

International Relations Annual Report 2024

March 2025



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Welsh Parliament

**Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport,
and International Relations Committee**

International Relations Annual Report 2024

March 2025



About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddCulture

Current Committee membership:



**Committee Chair:
Delyth Jewell MS**
Plaid Cymru



Mick Antoniw MS
Welsh Labour



Alun Davies MS
Welsh Labour



Gareth Davies MS
Welsh Conservatives



Heledd Fychan MS
Plaid Cymru



Lee Waters MS
Welsh Labour

The following Members were also members of the Committee during this inquiry:



Laura Anne Jones MS
Welsh Conservatives



Hefin David MS
Welsh Labour



Tom Giffard MS
Welsh Conservatives



Llyr Gruffydd MS
Plaid Cymru



Carolyn Thomas MS
Welsh Labour

Contents

Chair's Foreword	5
Conclusions and recommendations.....	6
1. Role and responsibilities	8
Welsh Government	9
2. Improving transparency	10
3. Budget.....	12
4. International Strategy	14
Refresh of the International Strategy	15
New International Strategy Delivery Plan	15
Overseas office network	17
Programme for Government	19
5. Priority relationships.....	21
Bilateral agreements	21
Wales-Ireland relations.....	23
Wales-EU relations	24
6. Overseas visits and visitors	26
Scottish Government approach.....	27
7. Legislation	28
Legislative Consent	28
Data (Use and Access) Bill	28
International treaties.....	28
UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.....	29
Amendments to the Agreement establishing the African Development Fund	29

8. Future work..... 31

Annex 1 List of oral evidence sessions. 32

Chair's Foreword

Our nation has a long history of contact with other peoples and other places.

Our geography, situated as we are at the edge of a continent, demands that we not only embrace these connections, but take them for granted at our peril. Author Jan Morris saw our long coastline as “an open door to the world” - a world of other cultures, artists, languages, and possibilities.

This report documents another year of our committee's work on international relations: a year in which we have painted the first picture of the effects of Brexit on our culture sector, and visited Brussels and Dublin to continue collaborating with our partners and nearest neighbours.

At home, we have made every effort to hold the Welsh Government to account when it comes to its international priorities. We have continued to issue recommendations on what is surely one of its most consequential duties - to present Wales to the world, and we do so again in this report.

As we enter the final stage of this Senedd, we urge the Welsh Government to seize this opportunity to shed light on its endeavours, to raise our profile internationally and to establish Wales as a globally responsible nation.

We must not be complacent - we are, after all, in the foothills and have mountains yet to climb. As we publish this report, we stand ready to begin our new inquiry on the future of the Welsh Government's international relations strategy.

Our focus, as always, will begin and end with Wales: as a committee, we will endeavour always to look at the positive contribution which Wales makes to our ever-changing world. For by looking at what we do elsewhere, there is so much we can learn about ourselves (as is observed in Joyce's *Ulysses*, “the longest way round is the shortest way home”). As a committee, we will remain steadfast in championing the goodwill, passion and enthusiasm underpinning so many of Wales's international connections - to ensure that those connections are neither lost, nor left to chance.



Delyth Jewell MS
Committee Chair

Conclusions and recommendations

- Conclusion 1.** We note the Welsh Government’s change in approach to the International Strategy’s refresh and that the commitments made to this Committee on its involvement have been rolled back. Page 17
- Conclusion 2.** We are dismayed that the new International Strategy Delivery Plan has failed to materialise. It is important, given that we are now three months into 2025, that it is provided quickly for this Committee, stakeholders and other interested parties..... Page 17
- Conclusion 3.** We welcome the First Minister’s offer to provide this Committee with a technical briefing on the Delivery Plan prior to its publication. Page 17
- Conclusion 4.** We welcome the priorities provided by the First Minister for the upcoming implementation review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement but continue to be disappointed that the Welsh Government does not produce a dedicated EU strategy outlining its overall priorities for EU relations, including for the UK-EU reset..... Page 25
- Conclusion 5.** We will continue to scrutinise the Welsh Government on the development and delivery of its EU priorities during this critical year in UK-EU relations..... Page 25
- Conclusion 6.** We note the different approach taken by the Scottish Government to publishing overseas visits costs which publishes details of all Ministerial travel overseas three months in arrears each quarter..... Page 27
- Recommendation 1.** We call on the Welsh Government to provide a progress update on the actions listed in the International Strategy and its actions plans, as per the commitment made by the First Minister during evidence to the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister in December 2024. Page 17
- Recommendation 2.** Beyond the International Strategy Delivery Plan, it is important that the Welsh Government develops mechanisms to monitor delivery of its priorities on an ongoing basis. We call on the Welsh Government to include in annual reports provided to this and future Committees, updates on progress to deliver priorities and specific actions listed in its strategies..... Page 19

