European Union Structural and Investment Funds and Celtic Language: An analysis of the 2007-2020 funding period in relation to Breton, Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh

Herault, Romain and Willis, Craig

ALPHA-RLH, European Centre for Minority Issues, Europa Universität Flensburg

April 2021

European Union Structural and Investment Funds and Celtic Language: An analysis of the 2007-2020 funding period in relation to Breton, Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh.[1]

Romain Herault[2] and Craig Willis.[3]

Abstract:

The European Structural and Investment Funds are distributed to the regional level within the EU, targeting primarily regions which are 'less developed' in terms of GDP as a percentage of EU average. At the same time, many of the national and linguistic minorities within the EU lie in geographically and economically peripheral areas, such as the traditional areas where Celtic languages are spoken. This working paper uses a qualitative method to examine projects in the regions in which four Celtic languages are or have been traditionally spoken, covering Breton, Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh. Whilst the four languages and their heartland communities varying greatly in terms of numerical size and also economic marginalisation, all have received structural funds which can be linked directly to projects using the language or indirectly through projects in areas where there are a large percentage of speakers of the language. The findings show that the direct links are more prominent in the Scottish Highlands and Islands and West Wales, than the Irish Gaeltacht or Brittany. This is of course concerning in light of the UK's recent departure from the EU and thus ending of applicability for ESIF.

Keywords: European Union structural and investment funds; Celtic languages; Breton; Irish; Scottish Gaelic; Welsh; regional and minority languages; European Regional Development Funds; European Social Funds

[1] This research was presented at the 18th International Conference on Minority Languages on 26th March 2021. We are grateful to the feedback we received here as well as from other colleagues during the process. The article remains a work in progress, for which we acknowledge our limitations in the conclusion.

[2] ALPHA-RLH. email: r.herault@alpha-rlh.com

[3] European Centre for Minority Issues / Europa Universität Flensburg. Correspondence email: willis@ecmi.de

1 Introduction

It has been previously documented that EU structural funds have made a significant impact for economically peripheral regions in Europe (Analysis for Economic Decisions, 2012; Becker et al., 2010; Spilanis et al., 2013; Surubaru, 2017), including in the British Isles (UK and Ireland) as well as France (Bachtler et al., 2017; Armstrong et al., 2015; Giordano, 2020). Such peripheral regions are often home to much of Europe's national minority communities and languages and this is very much the case for the Celtic languages of Breton, Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh, which are the focus of this research paper.[4] Whilst these four branches of Celtic language differ significantly in terms of number of speakers, the regions all contain a cultural identity different from the dominant culture in Paris or London for example. Moreover, these Celtic speaking regions or nations share similar patterns of not just linguistic but economic and social oppression over centuries, which have resulted in the current-day socioeconomic situation being below national averages in regional development (at least when measured in strictly economic terms such as GDP). As such, some of these regions (often only forming part of each historic Celtic nation) have been targeted by European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) due to their lower GDP per capita as an average of the EU. The funding period of 2000-2006 contained a number of culturally related projects, however the consequent Creative Europe, Erasmus + and Horizon 2020 funding replaced this with more targeted funds, expanding upon previous smaller EU funding lines. Previous research and policy reports have highlighted some projects funded by these new post-2007 related to different spheres of minority language (DG Education and Culture, 2018; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019; Gazzola et al., 2016; Dendrinos, 2018; Manias-Muñoz, 2016), including in the four aforementioned Celtic languages (ELEN, 2018; Creative Europe Desk Ireland, 2020; Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru, 2017). However, less attention has been paid to the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund which have since seen two further funding rounds (2007-2013 and 2014-2020). Although this funding has been not targeted at language or indeed Celtic language speakers, the focus on structural investment into regional development has been to the benefit of regions as a whole. The aim of this working paper is to explore if there have been projects which have directly funded minority language related activities in these four regions, or whether there have only been indirect links.

In the current context of the United Kingdom's recent exit from the European Union and therefore access to EU funds, there has been concern expressed that minority languages in the UK will be hindered by this and there are calls for replacing certain cultural funds as a result (ELEN, 2018). This work therefore also aims to ascertain whether the ESIF should also be a discussion point on top of more typically cultural funds such as Creative Europe and Erasmus+. It is thus also a timely point to draw a comparison between regions in the UK home to Celtic language speakers (Scottish Gaelic and Welsh) who will lose EU funding, alongside regions in

[4] Although there are six modern branches of Celtic language, this research does not focus on Cornish or Manx. In the case of Cornish, the number of speakers is extremely low and initial research by the authors failed to find any project which could even indirectly link European Union structural funds to the Cornish language. In the case of Manx, the number of speakers is also extremely low plus it also falls outside the scope of EU due to the Isle of Man's self-governance status.

