https://www.whatstudentsthink.org.uk/society-and-democracy-stats>



**NSoA remains of the view that Erasmus+ and Erasmus Pro are programmes the UK should re-join.**

We, alongside NUSUSI<sup>143</sup> and USI<sup>144</sup>, lobbied for learners in Northern Ireland<sup>145</sup> to remain part of Erasmus+ and welcomed the commitment from the Irish government to facilitate that. Last year however we were concerned to see the minister roll back on the “plus” of Erasmus+.

Finally we turn to the issue of worker mobility. The Bologna process and mutual recognition of university qualifications allows graduates to move from one country to another during their career. Graduates have built a Europe that works for them.

Apprentices have the same rights to mobility as workers but the lack of a mutual recognition of vocational qualifications means that they are unable to take up those rights. NSoA is proud to be part of the European Apprentice Network that welcomed the first tentative steps to addressing this pernicious inequality in the Osnabrück Declaration<sup>146</sup>.

A Europe in which a hairdresser, butcher or mechanic cannot move jobs across borders has fundamentally failed. A right that only some workers are able to take up is no right at all.

**Without mutual recognition of vocational qualifications, the right to workers mobility remains a right only for the few.**

### **6.15 Spotlight on EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS)**

EU, EEA and Swiss nationals and their non-EU family members (EEA+) living in the UK who wanted to stay in the UK beyond 31 December 2020 were required to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme. Applicants could apply for Settled Status (EUSS) after 5 years’ residence or Pre-Settled Status (EUPS) if resident for less than 5 years. The EU Settlement Scheme allows EU citizens to continue to live, work and study in the UK<sup>147 148</sup>. Although the EUSS has been a success for the around 6 million people who

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143 <https://www.nus-usi.org/>

144 <https://usi.ie/>

145 <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/29934-minister-harris-announces-mobility-funding-for-northern-ireland-higher-education-students/>

146 [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/osnabrueck\\_declaration\\_eu2020.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/osnabrueck_declaration_eu2020.pdf)

147 [https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/EU\\_Settlement\\_Scheme\\_council\\_guide.pdf](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/EU_Settlement_Scheme_council_guide.pdf)

148 <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/the-eu-settlement-scheme-ongoing-issues-from-the-frontline/>

have been granted status, there are cases in which individuals still struggle with applying and risk losing legal settlement status in the UK. In a UK in a Changing Europe article<sup>149</sup>, four issues are discussed.

First, that individuals must apply to upgrade from EUPS to EUSS. In the current situation, citizens who fail to apply for EUSS before the expiry of their EUPS automatically lose their rights to stay in the UK. For many, especially women separated from their partners, applying to the EUPS has been difficult due to not having correct paperwork of struggling to prove residency. Many are also unaware of follow-up applications and deadline resulting in an expired status.

Second, continuing issues regarding securing rights for joining family members due to, for example, having a EUPS status and not an EUSS status, or a child who turns 21 during the application procedure thereby requiring to prove dependency on their parent (the relevant sponsor).

Third, an emerging challenge for advisors assisting individuals applying to the EUSS through paper applications is the Resolution Centre's policy of withholding updates from third-party representatives without an application number. Consequently, clients must possess evidence of their application submission, such as a certificate of application, to share with their advisors. Only after obtaining this documentation can advisors like GYROS<sup>150</sup> make inquiries on behalf of the client to the Resolution Centre. This causes problems because many applicants do not possess the necessary linguistic or digital skills to track down application numbers and email addresses.

And fourth, in 2020, many EU nationals faced challenges applying for National Insurance Numbers (NINOs) due to capacity issues in HMRC during the lockdown. When the application process resumed, EU nationals were required to have EUSS or EUPS before applying for a NINO. However, by late 2022, the situation has reversed: EUSS applications are being rejected due to the absence of a NINO. GYROS reports that some clients are caught in a dilemma; they cannot apply for a NINO without EUSS/EUPS, and they cannot obtain EUSS/EUPS without a NINO.

## **7. Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) concluded between the EESC and UK partners**

Two MoUs were signed to formalise and consolidate the collaboration between the EESC and UK civil society associations, identifying areas of mutual interest on which the two sides can work in tandem. The first MoU, signed on 28 March 2023, established a partnership between the EESC and the Civil

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<sup>149</sup> <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/the-eu-settlement-scheme-ongoing-issues-from-the-frontline/>

<sup>150</sup> <https://www.gyros.org.uk/post/eu-settled-status-and-non-eu-nationals>

Society Alliance UK<sup>151</sup>. Later in the year, on 9 November 2023, the EESC signed a MoU with the Scottish Advisory Forum on Europe (SAFE)<sup>152</sup>.

