



## European Affairs Committee

### Corrected oral evidence: The future UK-EU relationship

Tuesday 7 March 2023

1.30 pm

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Members present: The Earl of Kinnoull (The Chair); Baroness Anelay of St Johns; Baroness Blackstone; Lord Faulkner of Worcester; Lord Foulkes of Cumnock; Lord Hannay of Chiswick; Lord Jay of Ewelme; Lord Lamont of Lerwick; Lord Liddle; Baroness Ludford; Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne; Baroness Scott of Needham Market; Viscount Trenchard; Lord Wood of Anfield.

Evidence Session No. 12

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Questions 189 - 216

### Witnesses

I: Leo Docherty, Minister for Europe, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; Olaf Henricson-Bell, EU Director, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

## Examination of witnesses

Leo Docherty and Olaf Henricson-Bell.

Q189 **The Chair:** Welcome to all those who are watching. Welcome to the hybrid House of Lords European Affairs Committee. This is our final evidence session in our inquiry into the future relationship between the UK and the EU. We are very pleased to welcome this afternoon the Minister for Europe, Leo Docherty MP. Thank you very much for coming. He is supported this afternoon by Olaf Henricson-Bell, who is the EU director at the FCDO. Thank you both for coming along and for sparing time.

We have had a really interesting few months in our inquiry. This is the final act when we can put some things to you for comment. As it is a public session, a transcript will be taken and, in the usual way, we will send that to you both. We would be grateful if you could send us back any corrections. We will be using the transcript in the report we will be writing. We only have 90 minutes, as everyone is very busy, so I would be very grateful if both questions and answers were kept crisp.

I am going to begin at a high level. In his Statement to the House of Commons last week following the conclusion of the Windsor Framework agreement, the Prime Minister referred to there being “many areas of co-operation that we can and should have with the European Union”. How would you, as the Government, like to see the wider relationship develop over the next period? You can answer at a high level, because we will be going into the detail later on.

**Leo Docherty:** There is a whole range of opportunities. Our approach would be one of collaboration and joint working. For example, in the area of energy, we have seen over the last year how critically important to our national security the supply of energy is. The solutions to our collective energy security and sovereignty are ones that we are reaching through collaboration.

The Prime Minister was referring to that type of approach. That is certainly our approach in the work I do as a Minister and the work we do as an institution. We are eager for collaboration. We acknowledge that a lot of the best outcomes, whether it be diplomacy or security, are through alliance. The last year, in terms of the outrageous Russian invasion of Ukraine, has proven that point.

Q190 **The Chair:** We will come back later to many of the issues you have raised there in greater detail. There was one other thing that caught my eye during the press conference when the Windsor Framework agreement surfaced. The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said of the agreement, “The moment it is implemented, I am happy to start immediately, right now, the work on an association agreement”. That was referring to the association agreement for Horizon Europe, which is something this committee has been extremely interested in over a long period of time.

I wondered whether you could confirm that the Government are determined to become associated with Horizon Europe. From your perspective, when will those discussions begin?

**Leo Docherty:** It would be premature for me to comment very specifically, but I know we are absolutely open to that notion. Discussions are ongoing. We acknowledge that scientific collaboration has been and will be a hugely important part of that relationship.

Forgive me if I am not drawn into specifically commenting on the timeframe, but, certainly, discussions are under way.

**The Chair:** If the EU is determined to do that immediately following the implementation of the agreement, you are saying that is the British position as well.

**Leo Docherty:** I will not pre-empt what approach or timing the Prime Minister will decide on, but it is commonsensical to expect a very high degree of collaboration in the near future, if I can leave it at that.

**The Chair:** I will just say for the record, as the committee has observed many times, that this is to the mutual benefit of everyone. It would be a great shame if we dragged our feet.

**Leo Docherty:** We acknowledge that wholeheartedly, yes.

Q191 **Lord Wood of Anfield:** Thank you very much for coming, Minister. It is good to see you. I want to ask you about the relationship between the EU and the UK and, in particular, the institutional relationship in relation to the 32 different committees and working groups set up by the withdrawal agreement and the TCA.

It is fair to say there has been a slightly slow start in getting this machinery up and running. There has only been one meeting, for example, of the TCA Partnership Council, which was in June 2021. What is the Government's sense of the way in which these agreements and these structures in particular are working? What improvements would you like to see? Does the Windsor Framework herald an era in which there can be an acceleration in the way these frameworks work?

**Leo Docherty:** You have almost answered your own question. We are satisfied with the architecture. Let us be honest: there was some slowing down of the level of co-operation because of the outstanding issue of the Northern Ireland Protocol. Now that is settled, we will see an acceleration of that formal co-operation.

We should also acknowledge that equally important is the non-structured constant diplomatic engagement that is carried out not only by FCDO Ministers but by Ministers right across the Government. That is certainly a focus of mine.

We are satisfied with the formal architecture. We acknowledge that we are now in an era with an increased tempo to those sorts of formal

engagements, but that does not mean we will not continue with our very energetic bilateral and less formal diplomacy.

**Lord Wood of Anfield:** Just to summarise, the Government are not seeking to make any changes or improvements to the framework in the next period.

**Leo Docherty:** I am not ideological. The structures are in good shape and provide a good framework. The important addition will always be the less formal drumbeat of diplomacy. Olaf, do you want to comment on the formal structure of the committees and so on and so forth?

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** The only other point I would add is that the TCA provides for additional sub-committees to be established in certain areas of regulatory co-operation and where industry would like to see those established. That is something we will be taking forward in discussions. I imagine you were talking more broadly, but we can look at that specifically for those groups.

Q192 **Lord Wood of Anfield:** That is very helpful, thank you. I just want to ask one more follow-up. As you say, we hope that the Windsor Framework heralds a new spirit of progress in this department. Can I ask you one specific thing about the Windsor Framework and its effect on UK-EU relations? It is about the Stormont brake and the circumstances in which it can be pulled. Could you just clarify that the brake that withholds EU law from applying to Northern Ireland can only be pulled once there is cross-community consent for that brake to be pulled? I ask because Article 42 of the 1998 Act says that is indeed what is required, but it is not clear from what was said in the announcement.

I appreciate that the Stormont brake has more details that need to be fleshed out and that this may be in progress, but I wonder whether there is a government position at the moment on the general principle question of whether the Stormont brake will require cross-community consent.

**Leo Docherty:** The technicality is that it requires 30 MLAs of two parties. You are right in scrutinising whether those could technically—

**Lord Wood of Anfield:** They could come from one community.

**Leo Docherty:** That is correct. Do you want to expand on that point, Olaf?

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** I have two points of nuance. First, the fact that it is 30 MLAs from two parties means that it could be from one side or the other. Of course, that means that for the change to take place both would need to accept it, because either one or the other could block. To that extent there is a cross-community element. There is also the possibility of a cross-community element after the point at which the brake is pulled, were there to be cross-community consent for the amendment to take effect. That is one of the issues that, as laid out in the Command Paper last week, we are discussing with the parties in Northern Ireland.

