

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee
Thursday 4 December 2025
32nd Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

International Network Annual Report 2024-25

1. Following publication on 12 November 2025 of the [International strategy: annual report 2024 to 2025](#), the Committee will be hearing from the following Scottish Government officials—
 - Catherine Reeves, Head of Scottish Government Office Berlin
 - John Devine, Head of Scottish Affairs Office Canada
 - Nick Leake, Deputy Director, Scotland House Brussels
2. A SPICe briefing can be found at **Annexe A** and the Introduction to the annual report at **Annexe B**.

Annexe A

Scottish Government International Strategy Annual Report 2024-25 – the role of the international offices

Introduction

On 12 November 2025, the Scottish Government published its [International strategy: annual report 2024 to 2025](#). Whilst the Scottish Government's previous annual reports focused on the work of the Scottish Government's international network, this latest report looks more widely to focus on work to deliver the [Scottish Government's International Strategy](#). This paper for the Committee focuses on the work of the international offices, in particular in Brussels, Berlin and Ottawa, highlighted in the annual report.

The Scottish Government publishes an annual report in response to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee's [report on the Scottish government's international work](#) (published in April 2022) which recommended that the Scottish Government publishes an annual report, setting out the contribution made by the international offices in promoting the values, objectives and priorities of the revised International Framework. The International Framework was subsequently replaced by the International Strategy.

In October 2024, the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee published a report in response to the [Review of Outcomes and Indicators relating to the Scottish Government's International Work](#). The Committee's report included recommendations around the role of the international offices including:

"The Committee welcomes the publication at the end of last year of the International network: annual report 2022-2023, the first such report to set out the contribution made by the international offices to promoting the values, objectives and priorities of Scotland's International Strategy, and a key recommendation from our 2022 inquiry. We note that monitoring and evaluation is underway for the second such report and welcome the Cabinet Secretary's assurances that the approach will be to continue to refine and improve these reports to ensure accountability and transparency in how the network is delivering against its objectives."

And

"The Committee supports a more collaborative approach between the Scottish Government and the UK Government on international engagement and we will ask the UK Government to provide an update on progress in delivering this approach."

The [Scottish Government responded to the Committee's report](#) in January 2025. In its response, the Government indicated that future annual reports would "report on delivery of the strategy overall but will retain a focus on the international network within that".

The International Strategy

The work of the Scottish Government's international offices is guided by the Government's international policies as set out in the [International Strategy](#) which was published in January 2024. It focuses action on four areas:

- Scotland's international role.
- Economy, trade and investment.
- Climate change, biodiversity and renewable energy
- Reputation, influence and relationships.

On the role of the International Network of offices, the International Strategy states:

"These offices directly engage with governments and organisations in their respective countries, to learn from others' experiences and to share our knowledge, skills and technical expertise for the global good.

They facilitate high-level engagement abroad for Scottish Ministers and provide a base for Scottish public sector and commercial stakeholders to interact with their international partners. Through these important engagements, we help share and build understanding on common challenges and priorities, pave the way for new cultural and commercial projects, develop partnerships with our key partners and attract people to come to live and work, study, visit and do business in Scotland."

The Scottish Government's international footprint

The Scottish Government has international offices in [London](#), [Beijing](#), [Berlin](#), [Brussels](#), [Copenhagen](#), [Dublin](#), [Ottawa](#), [Paris](#), and [Washington DC](#).

[According to the Scottish Government](#), the purpose of the international offices is:

"to promote Scottish interests overseas and strengthen our relationships with countries and continents."

The [strategic objectives for the Scottish Government's international offices](#) are:

- improving Scotland's international profile
- attracting investment
- helping businesses to trade internationally
- promoting and securing research and innovation capability, partnerships and funding
- facilitating cultural exchanges and events
- protecting and enhancing Scotland's interests in the EU and beyond

In addition to the Scottish Government's international presence, [Scottish Development International has a large international footprint](#) with over 30 offices across the globe.

Scotland's international footprint



The strategic objectives for each international office

The Scottish Government has published on its website the individual strategic objectives for each of its international offices. Given the witnesses for today's session are representing the Scottish Government's offices in Brussels, Canada and Germany, the strategic objectives for each of these offices is provided below.

In the case of both the Canada and Germany offices, the Scottish Government offices are based in the UK Embassy/High Commission.