## **8. EESC work and other sources**

### **8.1 EESC work**

#### **1) Information Report on the implementation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland<sup>153</sup>, 25 January 2023**

The EESC:

- highlights the enthusiasm of UK civil society organisations (CSOs) for engagement and cooperation with the EU, its institutions and European organised civil society by fostering civil society links through existing and any future formal structures that facilitate and deepen their cooperation.
- points out that the EU-UK relationship is heavily burdened by the impasse over implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, as part of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement (WA), and that a mutually agreed resolution of this issue could be key to opening the way towards a constructive, mutually beneficial and wider EU-UK relationship, optimising the potential that lies in the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).
- conveys the views of UK CSOs that the domestic advisory groups (DAGs) and the civil society forum (CSF) need to be fleshed out, developed and supported. In this context, UK CSOs point to the composition of the UK DAG, which appears to be imbalanced both in terms of proportionate representation of employers, workers and the third sector, and in terms of proportionate geographical representation from all parts of the UK.
- stresses the views of UK CSOs, particularly UK youth organisations, that the loss of free EU movement and people-to-people contacts arising from the UK's decision not to remain in EU programmes such as Erasmus+ is one of the most negative and undesirable consequences of Brexit. In this context, the EESC welcomes the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly's unanimous agreement to raise the issue of a future mobility scheme for young people between the UK and the EU with the Partnership Council.
- notes that progress has been made towards addressing concerns over the implementation of the provisions of the EU-UK WA protecting the rights of citizens. However, it regrets that so many

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151 [https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/mou\\_eesc\\_civil\\_society\\_alliance\\_uk\\_march\\_2023.pdf](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/mou_eesc_civil_society_alliance_uk_march_2023.pdf)

152 [https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/mou\\_eesc\\_safe\\_uk\\_november\\_2023.pdf](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/mou_eesc_safe_uk_november_2023.pdf)

153 <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/information-reports/implementation-eu-uk-withdrawal-agreement-including-protocol-ireland-and-northern-ireland>

problems persist. These are causing considerable distress and inconvenience and could have dire consequences in the future. Liberal democracies should not allow individual citizens and their families to become collateral damage of their political difference.

## **2) Own-Initiative Opinion on the EU Youth Test<sup>154</sup>, 21 September 2022**

The EESC:

- points at the need to improve youth participation, tackling in particular the lack of youth democratic representation and the lack of a youth perspective outside of the traditional youth policy domain.
- considers education as one of the most effective ways of reaching out to young people to inform them about the possible forms of participation and the values the European project represents.
- encourages EU institutions and Member States to implement measures and mechanisms that ensure that the youth perspective is taken into account in every policy field. Participation in civil and democratic life has to be strengthened at all levels to ensure Europe's future prosperity.
- believes that young people's participation in policy and decision-making processes can support better regulation and policies. Suitable resources should be made available for meaningful youth participation in policy-making.
- believes an EU Youth Test should be part of the Better Regulation Toolbox as a separate tool, since future generations and young people deserve specific attention.
- points out that the EU Youth Test should not substitute meaningful engagement with young people in general and should complement existing participatory mechanisms. Participatory mechanisms should be inclusive and communicated in such a way as to reach a diverse public and those who are hard to reach.
- agrees that CSOs can play a critical role in engaging young people in societal challenges, and therefore in their participation in policy-making and the democratic process.
- will seek to enhance the internal engagement of young people and youth organisations in its work and will further explore possible ways to apply the EU Youth Test concept to develop a consistent approach on youth involvement in the EESC.

