

International Relations

Monitoring Report

September 2025 – Issue 7



Introduction

In March 2022, the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee (the Committee) noted its intention to conduct regular monitoring of international activity undertaken by Welsh Ministers as part of its strategy and priorities for the Sixth Senedd.

This monitoring report is intended to provide Members of the Committee with an update on key policy developments related to the Committee's international relations remit. This includes relevant statements made by the Welsh and UK governments, as well as public bodies, delivery partners and stakeholders. Relevant publications from Senedd Research will also be included in the report.

The report covers the period April-September 2025

1. International relations

International relations annual report

The section below provides an overview of the latest Welsh Government international relations annual report which was published on 13 June.

- The Welsh Government published the international relations annual report 2024 to 2025. In the introduction to the report, First Minister Eluned Morgan MS, reiterated that her “focus is on what lies ahead. This year, I published the International Delivery Plan, setting out the 15 areas of activity where I will concentrate our efforts over the next year”.
- The report outlines some of the activity undertaken by its overseas offices network and also includes examples of international engagement undertaken by the Welsh Government. It covers information about the Wales and Africa programme and how the programme has changed its scope to a broader global responsibility agenda.

Taith

The section below contains information relevant to the Welsh Government’s international exchange programme, since an extension to 2028 was announced.

- Darren Millar MS tabled a series of questions on the Taith Programme on 10 and 11 June. These included questions on the benefits of the programme, communications, costs and targets. A list of key points from the Welsh Government responses is below:
 - Taith is promoted through a dedicated website, social media, workshops, stakeholder engagement and Welsh Government communication channels;
 - An interim evaluation conducted by Wavehill will soon be published (The evaluation was published in August). This evaluation reviews delivery and management processes, assesses progress towards meeting outputs and outcomes, and provides a value for money assessment;
 - The 2028 extension cost is covered by the programme's initial budget due to adjusted funding profiles that account for demand fluctuations in the grant scheme;
 - Combined target for overall number of outbound and inbound mobility exchanges: 15,500;

- Cumulative total for all underrepresented groups, for outward learners is 40%. The minimum percentage of participants from underrepresented subgroups for outward learners is:
 - i. *Disabled participants, including those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN): 10%*
 - ii. *Participants from Ethnic Minority Backgrounds: 10%*
 - iii. *Participants from disadvantaged backgrounds: 20%*
- Total number of multi-annual partnerships (at institutional level) ‘live’: 50; and
- Total number of countries having been involved in the programme (including Global Wales): 40

Global Wales

This section outlines developments in relation to Global Wales, a programme which provides international strategic support to the higher education sector.

- In the written statement announcing Taith’s extension, the Welsh Government referenced “the recent announcement of the continuation of funding for Global Wales”. This likely refers to an **additional £500,000** announced by Welsh Government in February 2025.
- A **written question** was tabled by Natasha Asghar MS in July, requesting a breakdown of annual funding awarded to Global Wales since 2015. The information in the table opposite was provided by the Welsh Government.
- Global Wales **announced funding** for 22 international partnership projects which were set to take place between April and June 2025. Over £75,000 was awarded in total and shared between nine universities, colleges and supporting projects with partners in the USA, Canada, India and Vietnam.
- Universities Wales published **the results of an independent evaluation** of the Study in Wales campaign, which is delivered by Global Wales. The findings indicate that between 2022-25 familiarity with Wales among prospective international students rose from 21% to 44%.

Year	Funding awarded
2015-2016	£15,000
2016-2017	£15,000
2017-2018	£15,000
2018-2019	£787,000
2019-2020	£1,382,000
2020-2021	£1,382,000
2021-2022	£1,600,000
2022-2023	£1,325,000
2023-2024	£2,582,000
2024-2025	£1,307,029
2025-2026	£500,000

Wales-Japan

This section outlines recent events in the Wales and Japan 2025 promotional year.

- In April, the Welsh Government held an investor showcase. The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS, attended as part of her visit to Japan. In a written statement, she outlined events and engagements attended as part of her visit.
- On 11 June, First Minister, Eluned Morgan MS, co-hosted the Wales and Japan Mid-Year Reception, alongside the Embassy of Japan to the UK

Wales and Africa

This section outlines developments in relation to the Wales and Africa Programme.

