

European Affairs Committee

Corrected oral evidence: The future UK-EU relationship

Tuesday 6 December 2022

4 pm

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Members present: The Earl of Kinnoull (The Chair); Lord Faulkner of Worcester; Lord Hannay of Chiswick; Lord Jay of Ewelme; Lord Lamont of Lerwick; Lord Liddle; Lord Purvis of Tweed; Baroness Scott of Needham Market; Viscount Trenchard; Lord Tugendhat; Lord Wood of Anfield.

Evidence Session No. 8A

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Questions 117 - 125

Witnesses

I: Joss Croft, Chief Executive Officer, UKinbound; Rhammel Afflick, Head of Advocacy and Communications, British Youth Council; Stephen Lowy, Chair of British Educational Travel Association.

Examination of witnesses

Joss Croft, Rhammel Afflick and Stephen Lowy.

Q117 **The Chair:** Welcome everybody to this hybrid House of Lords European Affairs Committee. We continue our inquiry into the future of the UK-EU relationship; this afternoon we turn to the movement of people.

We have an excellent panel in the shape of Joss Croft, CEO of UKinbound, and Stephen Lowy, chair of the British Educational Travel Association. They are here with us in the room. Arriving online shortly will be Rhammel Afflick of the British Youth Council. When you first speak, I would be grateful if you said a few sentences about who you are. We know exactly who you are because we invited you here but those watching may not.

This is a public session and is being broadcast. We will take a transcript, which we will send you. We would be grateful if you could notify us of any corrections to the transcript because that will be the basis on which we may include you in the report that we expect to write early next year. We have only an hour and quite a lot of ground to cover, so I would be grateful if questions and answers were kept pretty crisp.

I will start at a high level, knowing that we will come back to a lot of the detail later. How would you assess the overall impact of Brexit on mobility between the UK and the EU? Have you seen any particular patterns emerge that are worthy of note since the trade and co-operation agreement came into force? To what extent do you think that changes in mobility rules have a particular impact on youth? I have carefully not defined “youth”; as I get older it gets older, too.

Joss Croft: I am the chief executive of UKinbound, a trade association with about 330 members, ranging from attractions and sightseeing tour companies to hoteliers. At the centre of my organisation are about 100 of the UK’s top tour operators: ground handlers who manage tourists when they arrive here—what they do, where they go, where they stay and so on. Youth and student travel forms part my members’ work. We look at wider leisure groups of all types and business visits too.

Today, I will focus my remarks on youth and student travel from the European Union. Historically, about 1.2 million European students under the age of 18 came here each year, contributing about £1 billion to the UK economy. Youth and student travel sustains about 17,000 jobs across the whole United Kingdom, definitely not just within London. For those undertaking educational travel tours to the UK, 79% of the accredited schools are situated outside London.

Since the introduction of the regulation that requires all entrants to the UK to have a passport, rather than travelling on their ID cards, we have seen a significant decline in numbers. I will touch on the impact, but the cause of that decline is that people now need a passport. A large proportion of EU students simply does not have one. They can travel throughout the Schengen area of 26 countries on an ID card; travel to

the UK requires the additional onus of getting a passport. That is a hassle but also has a cost. A lot of European nationals holiday within the European Union and, indeed, within their own countries. To travel to the UK they must get a passport. That involves cost and the organisation of getting it. In Italy, for example, it costs €116 to get a passport. In France, if you are aged 18 it costs €86, and if you are aged 15 to 17 it is €42. Of course, potentially, you may be spending that €86, if you are 18, for only a single trip to the UK. My wife is a teacher and I know how much effort goes into organising school trips. The hassle factor should not be underestimated.

Another reason this has caused problems is simply because it is easier to travel to other European destinations than to the United Kingdom. We did some research in March, working with BETA and other organisations. We then redid that in October, looking back at the year to identify the impact, what the competition was up to and how much of our lunch they are stealing, if I can put it that way. It is easier to visit a competitor destination.

The final reason we have seen such decline following the implementation of the regulation is that third-country nationals based in foreign European Union countries, such as Turkish children at school in Germany, now need to apply for a visa to travel to the United Kingdom. There is a regulation in Germany that if more than 10% of students in the class cannot travel to a destination, the whole group cannot travel there.