France and Ireland where the speakers (Breton and Irish) will still have access. This will also allow future research to examine differences following this divergence.

Accordingly, this paper first outlines and defines the empirical situation of the four Celtic languages in focus and their regions. This includes a review of previous studies on Celtic language and in particular socioeconomic aspects. It then discusses the ESIF including the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in detail and its intention and role, as well as summarising previous studies on its impact. This allows for the second half of the paper to provide four subsections looking at each language, followed by a comparative analysis of them all. Each subsection evaluates the impact of ESIF funds in these regions.

2 Celtic Language: History and Research

2.1 Celtic Language Overview

As the introduction briefly summarised, Celtic languages and their traditional speaking regions share a lot of history. Linguistically, although historically the Indo-European language family subgroup of Celtic has had widespread influence across the continent (Eska, 2009), there are now considered to be six modern Celtic languages which are then divided into two subfamilies (Innes, 2013). The historic linguistic development and specificities of Breton, Cornish, Irish, Manx, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh are not of primary importance here, it is sufficient to state that these six are considered as a linguistic grouping. What is of significance is that they share similarities of historic suppression and geographical marginalisation, which have led to their current-day socioeconomic situations. As is outlined below, the numerical statistics vary greatly in terms of number of speakers, yet the six share cultural characteristics which continue to shape the traditional regions where Celtic speakers live or lived. As such, there are many joint organisations and examples of cooperation between individuals and local organisations working together to celebrate pan-Celtic culture and address common issues. One prominent example of this is the Celtic League, founded in 1961, and their periodic magazine 'Carn' (Celtic League, n.d.). Their stated aims are to "campaign for the political, language, cultural and social rights of the Celtic nations" (Ibid.), demonstrating that language is just one element of their respective minority identities. Furthermore, the annual conference of the International Celtic Congress brings together speakers of the six languages as well as a series of cultural events each year (Comhdháil Cheilteach, n.d.). On the academic level, the International Congress of Celtic Studies holds conferences every four years to bring together scholars specialising on the six Celtic nations and their culture, linguistics, literature and history (Bangor University, n.d.a; International Congress of Celtic Studies XV, n.d.). Thus, there is organisational evidence that advocates, activists and scholars from the six Celtic nations cooperate and consider themselves in common despite their political and geographical differences. There are of course vast differences between the six and thus in order to be able to compare how EU funding might impact each of them, it is first necessary to outline a cross-thematic profile of each. As previously mentioned, Cornish and Manx are not considered in this analysis, not due to a lack of comparative importance but rather due to the reasons outlined in footnote 4.

2.2 Breton

As a centralised state, administrative regions in France are quite weak in comparison with those of other countries such as the devolved nations of the UK. Some exceptions exist for some regions such as Corsica, which has its own regional assembly. Even though Brittany does not benefit from exceptions, Bretons are considered as having a strong regional identity (Postic et al., 2003). This identity has historical origins as Brittany was an independent Duchy until 1532 (Queniart, 2011). From 1532 to the end of the 19th century, Breton was the most used language in this Celtic peninsula and the French tongue was spoken only by the local elites, militaries, and used by the royal administration (Postic et al., 2003). After the proclamation of the Third Republic in 1871, the French republicans led a violent language policy aiming at eradicating the use of regional languages considered as obstacles to the republican uniformization of the nation (Cortier & Puren, 2008; Le Marec, 2013). Since this period, the use of Breton has significantly decreased, and French became the language of the majority. This policy continues to have consequences nowadays as France did not ratify the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECMRL) as it was considered as being anti-constitutional for the French Republic (Määttä, 2005). As a consequence of this policy, the UNESCO Atlas currently considers the Breton as a "severely endangered" language (Goalabré, 2012).