**Lord Wood of Anfield:** There are discussions under way on this, but the effect is that cross-community consent would be required in some broad way.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** That is probably strong, but there is a cross-community element to it.

**Lord Wood of Anfield:** I appreciate the detail. Thank you very much.

Q193 **Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Do the Government look on the TCA machinery, starting with the Foreign Secretary and Maroš Šefčovič, as an instrument that is a top-down or bottom-up system? Does it need political input from the top to make the technical discussions work better and be more fruitful.

**Leo Docherty:** If such a thing is possible, it is both, in the sense that the Foreign Secretary has clearly had a role in building a very strong relationship with Vice-President Šefčovič. That has been critical in the breakthrough we have had with regards to the Northern Ireland Protocol. It is important in the ongoing running of the TCA in terms of the formal architecture.

At the same time, the variety of committees that exist are necessarily and quite usefully able to feed things from bottom to top.

Q194 **Lord Jay of Ewelme:** It is good to see you, Minister. This is going up a little from the question that Lord Wood asked. The European Union holds regular summit-level meetings with other major bilateral partners, including Canada and the United States. Would the Government be open to the possibility of holding regular UK-EU summits in the future? Indeed, has the possibility of doing so been raised in the slightly warmer climate we have now following the Windsor agreement?

**Leo Docherty:** It would be premature of me to speculate as to what formal architecture there may be, but we are certainly open to it. These formal events are useful opportunities to accelerate work in advance and focus minds during. I would look forward to participating personally, if possible. We are certainly open to that prospect.

**Lord Jay of Ewelme:** I chair the Sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, and we will be looking at the Windsor agreement in greater detail. We will be looking at some of the issues raised by Lord Wood. We will not go into those now, but we are very much hoping that the Foreign Secretary will come and give evidence to us. Indeed, I think he has promised to do so. I wondered whether you could pass on that invitation again to him and say how much we are looking forward to seeing him.

**Leo Docherty:** With great pleasure, yes.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. The post is unreliable these days.

Q195 **Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** Good afternoon, Minister. My questions

focus on the machinery of government, the machinery across Whitehall, in co-ordinating our relationship with the European Union and indeed the member states.

I appreciate that you have been in the FCDO for just seven months, but I am sure you will be aware that the Brexit negotiator Lord Frost gave evidence to this committee. When he did so, his reflection was that there had been what he called a gradual deterioration over the past decade or so in the effectiveness of the arrangements in Whitehall for co-ordinating our policy towards the EU. Does that resonate with you? If not, what have you seen that shows there is a strategy across Whitehall for effectively managing that relationship?

**Leo Docherty:** In my experience, it is joined up. The metric we must use is the outcome of our recent negotiations and the signing of the Windsor Framework.

I am assured—I get reassurance from my contact with the director for the EU, who is sitting on my left—that there is a healthy dose of cross-Whitehall collaboration. If we measure it against our desired outcomes, what we have been able to achieve with the Windsor Framework shows pretty good work from No. 10, the Foreign Office and other government departments. It has been a cross-Whitehall success story in that regard.

Olaf would probably agree with me, because he has been doing it. Olaf, do you have any comment on the cross-Whitehall element of your work in our department?

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** Thank you, Minister. I would agree with that. Beyond the Windsor Framework negotiation, the past year has seen our participation in the European Political Community, which was widely welcomed; the energy co-operation that the Minister mentioned earlier; the work with the EU and more widely with our European partners on Ukraine; as well as the summit in Paris on Friday. All of those are examples of where the system is delivering for our European agenda.

One of the advantages in the way we are set up at the moment is that we bring together both the EU and the bilateral aspects of the relationship. If you think about the energy context, for example, when we need to work with a particular member state to look at them authorising a new interconnector, we want to be able to connect that to the discussions in Brussels around the electricity trading framework, which governs how that interconnector will work. The way we are currently set up allows us to bring those things together.

The question that may lie underneath that is whether we can join up the different bits of Whitehall through the Foreign Office. Lord Hague addressed this in his evidence session with you. The answer to that is that we think we have done that well by working very closely with the Cabinet Office and No. 10, because you need that kind of central grip. There are examples where that has delivered well. We have a fortnightly senior officials' meeting, chaired by the National Security Adviser, to oversee that.

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** You say that the systems in place are working. It has been notoriously difficult in the past for cross-Whitehall groups to work. You have mentioned that there is an officials group that has met regularly. What about the policy formation and the policy drive to have a deliverable strategy that is agreed across government? What is your perception of that? What has your contribution been to that?

**Leo Docherty:** In my role as a junior Minister, I have seen the very close working relationship between the Foreign Secretary, No. 10 and his Cabinet colleagues. The Windsor Framework was the result of very clear higher commander's intent. It was very clear that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary were agreed on the approach. It was kept very private. The Foreign Secretary was very clear on the Prime Minister's intent and was therefore able to build a credible relationship with Vice-President Šefčovič. The Foreign Secretary was empowered to do that. The very close personal working relationships at the top of the Government gave this a coherence that proved useful.

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** Does that co-operation go beyond that, across the Government? I am thinking of the interests that are held by Defra and the Home Office. How do those interests feed into the work you are doing on policy and that relationship with the EU and more broadly?

**Leo Docherty:** They absolutely do right the way through the institution. That is the kind of routine cross-Whitehall outreach Olaf and his team are doing at senior official level.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** To give two live examples, the negotiation on the Windsor Framework was built around a cross-Whitehall team. You mentioned Defra. A core aspect of the negotiation was the way in which SPS rules apply across both the green lane for UK trade and the red lane out to the EU. We had Defra colleagues implanted within our negotiating team and we will continue to work with them on the implementation. That would be one example.

To take another example, the Home Secretary is still speaking now about migration. A section of my team works very closely with the Home Office as well as No. 10 to make sure domestic decisions on migration are plugged into our European relationships. That is both bilateral—it is one of the subjects for the summit on Friday—and EU because some of the framework is also for the EU.

Q196 **Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** I want to focus the last part of my question on the relationship, which has sometimes been uneasy, between the Cabinet Office and FCDO. I declare a past interest, having gone from FCDO to DExEU. We saw the policy initiative go to FCDO. What is the relationship between the two departments now? Is that separate and apart from the official-level system you have already set out? How does it come into effect at the level of ministerial operations? I appreciate that the Prime Minister controls the Cabinet Office in theory and in practice, but the real day-to-day work is done by individual Ministers.

**Leo Docherty:** Absolutely, yes. I am very often over at the Cabinet Office, in ministerial groups, discussing policy. At ministerial level there is very active and frequent collaboration. I know that is replicated at senior official level.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** As you discussed with Lord Frost, when he left the Government the structure that sat in the Cabinet Office to co-ordinate our EU work, of which I was a part, moved over to the Foreign Office and then merged with the bilateral teams.

