

Actions speak louder than headlines this Europe Day

Today on Europe Day 2023 Angus Robertson Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution External Affairs and Culture, addressed The Scottish Parliament.

He said: “The difficult reality is that Scotland, while it is part of a UK that is not part of the EU, cannot ensure alignment with the EU in all cases. We must align where we can and where that alignment is meaningful but, first and foremost, we must protect Scottish legislation from the UK Government’s Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, which is creating significant uncertainties for our country during an on-going economic crisis.

“We will always seek to work constructively with the UK Government, because we value co-operation as a matter of principle. However, where the UK Government seeks to undermine the basis of co-operation – such as agreed rules on exemptions to the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 – we will challenge that robustly.

“The Scottish Government will keep fighting for the values and standards that we hold dear and for a Europe that is green and prosperous as well as united and diverse – a Europe that, above all, stands for co-operation and peace. That is what Robert Schuman stood for, what Europe day represents and what the EU project is. It is an ideal that Scotland continues to support and believe in, and one to which we will return.”

Foyso! Choudhury MSP was in the chamber and asked a question about Scotland's replacement for the Erasmus project, saying: "No progress has been made on that programme. Instead, The Scottish Government continues to deflect any questions about the Erasmus programme, and the Erasmus+ programme was mentioned only briefly in the ministerial statement, which shows how much of a priority it is for the Scottish Government".

Mr Robertson replied: "We have not seen a repatriation of budget that would have gone towards the Erasmus scheme. Foyso! Choudhury is absolutely right that work is in progress on how to have what can only be a second-best scheme – the best scheme is an Erasmus+ scheme. If he has any ideas about which bits of the education budget that is currently spent in Scotland he wishes to see cut to pay for a new programme, I will listen very closely to what the Labour Party is advocating."

After the meeting Mr Choudhury said: "As Scottish Labour Spokesperson for Culture, Europe, and International Development, it was important for me to question The Scottish Government on its commitment to introducing a replacement Erasmus + programme on this, Europe Day 2023.

"After Brexit, the SNP Scottish Government seem determined to remain aligned with the EU, yet in terms of education they have made no progress on a Scottish Education Exchange Programme.

"Unlike the Labour Welsh Government, the SNP Scottish Government are letting down young people by not providing an appropriate replacement for the European Erasmus+ scheme.

"The successful Welsh Taith scheme has provided 5,000 exchange opportunities since September 2022.

"When will the Scottish Government stop hiding behind arguments for independence and act now to truly align Scottish

priorities with EU practices?

“The Cabinet Secretary’s response to my question was inadequate.

“Scottish Labour wants to see the SNP make true on its commitment to young people and not to abandon them.

“Actions speak louder than headlines.

“Now is the time for the Scottish Government to realign Scottish priorities.”