However, the situation has started to positively change for Breton since the 1970s as France implemented decentralisation reforms. Regional languages such as Breton were recognised by the French government as part of national heritage (Goalabré, 2012). Moreover, numerous organisations promoting the Breton culture have been created since the 1970s such as a Breton language agency, the *Ofis Ar Brezhoneg* (Goalabré, 2012). In addition, persons in Brittany could rediscover the Breton language through the creation of regional radio stations using Breton as the main language such as Arvorig FM (Moal, 2000). In 1977, the development of bilingual schools named *Diwan* has been a major change from an educational perspective as pupils were allowed to learn in Breton from the first class to the Baccalauréat (Balcou-Debussche & Tupin, 2017). Even though a minority of pupils are registered in these schools, the number of Diwan's attendees increases significantly every year (Ibid.). Nowadays 207,000 people across the four departments of Brittany and Loire Atlantique speak Breton (Region Bretagne, 2018), and the evolution of this number is stagnating while interest for the language is growing among the young adults living in these areas (Ibid). Nonetheless, the use of the language remains concentrated in the Western part of Brittany; for instance, 107,000 Breton speakers live in Finistere (Region Bretagne, 2018). In the meantime, Breton culture is also promoted though international events such as the Festival Interceltic in Lorient, which gathers participants from Celtic nations across the world every year (Lavenir, 2012). More local events are also taking place in cities and towns all over the region contributing to the survival of a differentiated culture (Lavenir, 2012). Despite this positive development for the Breton language and culture, regionalism remains a limited political phenomenon (Gemie, 2012). The Union Démocratique Bretonne, the main regionalist political party promoting a Breton citizenship and the reuse of the Breton language (Loyer, 2002), did not manage to gather significant results at the regional scale so far (Gemie, 2012).

From an economic perspective, Brittany remains a competitive region in France despite its geographical situation. Indeed, Brittany had the second-best GDP growth from 1990 to 2010, right behind the neighbouring region Pays de la Loire (Le Guen, 2010). Its economy contributes to 4.3% of the national GDP (Garrec, 2019). Some sectors such as the maritime sector are important determinant for France's competitiveness as a whole, although the economic growth of the agricultural sector has been limited since 1990 and contributed to only 2% of the national production in 2008 (Le Guen, 2010). In addition, unemployment rates are low in comparison with other regions as only 6.5% of the active population was unemployed, while this rate was around 8.0% at the national level (Insee, 2021). However, Brittany's economic contribution to the national GDP remains quite low compared to leading regions such as Ile de France or the PACA region (Le Guen, 2010). As regions in France are all classified as NUTS 2 level, it is the case of Brittany as well. In comparison with other EU regions of this level, Brittany is seen as a successful region regarding employment, social cohesion and education (Molina & Rouxel, 2015).

2.3 Irish

Irish Gaelic is one of the oldest languages in Europe, with the current form of modern Irish spoken since the 13th century and used in Ireland by the majority of its population until the 19th century (Baoill, 2009). Following English colonisation of the entire island of Ireland, the English language progressively became more prestigious; used by the local elites as well as in the most populous cities such as Dublin. This was possible for instance through the extension of the British administration and the elimination of the Irish Gaelic speaking lords (Neachtain, 2014). Therefore, from the 19th century, the use of the Irish language started to decrease significantly among the Irish population and extraordinary events such as the Great Famine and its consequences on Irish migration accelerated this process (Grin & Vallancourt, 1999). Over time, the use of Irish has been pushed towards the most isolated places of the island such as the rural and the western coastal areas (Baoill, 2009).

Despite the fact that the use of the language has been reduced since the 19th century, Irish Gaelic remains a key cultural aspect for the Irish nation. Following independence, the Republic of Ireland proclaimed the Irish language as being an essential part of the national culture and a language revitalisation policy has been established. For instance, Irish Gaelic became the first official language of Ireland in 1922 and remains one of the two official state languages to this day, alongside English (Darmody & Daly, 2015; Walsh & McLeod, 2008). Consequently, the number of Irish speakers started to slowly grow again from 1926 (Ó hIfearnáin, 2009). However, this has been a slow process and Irish remained mostly spoken only in the Gaeltacht area (the Irish regions where Irish Gaelic is used as first language of communication between citizens) until recently (Grin & Vallancourt, 1999). These regions are officially recognised by the state and have a specific agency for its regional development (Darmody & Daly, 2015). One of the causes of this lack of use by Irish citizens living in economic centres of the country is that the Irish language was seen by some as being incompatible with modern economic and political institutions (Brennan, 2013). Some defenders of the Irish language even claim that a

clear distinction between cultural heritage and economic development must remain to preserve the Irish language (Brennan, 2013).