Currently, that remains the core co-ordinating function, but it is done jointly with the Cabinet Office. For example, when we have meetings to prepare—we will talk later about the European Political Community—I would do that jointly with the National Security Secretariat.

You asked about ministerial co-ordination. The other part of that jigsaw is the National Security Council. Both in its prime ministerial formation and in its European formation, the NSC addresses those issues.

Q197 **Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** My next question goes a little more widely, but I hope you might be able to give a shorter answer. You have a very large and important portfolio. How much time are you able to devote to liaising with the individual member states and institutions of the European Union?

**Leo Docherty:** That is a great question. It is the reason I love my job. I am travelling almost every week. I have visited more than 25 countries since I came into post in September. That sort of energetic bilateralism is our core business. I have nearly covered off all of western Europe. I have visited some countries more than once. That is the reason this is a fun job. With energy and resolve, empowered by the Foreign Secretary, we get on with it. We know it is our core business.

Q198 **Baroness Blackstone:** You say that you have visited 25 different countries in the European Union over the last six or however many months it was. Can you give the committee some idea what the outcome of these meetings was? Where have we scored some really good outcomes in terms of our relationship with individual countries? Are there some countries where we have found it very difficult to have a good relationship and to move on in terms of how we operate?

**Leo Docherty:** One example would be the fact we are having the leader-level summit with France on Friday. That is a very significant diplomatic opportunity for us to push forward on a number of areas. That is going to be a very important moment in Anglo-French relations, which had a bit of a scratchy time last year. That is a very important moment. I will not speculate on the content, but you can imagine some of the themes therein. It will be very important.

Another example would be our strategic dialogue with Germany at the beginning of the year. As a junior Minister I look forward to maintaining the drumbeat of diplomatic engagement on the back of that. Those are



just two examples of very significant engagements with member states, which point to a very close collaboration.

**Baroness Blackstone:** Those are the two largest and most important countries in the European Union. What about some of the smaller countries? If you have been to 25, what are you saying to them and what are you getting from them?

**Leo Docherty:** I am doing my best. For example, I have recently been in Slovakia discussing deeper collaboration with the Slovaks. I saw the Maltese yesterday. I saw the Luxembourg ambassador yesterday. Apart from the Czech Republic, I have been to pretty much every member state so far. I am doing my best. We do not just focus on the big member states. It is our bread and butter.

**Baroness Blackstone:** With respect, I was not asking you which countries you have been to. What was the purpose of these visits? What was the outcome? I am particularly wondering about some of the smaller countries. France and Germany are atypical.

**Leo Docherty:** That is a good point. In the smaller countries we often offer technical assistance and collaboration. For example, in Slovakia we were offering a range of collaboration on energy and good governance building. They are not member states, but the countries on the periphery of Europe with important links into the EU, such as Moldova and the countries in the western Balkans, are also important.

We are able to offer technical co-operation. There is a very strong appetite for more UK rather than less UK. There is very strong appetite for our technical expertise, trade and commerce. Educational links are hugely important, as is defence and security. Italy clearly is a major nation, but the work we are doing with the Italians on future combat aircraft is very important.

In terms of formal bilateral agreements, we have 22 agreements in place with countries like Albania, North Macedonia—that is a really important focus—Estonia, Greece, San Marino, Belgium, Latvia and Slovenia. There is a whole range of important bilateral engagement going on. As I said, there is a very strong appetite for our deeper engagement with them.

**Lord Jay of Ewelme:** Would you say the war in Ukraine has led to a stronger relationship with two countries you have not mentioned, Poland and Hungary, and with eastern European countries more generally?

**Leo Docherty:** Broadly, yes, undoubtedly. The last year has really focused everyone's minds on the bigger issues at stake. Our leadership in the provision of lethal aid was really critical in that. Undoubtedly, it has accelerated a process that would have taken longer.

You mentioned Hungary. That is an interesting one. Clearly, we urge our Hungarian friends to ratify the accession of Finland and Sweden into NATO. That is not entirely straightforward. Without a doubt it has

accelerated and deepened the relationships between the UK and EU member states. Without it, that process would have taken longer.

**Q199 Baroness Ludford:** Thank you very much, Minister, for this opportunity. I want to ask about the European Political Community, which was mentioned. Mr Henricson-Bell said that participation in the EPC was widely welcomed. Certainly, for my part, I would agree with that. The first meeting of the European Political Community was attended by the then Prime Minister Liz Truss on 6 October. Do the Government see this forum as having a role to play in UK-EU relations as well as the wider forum?

Can I just note that we were pleased to get the latest letter from the Foreign Secretary on 24 February about keeping this committee informed of further details about discussions and outcomes?

**Leo Docherty:** To answer your question, it clearly is very important in terms of our relations with the EU. The great value is that it is not just EU member states. Bringing in nations on the periphery of Europe, such as Azerbaijan and the Caucasus nations, as well as Turkey, makes it even more valuable as a platform for discussing urgent and important issues like migration and energy security.

The output of the Prague summit was therefore extremely useful. We are resolute in our determination to make it a good opportunity for the UK to host in 2024. We are looking forward to the Moldovans hosting and then the Spanish hosting. We regard it as a very useful platform.

**Baroness Ludford:** I wonder how the Government anticipate the EPC developing in the medium to longer term. I realise that it is intergovernmental and that it is regarded mainly as a discussion forum. If there are things that need to be followed up and put into a concrete decision-making form, will there be a relationship with the EU, which is the most obvious conduit for any discussions? What issues do the Government wish to prioritise as being on the agenda of the EPC?

**Leo Docherty:** I am agnostic as to formal structures. Part of the benefit is that it is exactly informal. The follow-up is got on with by individual states. For example, following Prague we signed our energy co-operation memorandum to become part of the North Seas Energy Cooperation initiative. Once again, that was good. I am agnostic as to whether or not one needs an additional layer of formality around that.

Clearly, it is too early to speculate as to what will be on the agenda for our hosting, but some of the themes that have come out of Prague will still be so relevant and urgent that we will still be attending to these sorts of things, including migration and defence. It is too early to speculate.

We are also institutionally helping the Moldovans with the organisation of their summit. We will work with allies to ensure there is coherence. If some of the themes need to be continued, we will ensure that is the case. We will work with allies to ensure, in the first instance, the success of the Chişinău summit.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** If it is possible to expand on that last point, one of the things we have found useful since the Prague summit is the co-ordination between the future hosts. We, the Moldovans and the Spanish have begun regular meetings of what, in EU terms, would have been called a troika.

**Baroness Ludford:** Indeed so, yes. I was about to think on those lines, yes.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** That is happening. I was in touch with my Moldovan colleague this morning and we are speaking to the Spanish again on Thursday. That work is under way.