Those are the main reasons why we do not see people travelling. We undertook a survey of our 82 European-based operators that send children to different parts of Europe to learn English or to undertake educational, cultural or sports-related trips. In 2019, those operators sent some 306,000 students to the UK, which is about 20% of their market. This year, they sent 37,069 students to the UK. That represents a reduction of 83% from 2019 figures. For the rest of the visitor economy—as I said, I represent bodies that bring leisure and business tourists as well as student tourists into the UK—the recovery rate is at about 75%. Here, we have seen an 83% decline.

The Chair: Thank you. If you have figures, it would be helpful if you sent them to us.

Stephen Lowy: I am the chair of BETA, the British Educational Travel Association. We represent over 100 organisations that focus on inbound and outbound youth, student and educational travel. Our members include football clubs that have summer soccer camps, language schools, hostels, student accommodation, universities and so forth. It is quite a broad mix.

To follow on from what Joss said, there have been multiple impacts since Brexit was ratified a couple of years ago. There was an initial impact in terms of sentiment. VisitBritain did some studies immediately after the Brexit vote that suggested that younger people from mainly northern European countries were less engaged to choose a social trip to the UK

because they felt less welcome. That has been visible particularly among school groups. You will probably see a lot fewer fluorescent backpacks outside the Houses of Parliament and the House of Lords in particular this summer. If it is helpful, I will quickly go through the figures now.

The Chair: It might help to send the figures because we are a little short of time. We will come back in detail to some of these questions later.

Stephen Lowy: I have one other point. Youth mobility is often a reciprocal movement. The latest trade deal between the UK and Australia proves that. Fewer young Europeans are able to work here, but a lot of opportunities have stopped for young British students and young people to study and use their language skills abroad—be it teaching English in Italy or a ski season in France. The lack of visa opportunities we offer to young Europeans is translating into fewer young British students going to Europe.

The Chair: Thank you. We are now able to welcome Rhammel Afflick, head of advocacy and communications at the British Youth Council. Rhammel, I just asked your two colleagues how they would assess—at a high level, because we will come on to the detail later—the overall impact of Brexit on mobility between the UK and the EU. What patterns of mobility have changed since the trade and co-operation agreement came into force? To what extent do you think that mobility rules have a particular impact on young people?

Rhammel Afflick: Thank you for bringing me in. The British Youth Council has a key role in ensuring that young people across the UK have a voice on a whole host of issues. As you can imagine, Brexit was not an issue that young people held back on—they had plenty of thoughts on it. An overarching theme for us is that the worry and uncertainty we saw in the research from 2017 have carried through. Young people are worried and concerned about some of the issues that have been alluded to, such as people feeling unwelcome.

One key issue that we have spoken out about since Brexit is the lack of focus on some of the informal training opportunities afforded as part of the £1 billion Erasmus+ fund. The focus tends to be on what the Turing scheme offers—perhaps not to the same extent, as has been alluded to—but we are really concerned about the huge shortfall in funding to support the wider issue of co-operation across Europe. That has not been replaced in any shape or form. I hope that I can give an insight into that and, more importantly, share insights directly from young people on how they feel about mobility and these other things, and how they are linked. When the Government brought in the Turing scheme, we made the point that, although it is of course great to think about Erasmus+ in the context of exchanges, there was a lot more to it. I would like to bring that in, but I know you want us to go into the detail later.

The Chair: Absolutely. We will come back to that specifically later.

Q118 **Lord Faulkner of Worcester:** I should start by declaring an interest:

my daughter is a schoolteacher in central France and until 2019 would bring a party of between 25 and 30 of her pupils to London for an educational visit. She provided written evidence to this committee in which she says that she has not been able to bring a party since 2019, although I think she may make an effort to do so next year. There are a number of reasons for this, to which you already referred, but can you distinguish between the impact of Brexit and its restrictions on school travel and Covid-related travel restrictions?

Joss Croft: In our survey, we asked the 82 operators, which historically sent about 300,000 students each year, why they saw such a decline. At the top of their reasoning was the requirement for all students to have a passport: they ranked that eight out of 10 in importance, and it was the number one reason. The second reason was the increased cost of travel to the UK, which is to do not necessarily with Covid but with the cost of living crisis, potentially. Covid was rated as the third most important reason, but only at 5.5%. That is taking the rank in importance that those operators placed on different criteria, but there is another way to look at this.