Scottish Government office in Brussels

The Scottish Government shares Scotland House in Brussels with Scotland Europa and Scottish Enterprise/Scottish Development International.

[According to the Scottish Government:](#)

"Scotland House Brussels (SHB) is a key part of Scotland's international network. It is the centre of Scotland's engagement with the EU and a convenor of relationships between Scottish, European and international partners."

The strategic objectives for Scotland House Brussels are built upon the following overarching themes:

- Reputation, influence and relationships.
- Economy, trade and investment.
- Climate change, biodiversity and renewable energy.

Scottish Government office in Canada

According to the Scottish Government, [the office in Canada works to:](#)

- Protect and enhance Scotland's interests and strengthen Scottish/Canadian intergovernmental relations, by identifying and influencing issues of mutual interest for bilateral cooperation.

- Share information with Canadian partners around areas of excellence where Scotland has developed significant policies e.g. the Arctic Framework, climate change and social enterprise.
- Support in-country and Scottish-based partners (including Scottish Development International, VisitScotland, Scottish higher education institutions, Creative Scotland, British Council and others) to find opportunities to promote Scotland's cultural, education, tourism, trade and investment offers.
- Facilitate innovation and research collaboration through our partners.
- Engage, inform and develop networks with Scottish diaspora across Canada.

Scottish Government office in Germany

According to the Scottish Government, [the work of the Scotland in Germany network includes](#):

- Increasing influence and engagement with Germany.
- Encouraging increased collaboration between our business, research, education and cultural institutions.
- Supporting Scottish ministers, in particular in the areas of trade and investment, higher education, research and innovation.
- Promoting trade and investment between German and Scottish businesses and organisations.
- Providing analysis on political and economic developments in Germany.

Further information on the Scottish Government's international network is provided in the [attached SPICe blog](#).

The Scottish Government's other international policies

In addition to the International Strategy, the Scottish Government also has other policies which inform its international work. These include the Global Affairs Framework and the Scottish Connections Framework.

The Scottish Government's Global Affairs Framework

The Scottish Government published its [Global Affairs Framework](#) in May 2022. The Framework sets out a series of principles, vision and values for Scotland's international engagement.

The Global Affairs Framework focuses on the following policy and operational areas:

- Good global citizenship,
- maintaining the closest possible relationship with the European Union,
- gender equality,
- climate crisis and climate justice,
- respect for human rights and the rule of law,
- the role of Scotland's international networks,
- Scotland's culture.

The Scottish Connections Framework

In April 2023, the Scottish Government published the [Scottish Connections Framework](#), which sets out the Scottish Government's approach to engaging with Scotland's diaspora.

The Framework covers a lot of ground setting out how the Scottish Government and its public bodies will build on existing activity to create an international network of Scottish connections. It sets out how, in the Government's view, Scotland can better engage with its diaspora.

The Framework also highlights the need to work with the Scottish global network including Scottish Development International, Visit Scotland and the Government's own network of nine international offices. It also sets out the importance of working with the UK Government, the other devolved administrations and the British Council.

The Scottish Government's international offices were given a key role in delivering elements of the Framework. The offices were to be responsible for engaging with the diaspora, including university alumni, in those countries. They were to be supported by including a diaspora objective in all the Scottish Government's international offices business plans.

More information on the Scottish Connections Framework is [provided in a SPICe blog](#).

The International strategy: annual report 2024 to 2025

The [International Strategy annual report](#) sets out how the Scottish Government has delivered against the aims and key actions set out in the International Strategy during the year 2024-25. It also sets out how Scotland's "international engagement supports the broader ambition of strengthening Scotland's global reputation".

The report focuses on each of the priority areas identified in the International Strategy:

- Economy, trade and investment
- Climate change, biodiversity and renewable energy
- Reputation, influence and relationships
- Scotland in a changing world

The report includes 15 case studies which include examples demonstrating how the international offices have supported delivery of the International Strategy. There is also a specific section focusing on the "International Strategy in action: Euro 2024 in Germany".

Finally, the annual report provides a section on performance and transparency data.

The Scottish Connections Framework

The chapter on Reputation, influence and relationships within the annual report incorporates the findings of the biannual review of the Scottish Connections Framework. The review emphasised the role of the international offices stating that:

“Our international network of offices have also included diaspora focused objectives into their business plans, with Scottish Connections activity integrated into office events, particularly around key cultural moments such as St Andrew’s Day and Burns Night. These events have provided valuable opportunities to strengthen engagement with diaspora communities and promote valuable sign-ups to the digital tools.”