Recommendation 3. We call on the Welsh Government to provide a list of methods it uses to report on outcomes, in light of the First Minister’s statement, that its annual reports are “just one of the methods” used..... Page 19

Recommendation 4. We call on the Welsh Government to explain the rationale for changing the name of its annual overseas network reports to ‘international relations annual report’ and what implications, if any, this has for what is included in the reports. Page 19

Recommendation 5. We call on the Welsh Government to list all international bilateral agreements on its dedicated webpage..... Page 23

Recommendation 6. We call on the Welsh Government to proactively notify this Committee when new international bilateral agreements are signed. Page 23

Recommendation 7. We call on the Welsh Government to provide an update in relation to the implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, including its priorities for Welsh traditions to be recognised and protected, and on intergovernmental discussions.Page 29

Recommendation 8. We call on the Welsh Government to confirm whether it has revisited the matter of St David’s Day becoming a Bank Holiday in Wales with the new UK Government, and its response. Page 30

1. Role and responsibilities

1. The Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee (“the Committee”) is responsible for scrutinising the Welsh Government’s approach to international relations, including the delivery of its International Strategy¹, and associated actions plans.²
2. The Committee is particularly keen to ensure that the global profile of Wales does not diminish because of our changing relationship with the EU. We also wish to keep abreast of how the Welsh Government’s international relations work overlaps and impacts other areas of the Committee’s remit.
3. In 2023, we agreed³ to start issuing annual reports on international relations to provide an overview of our work and draw out key themes in one place. Our second report summarises our activities.
4. The Committee routinely considers the following matters:
 - Budget;
 - International relations priorities of the Welsh Government;
 - Implementation of the International Strategy, including activities of the Welsh Government’s network of overseas offices;
 - Overseas visits and visitors; and
 - Relevant legislation, including legislation relating to international obligations.
5. The Committee has undertaken proactive inquiries, including on:
 - Wales-Ireland relations⁴ (completed);
 - Culture and the new relationship with the EU⁵ (completed);
 - Welsh Government’s International Strategy⁶ (ongoing); and

¹ Welsh Government: [International strategy for Wales](#) – 14 January 2020

² Welsh Government: [International action plans](#) – 14 December 2020

³ Committee meeting: [25 May 2023](#)

⁴ Committee inquiry: [Wales-Ireland relations](#)

⁵ Committee inquiry: [Culture and the new relationship with the EU](#)

⁶ Committee inquiry: [Welsh Government’s International Strategy](#)

- UK-EU implementation review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement⁷ (ongoing).

6. The Chair represents the Committee at relevant meetings held at the Senedd and in diplomatic meetings with visiting Ambassadors and dignitaries.

7. Committee members also represent the Senedd in a number of relevant parliamentary bodies, including the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly, the EU's Committee of the Regions-UK Contact Group, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly.

8. We are not the only Senedd committee that considers international affairs. We work alongside the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee and others to ensure that international matters are considered, and the Welsh Government's approach is scrutinised.

Welsh Government

9. Since our last report, there have been significant Ministerial changes. Responsibility for international matters falls across different Welsh Government portfolios.

10. International relations moved to the First Minister's portfolio in 2021 after a decision not to reappoint a minister for international relations to the Cabinet (a position held by the current First Minister between December 2018 - October 2020)⁸. The First Minister, Eluned Morgan MS, is responsible for:

- international relations including the overseas office network;
- Wales and Africa;
- Wales and Europe;
- national security, including counterterrorism and cyber security; and
- the Ministerial Code (which contains international obligations duties).

11. Other ministerial portfolios also cover international matters, including trade, refugee policy, human rights, social justice and constitutional affairs.

⁷ Committee inquiry: [UK-EU implementation review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#)

⁸ Welsh Government: [Ministerial Portfolio – Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS](#)

2. Improving transparency

12. The Welsh Government does not report on international relations in one place and there are limited requirements to provide information to the Senedd on the topic.

13. Since this Committee's establishment in June 2021, we have sought to ensure that information is regularly provided by the Welsh Government to the Senedd. This is to ensure that, between annual scrutiny sessions attended by the First Minister, there is no diminution of focus on international relations in the absence of a dedicated Minister.

14. The First Minister is also invited to attend the Committee for scrutiny of the departmental budget of £8.093 million.⁹

15. At our request, the Welsh Government agreed to provide the following information:

- Monthly lists of overseas Ministerial visits and diplomatic visits to Wales. Prior to receiving these lists, the Committee relied on a number of different sources to monitor visits which presented challenges in effectively scrutinising the Welsh Government's activities;
- Annual activity reports of the Welsh Government's overseas offices;
- Notifications of intergovernmental meetings under the Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement;¹⁰
- Specific information in response to Committee requests, including copies of correspondence, statistical requests and detailed information on specific aspects of our work; and
- At the Committee's request, the Welsh Government also launched a new webpage for international bilateral agreements¹¹, giving them parity with how equivalent domestic agreements¹² are presented on its website.