You mentioned that the structure and concept of the initiative will evolve. If you look at the way it was announced and the way it took place and the debate since, it has already evolved quite a lot in quite a short space of time.

One of the key things is, of course, that Europe is currently facing a war. That war was very much the context and, in a way, the output of the summit in Prague. It showed a level of unity that was very powerful, and one would expect that to be the case in Chişinău in several months as well. That, hopefully, will not be the case in five or 10 years. As you say, there is also a natural evolution to this.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** What are the Government's objectives for the Chişinău meeting, other than solidifying support for Ukraine, which I assume to be axiomatic?

**Leo Docherty:** At an operational level, we want to help the Moldovans run a good EPC. We are helping them institutionally. I will not speculate on the pillars of our focus, but I would expect that, following Prague, there will be similar themes of migration, energy and that sort of co-operation. It would not be useful for me to announce anything here, but we can expect it to be along similar lines.

Q200 **Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** Minister, you will have noticed that the countries that attended the European Political Community almost exactly replicate the members of the Council of Europe. You have not mentioned the Council of Europe. Our witnesses have said that they do not see any competition. They see the Council of Europe continuing to deal with democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Do you agree with that?

**Leo Docherty:** Yes, I do. I am glad I have the opportunity to commend the work of the Council of Europe, which we value hugely. We think they are different things. They are not fishing in the same pond. We do not regard it as a threat. We recognise and applaud the importance of the Council of Europe wholeheartedly.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** Do you see any scope for the Council of Europe and the European Political Community to work together? Could the Council of Europe provide some technical support in its secretariat for the European Political Community?

**Leo Docherty:** I am completely open-minded as to those sorts of arrangements. Simplicity is a virtue when it comes to these sorts of summits.

The empowerment of each state in turn is important. It is important to let each state get on with it and to have close working between the previous state host and the future state host. For example, we, the Moldovans and the Spanish are working well together. That is probably a good model for the organisation rather than creating an additional secretariat, but I am not ideological about it.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** Earlier, in another context, you mentioned the Moldovans and the Balkans. They are all members of the Council of Europe. It seems like a fairly good way forward to co-operate in that way.

Q201 **Lord Lamont of Lerwick:** Good afternoon. Some of our witnesses have argued that the Government should seek to negotiate structured arrangements for co-operation with the EU. The phrase "structured arrangements" probably goes beyond what Lord Jay was suggesting earlier when he talked about regular summit meetings. What view do the Government take on this? It has been suggested, for example, that having more formal arrangements for co-operation might have made it easier to implement sanctions against Russia in relation to Ukraine.

**Leo Docherty:** That is a good question. I have an open mind and we have an open mind. There is nothing holding us back from having a very good, active and warm relationship. By necessity, that is our bread and butter in the Foreign Office. I am not entirely sure it needs to be formalised.

I take your point with regard to sanctions. There might be a counterargument, though, that having independence on our own sanctions policy is in fact a useful accelerant. We can perhaps be a bit more agile and encourage others in a way that we would not be able to do if we were formally moving in lockstep, if I can put it like that.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** On that last point, over the last year we have co-ordinated those successive waves of sanctions. There is both information-sharing about specific plans and co-ordination on when we might do what in a broader sense so we do not end up with asset flight or the people we are trying to target playing off different jurisdictions. That is working quite well.

There are times when it is easier for us to move faster because of internal EU debates on a given issue. Some bits of the oil sanctions and the cap would be an example of an area where that has happened. At other times, there is a healthy competition with both sides pushing each other to go further. That has been welcome.

**Lord Lamont of Lerwick:** Could I just come back and press you on the general point? Particularly as someone who supported Brexit, I very much appreciate that Europe is our neighbour, but it is not the only port of call; we have interests worldwide. Having said all that, you have said

that you are eager for collaboration. Europe is our neighbourhood. It matters more to us than any other region. It matters to us in defence terms. Defence and foreign policy are intertwined. It would be a demonstration that, having made this momentous political decision, we were none the less, in foreign policy terms, firmly committed to working very closely and therefore more effectively with our European neighbours.

**Leo Docherty:** Absolutely, yes. We do intend to achieve that. Now we have the Windsor Framework in place, the road is clear for us to get on with that with an abundance of energy. I am not convinced about whether that needs an additional layer of formality, but, again, I have an open mind.

Q202 **Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** On this issue of sanctions, the discussion is not mainly about joint decisions on sanctions with the EU. It is well understood that each side will take their own decisions. It is about the implementation of them. It is about making sure that all those clever people in Beijing, Tehran and Moscow, who are trying to find ways through and around the sanctions, do not succeed. That surely requires a structured framework because, without that, those clever people will find gaps.

Finally, could not you see a role for a much closer consultative relationship as we move through a very difficult period in all our relations, including those of the US with China?

**Leo Docherty:** When it comes to sanctions, we do co-ordinate. Olaf may want to say more, but we clearly have very energetic co-ordination with our European colleagues. Do you want to talk to that?

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** Specifically on Lord Hannay's point about implementation, the co-ordination framework the Minister is describing operates day by day and week by week. Structurally, our sanctions directorate has regular, more in-depth engagement with the EU, the US and other G7 partners, as you would expect. That is happening.

On implementation, first, that is a fair challenge. You are right to distinguish those things. Specifically on Russia, the policy work has become more urgent over the last six months as businesses and individuals on the wrong side of this equation have got used to it. The same framework of doing this together is operating on the question of implementation as on the question of designing the agreement.

Does that mean we will always do exactly the same thing all the time? No, but it means we are making sure that we share the lessons we are learning. In some cases, again, you want to do bits of it at the same time, because that has an impact on the decisions the other side are making.

**Leo Docherty:** China is clearly a hugely important geopolitical challenge on which we will, by necessity and by desire, co-operate very profoundly with the EU. Whether we need some specific formal construct on top of

the wide range of collaboration that is already in place remains to be seen, but I have an open mind.

**Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne:** There have been most interesting offerings from everyone. I have just come from the silk route. The idea put forward by our colleagues of having a more structured arrangement seemed to me to be well worth thinking about, because this issue is not going to go away. Sadly, it would appear that we will have to keep sanctions going against Russia for quite some time. There will be a huge impact on the neighbouring countries. For example, there will be an impact on higher education, with hundreds of thousands of students no longer able to study in Russia. We need co-ordination in order to help them.

**Leo Docherty:** Yes, we are strongly in favour of co-ordination. The extent to which that needs formal architecture around it remains to be seen, but deep co-ordination is what we have currently.

Q203 **Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** I wonder whether we could look at the NATO-EU relationship and our own involvement in that, as a member of NATO but not the EU. Paragraph 43 of the NATO 2022 strategic concept states, "For the development of the strategic partnership between NATO and the EU, non-EU allies' fullest involvement in EU defence efforts is essential". "Non-EU allies" includes us. What do the Government understand that "fullest involvement" will consist of in respect to us?