How the competition is doing probably gives us a slightly better indication. Ireland has seen a decline in tourists this year of about 29% compared with 2019, which could be related to Covid. As I said, the decline in travel to the UK was 83%. We also asked how other European Union markets expect to do next year. We expect to see a decline of 58% for the United Kingdom. As your daughter demonstrates, people make an effort to come to the UK but there are still barriers. Meanwhile, Ireland will be at 95% of 2019 figures and the rest of the European Union will be at about 90%. Obviously, Brexit has not impacted the competition in the same way that it impacted the United Kingdom.

Stephen Lowy: We do regular business barometers with our membership. Covid was an obvious restriction because people physically could not come here, particularly in groups, but as things have unlocked—it is only nine months since travel restrictions were fully lifted here—the pickup has not been as great as we hoped, particularly from European school-group business. As Joss eloquently said, a lot of that is down to restrictions and the duty of care schools have to their students. Any sort of restriction will make it more challenging to go to a destination, but people such as your daughter still want to deliver that unique experience for learning English. Malta and Ireland in particular seem to have done very well out of the restrictions that we have put in place here; students can travel there freely.

There have also been issues for British school kids going into Europe because of Brexit. There were some very well-documented incidents this summer when Border Force was not sure of the documentation regarding the collective passport for young British kids going through Dover, where there were already problems. The duty of care for students meant that a lot of British school groups decided against the hours and hours of queueing. In particular, October half-term used to be quite a big time for them to go abroad.

Returning to the bigger point, that is a huge loss of soft power, inbound and outbound, for young people. As the son of Irish and eastern European migrant families, it upsets me that a lot of young European kids will miss out on experiencing the joy of travel at that age here, in the formative part of life when you get those experiences and fall in love with a country. We talk about creating global Britain but British kids will not have that in Europe. That is very sad for the UK, both inbound and outbound.

Rhammel Afflick: From the work that we have done, we know that almost 5,000 UK-based projects were funded as part of Erasmus+, almost none of which will be funded by the Turing scheme. Many of those organisations may have found some of that funding elsewhere, as we have, but most of it will have been lost. As a result, the difference in opportunities is significant, and we know that has a real impact on young people's mobility. The core of the work we were doing was slightly different in that it was about developing young people's skills, gaining vital international experience and, more importantly, boosting their employability. That is a slightly different slant from that of my two colleagues on the panel, but ultimately we see it as a vital package as part of the Erasmus+ programme. We had to stop some of that work entirely, which of course means that the amount we have done across Europe has changed and is now minimal. That is probably the best way to describe it.

Lord Faulkner of Worcester: Thank you. Joss, you answered my final question on the trend in terms of recovery since Covid. Is there any other information you want to give the committee on that?

Joss Croft: Overall, this is very difficult because inbound visits are measured by the Government through the International Passenger Survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics, and that was last run fully in 2019. It has run this year but it works retrospectively, so we only recently had figures for August and have not yet had figures for anything past August. VisitBritain's own estimates suggest that there will be a recovery of about 75% of overall spend and about 65% of overall visitation. You could see that as a 35% dip down from 2019, compared with English language students or the youth and student group travel where we see the 83% decrease. We wait to see full-year figures for 2022, which we will probably get in March next year, at which point those will be the official statistics. In the meantime, these are the reported statistics from businesses in that sector.

Q119 **Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** What action should the Government take to make school trips of all kinds recover? I do not use the word "viable" because, at current levels, it does not seem that viability is even within sight. To what extent would such changes require negotiation either with the EU or bilaterally with individual member states? Secondly, could you comment on what I am told is the Government's slightly incredible argument that removing the ability of school groups to travel on a collective document was necessary to strengthen our own border

security?

Stephen Lowy: On your first question, there is a system in place: the youth group travel collective passport. That is an available mechanism that just needs to be tweaked and reintegrated to make sure that it is known at the border. What is delivered in Westminster needs to flow through. That has sometimes been a problem, with visa changes not going straight through to the border, causing a very awkward situation for school groups.