⁹ Welsh Government: [Final Budget 2024 to 2025](#) - 27 February 2024

¹⁰ Welsh Parliament: [Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement](#) - November 2021

¹¹ Welsh Government: [International bilateral agreements](#) - 13 June 2023

¹² Welsh Government: [Concordats, memorandums of understanding and other agreements](#) - 9 June 2023 <https://www.gov.wales/concordats-memorandums-of-understanding-and-other-agreements>

16. We continue to make recommendations to the Welsh Government on ways it could further improve information in the public domain to improve scrutiny, assist interested parties and showcase its activities.

3. Budget

17. The Committee carries out annual scrutiny¹³ of the Welsh Government's draft budget for international relations work.

18. Since our last annual report, we have completed scrutiny of two draft budgets, for 2024-25¹⁴ and 2025-26, respectively.

19. In respect of both budget cycles, we expressed our disappointment that the First Minister would not give oral evidence¹⁵ and instead provided written information.

20. In respect of the 2025-26 draft budget, we concluded that, in the absence of oral evidence, it is vital that the written evidence is clear, detailed, and of a high quality. It must provide sufficient information about intended outputs, outcomes, impact, and value for money.

21. We regretted that, once more, the information contained in the First Minister's evidence falls below the standard we expect, and that we called for in our 2024-25 draft budget report. We concluded:

*"the absence of necessary information, combined with the absence of an opportunity in oral evidence to explore and clarify matters, means that, once more, we are not in a position to scrutinise planned spend on international activity with confidence."*¹⁶

22. In our report on the 2025-26 draft budget, we noted that:

"one final opportunity remains in this Senedd for the Welsh Government to engage effectively in our scrutiny of the Draft Budget proposals for International Relations and ensure parity with other Ministerial portfolios. We expect a significant improvement next year

¹³ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: [Completed work and Published Reports](#)

¹⁴ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: [Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25](#)

¹⁵ Letter to the First Minister: [Providing oral evidence for Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2023-24](#) – 30 November 2022 [PDF 77KB]

¹⁶ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: [Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26](#)

and emphasise that this situation cannot persist into the Seventh Senedd.”¹⁷

23. On 20 February 2025, the Welsh Government published its final budget 2025-26 which confirmed that the final budget allocation for International Relations is £8.193m and for International Sustainable Development is £1.050m.¹⁸ This marks a £50,000 discrepancy in the breakdowns provided to us during draft budget scrutiny of the International Relations budget.

24. On 3 March 2025, we received the Welsh Government’s response to our report on the 2025-26 draft budget.

25. We will continue with the Committee’s financial scrutiny of international activity in our annual scrutiny sessions with the First Minister and through subject specific inquiries.

¹⁷ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: [Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26](#)

¹⁸ Welsh Government: [Final Budget 2025 to 2026](#)

4. International Strategy

26. The Welsh Government does not report specifically on its International Strategy (2020-25). However, the Committee monitors international relations activity for progress using a combination of Welsh Government overseas office reports, Ministerial statements, and evidence sessions, Senedd business and social media.

27. The International Strategy was published in January 2020, and its five action plans in November 2020. Whilst the International Strategy does not include specific dates for delivery of its actions, some action plans list 'short term' (2020-21) and 'medium term' (2022-25) activities without specifying in which year they will be carried out.

28. We carried out analysis that showed there are over 270 measurable actions listed in the International Strategy and its five accompanying action plans. In June 2024, we shared this analysis with the Welsh Government, which was welcomed by both the former First Minister, Vaughan Gething MS,¹⁹ and by the current First Minister, Eluned Morgan MS.²⁰

29. We have sought to ascertain how many of these actions have been delivered and how many remain to deliver before the Strategy's expiration this year. In December 2024, the First Minister told the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister that:

*"There are areas within the strategy that are green, which have been done, they've been delivered. There are bits where it may be red and will continue to be red, and then we need to give you an explanation for why it is red. But there are lots of amber bits in there that we need to say, 'Right, come on, we've got 18 months left; let's get cracking, let's make sure we deliver on what we said we were going to do.' So, that is very much the formula that I'm very keen to make sure that you have sight of, where it is we're delivering, and also where you need to hold us to account because we're not."*²¹

¹⁹ Letter from the former First Minister to the Committee: 1 August 2024

²⁰ Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister meeting: 13 December 2024

²¹ Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister meeting: 13 December 2024

30. We have not yet received this information, and we have not ascertained how many actions have been, or remain to be, delivered.

Refresh of the International Strategy

31. Since 2023, we have discussed the Welsh Government's international relations beyond 2025 with both former First Ministers, Mark Drakeford MS and Vaughan Gething MS. In May 2023, Mark Drakeford MS committed to refreshing the Strategy in 2025 to cover the time until the 2026 Senedd election²² and, in June 2024,²³ Vaughan Gething MS confirmed plans to review the refresh were underway. Both former First Ministers committed to involving the Culture Committee in this work.