- The Wales and Africa Grant scheme 2025, which supports “civil society, business and public bodies in Wales to take action on poverty in Africa”, closed for applications on 11 July. Applicants could apply for funding for 12-month projects, with the earliest projects expected to start in September.
- Andrew RT Davies MS tabled written questions in May on money spent in Uganda and payments to the Ugandan Government. In response, the First Minister stated that “in the past five years, Welsh Government has awarded a total of £3,835,073.40 to 16 different Welsh groups with partners in Uganda”. She confirmed “in the past 10 years, the Welsh Government has made no payments to the Ugandan Government other than for visitors visas”.
- The Petitions Committee is currently considering a petition which calls on the Welsh Government to stop all foreign aid payments and provides examples of international development activity carried out by Size of Wales, a Welsh Government delivery partner.

Sports

This section outlines events relating to sports and sports diplomacy, which is one of the 15 aims under the International Delivery Plan.

- In April, Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership, Jack Sargeant MS, announced 16 organisations offered a grant from the UEFA Euro 2025 Partner Support Fund, which was launched in February.
- The Cabinet Secretary also visited Switzerland for UEFA Women’s Euro 2025 in July. In a written statement, he outlined a series of engagements undertaken during the visit.

He also previously issued an overview of the cultural programme which would run alongside the tournament.

Cardiff Airport

This section outlines developments around Welsh Government support to Cardiff Airport.

- In April, the Welsh Government issued a written statement on its investment package for Cardiff Airport. Stating consideration had been given to the CMA’s assessment, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS announced the first investment of £20m is to proceed.
- This statement was followed in July by a update on Bristol Airport’s legal challenge to the Welsh Ministers decision to provide a subsidy package of up to £205.2m over 10 years to Cardiff Airport. The Welsh Government confirmed it would be defending the legal challenge.

Other developments

- Following the resignation of Angela Rayner MP and subsequent UK Cabinet reshuffle, Yvette Cooper MP was appointed Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs.
- The Welsh Government made a £100,000 donation to the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) Myanmar Earthquake Appeal in April.
- In April, GlobalWelsh announced the launch of a new global hub in Australia. It says the hub will focus on facilitating business connections, supporting market entry and promoting cultural exchange.
- In a written statement in May, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Jane Hutt MS, reiterated calls for a lift on the aid blockade in Gaza and urged “all parties to re-engage in ceasefire negotiations to get the hostages out and to secure a permanent end to the conflict, leading to a two-state solution”. She, and the First Minister, also attended a meeting of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in July.
- The Welsh Government responded to a Freedom of Information request on funding provided to Academi Heddwch since 2021. The Welsh Government confirmed that it had provided £550,235 “to support its creation and ongoing work”.

2. Europe

Common Understanding

This section outlines developments around the agreement reached by the UK and EU on 19 May 2025, Common Understanding.

- On 19 May 2025, the UK and EU announced their latest agreement, Common Understanding, which provides for increased cooperation and the negotiation of additional UK-EU agreements in future. A summary is available from Senedd Research. The First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning have welcomed the agreement and its commitment to negotiate a youth mobility scheme.
- On 16 July, the European Commission published its recommendation to the Council of the European Union for negotiation mandates on two key elements of the Common Understanding agreement. These are the creation of a common sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) area between the EU and the UK and the linking of their respective emissions trading systems. Once the recommendation is adopted by the Council, the European Commission will be able to enter detailed negotiations with the UK.
- On 26 August, the UK Minister for the Constitution and EU Relations, Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, made a speech on the future relationship with the EU in which he said the UK Government's aim was to have an SPS agreement with the EU in place by 2027. The Minister said detailed negotiations will begin in the autumn.

The Multiannual Financial Framework (EU budget)

This section outlines developments in relation to the EU's budget for 2028-2034 including funding for EU programmes to which the UK may associate.