On your second question, it would be interesting to see the statistics from UKVI or Border Force on the number of schoolchildren who absconded on school trips in the past. We know that the visa regime for international students at university level is one of the safest we have: more than 98% of students leave on time. They often bring a lifetime of value to the UK, and obviously a lot of short-term value. We would like the group travel passport to be streamlined. If that must be reciprocal, we should reciprocate with individual member states to allow easy travel for our young British students on school trips to Europe. Those would be our asks: nothing brand new, just tweaking the systems that are already there.

Joss Croft: All I would add is that, with the 2025 border strategy, whatever system gets put in place should be digitised; there is no reason why it must be paper based. It could work in collaboration with the electronic travel authorisation that will be introduced at some point. I do not think that necessarily requires new legislation or even negotiations, but there would be an element of making sure that the collective passports are reciprocated on both sides.

I have not been able to find out the figures on abscondments but it is not hugely credible to imagine that these children, whose parents are waiting for them to return home, will abscond into the black economy of Hastings, or anywhere else. That risk is quite low. We have not been able to identify exactly what the risk is and it is probably more of a question for UK Visas and Immigration or Border Force, as Stephen said.

Rhammel Afflick: When we looked at the detail of the trade and co-operation agreement, we maintained that we should remain in Erasmus+. That was our initial position, but ultimately we would like recognition of the loss. There has been no public recognition of what, as I said, was not an insignificant amount of money going to those 5,000 UK-based projects, many of which we ran. Most people know Erasmus+ for the core part of its programme, the student exchanges, which the Turing scheme was meant to replace. Yet there has been no recognition of the significant amount of funding that has been lost as part of that. Similarly to what has been said about some other issues, this does not necessarily require huge amounts of legislative change, but ultimately there has been no replacement for that work. We feel that that informal education is still really important and it had a significant impact on the work that we do with young people. We would like recognition that it now does not exist; a recommendation that we need to bring it back would be helpful.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: None of you mentioned identity cards. Would the Government help a lot if they returned to accepting identity cards from EU member states—I am not talking about third countries—for these visits? A quick answer on that would be helpful. Can you also confirm my view that we are talking about a quite substantial invisible export by the UK that brings benefits to the British economy? I am not talking about British students who go to EU countries, because obviously that is an invisible import, but can you confirm that that is the case?

Stephen Lowy: Yes. School groups coming to the UK pre-Covid were worth more than £1 billion to the UK economy. The 86% drop this year is worth £860 million. The study we did with the Tourism Alliance predicted a further £600 million difference from the £1 billion pre-Covid, so there are certainly quick wins there to try to boost the economy one way or another. Within that, there is also the residual spend and the fact that most young students will go to the regions. Hastings is always mentioned but there are other places. That is of huge benefit to the UK as a whole and it disburses that spend across the UK and the whole British Isles.

I completely agree with you on ID cards; that form of identification allows young people to travel freely across Europe and used to allow them to travel freely into the UK. If that was another option, alongside the collective passport, it would certainly ease the fears of European school groups coming to the UK.

Joss Croft: From my perspective, we are talking about the continued use of ID cards but only for an organised group of under-18s. It would be in association with the collective passport that brings that group together, if you like.

On exports, you are absolutely right. Inbound tourism is our second-largest service export after business and financial services. It is our fifth-largest export industry, bigger than car exports and oil exports. Inbound tourism is almost one of the hidden exports, if you like. It is massively important to the United Kingdom. Of course, this is about not just exports but building lifelong relationships with people. We know that people who come to the UK to learn English are more likely to return to study in, trade with, invest in and holiday in the UK. Visitation at a young age leads to that virtuous circle. We also know that countries that have a greater familiarity with the United Kingdom have greater favourability for it. Bringing them here to study in the UK creates that favourability, which then results in greater UK plc profitability.

Rhammel Afflick: In the interests of time, I will not reiterate the points that have been made. We agree with what you just said. The only thing to add from our perspective is that a core part of the funding was for social action and providing a service, but it was also about the skills that young people build that they would not have built in other places. We need to be clear about that: they will not learn these skills traditionally in schools. Particularly for minorities, the impact is the social mobility they get as a result of gaining some of those skills. There is also social capital. Navigating the workplace is difficult for young people at the moment, so

anything that they can do to build a network of people who support them in employability and mobility is important. We support the points on ID cards and so on, but in the interests of time I will not reiterate them.