32. In our last annual report, we encouraged the Welsh Government to include stakeholders in this work.

New International Strategy Delivery Plan

33. On 21 November 2024, the First Minister announced that:

"Early next year the Welsh Government will be publishing our International Delivery Plan, which will set out the international activities to support the delivery of my four priorities."²⁴

34. On 13 December 2024, the First Minister confirmed to the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister that she intends to publish an International Strategy Delivery Plan (ISDP) in "early 2025". The ISDP will:

- i. replace plans for the anticipated refresh of the International Strategy; and
- ii. will set out the International Strategy's remaining activities for delivery in the rest of the Sixth Senedd.

35. During the session, our Committee Chair, Delyth Jewell MS, asked the First Minister:

²² Committee meeting: 10 May 2023

²³ Committee meeting: 19 June 2024

²⁴ Welsh Government: press release – 21 November 2024

"When the plan had originally been for there to be a refresh of the international strategy early next year, both of your predecessors in this role and this Senedd had committed to providing a role for the CCWLSIR Committee in that refresh. [...] Could you clarify, please, what that means for the commitment that had been given to the culture and international relations committee in terms of the role that we would have in that?"

36. The First Minister responded that:

"Well, we won't be doing a refresh, and so the role will be different.

Where I'd see the role of the committee is in scrutinising the delivery itself. I know that you, as a committee, did an assessment of the international relations strategy, so that was really useful for us.

We do annual updates to keep you informed of where we're at and whether we're on track or not, but I think that is probably where the focus of your committee could actually helpfully be deployed, in making sure-

You know, I'm trying to breathe down the neck of officials here. It's important that you breathe down my neck to make sure that I keep up the pressure on the officials.

So, for me, it's all about, 'Let's stop writing strategies; let's make sure it's about delivery of the strategies.' It's actually much, much easier to write a strategy than to deliver one. And so, I'm trying to shift the focus across the whole of Government away from writing strategies all the time—'Just focus on delivery of what we've got now on the table, get that done. Once we've completed that, we'll look at the next thing.' That's where I'm at, in keeping, ideally, with the full priorities that I set out in September."

37. Following this exchange, we wrote to the First Minister requesting more information. The First Minister responded on 28 January 2025, confirming that:

"As we approach five years since publication of the International Strategy, I have asked my officials to prepare a Delivery Plan which

will set out our key priorities for the coming year. It will set out where we can have the maximum impact on the global stage. I plan to share this with the Committee in the coming weeks. In addition to sharing the document, I would be happy to request that officials provide the Committee with a technical briefing prior to the release of the Delivery Plan.”²⁵

38. We did not receive this information and wrote to the Welsh Government requesting an update on 4 March 2025.

Conclusion 1. We note the Welsh Government’s change in approach to the International Strategy’s refresh and that the commitments made to this Committee on its involvement have been rolled back.

39. We received a Welsh Government response to our draft budget 2025-26 report on 3 March 2025, in which the First Minister confirmed that the Delivery Plan will be launched “by the end of the current financial year”.

Conclusion 2. We are dismayed that the new International Strategy Delivery Plan has failed to materialise. It is important, given that we are now three months into 2025, that it is provided quickly for this Committee, stakeholders and other interested parties.

Conclusion 3. We welcome the First Minister’s offer to provide this Committee with a technical briefing on the Delivery Plan prior to its publication.

40. Our consideration of the Delivery Plan will form part of our inquiry into the Welsh Government’s International Strategy, which we plan to carry out during the Summer term 2025.

Recommendation 1. We call on the Welsh Government to provide a progress update on the actions listed in the International Strategy and its actions plans, as per the commitment made by the First Minister during evidence to the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister in December 2024.

Overseas office network

41. The Welsh Government’s:

²⁵ Letter from the First Minister: 28 January 2025

- annual reports on its overseas network²⁶; and
- overseas office remits document²⁷,

form key parts of the Committee's international relations scrutiny.

42. Each First Minister of the Sixth Senedd has signposted the Committee to the Welsh Government's overseas network reports to measure output, but these do not link to the International Strategy's actions. In her written information provided during draft budget scrutiny, the First Minister said:

*"Due to the nature of international relations, outputs and outcomes can be difficult to quantify and measure. The annual overseas network report is just one of the methods that we have used to report on our outcomes."*²⁸

43. We note the change in title of these reports, from 'overseas network annual reports' prior to 2023-24, to 'international relations annual report' for 2023-24. It is not clear whether this signifies a broader approach than was previously taken to the Welsh Government's international relations reporting for 2021-22 and 2022-23.

44. In September 2024, we visited the Welsh Government's Dublin office as part of a cross-committee delegation visit to enhance Wales-Ireland relations.²⁹ In November 2024, we also visited the Welsh Government's Brussels office where we launched our report, Culture shock: Culture and the new relationship with the EU.³⁰

45. Members of the Committee also regularly visit the Welsh Government's Brussels office in their capacity as Senedd representatives on post-Brexit UK-EU bodies, such as the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly³¹ and EU's Committee of the Regions - UK Contact Group.³² We are grateful to these offices for their engagement with us.