### **3) Opinion on the Implementation and enforcement of the UK Withdrawal Agreement<sup>155</sup>, 15 June 2022**

The EESC:

- acknowledges that the proposed Regulation empowers the EU Commission to adopt and apply certain measures for the exercise of the Union's rights under the provisions of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement and of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.
- acknowledges that the Parties to the relevant Agreements are the United Kingdom and the Union only. It therefore agrees that it is entirely appropriate that initiation of any action would lie at Union level, with recourse to comitology procedures, as set out in the proposed Regulation.
- agrees that the Union needs an agile and effective procedure in the event of the United Kingdom's non-compliance with the Withdrawal Agreement and/or the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.
- agrees that the recourse to comitology procedures as a way to empower the Commission to adopt and apply certain measures in the event of breaches of or non-compliance with the relevant Agreements is fully justified, and is in accordance with the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity that necessarily determine EU action.
- welcomes the proposal for a review of the Regulation five years after its entry into force, and notes that this would be in line with similar provisions in the relevant Agreements.
- supports the proposed Regulation. Furthermore, it maintains that this is an excellent inter-institutional compromise to deal with any eventualities arising from a breach of or non-compliance with the Withdrawal Agreement and/or the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

### **4) Opinion on the Brexit Adjustment Reserve<sup>156</sup>, 24 February /2021**

The EESC:

- Considers that Brexit is a very complex and difficult exercise. The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement alleviates some of the economic and social damage of a "no-deal" scenario, but the future economic and financial losses are very difficult to quantify at such an early stage.
- Observes already the negative impacts on cross-border mobility and barriers to trade in goods and services. This could result in job losses and businesses going bankrupt, especially SMEs.

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<sup>155</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/implementation-and-enforcement-uk-withdrawal-agreement>

<sup>156</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/brexit-adjustment-reserve>

- Welcomes the creation of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve (the "Reserve") within the special instruments outside of the EU budget ceilings of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). It considers that cohesion and solidarity between Member States are fundamental EU values and appreciates the retroactive application of the Reserve going back to July 2020.
- Believes that workers' rights have to be protected immediately and the mutual recognition of qualifications must be further negotiated. Also recommends that all Member States should immediately start organising information campaigns to raise awareness among citizens regarding the new rules in place. Suggests that the fisheries sector should have a completely separately designed reserve that will support this sector only. Special attention should be paid to other sectors, such as tourism and agriculture, for example.
- Expects prolonged discussions between stakeholders on who gets the biggest slice of the Reserve and considers that additional funds should be immediately provided for.
- Calls on all Member States to act responsibly and direct the available funds towards the regions, companies, workers and citizens that need them the most.
- Believes that the eligibility period could be extended by two more years, just to make sure that the Member States have adequate time to make use of their share of the Reserve and absorb the shock waves from the UK's withdrawal.
- Considers that a small part of the Reserve should be earmarked for technical assistance purposes, for when a new management system is created. However, strongly believes that the largest part of the Reserve should be allocated to supporting employment and economic activities.
- Is asking for specially designed measures to support the SMEs which are particularly affected by the newly introduced customs procedures, regulatory burdens and rising transport costs.
- Recommends that the simplified costs option be used. Simplified rules and less bureaucracy in the implementation process will contribute to faster distribution of the financial resources.
- Calls for the creation of a monitoring committee in each Member State with the main purpose of eliminating possible risks that could appear in the implementation process, while ensuring the formal involvement of civil society in the process.
- Proposes that more clarity should be provided in terms of governance by clearly designating a management body for the Reserve.
- Calls for an intermediary performance framework to be created, based on specific performance-driven indicators to be established by the Member States and evaluated by the European Commission yearly.
- Finally, suggests that the European Commission report on its evaluation of the Reserve's effectiveness to the European Parliament and the Council within three months from the assumed deadline.

### Other related EESC opinions:

- 1) Opinion on the Recovery plan for Europe and the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027<sup>157</sup>, 15 July 2020
- 2) Opinion on the Modification of the Solidarity Fund – No Deal Brexit<sup>158</sup>, 13 September 2019
- 3) Opinion on PEACE IV – Continuation of the cooperation programmes<sup>159</sup>, 20 February 2019
- 4) Regulation on the European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund<sup>160</sup>

## 8.2 Committee of the Regions

- 1) Opinion on strengthening the EU-UK relationship at subnational level and remedying the territorial impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU<sup>161</sup>, 28/04/2022

