

The EU and Post-16 Education & Training in Wales: an Overview

EU Structural Funds in Wales 2014-2020

Over £740 million (€1 billion) of EU funds is expected to be invested through the 2014-2020 Structural Funds Programme to help provide jobs and training opportunities, and improve skills, especially among young people and the most marginalised and disadvantaged.

Of this £740m, over £320m will be invested in improving the skill levels of the workforce (i.e. Priority 2 of the ESF programmes 2014-2020), with additional funding made available for post-16 education/training projects through the youth employment priority (Priority 3 of the ESF programmes 2014-2020).

Projects worth just over £200m have been approved to date under Priorities 2 and 3.

Learner, apprentice and worker mobility in the EU

Colegau Cymru is the lead contact point for the coordination and/or delivery of a range of European qualifications programmes in Wales that help learners, workers, employers, colleges, universities and careers advisors understand how skills and qualifications are recognised across Europe.

Together, these initiatives:

- relate different countries' national qualifications systems to a common European reference framework, making national qualifications more readable across Europe
- show the skills and qualifications that are needed to get work in particular trades in Europe
- provide confidence in the quality assurance of vocational education and training programmes in Europe, building mutual trust, and
- enable the recognition of learners' achievements during periods of study and/or training overseas (which may be financially supported by **Erasmus+** funds).

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Erasmus+

Between 2011-15, Wales' further education sector was allocated over 4.25 million Euros of Erasmus+ funding with the key purpose of providing work placements for Wales' vocational learners and apprentices in European countries.

In 2016, Colegau Cymru was successful in its most ambitious consortium application, with the securing of over €500,000 of European funding for two ambitious projects. In addition to the collaborative bids submitted by Colegau Cymru, further education colleges may make college-specific bids. The total amount received by Wales' further education sector in 2016 from Erasmus+ is not yet available.

EU funds and initiatives 2018+

Following the EU Referendum, in which the UK voted to leave the EU (Brexit), it is now likely that David Cameron's successor as Prime Minister of the UK will trigger Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, and begin the process of withdrawing from the EU. Article 50 allows for a two-year window within which new agreements can be negotiated. Potentially, the UK will be out of the EU by autumn 2018.

There is as yet no clarity regarding how, whether or to what extent these EU funds and initiatives will be available to Wales post-withdrawal.

Of all the EU funding streams, EU Structural Funds provide the greatest share of funding to the post-16 education and skills sector. The remainder of this paper outlines the structural funds approved to date.

Latest EU Structural Funds Approved 2014-2020

On 25 May 2016 the Welsh Government announced that EU funds of £29 million have been allocated to match fund a package of £45 million to support young people at risk of dropping out of education or training, workplace learning for employees of companies and leadership training for business owners and managers across South Wales. | [WG](#)

The four new initiatives are:

- £19m Upskilling@Work scheme, backed with £10.8m from the European Social Fund (ESF), will provide work-based training programmes to develop the skills and careers of over 8,000 employees in companies across South East Wales, led by **Coleg y Cymoedd and Coleg Gwent**;
- £16.8m Skills for Industry II, backed by £11.8m ESF, will provide over 8,800 work-based learning opportunities to drive productivity in companies across South West Wales, led by **Gower College Swansea**;
- £9.2m Inspire2Achieve, backed with £4.2m ESF, to help 3,900 young people who are at risk of disengaging and falling out of education and training in Cardiff, Newport, Monmouthshire and the Vale of Glamorgan, led by Newport City Council.
- £4m Leading Business Growth (East Wales), backed with £2.4m ESF, to help over 300 business owners and managers gain new leadership and management skills, led by Cardiff Metropolitan University.

WEFO is also considering skills related projects outside of South Wales, including a proposed initiative by North Wales Business Academy led by Grŵp Llandrillo Menai.

EU Structural Funds Previously Approved 2014-2020

Examples of projects previously approved by WEFO in support of post-16 education & training and youth employment:

Project	Project lead	ESF award Priority 3
Jobs Growth Wales	Welsh Government	£25m
Traineeships	Welsh Government	£28m
Total		£53m

Project	Project lead	ESF award Priority 2
Agile Nation	Chwarae Teg	£8m
Apprenticeships	Welsh Government	£83.6m
Growing Workforces through Learning and Development (Gwlad)	University of Wales Trinity Saint David	£2.4m
Leading Business Growth	Swansea University	£2.7m
Materials and Manufacturing Academy	Swansea University	£8.6m
Materials and Manufacturing Education Training and Learning	Swansea University	£1.1m
Skills for Employers and Employees	Coleg Cambria	£10.4m
Welsh Financial Services Graduate programme	Welsh Contact Centre Forum Ltd	£1.4m
Working Skills for Adults	Torfaen Council	£2.7m
Total		£120.9m

Structural Funds 2007-2013

EU funds of £445 million, driving a total project investment of over £735 million, supported 57 projects across Wales to improve the skill levels of the people of Wales. Of these projects, the HE/FE sector led on 37 projects worth some £490 million (EU funds of some £270 million), mainly in research and innovation fields. Skills related projects in relation to your enquiry included:

Project	ESF investment
Apprenticeships	£108m
Modern Skills Diploma	£2.9m
Traineeships	£11.4m
Jobs Growth Wales	£32.8m
Skills Growth Wales	£32.2m
Essential Skills in the Workplace	£13.2m

Post-2020 Cohesion Policy

Prior to the EU Referendum on 23 June, the expectation was that negotiations over budgets and qualification criteria for post 2020 would begin with Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) proposals published towards the end of 2017, to be followed by the tabling of formal legislative proposals in 2018.