**Leo Docherty:** We will, for example, join the Dutch-led mobility element of PESCO. That is a good example of where we think we can add value. That is an important example of collaboration. What we take by that is engaging and collaborating where we think it is beneficial to both sides. The mobility project of the PESCO framework is a good example of that.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** That is very welcome. We were only following the United States and Canada in joining up on that, but we got there. What other PESCO projects do you have in mind as possible areas where we could shore up this strategic concept work?

**Leo Docherty:** We have none in mind at present, but we remain open-minded in the context of acknowledging that NATO is the cornerstone of our defence arrangements. The last year has shown that, when it comes to delivering lethal aid, in our case, and working on a security basis with allies, NATO is the cornerstone. We are open-minded as to other future opportunities similar to the one I have discussed. First and foremost, we will always see this issue through a NATO lens.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Yes, but that is precisely what the strategic concept does, because it says that NATO wants countries like us to co-operate more with the EU.

**Leo Docherty:** Yes.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Could I ask you to give us a word about the European defence fund? What are your views about the implications of

the launch of this for UK defence procurement?

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** On your previous question, you are absolutely right in the reference to the strategic concept. Our approach on that is also informed by the test that the Secretary-General has put out for co-operating with EU defence initiatives: that is about being coherent with NATO requirements, the capabilities being available to NATO and the capabilities being open to the fullest participation of wider NATO allies. That provides the framework within which we would make judgments about your question, which is relevant to the PESCO example that the Minister has given.

It is also relevant to the quite close co-operation between the EU mission for training Ukrainian soldiers and Operation Interflex, which we have here in the UK. We not only helped in designing the curriculum for the EU mission, so that Ukrainian forces would have a similar curriculum, because they would be fighting together; there were also liaison officers in the two missions, so where it meets those tests, we would.

The same criteria would apply to the EDF. As you know, in the context of the first year or so of the TCA framework, that has been looked into. We do not currently participate in the EDF, and, although we are not ruling it out, that is because our initial assessment is that the provisions in the EDF for third countries would not deliver what we or our industry would need. You can see that the only third country that has participated in the EDF is Norway, but that is not a position of principle or of ruling it out for the future.

Your point about the British defence industry is very well made. In the context of the conflict in Ukraine and our need to regenerate and backfill, a particular question arises, but at the moment we do not feel that the framework would give us what we would need.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Have we communicated those findings on our side to the European side, so that they understand what is holding us back?

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** Yes, and we would not be the only country that has done that.

Q204 **Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne:** Last November, the UK-EU PPA agreed a resolution calling for closer co-operation and regular meetings with the UK and the EU on energy security in the recent winter. Can you tell us how that has been affected? I do not mean the drumbeat but the actualities.

**Leo Docherty:** Energy co-operation is in a good place. We are now part of the North Seas Energy Cooperation initiative. That will further deepen our already impressive level of interconnection and collaboration in the North Sea. Clearly, there is the prospect of a greater number of electrical interconnectors between us and the European mainland in one form or another. That would be very welcome. I have personally seen the Nemo link coming from Belgium to the UK. It is very impressive. I was in

Denmark recently discussing the Viking link, which will achieve a similar thing. If our collective energy security is a measure of collaboration and interconnection, we are in a strong place, but of course there is room to do more.

**Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne:** We understand that the TCA Specialised Committee on Energy has met twice since 2022. Does the Minister consider this to be sufficient, given the extreme urgency and importance of this situation?

**Leo Docherty:** I think so. If you look at the outcome, in terms of policy expedited and us joining our European friends in the wholesale reorganisation of European supplies, storage and sourcing of energy, it has been a remarkable success right across Europe. There is more work to do with some of the eastern European nations, but the way supply and source has been radically diversified in a very short space of months illustrates success in that regard.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** On the specific point about the specialised committee, I will double-check for you. In my head, I have that it has met three times, but either way your point is that it is not tens of times. That is not the only format in which we co-ordinate. Specifically on security of supply with the EU, there are a series of meetings that are dedicated exactly to that question, both on gas and electricity. As the Minister said, this winter has gone a lot better than expected, including because of the LNG that we have provided or assisted with over the last year.

**Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne:** As you may be aware, several of our witnesses have suggested that the UK and the EU should have some sort of principle agreement that cross-border energy supplies are maintained in the time of crisis. What do our Government feel about that suggestion? How do they perceive it?

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** We would be positive towards that, not least because at the European Political Community Summit in Prague we were the ones who made a point of advocating it. If you read the op-ed that the then Prime Minister published on the morning of the summit in the *Times*, she specifically said that one of Putin's bets is that, as well as putting pressure on democracy, he can put pressure on our ability to share energy with each other when under pressure—that is the example of that pressure—and that we should resist it and not fall into his trap. We would be strongly in agreement with that.

Q205 **Lord Liddle:** Pursuing Baroness Nicholson's points about energy, we took a lot of evidence on this in our inquiry. We regard it as a very important potential area of co-operation between ourselves and the continent, and that means the EU as well as its member states. We welcome the fact that we are re-engaging with the North Seas Energy Cooperation body, but we are not a full member of it. Can you explain why, and do you think we should be?



**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** The history of that body is that it was set up as an intergovernmental framework in, from memory, 2010, and at some point around 2014 to 2016 it was transformed into having a treaty or a legal basis under which the Commission became part of that process. The Commission's interpretation of that was that at that point it essentially became an EU body. We did not agree with that, and, in the context of the TCA negotiations, argued the opposite.

We think that several member states would have been sympathetic to that argument, but in the wider context that was not the approach that they took. The basis for the current framework, which is the MoU that we agreed in December, was that framework. As currently set up it is regarded as an EU entity. The TCA provided for us to have a relationship with the EU to take forward measures on the North Sea—I forget the specific article—and this is an example of us doing that.

**Lord Liddle:** To be clear, is it the EU saying that we cannot be a member because we are not in the EU, or is it the UK that does not want to be a member because, on principle, it does not want to be part of anything that is the EU?

**Leo Docherty:** It is the EU, but we hope that it will not prevent a very deep relationship of collaboration and joint working in practical terms.

**Lord Liddle:** One of the facts that emerged in our evidence-taking was the huge expansion—a tenfold expansion, I think—of North Sea wind power that is required if we are to meet our climate goals. On the face of it, this requires a lot of drive and some kind of plan in which Governments have to play an essential role, for planning reasons as well as the private sector. How do the Government intend to take this forward? This is an example of how something involving the EU requires co-ordinated action by the UK. How is the Foreign Office managing to drive this priority forward?

**Leo Docherty:** We are seeking to ensure that a larger degree of our energy comes from renewable sources, particularly offshore wind in the North Sea. I visited Denmark recently to talk about this and to push this forward. It is clear that there is a huge abundance of opportunity in that regard, and a huge scale of Danish foreign direct investment matched with UK investment.