Nowadays, around 3% of the Irish population state that they speak Irish Gaelic as first language, most concentrated in the Gaeltacht areas. Then approximately 38% of Irish citizens are able to speak and understand Irish, while overall only 1.8% of the population reportedly uses Irish every day (Ceallaigh & Dhonnebhain, 2017). The historical strong support of the Irish state for the revitalisation of the Irish Gaelic language allows the use of Irish Gaelic through different means. For instance, classes in Irish Gaelic are mandatory for all pupils and the use of Irish Gaelic has been progressively extended inside the education system and in the civil services (Ceallaigh & Dhonnebhain, 2017; Walsh & McLeod, 2008). From a legal point of view, all publications from the state must be translated in Irish and administrative tasks can be undertaken in both Irish and English (Ceallaigh & Dhonnebhain, 2017). In addition, there has also been a substantial amount of activism and also creation of civil society organisations campaigning for the development of Irish and its daily use in society. Conradh na Gaeilige was a significant actor in this, pushing also for the campaign for Irish language television, spurred on by the Welsh campaign (Hourigan, 2007). Eventually in 1996, Teilifís na Gaeilge (TnaG, now TG4), was created to broadcast entirely in Irish (Hourigan, 2007; Watson, 2016).

In addition, Ireland has developed a national strategy with funding programmes devoted to the development of the Irish language. For instance, the Irish state spent over €350 million from 2010 to 2018 through the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to support the Irish language in the Gaeltacht and beyond. The current action plan of this strategy started in 2018 and will last until 2022. During this plan, the annual budget for the regional agency Udaras Na Gaeltachta has been increased from €7 million to €12 million (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2018). Udaras Na Gaeltrachta was created in 1979 in order to preserve the Irish language in the Gaeltacht as well as the economic viability of the region (Neachtain, 2014). Its political powers are limited; however, the organisation is autonomous and has its own budget to develop cultural and economic projects as well as to participate in national or European projects (Neachtain, 2014). Despite the dynamism of this agency, the economic situation and performance of the regions composing the Gaeltacht are still lagging behind in Ireland. For instance, regions such as Donegal, Mayo or Kerry which are including an important part of the Gaeltacht are parts of the Irish regions where the median gross income is among the lowest of the country (Central Statistics Office, 2016). It must be noted that the Galway County and the city of Galway are performing much better and can be considered as the economic centre of the Gaeltacht (Central Statistics Office, 2016). However, past research has found positive links between the Irish language and socio-economic development in Ireland (Walsh, 2010).

To conclude on Irish in Ireland, the language is evidently a national symbol and part of its heritage, seen as an intrinsic element of Irish identity. However, Irish Gaelic remains most concentratedly spoken in remote areas of the Gaeltacht and the economic development of this region is also seen as a linguistic challenge. Indeed, the revitalisation and the survival of Irish in the Gaeltacht seems to be highly linked with the economic viability of these regions.

2.4 Scottish Gaelic

Scottish Gaelic emerged as a language in north-western Scotland through settlers from Ireland around 500 AD and expanded across much of Scotland through the following centuries (Gillies, 2009). Despite this expansion, by around the year 1400 Scotland was divided linguistically between Gaelic spoken in the Highlands and Islands (referred to as the Gàidhealtachd – University of Aberdeen, n.d.) and Scots spoken in the Lowlands (Gillies, 2009). Gaelic had retreated almost entirely to the Highlands and Hebrides by the 17th century (MacKinnon, 2009) and the Scottish Crown attempted "linguistic assimilation" even before the Union of Scotland with England in 1707 (Keating, 2009, p.21; Dunbar, 2003). The consequent cultural transformation of the Highlands through the following centuries has pushed Gaelic language to the western fringes but this was not without protest and resistance and the retention of a cultural difference to the Lowlands (Withers, 1988). Although the numbers of Gaelic speakers rapidly decreased throughout the 20th century, the language survived and in the 1970s saw an emergence of social and political activism by leaders such as the head of Comunn na Gàidhlig, John Angus Mackey, eventually securing concessions from Westminster (Hourigan, 2007). This was then built on through the 1990s and after Scottish devolution, whereby bodies such as Bord na Gàidhlig as well as legislation such as the *Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005*, were established. Similarly, Scottish Gaelic was recognised by the government of the United Kingdom as one of the linguistic minority languages to be protected by the *European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages 1992* which the UK ratified in 2001 (Dunbar, 2003; McLeod, 2009).

