

## **Cross Party Group on Wales International**

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2016**

**Attendees:** Rhun ap Iorwerth AM (Chair)  
Joyce Watson AM  
David Rees AM  
Lee Waters AM  
Vikki Howells AM  
Simon Thomas AM  
Julie Morgan AM  
Hefin David AM  
Dr Dai Lloyd AM  
Nancy Carroll – Julie Morgan AM office  
Craig Lawton – Suzy Davies AM office  
Heledd Roberts – Rhun ap Iorwerth AM office  
David Hibler – British Council  
Jenny Scott – British Council  
Dr Christopher Lewis – British Council  
Alison Cummins – British Council  
Rebecca Gould – British Council  
Professor Iwan Davies – Swansea University  
Amanda Williams – Universities Wales  
Gwen Williams – Universities Wales  
Susan Bowen – Positif

### **1. Welcome from the Chair**

Rhun ap Iorwerth AM welcomed all members and set out the purpose of the group which is to promote the international political, commercial and economic links of Wales and influence policy.

### **2. Terms of Reference**

These were agreed.

## **Professor Iwan Davies, Pro Vice Chancellor International, Swansea University and Chair, Global Wales – Internationalising Welsh higher education**

Prof Davies made the following points:

- Prof Davies began by stating that globalisation is the biggest factor of our time. Universities have always been internationalised and are “windows on the world” in that they are collaborative, internationalised and multi-disciplinary.
- Wales must be open and receptive to students, at present students in Wales account for 4.6% of GVA, or £600 million.
- There is a need for a level playing field, as there is concern around work visas and the need to be outward looking.
- At present there are 25,000 international students in Wales and they are keen to recruit the best into Wales on a broad range of subject areas.
- By 2030 40% of all the world’s graduates will be Chinese and 8,000 degree courses will be in English in non-English speaking countries – this is something that needs considering.

- The world is young – this is a sign for tertiary higher education as it is the biggest growth industry in the world and an important part of how we position ourselves on the youth explosion.
- The world is getting smarter, due to technology advances.
- The world is getting fitter.
- Three phases of internationalism:
  - International collaboration phase
  - Internationally active phase – having branches overseas
  - And the third is the most important phase and something Wales can resonate with, internationally operative, where universities are plugged in on a services level with institutions outside Wales, he said Wales has not arrived at that phase yet and this is a challenge for the coming years.
- Wales has an opportunity to be cleverer than Scotland in sharing our experience of international opportunity by adding value to individual brands of universities and promoting the devolved system in Wales.
- David Rees AM argued that Wales needs to show that we have excellence and that we have an agenda on collaborative research as that will be the attraction overseas. Mr Davies said the issue is how research income is distributed and to ensure that research income is also presented in a way that deals with opportunities, building long-term is the best way forward.
- The Chair asked how far is Wales in giving a realistic ambition to the higher education sector. Prof Davies responded that the infrastructure of the higher education sector is important, as is the move from sectors to industry – a higher education industry is being created.

**David Hibler, British Council Erasmus+ HE Programme Lead – International mobility and Welsh Higher Education**

Mr Hibler made the following points:

- The majority of mobility is organised through Erasmus+. It gives students a chance to undertake academic study abroad and staff a period of time working in another country.
- The UK has a history of low participation in Erasmus, far behind France, Germany and Spain who send two or three times as many students. This is due to finance and language barriers.
- Between 2007 – 2013 there was a substantial growth in numbers, with 5% of Erasmus students from Wales, so Wales is doing well but it could do better.
- In 2014/15 1.5% of registered students in the UK took part in placements. The agreed Bologna-wide target is 20% by 2020, so there is some way to go.
- Those who undertake placements are far more likely to get a first at degree level. Their experience also gives them increased employability skills such as greater self-assurance, networking and working multi-culturally.
- It is hoped that post-Brexit the programme and participation continue to grow.
- David Rees AM noted the lack of language skills at an early age in schools and also the lack of English language courses. Mr Hibler said there should be much greater openness in the curriculum and learning another language would make a huge difference. English language courses are growing but there are still opportunities out there. Amanda Williams responded that there needs to be a full system tie-up and Brexit does give the opportunity to ask the question ‘what do we want?’
- Joyce Watson AM asked what prevents people from taking up placement opportunities and how is accessibility and equality measured. Mr Hibler said that there is regular analysis of disability, ethnicity, and social demographics, but there is a lot more work to be done in this

area. He called for young people in schools to be encouraged to speak a foreign language at an early age.

- The Chair questioned how important mobilisation is in higher education in developing soft contacts for the Welsh economy. Both parties agreed that it is critical.

## **7. Any Other Business**

N/A.

## **8. Close**

The Chair thanked those in attendance and closed the meeting.