If we can achieve a hybrid link that brings in an increasing level of renewable energy from the North Sea, combined with the conventional energy that we have coming from other Scandinavian states as a transition fuel, that is where we see the real value of North Sea energy co-operation. It is something we are keenly aware of and we are very excited about. We are a world leader in offshore wind, so there are bags of potential.

It also has an application on the other peripheries of Europe. For example, I was in Azerbaijan the week before last talking to the Azerbaijanis about doing a similar thing on the Caspian Sea. I had the

personal experience of there being a great deal of wind in that place. It is of global value.

**Lord Liddle:** I do not doubt that there is an agreement in principle to this. Is there an adequate plan, and does the UK have an adequate means of co-ordinating its contribution to it?

**Leo Docherty:** Yes, there is. There is capital flowing into building these platforms, and there is an abundance of gigawatts being lined up to flow from the North Sea, from renewable energy, into the British grid, and then, as and when required, to be exported into Europe.

Q206 **Baroness Scott of Needham Market:** Staying with energy but thinking about the emissions trading schemes, the evidence we took was clear from everyone that there would be huge advantages in the UK and the EU schemes being linked in some way on the basis of liquidity, bureaucracy, effectiveness against climate change and so on. Is that something you would think about in principle? If not, why not? If you think it is worth exploring, can you identify what you would see as the main barriers and the points that would have to be resolved?

**Leo Docherty:** We certainly see it as something over which we would seek to co-operate. We are very enthusiastic to do that in principle. We are watching to see what emerges from the EU side, but there is already a great deal of anticipation as to how we might co-ordinate in that regard. Olaf has more details about the ETS.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** The TCA provides for the kind of linkage that you are suggesting. On the details of how a linkage works, there are various ways in which you could do it, if you look at how our price has evolved over the past year and a half and the EU's proposals for the sectors that the ETS applies to, and we would also consult on our own version of those things. Those are some of the questions that you would need to think through. We remain committed to considering the framework that was outlined in the TCA, which provides for a linking if both sides agree.

On the previous question about the way in which you would co-ordinate over the long term in the North Sea, the only point that might be helpful for Lord Liddle is that we obviously have a target for the scale of interconnection by 2030, as the Minister referred to. There are a series of additional interconnectors that need to be pushed through. That is largely private sector money, but it needs public sector support and regulation. That is the framework that needs to be put in place. The North Seas Energy Cooperation format provides for exactly the kind of regulatory, technical and project co-ordination that he was referring to. We are very much committed to making sure that that happens.

**The Chair:** That is very helpful. I have a follow-up question on Baroness Scott's question. Which of the specialised committees under the TCA does the issue of emissions trading fall under? We are very keen on this and we need to know where to watch.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** I know it was discussed in the goods group, but let me come back to you to make sure I get it right. I will write to you.

Q207 **Baroness Blackstone:** As you know, the EU plans to introduce a carbon border adjustment mechanism to combat carbon leakage. What evaluation have the Government made of the implications of this proposal for the UK, and what discussions have they had with the EU about it?

**Leo Docherty:** It is still early days. We are waiting to see some of the detail that emerges. We come at this with the expectation that we will collaborate and seek to achieve a positive benefit for both sides. Olaf, you have been working on those issues.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** On the Chair's question, it was the specialised committee for open and fair competition, before I mislead you.

On the question of the CBAM, we were tightly plugged in with the Commission on the design of the proposal before it got to the announcement stage. Given the very close similarities of our ETS systems at the moment, we would expect—and the EU knows—that, in any operation of the CBAM, the equivalence of our carbon pricing would be taken into account. That removes the core issue there, but CBAM also requires a set of reporting that companies would need to do against the requirements. That potentially has burdensome implications for our businesses. We are working on that.

It has been very helpful that the EU has agreed, to a point, that the UK is an observer to their informal expert group on the methods that are used for the implementation of the CBAMs. We are feeding in through that, so there is a direct link between what they are doing and what is coming up, which is a consultation in the UK on the CBAM; that is due for this spring.

**Baroness Blackstone:** Some of our witnesses expressed concerns about the implications of CBAM for UK exporters. They suggested that it could place very considerable administrative burdens on them. I wonder whether the Government agree with that. If they do, what are they doing to try to mitigate this in the future?

**Leo Docherty:** The central proposition is that we will have our own similar system whereby we will achieve a similar, if not better, standard. As long as we coordinate, we are all basically trying to move in the same direction. We do not see a circumstance where there is significant disadvantage to our own side.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Thank you, Minister, for clarifying that point, because I am not aware of any government statement that we are going to introduce a CBAM system ourselves. I have not seen one. Taking that as a given, as you said, does that imply that in most, if not all, cases, if the EU decides, for example, to put quite a hefty CBAM on Chinese exports of steel or cement, we will do much the same thing?

**Leo Docherty:** We would monitor these events and make our own judgments. I cannot speculate, but clearly we will want a situation

whereby we are not left with a significant disadvantage when it comes to the free flow of trade into Europe and beyond.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** In May of last year, the Treasury outlined that it would be consulting on our own approach.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** That is a consultation. The Minister has now stated that it is our policy.

**Leo Docherty:** I said that we would ensure that we would not be at a disadvantage when it comes to the free flow of trade into Europe. We would seek to be moving in the same direction on carbon emissions. The exact structure remains to be seen. That is why the consultation will be launched later this year.

Q208 **The Chair:** I will ask almost the same question that I asked previously. There must be a natural bit of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement's superstructure where CBAMs should be on the agenda. As we know, these committees are not really working yet, but where will that be?

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** I was right the last time, but about this question. That is the Trade Specialised Committee on Goods, but it is the same issue. The Trade Specialised Committee on Goods has raised that issue at the last meeting.

**The Chair:** I have got confused. The open and fair competition specialised committee is doing the emissions trading.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** They all feed up to the Trade Policy Committee and the Partnership Council.

**The Chair:** The goods committee is going to do the CBAM. That is very helpful.

Q209 **Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** We now come to one of the many negative effects of Brexit, the restrictions of movement of people between countries, particularly workers and professionals. I was going to say, "apart from Ministers", but that would be a bit cheap because you are doing a really good job in those 25 countries. It has been suggested that we might negotiate with either the European Union or with member states their participation in the youth movement schemes, so that at least young people would have better opportunities for travel.

**Leo Docherty:** We recognise that these are really important schemes. We have signed a number of individual ones. We seek to ensure as much mobility of youth as possible, whether it be schoolchildren or students. We recognise the importance. We acknowledge it is a huge benefit to both sides. As we move forward we will always be looking for additional opportunities to achieve whatever is possible in this area.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** Who are you negotiating with: the EU or individual member states?

**Leo Docherty:** It will end up being both.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** You have started negotiations.