- On 16 July, the European Commission published its proposals for its next long-term budget, known as the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). It will cover the 2028-2034 period and sets out the proposals and budget for the next round of EU funding programmes. The proposals total €1.98tn in total. Some significant changes are proposed to current funding programmes.
- Key proposals for funding programmes of interest to Wales include:
 - Erasmus +: The EU's international exchange programme has a proposed budget of €40.8bn over the period. It will merge with the European Solidarity Corps programme. In addition to education mobility it will have an increased focus on areas such as grassroots sport exchanges.

- **AgoraEU**: This will be the EU's new culture, media, citizens, equality and rights fund. It will merge Creative Europe with the Citizens, Equalities, Rights and Values (CERV) programme. Creative Europe will remain a distinct strand. The new programme will also have a MEDIA+ funding stream. It's proposed budget is €8.582bn.
- **The European Competitiveness Fund and Horizon Europe**: This would be a new fund worth €409bn. Horizon Europe will remain a separate programme within the fund but close collaboration between the two programme and the wider fund will be expected. The European Commission says the proposals will ensure connected funding from initial research and innovation to scale-up and deployment. €131bn of the fund will support investment in defence, security and space in support of the development of a European Defence Union.
- **Regional and cohesion funds including INTERREG**: The European Commission is proposing that many of the existing funding programmes including the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), funding for fisheries, regional and cohesion funding should be brought into a single **National and Regional Partnership Plan** in each Member State. Although each plan will contain ring-fenced strands for things like CAP this would still be a significant change. INTERREG which funds inter-regional and territorial cooperation would become part of this plan with its own chapter. It provides for cross-border collaboration on a range of key areas including with third party countries. The **proposed budget for INTERREG** is €10 billion Euro. The PEACEPLUS programme which funds cross-border and community cooperation in Northern Ireland will remain a distinct strand.
- **Third country participation**: Key for the UK and Wales will be the extent to which third countries outside of the EU are able to associate to these funding programmes. The UK already associates to the current Horizon Europe programme and **has said it** may associate to Erasmus +. The proposals would allow for third party association in full or in part provided that it offers a fair balance of contributions and benefits. Some limitations are proposed on collaboration on sensitive areas such as the audiovisual sector which requires third party countries to align with EU rules for the sector.
- Member States in the Council and Members of the European Parliament will now consider and scrutinise the proposals and the text of the regulations proposed to implement the budget. Both institutions must agree before the final financial framework can be adopted.

Welsh Government engagement on EU issues

- In June, the Welsh Government issued a response to an Freedom of Information request on engagement between the Welsh Government and any of its arm's length cultural bodies where Brexit was discussed. The Welsh Government provided redacted documents relating to a workshop run by its Museums, Archives and Libraries division in 2019.
- In July, the Welsh Government issued a response to an Freedom of Information request on the devolved management of replacement EU funds, which asked for copies of correspondence between UK and Welsh Government on this issue. Whilst, the response stated some information was exempt from disclosure, it provided links to publicly available documents, including to the transcript of the Committee's evidence session with the First Minister in June. The correspondent submitted a complaint which was responded to in August. The Welsh Government concluded that "exemptions applied to the original request were correctly applied".

Wales-Ireland relations

This section provides updates relating to developments in the Wales-Ireland relationship, following the Committee's inquiry on Wales-Ireland relations.

- In July, the Welsh and Irish Governments published the Ireland-Wales shared statement 2030. The statement notes that work will advance under the following six areas:
 - Political and Official Engagement;
 - Climate, Energy, Environment and Sustainability;
 - Economy and Trade;
 - Education, Research and Innovation;
 - Culture, Language and Heritage; and
 - Communities, Diaspora and Sport.
- The statement was launched during the fifth Ireland-Wales Ministerial Forum, which also included an announcement on a funding scheme to support early career researchers. The scheme will launch in autumn 2025.
- In May, Ireland's Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, James Lawless TD, and Wales' Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS announced €584,378 for eight research projects.