²⁶ Welsh Government: [International relations annual report 2023 to 2024](#) – 19 June 2024

²⁷ Welsh Government: [Welsh Government international office remits](#) – 27 September 2023

²⁸ Letter from the First Minister: [20 December 2024](#)

²⁹ Visit Report: [Cross-Committee visit to Ireland](#)

³⁰ Committee inquiry: [Culture and the new relationship with the EU](#)

³¹ Senedd Research: ["Developing Muscle": UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly sets out an imperative need for further cooperation](#) – 24 November 2022

³² Senedd Research: [Forging Future Relationships: Senedd to host first UK meeting of the EU Committee of the Regions - UK Contact Group](#) – 17 March 2022

Recommendation 2. Beyond the International Strategy Delivery Plan, it is important that the Welsh Government develops mechanisms to monitor delivery of its priorities on an ongoing basis. We call on the Welsh Government to include in annual reports provided to this and future Committees, updates on progress to deliver priorities and specific actions listed in its strategies.

Recommendation 3. We call on the Welsh Government to provide a list of methods it uses to report on outcomes, in light of the First Minister's statement, that its annual reports are "just one of the methods" used.

Recommendation 4. We call on the Welsh Government to explain the rationale for changing the name of its annual overseas network reports to 'international relations annual report' and what implications, if any, this has for what is included in the reports.

Programme for Government

46. The Welsh Government's Programme for Government³³ includes commitments to "give our country the strongest possible presence on the world stage". The Programme for Government, which was first published in 2016 and updated in 2021, does not mention the International Strategy.

47. Three additional commitments are set out to:

1. Establish a Peace Academy - Academi Heddwch - in Wales;
2. Put in place a £65 million international learning exchange programme; and
3. Reinvigorate our twinning relationships across the EU through a Young People's Twinning Fund.

48. Academi Heddwch was established in 2020 and continues to receive Welsh Government funding.³⁴

49. After Brexit, the Welsh Government developed its own international learning exchange programme, Taith (2022-26). Taith's budget was reduced by £1.6m (from £8.1 to £6.5m) for 2024-25 - a reduction of 19.8%. For the draft budget 2025-26, Taith's budget remains at £6.5m. In our 2025-26 draft budget report,³⁵ we asked

³³ Welsh Government: [Programme for government](#) – 4 July 2023

³⁴ Welsh Centre for International Affairs: [Timeline of the 'Wales Peace Institute Initiative'](#)

³⁵ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: [Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26](#)

the Welsh Government what consideration is being given to the future funding of Taith beyond 2026.

50. International matters, like biodiversity, refugee policy and incorporating treaties into Welsh law are threaded throughout the Programme for Government and will also play an important part in Wales's international relations.

51. In our last report, we committed to monitoring progress³⁶ against these Programme for Government commitments.

52. The First Minister addressed an additional programme for government commitment during 2025-26 draft budget scrutiny, to retain a Welsh Government office in Brussels. The First Minister confirmed that the nine-year lease for the Welsh Government's Brussels office was renewed in March 2023.³⁷

³⁶ Senedd Research: Wales at home and abroad – September 2023

³⁷ Letter from the First Minister: 20 December 2024

5. Priority relationships

53. The Welsh Government's International Strategy sets out its priority relationships:

"Country: Germany, France, Ireland, US and Canada Regions: Basque Country, Brittany and Flanders."

Bilateral agreements

54. The Welsh Government has a number of active international bilateral agreements in place with Quebec, Brittany, Basque Country, Ireland, Oita Prefecture and Flanders.

55. As a result of our work, these are listed on a dedicated Welsh Government webpage.³⁸ We will continue to monitor the conclusion of international bilateral agreements by the Welsh Government.

56. The webpage's original title when it was created in March 2023 was 'International bilateral agreements' but this was later changed in June 2024 to 'Cross-cutting bilateral agreements' as we exchanged correspondence with the former First Minister, Vaughan Gething MS, on agreements which appeared to be missing from it.³⁹ For example, the Welsh Government's healthcare recruitment agreement⁴⁰ with the Indian state of Kerala is not on the webpage.

57. The former First Minister explained that:

"The web page has been updated to reflect and clarify that the bilateral agreements on this page are those that are delivered across government, coordinated by my International Relations team, rather than single policy agreements."

58. The result of this revised approach is that there is not a specific place on the Welsh Government's website (or elsewhere) which sets out how many international bilateral agreements the Welsh Government has in place, and with whom.