**Leo Docherty:** No, but we have looked at a number of bilateral schemes. In the future, we will always be open to discussing this with the Commission, because we recognise it is important.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** You have not started yet.

**Leo Docherty:** No.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** This obviously came up in the context of the TCA negotiations, and it was not felt that it was desirable at that time, including because of the wider context. As you know, there is a slight debate inside the EU about the exact parameters of where competence lies on bits of youth mobility.

**Baroness Ludford:** That was going to be my supplementary, which I now do not need to put.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** Some member states think that they own the policy through visa routes, and bits of the Commission would disagree with that. We would need to operate within that framework.

**The Chair:** That was very interesting. That was a subject of quite a long discussion between me and our legal adviser earlier today, so thank you very much indeed.

Q210 **Viscount Trenchard:** Minister, I would like to talk about the challenges that are currently faced by creative professionals, in particular touring musicians, which means both classical orchestras and pop groups. When they travelled to the EU in the past, they used to go for a month and stop off in several different countries. Cabotage rules now prevent them from visiting more than one or two countries, so it has become uneconomic. It has very much cut down the amount of cultural exchange between British musicians and European musicians.

There is a great deal of dissatisfaction about the reaction of DCMS to what has happened, and there is doubt. The Independent Society of Musicians is disappointed that DCMS has not really achieved anything to make this better, although Julia Lopez did write to the committee to say that the Government really want to help. Could you please explain what substantive discussions, with the EU or with member states, are going on to solve this problem?

**Leo Docherty:** We are aware of this. I am pleased to report that the vast majority of member states—23 out of 27—have confirmed that UK positions and performers do not need visas or work permits for some short-term touring, but of course you mentioned in your question that does not provide the solution because they need to be going to multiple places, as do their support teams and staff. We will keep trying. We acknowledge it is important. We will continue to raise this with the Commission in due course to get the outcome we want.

**Viscount Trenchard:** The member states can solve the individual access to their country, but they should influence the Commission to be a bit more flexible.

**Leo Docherty:** Yes, indeed. It is in everyone's interest. We are alive to that challenge and we will keep working on it.

Q211 **Baroness Ludford:** Having renounced my supplementary on the previous set, I am inspired to ask now on competence. Forgive me; I may be a long time out of date, but nearly 20 years ago I was the European Parliament rapporteur on the Schengen Information System, so it has long been an interest. What is the Foreign Office understanding of member states' latitude to giving visas, even for that single member state? That does not ring any bells with me, particularly for working purposes.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** This may be one of the issues where we want to provide further information afterwards, because I do not want to give wrong information. It is worth reminding ourselves of what we put on the table during the TCA negotiations, part of the challenge here being that a solution to this problem—for the reasons that we just heard—is not just about visas; it is also about cabotage and movement issues.

During the TCA we suggested that there was a cultural exemption for the cabotage framework, which is what we have with bits of the EEA. It works with them. Independent of the visa issue, you need to fix cabotage as well. We would remain open to that solution.

On mobility, we aimed to resolve that through the mode 4 approach, which the Commission is able to agree as the trade negotiator, as it were. Now that we are not in that trade negotiation context, there is the same question about some disagreements about where exactly the competence lies. Some member states will say that the Commission cannot do that for them, for the reasons that you outlined.

**Baroness Ludford:** Forgive me, Chair; I am new to this committee. Have we had a note in the past of the Government's understanding of the legal issues here and the respective competencies?

**The Chair:** We have had very substantial chain of correspondence on all of this, which includes quite a strong element of that. I would suggest that we go back and consult on that. We have already been kindly offered a letter to follow on. We might wait for that.

**Baroness Ludford:** That would be very helpful.

Q212 **Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** If you look at the pile of correspondence that has surrounded this issue, in which we have been an active part, as have DCMS, the FCDO, Lord Frost, et cetera, it is about that thick. Does that not cast a slightly odd light on the Rolls-Royce co-ordination that you told us earlier was in place?

**Leo Docherty:** An abundance of correspondence is not a sign that we are not co-ordinating. Clearly it is a tricky issue and we will seek to address it. I am sure we will continue to correspond.

**The Chair:** My old question is a question we have asked on the Floor of the House. With this particular issue there is a TCA element to it, as we have equipment going across borders. The question that was asked on the Floor of the House was which committee or committees of the TCA is the equipment piece of this being discussed at. Perhaps you could add that to the letter you are kindly going to write to Baroness Ludford, because, once again, this whole area has been something the committee, even before this inquiry, has been interested in.

**Leo Docherty:** Yes, we know that.

**The Chair:** It would be helpful, because we can then watch developments in that over time.

Q213 **Lord Faulkner of Worcester:** Minister, I am going to return to a subject you raised briefly with Lord Foulkes a moment ago: school visits from the EU to the UK. We had a substantial amount of evidence from organisers of school visits, which have very largely—certainly initially, at any rate—dried up, mainly because of the requirement that the UK has to insist on passports for the students. There has not been a culture of passports, particularly in France, and the kids travel across Europe with their identity card. There has been resistance to going through the rigamarole and the expense of getting a passport.

A number of suggestions have come to us, such as introducing a new group travel scheme for under-18s so that, when a party is travelling together, they would all be covered on the same document. There does not seem to have been a lot of progress on that. I wonder if you could comment.

**Leo Docherty:** You are right that it is very difficult. Passports and a lack thereof are a key issue. This is repeatedly raised with me by my European counterparts, as you would imagine. This is something we continue to look at. We will look at it in the context of trying to be creative in any solution. We are aware and we are working on it, but there is no progress as yet.

**Lord Faulkner of Worcester:** A list of travellers scheme used to exist. It was alleged that it was being used as a route for illegal entry, but is there any evidence at all that was the case?

**Leo Docherty:** I am not aware of any.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** The list of travellers scheme was an EU scheme, so part of the issue is that in 2021, as we left, the EU removed us from its list, and by October we phased out the scheme for that reason.

On your specific question, we understand that almost half of the false documents detected at the border in 2020 were the kind of ID cards that

you were thinking of, which is a much higher rate than for passports. That is partly what stands behind bits of that logic.

**Q214 The Chair:** It is certainly something we have become very interested in. It is a co-ordination with the Home Office, and I hope that co-ordination goes well.

We move to our last substantive question, which is also about student exchanges. During our evidence-taking, quite a lot of people have told us about the lack of student exchanges being damaging. More interestingly, when we went to the Welsh Parliament we had a very interesting evidence session about the Taith programme the Welsh Government has put together, which is a reciprocal student programme. It does not supplant the Turing programme in any way. It sits alongside it, and it has already given benefit to 6,000 students.

Could you start by just reflecting on that as a programme and saying whether you welcome it and whether you have any plans to introduce it in England? We asked the same of the Scottish Government, and I am sure their answers will be recorded in our report.