- The Welsh Government issued a statement following a meeting of the British-Irish Council Environment Ministerial meeting in May, where they endorsed a report on the Environment Work Sector between 2020-2024.
- The Welsh Government highlighted the Celtic Exchange programme, which was developed by the British-Irish Council, and which took place in June. The programme supports Welsh, Cornish, Scottish Gaelic and Irish speaking young creatives to co-create multilingual content while “exploring their common cultural roots”.
- The Welsh Government has published the terms of reference and membership of the Taskforce on sea connectivity between Wales and Ireland.

3. Ministerial visits

This section outlines visits undertaken by Welsh Government ministers and incoming official visitors to Wales. The Committee is provided with monthly lists of these engagements from Welsh Government, in addition to its own monitoring.

Minister/Guest	Location	Purpose of Visit	Date
Japanese Ambassador	Wales	The Japanese Ambassador visited Wales to take part in the launch of the Wales and Japan year. The First Minister and the Ambassador launched the year with a reception and the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning held a business roundtable with the Economic Minister at the Japanese Embassy.	Jan 2025
Deputy Heads of Mission from the Nordic and Benelux embassies	Wales	The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning met with the Deputy Heads of Mission. The purpose of their visit was to gain a better understanding of the political landscape in Wales.	Feb 2025
First Minister	London	The First Minister travelled to London to meet with the London-based Heads of Mission from the 27 member states of the EU. Ahead of the meeting the First Minister held bilateral talks with the EU Ambassador to the United Kingdom.	Feb 2025
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services	India	The Cabinet Secretary travelled to India to close Wales in India 2024 at the Mumbai St David's Day reception, reaffirm an MOU on healthcare recruitment with the Government of Kerala and participate in high level discussions including on healthcare, trade and investment.	Feb 2025
Deputy First Minister	London	The Deputy First Minister co-hosted a St David's Day reception in London with Secretary of State for Wales. This was a network event, providing Welsh Government the opportunity to promote key messages. He also attended a reception at the Slovak Embassy to mark St David's Day.	Feb 2025
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning	London	The Cabinet Secretary joined a Wales Week reception hosted by the Swiss Ambassador to the UK. Following the reception the Cabinet Secretary attended the 'Investing in Future Wales' and met with the Lord Mayor of London.	Feb 2025

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning	London	The Cabinet Secretary travelled to the Japanese Embassy for a reception celebrating the Emperor of Japan's birthday. The event gave the opportunity to build on the recent launch of the Wales/Japan year.	Feb 2025
Irish Minister of State at the Department of Health	Wales	The Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government met with the Irish Minister of State at the Department of Health. The meeting was an informal discussion on housing issues. The evening before the First Minister joined the Irish Minister at the annual St Patrick's Day reception in Cardiff.	March 2025
First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services	Wales	The First Minister and Cabinet Secretary attended an event to provide a forum for discussion, collaboration and future action with other members of the Wellbeing Economy Government partnership. They attended alongside Health Ministers from Scotland, Iceland and Finland.	March 2025
First Minister	Brussels	The First Minister met with Wind Europe, Horizon Europe and Welsh Universities and the EU Ambassador to the UK. In the evening the First Minister hosted a reception to celebrate St David's Day.	March 2025
First Minister	Paris	The First Minister travelled to Paris for St David's Day. During the visit the First Minister addressed a conference marking International Women's Day, met with ENGIE, the UK Ambassador to UNESCO. In the afternoon, the First Minister attended an UNESCO networking reception, held an investor round table with the UK Ambassador, met with the CEO of EDF and held a bilateral with representatives from Brittany. In the evening the First Minister hosted a reception to celebrate St David's Day.	March 2025
Cabinet Secretary for Transport & North Wales	Ireland	The Cabinet Secretary held discussions on the resilience of sea connectivity between Wales and Ireland following the temporary closure of Holyhead Port.	March 2025