³⁸ Welsh Government: [Cross-cutting bilateral agreements](#)

³⁹ Letter from former First Minister: [2 July 2024](#)

⁴⁰ Welsh Government: [Written statement, 2 March 2024](#)

- 59.** We are of the view that this change in approach marks a step backwards in improving transparency and see no reason why all international bilateral agreements cannot be listed.
- 60.** We note that this was the original approach taken by the Welsh Government in its International Strategy, where 12 Memoranda of Understanding international agreements are listed in **Annex 1**.⁴¹
- 61.** In the course of our work, we have noted the different approach taken by the Welsh Government's partners in announcing the conclusion of international agreements with Wales.
- 62.** For example, on 14 November 2023, the Government of Baden-Württemberg published a dedicated webpage announcing the partnership with a copy of the Shared Statement in both the English and German languages.⁴² The Welsh Government issued a press release on 15 November 2023, and the Shared Statement was added to the list of its bilateral international agreements webpage.⁴³
- 63.** In December 2023, we wrote to the former First Minister, Mark Drakeford MS, and former Minister for Economy, Vaughan Gething MS, to request more information on the Shared Statement.
- 64.** In the letter, our Chair, Delyth Jewell MS, stated that we were keen "to understand why so little detail has been published by the Welsh Government", noting the different approach taken by the Government of Baden-Württemberg. She said she had "hoped that a copy of this Shared Statement would have been shared proactively with this Committee".⁴⁴
- 65.** The former First Minister responded in January 2024, stating that:

*"Our agreement with the B-W government does not follow a detailed or formal action plan."*⁴⁵

- 66.** We note that the Welsh Government's international relations annual report 2023-24 lists a number of new memoranda of understanding that have been

⁴¹ Welsh Government: [International Strategy](#)

⁴² Government of Baden-Württemberg: [Wales und Baden-Württemberg bauen Zusammenarbeit aus](#)

⁴³ Welsh Government press release: [15 November 2023](#)

⁴⁴ Letter to former First Minister: [19 December 2023](#)

⁴⁵ Letter from former First Minister: [29 January 2024](#)

signed with Catalonia, Saxony, the Bavarian Government and others, including European Silicon Regions Alliance (ESRA), universities and private companies.⁴⁶ These have not been added to the Welsh Government's international agreements webpage.

Recommendation 5. We call on the Welsh Government to list all international bilateral agreements on its dedicated webpage.

Recommendation 6. We call on the Welsh Government to proactively notify this Committee when new international bilateral agreements are signed.

Wales-Ireland relations

67. The Welsh Government's International Strategy identifies Ireland as a priority country relationship. Both governments have signed a Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan⁴⁷ outlining how they will cooperate on shared policy areas.

68. This is the Welsh Government's most developed strategic international relationship with another country and its government, with structured engagement mechanisms, strategic objectives and specific actions.

69. We conducted an inquiry⁴⁸ into this relationship and published our report⁴⁹ on 5 October 2023.

70. We have continued to monitor Wales-Ireland relations, and our Chair has regular bilateral meetings with the Consul General of Ireland in Cardiff which are invaluable to our work. We extend our gratitude to the Consul General for this close cooperation.

71. In September 2024, our members joined a cross-committee delegation to Dublin. In our visit report,⁵⁰ we made the following commitments:

- To continue monitoring the Wales-Ireland Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan's renewal.

⁴⁶ Welsh Government: [International relations annual report 2023 to 2024](#) – 19 June

⁴⁷ Welsh Government: [Ireland-Wales shared statement and joint action plan 2021 to 2025](#) – 1 March 2021

⁴⁸ Committee inquiry: [Wales-Ireland relations](#)

⁴⁹ Committee report: [Wales-Ireland relations: Exploring an old relationship in a new age](#) – October 2023 [PDF 1.9MB]

⁵⁰ Visit Report: [Cross-Committee visit to Ireland](#)

- To consider follow up scrutiny to the Wales-Ireland relations inquiry, to include revisiting the Committee's recommendations and the Welsh Government's response.
- To formalise links with the Chair of the Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media, including to explore the development of an memorandum of understanding, or similar.
- To diarise termly meetings between the committee Chairs.

72. We look forward to seeing this work develop.

Wales-EU relations

73. In our last report, we pulled together our previous observations relating to UK-EU and Wales-EU relations.

74. We are currently undertaking work on the upcoming implementation review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement⁵¹ and the Welsh Government's International Strategy.⁵² It is clear from the evidence we have received that the EU relationship remains a priority for stakeholders.⁵³

75. We have previously called for the Welsh Government to include the EU as one of its priority relationships. In response, the former First Minister, Mark Drakeford MS, did not specifically address this recommendation.⁵⁴

76. We have previously called for the Welsh Government to produce a dedicated EU strategy. This has been rejected by the Welsh Government on two occasions – in response to our first annual report⁵⁵ and in response to our report on *Culture shock: Culture and the new relationship with the European Union*.⁵⁶

77. We have also previously called for the Welsh Government to be more explicit in setting out its priorities as they relate to UK-EU and Wales-EU, in the absence of a dedicated strategy.⁵⁷ Our efforts have most recently resulted in the First Minister