### The European Committee of the Regions

- regrets that the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) lacks "territorial depth" and does not duly recognise the role of local and regional authorities (LRAs) in the EU-UK relationship;
- stresses that the CoR-UK Contact Group (CG), established in February 2020, is the only<sup>162</sup> institutional channel for providing a forum for continued dialogue and political partnership between the EU and UK LRAs and for exchanging know-how, in particular on territorial cooperation and cross-border issues, and calls for its formal recognition under the TCA in order to provide an assessment of the subnational dimension of the key policy and legislative issues that will have an impact on the UK-EU bilateral relationship;
- and encourages the European Parliament (EP) to adopt a formalised interaction between the CoR and the EP's Delegation to the UK (D-UK) to the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly (PPA) to provide territory-based evidence about the implementation of the TCA;
- welcomes the CoR study on *New trade and economic relations between EU-UK: the impact on regions and cities*<sup>163</sup> which concludes that Brexit effects are asymmetric across sectors and EU

<sup>157</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/recovery-plan-europe-and-multiannual-financial-framework-2021-2027>

<sup>158</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/modification-solidarity-fund-no-deal-brexite>

<sup>159</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/peace-iv-continuation-cooperation-programmes>

<sup>160</sup> <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/regulation-european-regional-development-fund-and-cohesion-fund>

<sup>161</sup> <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/OpinionTimeline.aspx?opId=CDR-108-2022>

<sup>162</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-relations-with-the-united-kingdom/post-brexite-agreements/eu-uk-negotiations-on-the-future-relationship/>

<sup>163</sup> [https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/New%20trade%20and%20economic%20relations%20between%20EU\\_UK%20the%20impact%20on%20regions%20and%20cities.pdf](https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/New%20trade%20and%20economic%20relations%20between%20EU_UK%20the%20impact%20on%20regions%20and%20cities.pdf)

regions, impact more heavily on smaller companies, may reduce human capital mobility and cooperation between EU and UK enterprises, and negatively affect regions and communities involved in interregional projects with the UK;

- insists that the provisions of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR) Regulation relating to the involvement of regions and local communities in the implementation of the BAR and the reporting at NUTS 2 level are fully respected;
- sees untapped prospects for cooperation between EU and UK LRAs in jointly engaging on common challenges, such as providing humanitarian assistance, the sustainable management of the North Sea, the Channel and the Irish Sea, as well as the global fight against climate change, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at local and regional level and the shift towards more sustainable and digital tourism.

### **8.3 Information on learning mobility for young people across the EU prepared by the European Parliamentary Research Service at the request of the EESC<sup>164</sup>**

#### **Definitions and background**

##### **European Commission<sup>165</sup>**

**Learning mobility** means moving physically to a country other than the country of residence, in order to undertake study, training or non-formal or informal learning. It has a broad scope covering all types of learning mobility and learners and staff in all sectors of lifelong learning, including school, higher education, vocational education and training, adult learning as well as the learning mobility of young people, youth workers and staff in the area of early childhood education and care, and in the area of sport. It also covers both intra-EU and international learning mobility to and from the EU.

##### **Council of Europe<sup>166</sup>**

**Learning mobility** in the youth field is mobility of young people (transnationally, regionally or online) undertaken freely and voluntarily for a specific period of time, consciously organised for educational purposes, to impact on the local community or to acquire new competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes or values). It encompasses a wide variety of project formats and activities, and can be implemented in informal or non-formal education settings.

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<sup>164</sup> Prepared by the EPRS and adapted by the EESC.

<sup>165</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2023:719:FIN>

<sup>166</sup> <https://pjp-cu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/european-platform-on-learning-mobility>



### **Learning mobility in the field of youth<sup>167</sup>**

The term **Learning mobility in the field of youth** refers to the mobility of young people across countries, inside and outside Europe, in formal and non-formal learning settings. Learning mobility takes place in the frame of exchange programmes with the aim of promoting and developing personal and professional competences, communication, interpersonal and intercultural skills, and active citizenship among others. The competences developed by youth taking part in mobility experiences contribute also to the recognition of youth work and non-formal learning, and to the increase of employment opportunities. At the EU level, learning mobility is also linked to the wider policy for the mobility of European citizens within the common market and the development of the skills needed to successfully live and work in this European environment.

This policy framework focuses mainly on the policies related to mobility opportunities in the context of non-formal learning.

### **Learning mobility and non-formal learning in European contexts. Policies, approaches and examples<sup>168</sup>**

**Mobility** is considered to be important for the personal development and employability of young people, as well as for intercultural dialogue, participation and active citizenship. Learning mobility in the youth field focuses on non-formal learning as a relevant part of youth work, with links to informal learning as well as to formal education. Different stakeholders at European level, particularly the Council of Europe and the European Commission, but also individual member states, foster programmes and strategies to enhance the mobility of young people, and particularly the learning dimension in mobility schemes.