Q120 Lord Lamont of Lerwick: My question has been largely answered but this is a sub-question on school group travel. Has there been a less severe decline in school group travel from the UK to the EU and, if so, why? You partly gave an answer to that.

Joss Croft: I will defer to my colleague because I deal exclusively on inbound tourism into the UK. Steve will have a view.

Stephen Lowy: Joss and I talked about this briefly because his wife works in one of those underprivileged wards. A lot of young British kids do not have passports either. Many of these smaller school trips assist people who most need help in seeing the world. It may be their only trip, or it might get them wanting to see the world, to improve themselves. This summer, a collective passport form was in place but it was not administered properly at the border. That meant that some students on certain school trips were unable to go through, or it took many hours and they missed their ferry and so forth. If that involves a student who is vulnerable anyway, that makes a scary experience even scarier. There has also been concern about the welcome meeting young British kids in Europe. Until the requirement for visas to be reciprocal is dealt with, it will be hard for British kids to go abroad to that level.

Lord Lamont of Lerwick: Does that explain entirely the discrepancy between the two?

Stephen Lowy: No. It is probably slightly easier for Brits to go into Europe. However, there are still restrictions unless they have their passport. Obviously, there were delays with issuing passports, not just here but around the world. There is a duty of care for schools to make sure that, where there is an opportunity for students, they should all be allowed to go. That was not the case this summer.

Joss alluded to this, but we are still trying to get all the detailed facts on why there were issues at the border. It was well-publicised that there were various issues. Maybe that will be resolved next year through more experience in dealing with this, but there were certainly many problems with British students going into Europe this year.

Lord Lamont of Lerwick: Rhammel, do you have any views on this discrepancy between the two? Can you give any explanation for it?

Rhammel Afflick: Not particularly, not through our own work.

Lord Lamont of Lerwick: How many students went through the Erasmus+ programme? How many go through the Turing scheme annually?

Rhammel Afflick: That is a good point. I do not have the exact numbers, so will send them after the session. The figure of 5,000 is

separate from continuing work. For example, as part of one of those projects we would often have upwards of 100 young people involved. Not all our projects included a direct exchange, going abroad to a European country, but they certainly involved some form of co-operation with other EU countries. The impact is quite significant on this. You need only talk about that one project with 100 young people, and times that by the 4,000 projects—I should be clear that these took place between 2014 and 2018, which I did not say earlier—and the impact is obvious. That work has not been replaced.

We have tried to make noise about this but as you can be imagine, because this represented a smaller part of the Erasmus+ programme, it has gone largely uncovered and unreported, other than by the few charities we know of that also benefited from this work, not the schools' work. Most people, including some who perhaps benefited from the other part of the Erasmus+ programme, do not know about this and have not even noticed that it disappeared. Yet to us the impact is clear.

Lord Lamont of Lerwick: I have heard some advocate that the numbers are quite marginal—but I do not know the numbers. If you come across some, it would be good to know them.

Rhammel Afflick: Yes, absolutely. I will work with our programmes team to find the direct numbers and get them back to you.

Q121 **Baroness Scott of Needham Market:** Stephen, do any issues arise from non-school travel, such as summer camps, language or sporting exchanges? Is anything in particular emerging in that sector?

Stephen Lowy: There is the ability for some of these camps to employ people with language skills to help. Although people are learning English, you sometimes need that language skill, particularly for younger students. There has been a challenge this summer for those specific language skills.

Across youth student and educational travel, which was worth about £28 billion to the UK economy in 2019, there has been real positivity. There is definitely demand for the UK. The big issue earlier this year, which was fairly well-publicised, was due to Ukraine. Student visa processing became very slow, particularly between the UK and US. Some students were unable to come because they were unable to get biometrics appointments anywhere in the US. Again, that may be a one-off but it was certainly an issue in the way of bouncing back this year.