As of the 2011 census, 57,600 people stated that they could speak Gaelic, a number which increases to 87,100 who have 'some Gaelic language skills' (National Records of Scotland, 2015). This is mostly concentrated in the council areas of Na h-Eilanean Siar (also referred to as the Western Isles), Highland, Argyll and Bute and Glasgow City (Scottish Census, n.d.). Within these three council areas, today's Gàidhealtachd or 'Gaelic heartlands' are concentrated on the islands which form most of Na h-Eilanean Siar and some of Highlands and Argyll and Bute (University of Aberdeen, n.d.). Yet the term 'Gaelic areas' or traditional Gaelic speaking areas refers to the council areas as a whole (Paterson et al., 2014; Willis, 2020). As the above suggests, within these three council areas the percentages of Gaelic speakers vary greatly with figures of 52.2%, 5.4% and 4.0% respectively (Scottish Census, n.d.). However, the impact on local and national identity and culture reaches far beyond these relatively small percentages. On a national level, Paterson et al. (2014) used Scottish Social Attitudes Survey data to find that 76% of their sample found Gaelic to be an important symbol of Scotland, and 42% wished more Gaelic to be spoken in Scotland – with that figure increasing to 55% wishing more Gaelic to be spoken in areas where it is already spoken (p. 435). The authors suggest that this is evidence which contradicts past sentiment on Scottish nationalism that there is not a language aspect involved. Furthermore, Bechhofer & McCrone (2014) found that Gaelic identity was fluid and not limited to linguistic competence but includes residency and heritage. The authors found also that the acceptance to outsiders or non-speakers becoming a 'Gael' was stronger in the traditional Gàidhealtachd.

In terms of measuring regional economic performance, the three council areas stated above where Gaelic is spoken as a highest percentage can be compared across 32 of Scotland at that level. In NUTS terms, Highlands and Islands is its own level 2 area, which is formed of six level 3 NUTS areas – of which two form the traditional Gaelic speaking area, namely 'Lochaber, Skye & Lochalsh, Arran & Cumbrae and Argyll & Bute' and 'Eilean Siar (Western Isles)' (Office for National Statistics, 2016). At the NUTS level 2, Highlands and Islands has been most recently classed as a transition region for the 2014-2020 period, due to it having a GDP per capita of between 75-90% of the EU average (European Commission, 2014). As of 2017, the Highlands and Islands GDP per capita as a percentage of EU average was 93%, faring below the Scottish figure of 98% (Eurostat, 2019). This is consistent with national level data which shows that the three 'Gaelic speaking' council areas are overall around average regarding regional development indicators (Willis, 2020).

The strong sense of Gaelic identity which remains on the island communities can also be observed in the specificities of the local society, economy and businesses. The Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), the agency for economic and community development in the north and west of Scotland, recognises the culture and traditions associated with Gaelic as a key economic and social asset for the Gàidhealtachd (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, 2014). Their research suggests that 70% of the "more than 300 businesses, enterprises and organisations" surveyed in the Highlands and Islands area, regard Gaelic as "an asset to their business" (Ibid. p. 4). Furthermore, the education and media sectors have strong links to Gaelic, including the Gaelic-medium college of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on the Isle of Skye, plus the creation of BBC Alba and the production company MG Alba have contributed to economic growth (Chalmers et al., 2013).

To summarise, Scottish Gaelic is evidently a very numerically small language with just over 1% of the population of Scotland speaking it, although these figures rise significantly in its traditional island heartlands. The economic area in which this is contained is underdeveloped but appears to be improving with significant investment including from the EU. Despite its low numbers, the language enjoys a largely positive attitude from the broader society and there is also some evidence that there are economic benefits to the Scottish Gaelic speaking sectors.