⁵¹ Committee inquiry: [UK-EU implementation review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#)

⁵² Committee inquiry: [Welsh Government's International Strategy](#)

⁵³ Committee consultation: [Welsh Government's International Strategy](#)

⁵⁴ Welsh Government response: [16 January 2024](#)

⁵⁵ Welsh Government response: [16 January 2024](#)

⁵⁶ Welsh Government response: [10 December 2024](#)

⁵⁷ CCWLSIR Committee: [International Relations Annual Report 2022-23](#)

setting out her EU priorities in January 2025. In a letter to this Committee, she outlined nine priorities for the upcoming TCA implementation review as follows⁵⁸:

1. The need for a veterinary and plant health (sanitary and phytosanitary - SPS) agreement;
2. Addressing issues relating to mobility of workers and provision of services;
3. The need for improved arrangements on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications;
4. Exploring options to re-join EU programmes such as Erasmus and Creative Europe;
5. Ensuring retention of EU Data Adequacy for Welsh businesses trading with the EU;
6. Seeking Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs), particularly on conformity assessments to reduce trade friction;
7. Addressing export issues around Live Bivalve Molluscs (LBMs);
8. Discussions around rules of origin to enable businesses to use increased supply chains and trade tariff free; and
9. Effective electricity trading arrangements.

Conclusion 4. We welcome the priorities provided by the First Minister for the upcoming implementation review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement but continue to be disappointed that the Welsh Government does not produce a dedicated EU strategy outlining its overall priorities for EU relations, including for the UK-EU reset.

Conclusion 5. We will continue to scrutinise the Welsh Government on the development and delivery of its EU priorities during this critical year in UK-EU relations.

⁵⁸ Letter from the First Minister: 28 January 2025

6. Overseas visits and visitors

78. The Committee receives monthly lists of overseas Ministerial visits and incoming diplomatic visits to Wales.

79. The Welsh Government's Ministerial Code⁵⁹ requires that:

"Annually, a list will be published of all travel overseas by ministers costing more than £500 per trip, together with the total cost of all ministers' visits overseas." [paragraph 9.8]

80. Paragraphs 9.2-9.10 of the Ministerial Code set rules for Ministerial visits overseas.

81. Paragraph 5.22 also requires list of gifts and hospitality received by Ministers on behalf of the Welsh Government valued at more than £320 to be reported annually.

82. The Welsh Government publish costs at the end of the financial year on its website. Costs for 2023-24 were published in August 2024, totalling £52,679.53.⁶⁰

83. We note that the Welsh Government also provides specific costs in response to questions from Members of the Senedd. For example, the Welsh Government confirmed that the total cost of flights for 2024 was £14,973.81 in response to a written question from Darren Millar MS.⁶¹

84. In January 2025, the Welsh Government answered a series of written questions on the staffing and running costs of its overseas offices. It provided breakdowns of locations and staffing details, confirming that 43 staff are employed across its 20 office locations. It also included the following table, breaking down costs per year:⁶²

Year	Cost
2019-20	£5.515m
2020-21	£4.475m

⁵⁹ Welsh Government: [Ministerial code](#) – 5 August 2021

⁶⁰ Welsh Government: [Ministerial Code information publication: 6th Senedd](#)

⁶¹ Welsh Government: [Response to written question WQ95407](#)

⁶² Senedd Cymru webpage: [Written Questions tabled on 20/12/2024 for answer on 02/01/2025](#)

Year	Cost
2021-22	£4.642m
2022-23	£5.530m
2023-24	£4.684m
2024-25	£4.684m

85. It also stated that

“individual costs per overseas office are no longer available due to a change in the way in which the Welsh Government is now charged by the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) for co-location within its offices overseas.”⁶³

Scottish Government approach

86. The Committee notes the different approach taken to publishing overseas visits costs by the Scottish Government.

87. In contrast to the Welsh Government, the Scottish Government routinely publishes information on overseas visits on its website alongside broader information on Ministerial engagements, car journeys, domestic travel and gifts. Travel data is broken down by Minister and published alongside the number of officials accompanying and costs.⁶⁴

88. Paragraph 11.17 of the Scottish Ministerial Code states that “the Scottish Government publishes quarterly details of all travel overseas by all Ministers three months in arrears”.⁶⁵ The most recent set of tables were published in February 2025 in relation to costs incurred in October 2024.⁶⁶

89. The Committee will continue to monitor overseas visits, including related costs.

Conclusion 6. We note the different approach taken by the Scottish Government to publishing overseas visits costs which publishes details of all Ministerial travel overseas three months in arrears each quarter.