Unfortunately, the cost of living crisis impacts in many ways on the profit margins of most operators and businesses within these sectors. It is quite hard to increase prices to combat such expenses. Many companies in this field have taken on CBILS or other Covid recovery loans and are seeing issues. Joss mentioned the figures. We are not back to 2019 numbers, and until we are it will be hard to know what UK infrastructure can deal with post Brexit and post Covid. We could certainly see the cracks in the

visa situation earlier this year, but again, that was a global issue; many countries experienced delays in visa processing.

Joss Croft: Steve is right. It is probably not specific to the summer camps but there is the cost of living and the labour shortages that much of the industry suffers from. Inbound tourism, albeit youth, student educational travel or wider tourism, was impacted first. We closed the borders. We were the deepest impacted: government support through the furlough scheme lasted until September 2021 but we did not open our borders until 18 March 2022. That meant many people took on a lot of debt.

That takes us back to Steve's point: the ability to recover faster, or as fast as our competition, has been somewhat hampered by industry's indebtedness and inability to recruit the staff required because of labour shortages. It is not specific to tourism—it happens elsewhere across the economy—but it has a negative impact.

Baroness Scott of Needham Market: Rhammel, did you want to add anything?

Rhammel Afflick: Not on this, no.

Q122 **Lord Tugendhat:** I was going to ask whether the current arrangements to facilitate youth mobility between the EU and UK are appropriate, but it is clear from your answers that you do not think so. Should the UK seek to negotiate the participation of the EU and/or individual member states in the youth mobility scheme? If so, what would be the main benefits? Would there be any significant drawbacks?

Joss Croft: The youth mobility scheme is a fantastic programme, offering 11 countries around the world the opportunity for young adults, aged between 18 and 30, to live, work and study in the UK. This should not be conflated with wider immigration policies. The people who undertake the youth mobility scheme do not have a right to remain in the UK when that period of two years ends; they return home.

The scheme would definitely help with cultural exchange. I am talking about the inbound side but, of course, it is reciprocated: Brits would be able to travel to those countries as well. We would definitely like to see the scheme revised and extended out from those 11 countries. I can understand that there might be issues in doing that on a UK/EU basis; some countries potentially might have a lower risk profile than others, even within the European Union. However, we could certainly start those negotiations on a bilateral basis or through the European Union.

At the moment, this is based on quotas. Each of those 11 countries has a quota of people who can travel to the UK and, likewise, of UK residents who can travel internationally. One issue in that is that in some markets the full quota is used almost immediately while in other countries the full quota is not used. One of our recommendations would be for the Government to reallocate unused quotas, both in and out, from those countries where there is more demand.

The UK is also negotiating trade deals on the back of our European exit. We would like the youth mobility scheme to be brought into those discussions as a key component within UK trade deals overseas. As we said, for these types of people undertaking the youth mobility scheme this is about building lifetime value and those lifetime allegiances to the United Kingdom that will also benefit trade, investment and education.

Lord Tugendhat: Are there any other steps you would like to see the Government take on youth mobility between the EU and the UK?

Joss Croft: A great start would be to resolve this issue of youth and student group travel with the collective passport or the list of travellers scheme, and to ensure that the youth mobility scheme is available to more than just the 11 countries outside the European Union. That does not require primary legislation; these are extensions of existing programmes or the reintroduction of an existing programme. In addition, in a sense these do not necessarily carry such a harsh political message. With the youth mobility scheme, you are given two years—we would like that extended to three years, as it is in Australia—but when that ends there is no right to remain. We believe that abscondment rates for youth and student group travel from the European Union are very low, so this is very low risk. Politically, these might well be easier than solutions that other people suggested. I would restrict it to those two things. Getting them done would be fantastic.

Stephen Lowy: I agree. I had a working holiday in Australia and started my entrepreneurial journey there. I feel the value of bringing back those skills from abroad. Likewise, when I ran hotels I had a student who went on to set up one of the largest tech companies in the Netherlands. We remain connected and still do business together. That is the soft power this creates.

I agree with Joss. We might start with a shortlist of EU countries and make bilateral agreements with Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and so on. There are also non-EU countries that we do not have youth mobility agreements with: the US, which is remarkable, and Brazil. If we expanded the quota overall and then worked on balancing that out on an annual basis, we would have a much better global youth mobility footprint. From Joss's point of view and that of the grander scheme of tourism, by creating that youth mobility early you then have a sustainable, long-term tourism product, including corporate and business meetings and events, luxury, family and adventure travel, and so forth. Youth mobility schemes allow that.