2.5 Welsh

The Welsh language has existing for fifteen centuries at one point thriving not only across all of modern-day Wales but into significant parts of the English midlands (Jones & Williams, 2009). The retreat of Welsh and dominance of English was accelerated by the Act of Union 1542 which banned the use of Welsh in courts and in public office (Davies, 2014, pp. 33-36; Grin & Vaillancourt, 1999), with the consequent decades seeing a retreat further to the west and north. This coincided with a continuous drop in the percentage of Welsh speakers in Wales, decreasing throughout the twentieth century to a low of 18.7% in 1991. However, this drop was slowed and indeed reversed as the legal situation improved, beginning with the Welsh Act 1967 which gave the use of Welsh in courts a legal right (Huws, 2009). Moreover, following a political campaign led by the Welsh Language Society during the 1960/70s, Sianel Pedwar Cymru (S4C) was established in 1982 as the first Welsh language television service (Hourigan,

2007, pp. 72-74). The Welsh Act 1993 added much stronger legal provisions applying to use of Welsh language in courts and to police forces (amongst others) needing to treat Welsh and English languages equally (Huws, 2009). Moreover, the act also created a statutory body in Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg (the Welsh Language Board) tasked with promoting and facilitating the Welsh language (Davies, 2014, pp. 122-123; Welsh Language Commissioner, n.d.). Additionally, the Welsh language was recognised by the UK's ratification of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages in 2001 (McLeod, 2009). Moreover, Wales was one of the regions were power was devolved in the UK in the late 1990s, with the establishment of the Welsh Assembly which has gone on to develop specific Welsh language related policy and targets, which are elaborated on in the following subsection.

On the current day situation, figures for end-2019 show that 857,600 of persons aged 3 and over can speak Welsh, which equates to 28.4% of the population (Welsh Government, 2020a). However, these statistics vary greatly by local authority area from 15.9% in Bridgend to 74.5% in Gwynedd (Ibid.). Indeed, the highest percentages are concentrated in the north-west of the country, the traditional Welsh speaking areas, in the local authority areas of Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey, Ceredigion, Camarthanshire, Conway, and Denbighshire (Ibid.). Moreover, recent data from the National Survey for Wales indicated that the percentage of people who feel that 'Welsh is something to be proud of' is above 90% in many of these aforementioned local authority areas, in comparison to much lower figures in South-East Wales for example (Welsh Government, 2018). This suggests that the identity and culture surrounding Welsh language extends further than just its speakers, particularly in the traditional areas.

In economic terms, Wales overall has a lower GDP than the UK average and also the EU average. For 2017, the UK had a figure of 106% of EU average, whereas Wales was just 76% of EU average (Eurostat, 2019). The contrast between the two NUTS level 2 regions of Wales is even more concerning for the Welsh speaking heartlands, with East Wales at 94% of EU average but West Wales and the Valleys at just 66% (Ibid.). Moreover, this has been the case historically and certainly since EU structural funds have been administered – as is shown in section 4.5 below. Regarding specifically language and the economy, as part of its strategy of aiming for 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050, the Welsh Government confirms its intention to focus on promoting the Welsh language also in regional economic terms and highlights that steps will need to be taken to help "mitigate the impact on Wales resulting from the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union" (Welsh Government, 2019a, pp. 29-30). Indeed, the Welsh language is heavily involved in the local economy, both directly through sectors such as education and media, as well as indirectly through businesses and organisations run by Welsh speakers.

Overall the traditional heartlands of Welsh speakers lie in the geographically and economically peripheral part of the country, suffering from long-term underdevelopment. These areas contain a significant percentage of Welsh speakers as shown by the council level statistics, and thus it possible to conclude that the language is a significant part of everyday life and the regional economy.

2.6 Summary

It is clear from the above subsections that the four language groups do vary significantly in a number of areas. Number of speakers is by far the highest in Wales, in both absolute and percentage terms, however there are regions of the other three which have a significant concentration of speakers. What is clear though is that the language does have a cultural value to the regions beyond merely just the direct speakers. Another key differentiation is the official status of the four languages within their larger jurisdictions. Whereas Irish is an official state language, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic are official languages only in the devolved regions of Wales and Scotland respectively, rather than the UK as a whole. Breton is not recognised as an official language nor is it protected by the ECRML. The status can have an impact on the strategy for language protection, or indeed an absence of such. Economically the regions vary too, the Welsh heartlands and the Scottish Gaelic Gàidhealtachd are significantly below EU and national (UK) average, whereas the Irish Gaeltachta and the region of Bretagne fare better – at least at the NUTS level 2. These differences allow a few initial questions to develop: do Welsh and Scottish Gaelic have more direct links to ESIF because they qualify for larger amounts of funds? Does the number of speakers effect the amount of language-linked ESIF projects, with a larger linguistic sphere offering more opportunities / need for funding? Does the official status effect the funding in any way – would it be more likely that ESIF funding steps in to replace an absence of national level funds?