**Leo Docherty:** We welcome it. It is clearly of great benefit to the individuals involved and their respective nations. We are open-minded and we look with interest at the extent to which we might operate a similar scheme. We are conscious of the importance of educational opportunities and the opportunities to study in Europe, and vice versa. We hope that in the future we can advance significantly, because if you look at the positive impact of the Erasmus scheme, we note that it was very beneficial. We come at this with a deal of sympathy and an appetite for creativity.

**The Chair:** Does that mean that you are actively looking at a Taith copy, or does that just mean that you are open-minded?

**Leo Docherty:** We are open-minded and everything is under consideration.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** We do think it is right that, where funds are being allocated, they are prioritised to UK students going overseas, which is obviously what Turing does. There is a question there. The Taith scheme covers a wider spectrum of mobility than simply the higher education framework. The value for money assessment, which is not about that scheme but about those kinds of exchange from Erasmus+, is different for the different areas, so there is a question linked to that. We think that Turing is working in the sense that the numbers of people taking it up are going up year on year and are now higher, although it is for the whole world so it is not directly comparable with Erasmus.

Part of what underlies this question is whether the levels of inbound mobility in these areas are what you would expect. I would note that although the make-up by nationality has changed quite a lot, the overall number of people coming to study in the UK remains incredibly high. Indeed, we had a target for 2030 of 600,000 students a year, and we



already met it last year and the year before, 10 years early. There is no question of people not finding the UK an attractive place to come and study. The question that you are getting at is about the change in the European make-up of those people after Brexit.

**The Chair:** As you pointed out, Taith starts with schoolchildren and goes all the way through the piece.

Q215 **Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** Following up what you said about schoolchildren, one of the ways in which that used to be encouraged, even before we were members of the European Union, was town twinning. That seems to have fallen by the wayside; fewer and fewer towns seem to be twinning, and some of them are dropping off. Have you thought of doing something to promote this, not just with France and Germany but with some of the newer member states of the European Union? You would get a lot of kudos for that. It would not help you in the election, but it might be useful.

**Leo Docherty:** It is interesting that you say that twinning has dropped off. I do not know if that is the case or not. We had some good discussions this week about French twinning, for obvious reasons, in advance of the summit. There is no shortage of appetite from the UK side. I would be interested to know what the trend is, in fact, and what we might do to support it if it is lagging.

**Lord Faulkner of Worcester:** There is a twinning department in what used to be called the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

**Olaf Henricson-Bell:** There is. If one had a non-scientific graph of twinning, you would see a huge surge in twinning after the Second World War, then a gradual decline, which was largely in western Europe, particularly with Germany and France, and then an uptick in twinning, particularly in eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The UK was obviously supportive of all that. We have done some work in recent years, exactly as the Minister said, to try to reignite bits of that. France is the example. I was based in Paris when we did that, and there was a series of new twinings. As you say, a wider infrastructure needs to be there to support them as well.

**The Chair:** My nice area of Scotland is twinned with a good bit of Bordeaux, which is a very good idea.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Do the Government recognise that this is one of the areas where we really are world leaders? We are the second biggest invisible exporter of higher education services in the world. The figures for our European partners are not good. The opening up towards the rest of the world is entirely welcome. This is not a criticism of Turing at all; it is to say that there is something missing there. Surely, if we are to stay as the number two in the world, we need to have a really lively, both-ways exchange with European countries. Have you given any thought to how Turing and Erasmus could work together and be linked up to some extent?

**Leo Docherty:** I agree with your analysis. We are of the same view. It is a hugely important international good, of which we are very proud. We will continue to look at ways in which we can ensure that relationship is nourished. I cannot speculate today on the structure of that, but in terms of approach we are keenly aware of that and we will seek to expedite such an outcome.

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** Can I just ask you, in your generosity in writing to the committee with further information, to add a bit more about the list of travellers scheme? Your colleague from the department gave a percentage that showed that some of the applications have been fraudulent. I would really like to get at the volume for the last year for which we have figures, and, within that, the proportion of invalid applications that apply to EU countries as against those that apply to people who are coming from outwith the EU. As you rightly said, the list applies more broadly than the EU.

**Leo Docherty:** We are happy to provide that.

**Baroness Ludford:** When I heard Mr Henricson-Bell reply, my understanding was that you were not talking specifically about this scheme. You talked about how ID cards in general were more likely to be fraudulent than passports. It is important to find out how many people on this particular scheme for schoolchildren were found to have fraudulent ID cards, because that is what we are talking about. I do not think it is terribly helpful to use a generalised statistic to invalidate children travelling in a group on ID schemes for exchanges.

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** That is really why I said that it had to be from the list, but also in a credible year of figures that can be given.

**Leo Docherty:** That is noted. We are happy to provide that clarity.

**The Chair:** That is the second letter.

**Leo Docherty:** Yes. We are happy to do that.

Q216 **Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne:** Given the incredibly high level of higher education in the UK—we have four of the eight top universities, and campuses and even British universities are being opened in different countries—does the Minister wish to review, or invite his department to review, the partial eclipse of the budget for the British Council, which is one of our front-running agencies and institutions of higher education?

**Leo Docherty:** I have seen for myself how important it is. Its reputation precedes it right across Europe. We seek to ensure that it can achieve the best outcome and the best effect, given the constraints that we collectively face. We have to deal with the world as it is, not as we would wish it to be, but we are passionate supporters of the terrifically good work of the British Council. I speak from personal experience.

**The Chair:** I just want one tiny bit of clarification and then we will finish on time, which I hope you will appreciate. We have been talking a bit

about the Turing scheme. I must say that the evidence that has come to us—I am speaking personally at the moment, because we have not had the full discussion—has been that the Turing scheme has been well received and really quite a good thing. Do you have any plans to alter it? I know you partially answered this in answer to Lord Hannay a moment ago, but is there an active way of thinking about how the Turing scheme could be expanded, either to have incoming people coming here or, as Lord Hannay suggested, linking up in some way with Erasmus+? Is that thinking going on?

**Leo Docherty:** Yes, it is. We are delighted with the success of the Turing scheme. Some 41,000 students participated in 2021. That is a significant success. We will always seek to find opportunities to allow more students from more countries to participate in more British education. It is under consideration.

**The Chair:** That is very good. Can you give us any clues as to what might be under consideration?

**Leo Docherty:** It is about how we might make it even bigger and better, and diversify it even more. It is clearly successful. Whether that success can be broadened is definitely under consideration.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much indeed, both of you, for giving us a very long session. You have answered a hugely wide set of questions. I am afraid that you are going to come back to us on two matters. First, there was Baroness Ludford's overall question, and then there was Baroness Anelay's question. We do not mind whether that is one or two letters, but we would be very grateful for some help on that relatively quickly, as I said, because we are writing the report as from this evening. In the meantime, I pass on the warm thanks of my colleagues.