Obviously, we did this recently with Australia. One of our board members was quite instrumental in that. Extending that from two to three years, and from 30 to 35 years-old, will have a big impact on the whole youth mobility scheme. If that could cover different countries, including EU countries—youth mobility would be made simpler by doing so—we would have a very good platform, on the basis that we need to start growing the economy again.

Rhammel Afflick: I completely concur; I was vigorously nodding my head. We are passionate about the idea that a core part of all this work is fostering young people's engagement in society. The imperative is in the habits we create when young people engage in this work. At this age in particular, we see it forming habits that enable them to use the skills and access they have and the self-confidence they gain from being part of this in a global context. They feel able to participate actively. The benefits from extending this are apparent and obvious.

I am not sure what more I can say on this other than to reiterate the obvious. Young people have said to us passionately that they are very worried about how we get beyond the fear and intolerance fostered during this recent period, and how we use the new arrangements to ensure that we extend that experience of diversity and the opportunities to build resilience and self-confidence. All those things are integral parts of mobility. It is almost a no-brainer that we should extend that and ensure that access is broadened, with more young people able to participate.

I absolutely concur with the points made earlier. We talked about tourism in the context of benefits to the UK economy. We must also talk about the double benefit, ultimately, to the young people and in the skills that they then bring into the workplace as a result of being part of these programmes. That double benefit is an important part of what we need to get across.

Q123 **The Chair:** One particular issue that we have struggled with is the definition of "youth". I understand that the youth mobility scheme is for those aged 18 to 30, except if you are Australian when it runs to 35. Briefly, what do you understand "youth" to mean? That could be of interest.

Joss Croft: I have quite a subjective view of what "youth" constitutes. People say that it is a state of mind. Some older age groups have younger psychographics than they used to in terms of their attitudes.

Specifically on these two issues, when we talk about youth and student group travel, I recognise that the Government have a view on borders, individual risk and the requirement for passports. A more controlled environment for those aged 18 and under is what I would classify within youth and student group travel out of the European Union. I am sure that many in the industry would rather that we could elevate that up. On the youth mobility scheme, the ages of 18 to 30 or 18 to 35 are probably appropriate. People are and remain younger these days: they are more able to work, they work harder and potentially work until they are older. The 18 to 35 range for youth mobility allows people to live, work and study in the UK for that period of up to two or three years. Youth and student group travel is school kids coming into the UK to benefit, then returning home.

The Chair: That is helpful at two levels. Certainly, I have my word for the day: "psychographic".

Stephen Lowy: It is very similar for me. We see it within BETA: “youth” covers those travelling either in a group or independently under the age of 30. Some countries—Australia included—count that as under 35, but we say 30. Often within that, it is split into school groups aged under 18 and over-18s. A lot of that is down to insurance and how you manage a group. A lot of educational groups come to the UK. In my day job, we look after American university educational groups aged 19, 20 and 21. That is how we classify it.

Rhammel Afflick: We concur on those points. The core of our work is for young people under the age of 18, essentially. That is our definition. I can see that context of 18 to 30 for mobility, but our core work is with under-18s, though a few bits of work were with under-25s.

Q124 **Lord Wood of Anfield:** Thank you for your answers. We have touched on Erasmus+ in following up on Lord Lamont’s question. Rhammel, what is your assessment of how serious the withdrawal from Erasmus+ has been to the totality of student mobility among post-18 students from the UK to the EU? How much of the gap has been picked up by Turing? How much is yet to be picked up—to the extent that there is still a gap, and how ever one sees that? What further measures would you like to see the Government take to improve student mobility to fill that gap?

Rhammel Afflick: Apologies for repeating myself but I want to make the point clear: in the context of our work, there has been no replacement. The Turing scheme replaced the core elements of the Erasmus+ programme, but for us there has been no replacement. We have had to source almost all the funding we would have received from the EU, via the British Council and suchlike, from elsewhere, or we have not delivered that work since 2016. In fact, we did some of that work after 2016 because some grant agreements were extended until 2018. We have certainly not had opportunities to replace that funding through any other avenues of government since 2018. That is very important.

