

WGIR03 Taith

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

[Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol](#) | [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee](#)

[Strategaeth Ryngwladol Llywodraeth Cymru](#) | [Welsh Government's International Strategy](#)

Ymateb gan: Taith | Evidence from: Taith

1. What is your relationship, if any, to the International Strategy?

Taith is Wales' international learning exchange programme. We create life changing opportunities for the people of Wales to learn, study and volunteer all over the world. We are a programme funded by the Welsh Government and delivered by ILEP Ltd, a subsidiary company of Cardiff University.

The programme was announced after the UK Government decided not to participate in the current iteration of the Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027). Taith was announced as a 4-year programme (2022-2026) with a budget of £65 million, and the first call for funding was opened in February 2022.

Although the launch of the Welsh Government's International Strategy predates the announcement of an international learning exchange programme for Wales, we have contributed directly to one of the core ambitions of the Strategy (Raising the profile of Wales internationally) by funding international mobility opportunities for young people, learners and staff across the formal, informal and non-formal education sectors, including Schools, Youth, Adult Education, Further Education, Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education. We also fund international strategic collaborations between Welsh and international partners, which develop project outputs addressing challenges and gaps in Welsh education policy and practice.

Education organisations, local and national governments from across the world have shown significant interest in Taith, and we have received very positive feedback, not only about the programme, but also on the Welsh Government's commitment to international exchange and a global outlook. Taith is widely recognised as an example of best practice in relation to inclusion and accessibility, and the EU are looking to learn from the programme as part of the development

of the next iteration of Erasmus+. This is hugely positive for Wales, and for the reputation and profile of the programme.

Taith has funded Welsh organisations across the sectors to collaborate with international partners on projects focused on creativity, technology and sustainability. Academics have been funded to undertake collaborative research, schools and youth groups have developed projects and exchanges which have introduced these topics to their learners and FE colleges have provided international work experience to enhance their students learning. As well as contributing to the current research and development of these areas of focus, Taith is supporting the development of the future workforce through inspiring and educating Welsh children and young people about these topics.

2. What are your views on the Welsh Government's International Strategy – what's worked well and any areas for improvement?

We would like to commend the Welsh Government for having produced the first international strategy in 2020 and for having created the role of Minister for International Relations for the first time since devolution. It's a powerful statement that was well received by international partners across the world. However, subsequently losing that ministerial portfolio may have damaged the ability to deliver some elements of the strategy – compounded by other factors like the effects of the global pandemic that broke out shortly after the strategy was launched. It would be a positive move if the Welsh Government reconsidered this decision so that a dedicated government minister can have responsibility and focus on developing this area of work. As an alternative, it is important to make sure that areas like Education and Sport have clear mechanisms and resources to engage internationally more effectively – in a similar fashion as Flanders, Quebec, the Basque Country and other sub-state governments use education, sport and the arts as a tool for international engagement .

The first International Strategy had a focus on projecting Wales to the world. We would like to encourage the Welsh Government to build on this idea and develop it further. One of the core principles of the Taith programme is reciprocity. In practice, this means that funding is allocated to international partners to come to Wales to engage with their peers. From what we have observed through Taith-funded projects, a true spirit of international cooperation and mutual benefit can be developed best when partners agree to learn from each other instead of only showcasing one's assets.

One key area that is absent from the current International Strategy is Education. We would encourage the Welsh Government to explore how other countries and regional governments use education as a tool for increasing international engagement. This idea goes beyond traditional student recruitment and mobility in the Higher Education sector and should encompass learning from international best practice to foster systemic improvement in Wales. This would also provide a platform to share Wales' success stories about Welsh education reform - from Curriculum for Wales to the establishment of Medr, and the concept of lifelong learning making Wales a nation of second chance.

An area for improvement is some of the language used in the first strategy: Welsh people are described as 'inquisitive' and 'loyal' and Wales as a 'small, smart and confident nation'. Such rhetoric deserves being reviewed. Similarly, it would be recommendable to review the Wales for Africa programme through the lens of the Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, to identify whether the ideas and the language need to be adjusted to the current context.

Ultimately, what could contribute to the success of a reviewed international strategy is a higher degree of coordination across several areas to maximise the impact of Wales' international engagement. These areas should include education, culture and the arts, sport, trade and tourism among others. Without coordination, there's a risk that the limited resources available will not deliver maximum impact.

3. What are your views on the Welsh Government's priority international relationships for 2022-25?

We understand that the priority international relationship countries/regions are selected taking into account a series of parameters that cut across several sectors which perhaps exclude education. Interestingly, some of the preferred destinations for Taith-funded outward mobility roughly mirror the current priority countries/regions.

Our data indicates that exchanges with EU countries remain popular. The latest participants report from September 2024 shows that the top-10 destinations for mobilities across all the sectors funded by Taith are the following:

- Spain
 - France
 - United States
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- Italy
- Germany
- Lesotho
- Canada
- Netherlands
- Finland
- Sweden

Taith Grant Recipients have been very positive about the fact that the programme has allowed many organisations to maintain links across the EU but also that Taith is open to the whole world.

However, the main consideration for selecting priority countries or regions should not be based on what could bring benefit to one sector, but rather the result of a holistic approach to identify how to maximise the impact of the limited available resources across all sectors.

4. What are your views on the availability of information on the Welsh Government's international activities and delivery of the strategy?

5. In your view, what information on the Welsh Government's international activities should be in the public domain?

It is vital that Welsh Government is able to demonstrate the impact of the investment in growing international relations. In order to counteract the idea that funding activities overseas is a waste of the limited resources Wales has, clear examples of how the investment is delivering benefit for Wales need to be shared publicly. These should focus not only on the impact on the economy, but also on other areas. A combination of cross-sector quantitative and qualitative data should demonstrate how international engagement provides clear, evidenced and sound return on investment.

6. What are your views on how the Welsh Government's international activity is resourced?

7. What priorities and priority relationships would you like to see included in the Welsh Government's approach to international relations beyond 2025?

8. Are there any other matters you would like to draw to the Committee's attention regarding the Welsh Government's international relations?

We believe that an international strategy for Wales is really important, and a review of the current strategy is timely. Moving forward, it would be good to see a more coherent and coordinated approach between different departments and teams across the Welsh Government and the sectors/organisations/stakeholders working closely with these departments. This would ensure a good dissemination and understanding of the strategy across the board, and a better chance of a successful and impactful delivery