This book on learning mobility is a joint Council of Europe and European Commission publication, and provides texts of an academic, scientific, political and practical nature for all stakeholders in the youth field - youth leaders and youth workers, policy makers, researchers and so on. It should contribute to dialogue and co-operation between relevant players and to discussion on the further development and purpose of youth mobility schemes and their outcomes for young people.

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<sup>167</sup> <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/learning-mobility>

<sup>168</sup> <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/learning-mobility-and-non-formal-learning>

## **Current framework**

On 15 November 2023, the Commission adopted the proposal for a Council Recommendation **Europe on the Move – learning mobility opportunities for everyone**<sup>169</sup>.

This **European Education Area**<sup>170</sup> emphasises three main messages of the proposal:

- Ambitious new EU-level targets to boost learning mobility: The proposal includes three new EU-level targets by 2030:
  - at least 25% of graduates in higher education should have a learning mobility experience, up from the present target of 20%
  - at least 15% of vocational learners in vocational education and training (VET) should benefit from a learning mobility abroad, up from the previous target of 8% for 2025
  - at least 20% of all learners benefiting from learning mobility abroad - in all education and training, and youth and sport systems – should be people with fewer opportunities
- Learning mobility as part of all education and training pathways: the proposal addresses a broad range of sectors (higher education; vocational education and training, including apprentice mobility; school education, including teacher mobility; adult education; youth exchanges).
- Overcoming obstacles: It proposes measures to overcome obstacles to mobility, such as outreach and awareness, enhanced language learning, recognition of learning outcomes, transition to labour market and work mobility.

It also addresses new learning patterns, including the proliferation of digital tools and more environmentally sustainable mobility and builds on the experiences gained from existing exchange programmes, most notably Erasmus+.

The proposal is complemented by a comprehensive **135-page Staff Working Document (SWD)**<sup>171</sup>, which provides **a wealth of relevant information and references**

The SWD is **based on more specific in-depth studies** contracted by the Commission, incl.:

- Study on learning mobility – Progress, obstacles and way forward – Final report<sup>172</sup>.

The study focussed on analysing evidence regarding learning mobility in formal, non-formal and informal settings throughout the European Union, within and outside the EU programmes, with **a focus on identification of incentives and obstacles to learning mobility**.

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<sup>169</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2023:719:FIN>

<sup>170</sup> <https://education.ec.europa.eu/fr/news/europe-on-the-move-a-proposal-on-the-future-of-learning-mobility>

<sup>171</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52023SC0719>,

<sup>172</sup> <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/504434>

- Enablers and disablers of cross-border long-term apprentice mobility – Evidence from country- and project-level investigations<sup>173</sup>

In addition, Cedefop **relevant policy briefs** include:

- National policies for quality in initial VET mobility – Little progress made – A new impulse needed<sup>174</sup>

The European Union policy on education and training attaches great importance to enabling learners to become familiar with international mobility. Acquiring such experience while in studies is seen as crucial to improving labour mobility later. This allows EU economies to address spatial imbalances in labour availability and transnational enterprise needs for mobile staff. A range of EU-level vocational education and training (VET) policy initiatives to support learner mobility has been undertaken since the 1960s. Major moves to ensure the quality of mobilities were made in 2006 (European Quality Charter for Mobility) and 2011 (Youth on the move recommendation).

- Recognising the learning outcomes acquired abroad by IVET learners – Some progress made, but still much to do<sup>175</sup>

This policy brief analyses country policies and practices in recognising learning outcomes acquired abroad by IVET learners on transnational learning mobility, whether within or outside Erasmus+. The analysis covers the EU Members States, Iceland, and Norway. It is based on data collected in 2021 from Cedefop's ReferNet network for the mobility scoreboard.

- European policies for information and guidance with reference to the international mobility of young IVET learners<sup>176</sup>

The 'Youth on the move' Recommendation of 28 June 2011 prompted Member States to boost the international mobility of IVET learners by upgrading their information and guidance systems. This brief takes stock of progress achieved to date. Information mechanisms on international mobility seem to be in place in all Member States, while related policies are typically coordinated countrywide. Still, there

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173 <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/94115>

174 <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/553085>

175 <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/790024>

176 <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/358348>

is room for progress, as clear policy targets and action evaluation differ across countries, with comprehensive guidance provision often being a weak point.