Minister for Culture and Social Partnership	US	The Minister travelled to San Francisco to support a trade mission to the Game Developers Conference.	March 2025
EU Ambassador to UK and other Heads of Mission	Wales	The First Minister met with the EU Ambassador to discuss the economic relationship between Wales and the EU and the strengthening of wider relations. The EU Ambassador was accompanied by the Ambassadors to the UK from Latvia, Belgium, Bulgaria and Luxembourg.	April 2025
Deputy First Minister	Latvia	The Deputy First Minister travelled to Riga to visit an exemplar Deposit Return Scheme operator in Latvia and for meetings with Latvian government officials.	April 2025
Counsel General and Minister for Delivery	Malta	The Counsel General visited Malta to speak at the Commonwealth Law Conference and learn from leading experts in the field.	April 2025
First Minister	Copenhagen	The First Minister travelled to Copenhagen to speak at the Wind Europe Conference and to meet with company CEOs to promote the Welsh renewables sector, green energy and green growth.	April 2025
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy & Planning	Japan	The Cabinet Secretary travelled to Japan for a 5-day programme of events. This visit formed part of the Year of Wales and Japan. The visit ended with a Wales Day at the Osaka Expo 2025, where the Cabinet Secretary hosted a reception at the UK Pavilion.	April 2025
Palestinian Head of Mission	Wales	The First Minister intended to meet with the Palestinian Head of Mission in Cardiff but, due to unforeseen circumstances, he was unable to travel so they held a telephone call instead. The call covered the conflict in Gaza and actions taken by the UK Government.	May 2025

Cabinet Secretary for Economy	London	The Cabinet Secretary travelled to London for the UK-EU Summit reception to discuss aspects of the EU-UK Deal. The reception was at 10 Downing Street and was attended by the Prime Minister, UK Cabinet Ministers, EU Commissioner Šefčovič and around 100 business representatives.	May 2025
Minister for Culture at the Government of Catalonia	Wales	The Minister for Sport and Culture met with the Minister for Culture at the Government of Catalonia at St Fagans. The meeting, which included representatives from Amgueddfa Cymru, explored potential areas of collaboration across the sector. The visit was an important step in deepening the relationship between Wales and Catalonia, ahead of the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between both Governments later this year.	June 2025
UNRWA	Wales	First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice met with a representative from UNRWA Office for Europe, to hear an update on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.	June 2025
Lieutenant Governor of Utah	Wales	The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning held a short bilateral with Lieutenant Governor Deidre Henderson and gave a welcome to the delegation of government officials during their visit. The main purpose of the visit was to discuss renewable energy, including the nuclear industry.	June 2025
First Minister	London	The First Minister met with the Swiss Ambassador to discuss Welsh participation in Euro 2025. The First Minister attended a business reception organised by the Japanese Embassy to celebrate the strong economic links between Wales and Japan. The First Minister met with business guests, held press interviews and held a short informal bilateral meeting with the Ambassador.	June 2025

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning	Paris	The Cabinet Secretary attended the Airshow to reinforce the Welsh Government’s commitment to growing the closely integrated aerospace and defence sectors. While in France, the Cabinet Secretary met with the UK Ambassador to France and key companies.	June 2025
Irish Tánaiste	Wales	The Tánaiste travelled to Swansea for the fifth annual Ireland-Wales Ministerial Forum. The Tánaiste was accompanied by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Minister for Defence.	July 2025
Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	Wales	The Dutch Ambassador came to Wales on a two day visit. On the second day he met with the First Minister to explore cooperation between Netherlands and Wales, particularly relating to key economic sectors.	July 2025
Ambassador of Uzbekistan	Wales	Cabinet Secretary for Education met with the Ambassador of Uzbekistan to discuss education in Wales. The meeting focussed on teaching and leadership models.	July 2025
First Minister	Switzerland	The First Minister visited Switzerland, travelling to Geneva and Lucerne. In Geneva the First Minister visited CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, for a tour and a series of discussions. The First Minister then travelled on to Lucerne for Wales’ opening game in the UEFA Women’s European Football Championship. This included a speaking engagement at an S4C showcase event.	July 2025
Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership	Switzerland	The Minister for CSSP travelled to St. Gallen, Switzerland, to support the Wales Women’s football team in its group match against England. In addition to attending the game, the Minister held meetings with Partner Support Fund Euro 2025 Resident Poet, and the Cymru Team Manager.	July 2025