3 Methodology

In order to identify links between ESIF funded projects and the four Celtic languages in focus, we chose to proceed to a strictly qualitative analysis which aims at identifying case studies of interest. This qualitative approach does not consider financial amounts or number of projects involved, as we do not seek to prove a causal effect. Our approach involves a two-step methodology, initially analysing regional authorities' publications on the implementations of the ESIF in the funding periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020. As there is no uniform method across all member states, this first step of document analysis considers EU, national and regional level agencies and their respective websites. The ESIF are partly implemented through regional authorities and here we focus on those covering the traditional speaking areas for each respective Celtic language. This includes literal lists of project beneficiaries/sponsors as well as also descriptive programme overviews or annual reports. The main aim is to observe any possible links to language or known institutions working with language, either directly or indirectly. We define directly as projects which are undoubtedly linked to language, such as education or media in Celtic language. Indirectly we consider to involve creation of jobs for speakers of a Celtic language (proved by high percentages of speakers in a given town/region or for industries closely linked to Celtic language), as well as funding for institutions working with a Celtic language in full or in part.

The ESIF funds are divided in different funding programmes. In this article, we look at two of them: the European and Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Funds (ESF). The main targets of these funds are to create local employment and develop infrastructures at the local level allowing the positive development of the regions'

competitiveness, while reducing their carbon impact (Brunazzo, 2016). In addition, the ERDF is an essential tool for regions to reduce the negative impact of borders through the funding of INTERREG programmes (Sousa, 2013). Indeed, INTERREG programmes allow cooperation between organisations across different borders and aiming at cultural and economic development. Thereby, some Interreg programmes concerning the Celtic speaking regions are analysed as well. In some cases, data on ERDF and ESF projects are not always available for the two periods; these limitations are highlighted in the conclusion.

Once identifying potential ESIF projects, the second step in our qualitative methodology is to expand this case study in more detail. This is a necessary step given that the project lists and annual reports often only list project names and funding amounts. The second step therefore considers official project/company websites, local authority websites (for example town or county councils), and also news articles. This allows for a more in-depth understanding of how ESIF have been used for the language or by its speakers.

4 The Impact of the ESIF in Traditional Celtic Speaking Regions

4.1 Overview of the ESIF

Since the Rome treaty, the European Economic Community and later the European Union was leading a regional policy aiming at reducing inequalities between territories belonging to the EU. At the centre of this policy, the cohesion policy, established in 1989 (Farole et al., 2011) and especially the ERDF and ESF are key tools (Brunazzo, 2016). They aim at allocating a certain budget to regions depending on their development level. Thus, regions in difficult economic situations can be supported by this means. The budget of the ERDF and ESF are planned according to specific cycles lasting several years. Since 2007, every cycle was lasting seven years, and specific operational programmes are providing indications for the implementation of the ERDF in each region over these periods. Although the primary aims of the ERDF is to increase regional competitiveness, its effects are going beyond economic aspects and can also have cultural and linguistic outcomes. Indeed, literature has also demonstrated that the ERDF is indirectly contributing to the support of minority language (Gazzola et al., 2016; Piccoli, 2011). On its side, the ESF are targeting at reducing social disparities by creating jobs, training opportunities and develop social infrastructures to reduce unemployment (Verschraegen et al., 2011). As the funds are essentially focusing on local development, regions willing to support local minority language can use the fund in order to increase job and market opportunities in the geographic areas where minority languages are spoken. However, very few studies focused on the links of these funds, and no studies provided a comparative analysis of their links in these five Celtic regions. The use of ERDF to fight inequalities has also been investigated, although the success of this is mixed in terms of catching up with the most developed regions (Spilanis et al., 2016). Before undertaking comparative analysis, the links of the ERDF and ESF projects on the development of minority language in the four Celtic regions in focus are presented separately.