As for the impact on young people, they were very clear in our report in 2017—post the EU referendum—about the kinds of opportunity they wanted. I would be happy to send on the report and the sentiment of those young people in that period. I should have mentioned the Structured Dialogue programme at the top of this; the young people felt that that was integral, not an add-on, despite it being the lesser-known part of Erasmus+. The loss is clearly in those young people not being able to engage in that diverse, connected and inclusive Europe. That is very obvious and young people have been really clear about it. I hope that answers your question. For us, there has been no opportunity to identify new funding, certainly not through the Government; we may have found it in other places.

Lord Wood of Anfield: I appreciate the point you reiterated about funding not being picked up. More globally, is there any sense of how many people Turing is picking up who might otherwise have gone through Erasmus+? What is the level and quantum of that gap? Does anyone have a sense of that?

Rhammel Afflick: In the context of Structured Dialogue, we are talking in the thousands. For the rest of the programme, my colleagues might be able to answer.

Stephen Lowy: Not really, because we do not necessarily work on mobility with students. All I know from campuses in American universities is that they were very interested in the Turing scheme and shocked that it was not reciprocal. One challenge in bringing American students over here is that they must find different funding from their side to do that reciprocally. With Erasmus+, it was more about free movement in where people wanted to go. That is hard to replace, particularly on an individual basis. Turing is an outbound programme, as opposed to a reciprocal programme.

Joss Croft: I cannot add much to this. Let us not forget that when the Erasmus+ students travelled to study in the United Kingdom they had a large spend in what they did, going to attractions and so on. They often brought over their parents as well. In tourism we refer to this as VFR: visiting friends and relatives. That can make up a substantial amount of additional expenditure. It always used to be that people stayed with their friends and relatives. Increasingly, neither the relatives nor they wished to stay with each other, so they would spend money in hotels and different types of accommodation, enjoying it almost as the trip of a lifetime. This means we have lost huge amounts of spend from VFR through our inability to accommodate Erasmus+ students in the UK.

The Chair: I now have my acronym for the day: "VFR". We are almost at the end of our session. There is one more question.

Q125 **Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Briefly, what are the consequences of having turned from Erasmus+, which was a reciprocal scheme of an expanding nature? I am interested in not just what we lost from the level in the past but what we lose from the level now and in future. Could you comment on the fact that Turing does not provide anything for inbound people coming to the UK?

Stephen Lowy: I know that the next panel is with witnesses from universities so they will probably have more statistics on that. The UK has done some good things. The postgraduate work visa for two-year stays has been very popular with certain countries. That will not replace the European university-level students but has certainly shown that we can do things on a global scale. However, I do not have the statistics to answer the question. All I know, again from working with some famous universities in America that work globally, is that there was an appearance, to them, that we did not welcome a full flow of international students. That is damaging for the institution that is our university world.

Joss Croft: Apologies, but I am unable to talk about Erasmus+. All I would say is that statistics are bandied around giving the number of international leaders of nations overseas who studied in the UK on university schemes or studied English here. The ability of the United Kingdom to express its soft power ambitions and that idea of global

Britain will be diminished if we are unable to accommodate these people coming to the UK to experience the wonders here.

Rhammel Afflick: I agree with that notion but it is hard to quantify it. Ultimately, a core part of the work we did across Europe was directly with member states, often in some ways on behalf of the UK Government. The ramifications for our work affect the way we might deliver a new policy or bilateral conversations—for example, on engaging young people in digital, which was one of our projects. We had young people across Europe involved in a cross-EU project. It is hard to quantify that. It is just not happening in the same format. Unfortunately, we do not have any stats to bring to the table. This is part of the issue: because this was the lesser-known part of the scheme, people have not been able to do a huge amount to quantify it. I agree that those things are obvious for soft power; it is just how we quantify that. We do not have backing on that at the moment.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We will leave it there, except that you generously offered us some further materials. On the first question, Joss Croft and Stephen Lowy kindly offered to send us some statistics. Those would be very helpful. We have a pile of statistics here already but we are very interested in yours as well. In answer to Lord Lamont, Rhammel Afflick also offered some numbers on Turing versus Erasmus+. Could you send those to us? I found this absolutely fascinating and there is much to chew on. Thank you all for spending time with us this afternoon. I declare the evidence session over.