⁶³ Senedd Cymru webpage: [Written Questions tabled on 20/12/2024 for answer on 02/01/2025](#)

⁶⁴ Scottish Government: [Ministerial engagements, travel and gifts](#)

⁶⁵ Scottish Government: [Ministerial Code 2024 Edition](#)

⁶⁶ Scottish Government: [Ministerial engagements, travel and gifts: October 2024](#)

7. Legislation

90. The Committee considers legislation relating to international relations, as follows.

Legislative Consent

91. When the UK Parliament wishes to legislate using a UK Bill on a subject matter which has already been devolved to the Senedd, convention requires it to receive the consent of the Senedd before it may pass the legislation in question.

92. This involves the Welsh Government laying a legislative consent memorandum (LCM) and tabling a legislative consent motion seeking the Senedd's agreement to what is included in the UK Bill within devolved areas.

93. We were tasked with scrutiny of the following LCMs⁶⁷:

Data (Use and Access) Bill

94. We have recently concluded scrutiny of the Welsh Government legislative consent memorandum for the Data (Use and Access) Bill.

95. Our report reiterates our concerns outlined previously in relation to the former UK Government's Data Protection and Digital Information Bill.⁶⁸

96. On UK-EU relations, we share the Welsh Government's concerns on the potential loss of the UK's EU adequacy decisions and the potential for the Trade and Cooperation Agreement to be undermined in future should the Bill lead to UK-EU divergence.

International treaties

97. We consider treaties drawn to our attention by the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee which has a dedicated process for treaty scrutiny.⁶⁹ That Committee notifies other Senedd committees of treaties agreed by the UK Government that fall within their remits.

⁶⁷ Welsh Parliament: [Legislative Consent – Sixth Senedd](#)

⁶⁸ Legislative Consent: [Data Protection and Digital Information Bill](#)

⁶⁹ Welsh Parliament: [International agreements](#)

UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

98. The former UK Government ratified UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in March 2024, under which a number of Welsh traditions could be recognised and protected. The Convention was effective as of 7 June 2024. The former UK Government also launched a public consultation⁷⁰ on the Convention's initial implementation, which closed on 29 February 2024. There has been no further update since the consultation closed.

99. In February 2024, we wrote to the UK⁷¹ and Welsh governments⁷² to learn more about the Convention, including practical arrangements and potential benefits to Wales. In March 2024, we received responses from both.

100. The UK Government warmly welcomed⁷³ our interest and stated it had been working closely with the devolved governments in preparation for ratification. It went on to say that one of the Convention's benefits was to start a conversation about the range of ICH which exists across the UK.

101. The Welsh Government also welcomed the decision to ratify the Convention, describing it as "an opportunity to raise awareness and the profile of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Wales".⁷⁴ On whether St David's Day should be a Bank Holiday in Wales, the Welsh Government responded that that the creation of bank holidays is not a devolved matter, that the UK Government formally rejected a request in October 2002 and has maintained this position since.⁷⁵

Amendments to the Agreement establishing the African Development Fund

102. On 19 February, we considered the Amendments to the Agreement establishing the African Development Fund. In light of our scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Wales and Africa action plan, we agreed to write to both the Welsh and UK governments requesting more information on their international activity relating to Africa.⁷⁶

Recommendation 7. We call on the Welsh Government to provide an update in relation to the implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding

⁷⁰ UK Government consultation: [2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) (no Welsh)

⁷¹ Letter from CCWLSIR Committee: [9 February 2024](#)

⁷² Letter from CCWLSIR Committee: [9 February 2024](#)

⁷³ Letter from the UK Minister for Arts and Heritage: [8 March 2024](#)

⁷⁴ Letter from the First Minister and Deputy Minister for Arts Sports and Tourism: [6 March 2024](#)

⁷⁵ Letter from the First Minister and Deputy Minister for Arts Sports and Tourism: [6 March 2024](#)

⁷⁶ Committee meeting: [19 February 2025](#)

of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, including its priorities for Welsh traditions to be recognised and protected, and on intergovernmental discussions.

Recommendation 8. We call on the Welsh Government to confirm whether it has revisited the matter of St David's Day becoming a Bank Holiday in Wales with the new UK Government, and its response.

8. Future work

103. In addition to our routine international relations scrutiny, we are currently undertaking the following work:

- Cross-committee work on the UK-EU implementation review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement;⁷⁷ and
- Welsh Government's International Strategy inquiry.⁷⁸

104. We have previously committed to monitoring Wales-Ireland relations, including the renewal of the Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan in 2025.

105. The First Minister has also confirmed that she will appear for annual international relations scrutiny in June 2025.

⁷⁷ Cross-committee inquiry: [UK-EU implementation review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#)

⁷⁸ Committee inquiry: [Welsh Government's International Strategy](#)

Annex 1 List of oral evidence sessions.

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed in the [Record of Proceedings](#). All evidence can be viewed on the [Committee’s website](#).

Date	Name and Organisation
19 June 2024	Vaughan Gething MS, First Minister for Wales Welsh Government Andrew Gwatkin, Director, International Relations and Trade Welsh Government