Scotland in Canada

The annual report’s first case study provides details of a Scottish Whisky promotion in Canada organised by the Scottish Government office in Ottawa:

“Scottish Government Canada plays an active role in promoting Scottish goods to key stakeholders across the country. Building strong connections with food and drink promoters and agents is a vital part of efforts to increase visibility of Scottish brands.

In collaboration with William Grant & Sons, we sponsored a whisky showcase for our Summer Reception for Federal MPs, Senators and those associated with the Scotland Canada Parliamentary Friendship Group...

...Later in the year, we partnered with Harris Distillery and Canadian distributor Noble Estates to launch the Harris Hearach Oloroso whisky at our St Andrew’s Day Reception.”

The annual report also highlighted the development of air traffic links with Canada as a result of a new Edinburgh to Montreal route operated by Air Canada starting in summer 2025.

Scotland House Brussels

Within the section of the annual report on Scotland’s place in the world there is a section setting out the work of Scotland House in Brussels. The annual report emphasises the importance of Scotland’s relationship with the European Union and highlights the engagement which has taken place facilitated by the Scottish Government EU office:

“The Scotland House Brussels team (made up of Scottish Government and Scotland Europa team members) have been uniquely placed in 2024-25 to leverage our longstanding diplomatic relationships and policy expertise to follow this [political change in Europe] and support Ministers, including support of domestic policy priorities, in particular growing the economy and tackling the climate emergency. The team also helps maximise opportunities for trade and investment, as well as long term opportunities for businesses, civil society organisations and people in Scotland.”

The annual report also provides details of the events the Brussels office have organised over the last 12 months. In relation to economy, trade and investment the report stated:

“Our events in 2024-25 focused on promoting key Scottish industries,

including a reception profiling Scotland's food and drink export markets and a financial services roundtable. Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands Mairi Gougeon hosted the former as part of her October 2024 visit to Brussels, alongside the Chief Executive of Scotland Food & Drink. Our financial services roundtable brought together Scottish and EU-based experts, industry and EU institutional representatives. The roundtable was complemented by a whisky tasting event, where we highlighted Scotland's financial services offer to an audience of EU27 representatives, including speech by Scottish Financial Enterprise Chief Executive, Sandy Begbie."

In relation to the Government's reputation, influence and relationships priority, the annual report states:

"Scotland enjoys a strong reputation in Brussels, bolstered by its consistent policy positions, strong European values and well-respected culture offer. Scotland House uses its presence at the heart of the European district to promote Scotland's aims and develop strong and enduring partnerships with EU institutions and others in Brussels."

The work Scotland House Brussels has done to develop strong relationships with senior contacts in the Commission, European Parliament and Member States is highlighted along with the example of the European Parliament Friends of Scotland Group which has 23 MEPs who take an active interest in Scotland.

In terms of events organised by the office in Brussels, the annual report states:

"Across the year, we delivered another successful annual programme of events, profiling Scotland's ambitions and expertise across various sectors. Our annual Winter Festivals programme once again brought together a variety of stakeholders in Brussels highlighting Scottish culture, featuring performances by young musicians from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

This period also included our first event under the Scottish Connections Framework, where we celebrated 25 years of Scotland House Brussels by connecting new and longstanding friends of Scotland House for an evening reception to reflect on our work over the years, and our ambitions going forward."

International Strategy in action: EURO 2024 in Germany

The case study setting out the Scottish Government's work in Germany around the men's European football championships in Germany in 2024 (Euro 2024) is presented as an example of the International Strategy in action. The case study states:

"The Scottish Government Germany office undertook an ambitious six-month programme in preparation for EURO 2024, taking advantage of the visibility afforded Scotland by being drawn against Germany for the opening match to advance Scottish interests in Germany across all three of our headline

international objectives. This effort spanned the period from the group stage draw in December 2023 through to the conclusion of the group stage in June 2024.”

