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Wednesday 27 January 2021

Oliver Dowden CBE
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

Dear Oliver

I am writing to you on behalf of the national agency for youth work in Scotland, and the wider youth work sector to seek clarification on the details of the new Turing scheme and potential continuation of membership of Erasmus+ in Scotland.

I've attached correspondence previously from DCMS, which acknowledged YouthLink Scotland's role in supporting Digital Youth Work, alongside partners from Finland and elsewhere. The letter also acknowledges that DCMS were actively considering a range of options with regards to the future of international exchange and collaboration in youth policy.

It would not be an overstatement to say that we are incredibly disappointed by the UK Government's decision to withdraw from the Erasmus+ programme. We believe this will seriously undermine opportunities for young people who are not in higher education. We had hoped, given all the clear evidence around the life changing benefit for young people in more disadvantaged communities, that any replacement scheme would have included the current youth strand element of Erasmus+.

The benefits of the scheme had cross-party support in Scotland and this was evident when the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee at the Scottish Parliament held a meeting with young people and youth workers, facilitated by YouthLink Scotland. The debate that followed evidenced an understanding from all parties of the benefit: [Official Report - Parliamentary Business : Scottish Parliament](#)

As you will be aware, the Erasmus+ programme benefits young people much wider than merely those within higher education. In fact, it's often those young people who are furthest away from university, who benefit most. Erasmus+ covers higher education, adult education, vocational education and training, youth, schools and sport. 10% of the total Erasmus+ funding currently is ring-fenced for the Youth strand, and this would have doubled in the next phase, meaning that even more young people, who might otherwise not have had the opportunity, would have been able to participate in an international exchange.

The full Erasmus+ programme not only benefits young people, it also creates opportunities for youth workers to share knowledge and practice, which has proved invaluable during Covid-19. Our involvement in digitalyouthwork.eu over the last few years has led to the creation of digitalyouthwork.scot, which has put Scotland's youth work sector at the forefront of shaping services for young people. We have been able to respond quickly to the needs of youth workers and young people during the pandemic, ensuring vital youth work services have continued online, through support, knowledge and training.

We are at a loss understand why such a successful programme like Erasmus+, which does not require membership of the EU to participate, would not have been considered as worth retaining. From what little detail we have about the Turing scheme, it is very clear that as currently framed, it is no substitute for the development opportunities and international collaboration that Erasmus offers.

Given the lack of information around the Turing scheme, we would seek clarification on the following points, about the new scheme and the potential continued membership of Erasmus+ in Scotland:

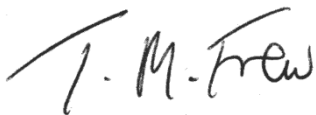
1. Can you confirm the UK Government's new Turing scheme only applies to students and does not include any budget for those currently able to participate through the Erasmus+ youth strand?
2. It would be helpful to understand the reasoning behind the exclusion of a wider youth strand in this new scheme.
3. What plans do you have to ensure that disadvantaged young people are able to participate in international exchanges?
4. How do you plan to replace the training and development opportunities currently available to youth workers and CLD practitioners?

5. It has been widely trailed that this new scheme will be one way only, so would not allow for the collaboration and exchange we had with other countries in the past – can you clarify this is indeed the case?
6. Can you clarify the new scheme has a budget of £105 million? If this is the case, this represents a significant spending cut in this area compared to the budget given to Erasmus+
7. Can you set out the timetable for the implementation of the new scheme?
8. Proportionally more young people from Scotland take part in Erasmus+, and more EU students come to Scotland as part of the programme than anywhere else in the UK. Can you confirm what the UK Government's position is on any potential membership of Scotland in the Erasmus+ programme?
9. We also seek clear assurances that the UK and Scottish Governments will work in partnership to ensure the opportunities now not available with the Turing scheme will be replaced?

On behalf of Scotland's youth work sector and the national agency for youth work, I would again emphasise our concern over the impact that these changes will have on Scotland's young people and the youth work sector, especially given the impact of Covid-19 on young people's wellbeing and learning opportunities.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T. M. Frew". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tim Frew

Chief Executive, YouthLink Scotland, the national agency for youth work