- Cross-border long-term apprentice mobility<sup>177</sup>

Based on a 2019-20 Cedefop study, this paper invites national policy-makers to reflect on the challenges that hinder CBLTMA today and proposes tips and policy suggestions to overcome them in the future. In the short term, a step-by-step approach in implementing incremental changes seems to be the most appropriate way to make CBLTMA work in a sustainable manner. All interested parties should bear in mind that, realistically, CBLTMA may become an opportunity for all apprentices only in the long run.

### **Facts, figures and examples**

Key Action 1<sup>178</sup> of Erasmus+ supports Learning Mobility of Individuals (pupils, students, trainees, apprentices, adult learners and young people, as well as staff, youth workers and professionals involved in education, training and youth).

The statistical annex to **Erasmus+ annual reports** provide data on budget, number of projects, participants, and organisations, as well as on the cross-cutting priorities of Erasmus+ (inclusion, environment, etc.). See for example:

- Erasmus+ annual report 2022 – Annex<sup>179</sup>
- Erasmus+ annual report 2021 – Statistical annex<sup>180</sup>

You can access these data in individual Country reports with interactive data<sup>181</sup> on exchanges, cooperation projects and more.

Details and outcomes of projects funded under the Erasmus+ programme are presented on the Erasmus+ project results platform<sup>182</sup>. The year 2022 marked the 35<sup>th</sup> year of existence of Erasmus+. Experiences and reflections shared by former Erasmus+ alumni are available on the Erasmus+ 35 years anniversary stories webpage<sup>183</sup>.

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<sup>177</sup> <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/27746>

<sup>178</sup> <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-1/key-action-1-learning-mobility-of-individuals>

<sup>179</sup> <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/090374>

<sup>180</sup> <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/63555>

<sup>181</sup> <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/resources-and-tools/statistics-and-factsheets>

<sup>182</sup> <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects>

<sup>183</sup> <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/about-erasmus/35-years-of-erasmus/stories>

The Cedefop **IVET** mobility scoreboard<sup>184</sup> is an online tool that monitors the policies for the international mobility of IVET learners in EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. It was presented in Cedefop's Briefing note<sup>185</sup> of March 2020.

The Mobility scoreboard database<sup>186</sup> provides detailed **country information** along 10 key action areas:

- information and guidance on opportunities;
- motivating learners for mobility;
- preparing learners for mobility;
- removing obstacles to mobility;
- portability of grants and loans;
- ensuring mobility quality;
- recognition of learning outcomes;
- support to disadvantaged learners;
- partnerships and funding;
- involving multipliers.

It offers **comprehensive country fiches and scorecards** (Scorecards are summaries of countries' overall average performance and performance across all indicators and criteria. There is one scorecard per country. Scorecards allow for identifying at a glance a country's strengths and weaknesses with respect to the key areas of learning mobility). Scorecards include Policy suggestions.

It also shows a list of Good practices<sup>187</sup> implemented in various countries. These examples are extracted from individual Cedefop country fiches.

Finally, Country reports<sup>188</sup> published in 2020 aimed at **identifying possible or actual enablers and disablers of long-term cross-country mobility of apprentices** at two levels: framework level (external factors to apprenticeships) and apprenticeship system/scheme design level. Where possible, the articles also aim at identifying what works and what does not in existing policies, initiatives and projects regarding international mobility of apprentices (at implementation level).

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184 <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/mobility-scoreboard>

185 <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/9145>

186 <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/mobility-scoreboard>

187 <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/mobility-scoreboard/good-practices>

188 <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/country-reports/international-mobility-apprentices>

**Data for UK available until 2019**

**UK and Erasmus+**

**After Brexit: Visiting, working and living in the EU**, House of Commons Library Research Briefing. 28.11.2023<sup>189</sup>

**Factsheet on UK participation in EU programmes for research, innovation and space, Horizon Europe and Copernicus**, regularly updated by the UK Research Office Brussels (UKRO) (last update: 22.09.2023)<sup>190</sup>

**Recommendation concerning Youth mobility schemes, student exchanges, school trips, and touring artists**, Fourth meeting of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly. London 4-5 December 2023 (adopted on 4 December 2023 in Westminster)<sup>191</sup>

**The Erasmus Programme**, Hubble, S., Bellis, A. and Bolton, P. (2021). UK House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number 8326<sup>192</sup>

**Universities after Brexit: an update on EU-UK relations**, European University Association (2021)<sup>193</sup>. The programmes under the EU's current Multiannual Financial Framework (2021-2027) that the UK has chosen for association are listed in a separate protocol. They are Horizon Europe and Copernicus.