The outcomes highlighted as a result of this work included a programme comprising three ministerial visits, a multicity cultural programme, a suite of Scottish Connections themed events in partnership with members of the Scottish diaspora in Germany and two joint events with the British Embassy in Berlin. The events run jointly with the British Embassy were:

- The Scottish team in Germany collaborated with the British Embassy to co-design the FCDO’s public viewing event to mark the opening match in Munich. As well as displaying the Brand Scotland marque, the team partnered with VisitScotland to design a highlight reel of Scottish landscapes and attractions, which played on a loop to an audience of around 3,000. When surveyed, the majority of attendees said they had never been to Scotland, but 70% said that they would be more likely to do so in future – a potential boost of over £1 million in economic activity based on VisitBritain average spend figures.
- Working with the British Embassy to leverage GREAT brand funding, the team also curated an Edinburgh Festival Fringe showcase to promote Scottish festival tourism. This was staged in the main fanzone at the Brandenburg Gate, again displaying the Brand Scotland marque.

Assisted by UK Government funding from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the Scottish Government team in Germany also worked with SDI and a Germany-based Scottish chef to design a Scottish themed menu, which was served in Munich alongside traditional German food. They also secured a high-profile sponsorship opportunity for Walkers Shortbread.

The annual report also includes a case study highlighting “Academic Exchange and Research Cooperation with Germany”. The case study states that:

“Scottish Government Germany actively promoted the new Scottish Education Exchange Programme and developed relationships with key academic and research organisations in Germany. These included the German Academic Exchange Service, the German Research Foundation and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. The aim was to facilitate partnerships with Scottish stakeholders and unlock funding opportunities for collaborative research.

Several notable outcomes were achieved which support the objectives of Scotland’s International Education Strategy. In September 2024, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the German Academic Exchange Service, establishing a £100,000 bilateral research fund for projects co-funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the German Academic Exchange and Scottish Government German.

In February 2025, another MoU was signed between the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Lower Saxony Science Ministry, underpinning a £1 million joint research and innovation scheme for bilateral research projects.”

Today’s evidence session

Today’s evidence session with representatives from the Scottish Government’s international offices in Berlin, Brussels and Ottawa is an opportunity to discuss in detail the role of the Scottish Government’s offices and how they have supported and continue to support delivery of the Scottish Government’s international strategy.

It provides an opportunity to discuss examples of specific outcomes achieved by each of the offices represented to support delivery of the three policy themes identified in the international strategy (economy, trade and investment; climate change, biodiversity and renewable energy; and reputation, influence and relationships).

Today’s evidence session also provides an opportunity for the Committee to explore how the offices support delivery of specific Scottish Government priorities as set out in other policies such as the Scottish Connections Framework.

The Committee may also wish to discuss how the Scottish Government’s offices work alongside the UK Government embassies and consuls and with the UK Government in London to pursue Scottish Government priorities.

Iain McIver and Annie Bosse.

SPICe

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The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP www.parliament.scot

Annexe B

Introduction

In January 2024, we published Scotland's International Strategy¹ setting out how the Scottish Government and our partners would deliver key international priorities throughout the parliamentary term. The strategy outlines how government, agencies and our international network work collaboratively across a wide range of policy areas and international activities to strengthen Scotland's position on the world stage and advance our shared international ambitions, including contributing to the development of the well-established values-led nation brand for Scotland, known as the Brand Scotland Partnership.

The strategy focuses on three broad themes of:

- economy, trade and investment
- climate change, biodiversity and renewable energy
- reputation, influence and relationships

The focus on these themes ensures we are prioritising areas where Scotland already has significant strengths. It also means that we have identified key areas where we see the greatest potential and opportunity for Scotland to grow its presence, impact and influence. This strategy will continue to be the principal guide for our international work for the remainder of this parliamentary term.

This annual report sets out how we have delivered on these aims and on the key actions set out in the International Strategy since it was published, in the reporting year 2024-25. It also reflects how our international engagement supports the broader ambition of strengthening Scotland's global reputation.

The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture confirmed to the Scottish Parliament in May 2023² that we would undertake a biannual review of the Scottish Connections Framework.³ The output of that review is included in this report, within the chapter on reputation, influence and relationships.

This annual report also includes narrative and financial reporting on our Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend previously included in the Contribution to International Development report.⁴ This is found in the chapter on climate change, biodiversity and renewable energy as it relates to the Climate Justice Fund; in the chapter on reputation, influence and relationships as it relates to our development spend in our partner countries of Malawi, Zambia, Rwanda and Pakistan, as well as our humanitarian emergency spend globally; and in the annexes on performance and transparency data detailing all of our ODA spend, by country, project, and implementing partner from which Scottish Government ODA fund the project financing was sourced, and whether grants or contracts were awarded competitively or non-competitively.