**Further reading**

**Learning mobility: making it the norm in the EU**, Sofia Fernandes. Joint publication by Social Europe and IPS-Journal. 18.12.2023<sup>194</sup>

**State of youth learning mobility: The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine on learning mobility programmes in Europe**, Dragan Stanojević and Sintija Lase. Analytical paper. EU–Council of Europe youth partnership. November 2023<sup>195</sup>

**Students' mobility at a glance: efficiency and fairness when brain drain and brain gain are at stake**, Gérard, M. & Sanna, A. (2017). Journal of international Mobility, 5, 43-74<sup>196</sup>.

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189 <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9157/CBP-9157.pdf>

190 <https://www.ukro.ac.uk/resources/eu-uk-relationship/>

191 <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/42749/documents/212710/default/>

192 <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8326/CBP-8326.pdf>

193 [https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/brexit\\_briefing\\_july2021\\_update.pdf](https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/brexit_briefing_july2021_update.pdf)

194 <https://www.socialeurope.eu/learning-mobility-making-it-the-norm-in-the-eu>

195 <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262316/EPLM+State+of+youth+learning+mobility.pdf/a3409c9f-dbc-bfb1-4cce-f774719e4df4?t=1703059240691>

196 <https://doi.org/10.3917/jim.005.0043>

## 8.4 Organisations consulted

Name of civil society organisation	Based in part of UK	Consulted via survey	Consulted via meetings
British Youth Council	England		yes
Civil Society Alliance	England		yes
YEM (Young European Movement)	England	yes	
Stand for nature	England	yes	
European Movement	England	yes	
Labour Youth	England	yes	
Surrey Clubs for Young People	England	yes	
Together.eu	England	yes	
Jusos	England	yes	
Allumni Association	England	yes	
Service Civil international	England	yes	
Chislehurst and Sidcup Sea and Royal Marines Cadets	England	yes	
Erasmus Student Network (ESN UK)	England	yes	
National Youth Council of Ireland	Northern Ireland		yes
Northern Ireland Youth Forum	Northern Ireland		yes
Education Authority Youth Service	Northern Ireland	yes	yes
Lisburn Castlereagh Youth Council	Northern Ireland	yes	
Caw Youth Centre	Northern Ireland	yes	
Include Youth	Northern Ireland	yes	
YouthAction NI	Northern Ireland	yes	
Children's Law Centre	Northern Ireland		yes
English scouts	Northern Ireland	yes	
British Council Northern Ireland Office	Northern Ireland		
Young Enterprise NI	Northern Ireland		yes
Youth Work Alliance	Northern Ireland		yes
Greater Village Regeneration Trust	Northern Ireland		yes
Human Rights Consortium	Northern Ireland		yes
Napier Surf Society	Scotland	yes	yes
Young Scot	Scotland	yes	yes
Bainsford Bairs	Scotland	yes	
Young European Federalists (JEF Europe)	Scotland	yes	
External Affairs Directorate	Scotland		yes
Scottish Youth Parliament	Scotland		yes
Alliance Scotland	Scotland		yes
Scottish Advisory Forum on Europe	Scotland		yes
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	Wales		yes
Keep Wales Tidy	Wales		yes
British Mountaineering Council	Wales		yes
FUW Academi	Wales		yes
Taith	Wales		yes
Welsh Centre for International Affairs (WCIA)	Wales		yes
Welsh Sport Association	Wales		yes
Children in Wales	Wales		yes
Volunteering Wales Network	Wales		yes
Wales Arts International / Arts Council	Wales		yes

Disability Wales	Wales		yes
Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales / Youth Forum - Stand for Nature	Wales		yes
NFU Next Generation Group	Wales		yes
Federation of young farmers	Wales		yes
National Sheep Association young people group	Wales		yes
Discovery SVS	Wales	yes	
Wildlife Trust Youth Group	Wales	yes	
Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS)	Wales	yes	yes
Plaid Ifanc	Wales	yes	

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