4.2 Brittany / Breton

As an entire administrative region of France, Brittany has a relatively large amount of power and means for financing regional projects. This includes being in charge of managing the ESIF and for the period 2014 -2020 the region managed a budget of €307 million under the ERDF programme. The stated regional aims of the programme do not include any direct development of Breton culture or language, rather it is divided in three broad axes: research and innovation, digital transition and energetic and ecological transition (Région Bretagne, 2017).

When looking at the existing funding programmes that finance directly linguistic projects, it appears that these are mostly supported by domestic regional and national funds. It is the case of the Desk and Skoazell programmes that are both aiming at financing training sessions for teachers and students willing to teach in Breton (Région Bretagne, 2016). These programmes are direct subsidies for the applicants and can as such be seen as relevant initiatives showing the willing of the region to maintain alive the Breton language. The Region Bretagne has recently clearly demonstrated a determined policy to support the language in its 2019 budget description (Région Bretagne, 2019). This policy has started since 2004 and is a horizontal aim that can be reached through different means, including EU funds.

However, as the aims of the European structural funds are not including directly the support of the Breton language, its impact on the Breton language resilience and development could be limited. Indeed, in the list of the ERDF projects from 2014 to 2020, only one project is clearly mentioning the spread of the use of the Breton language as a primary aim. This project is called Stal.bzh, stal meaning “trade” in Breton. It received a grant of about €57,000 from the ERDF funding (Région Bretagne, 2020a). It consists in developing an application and a website facilitating exchanges between consumers and companies using the Breton language. It allows for instance Breton speakers consumers to find shops where Breton is used (Mignoned ar brezhoneg, n.d.). Despite its unique aspect, this project demonstrates that Breton stakeholders are able to apply for ERDF funding to directly develop the Breton language at the local level.

Although it is hard to find projects directly supporting the Breton language, relevant regional organisations supporting the Breton language seem to be able to use the ERDF funding for undertaking new projects and having a greater activity in the region. For example, four regional radio stations that are transmitting programmes in Breton are members of an association gathering regional radio stations named CORLAB. This association is quite active in applying in EU funding and allows its radio stations to diversify their programmes and thus to finance their activities. As an example showing the involvement of the association in EU projects, CORLAB got a grant of approx. €12,000 for developing a new programme called “L’Europe Autrement” (CORLAB, 2020). Therefore, the ERDF can be used by organisations promoting the Breton language as a tool for financing new projects and allow them to be more visible at the regional scale.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that large projects funded by the ERDF can have a strong indirect effect on population speaking Breton. Indeed, one of the great aims of the ERDF for the period 2014 – 2020 is to implement a high-speed internet network on the whole territory by

2030. This will also concern the Breton speaking areas such as islands or rural areas. Thus, the Breton speaking population will be able secure much better internet connections and hopefully develop future initiatives online to learn or spread the Breton language such as the Stahl project. This regional project received an ERDF grant of approx. €280,000 and is a major priority of the regional government (Région Bretagne, 2020b). It is currently running, and it can be expected that it will contribute to the maintenance of the use of Breton online.

To conclude on this part regarding Brittany, the ERDF cannot be considered as a direct tool having a great impact on the Breton language. Nonetheless, it is integrated in a greater regional linguistic policy through its usages. Thus, projects that are implemented can create the conditions for supporting the Breton language through economic development, support of relevant linguistic organisations or in some cases direct support to linguistic projects. It is important to mention that the main direct financial tools developing linguistic projects remain regional or national funded programmes.

4.3 Ireland / Irish

As we have seen in the second section, the Irish language is part of the national cultural heritage of the nation. Thus, it appeared to be one of the most supported Celtic language at the national scale, and with this in mind it is of interest to determine whether the ESIF have links to projects using Irish. Less was obtainable for the ESF in this sphere, so this subsection examines the direct and indirect effects of ERDF projects on the development of the Irish language. In order to analyse the impact of the ERDF projects, we will on one hand attempt to identify the projects directly focusing on language and cultural support. On the other hand, a qualitative analysis of the overall projects will be done to assess their indirect impacts.

There are two ERDF operational programmes for Ireland, Border, Midland and Western / Southern and Eastern, both of are 'more developed regions' (European Commission, 2014). The areas of the Gaeltacht spread across both of these but are mostly in the Border, Midland and Western region. However, the programmes are implemented by the three regional assemblies in Ireland (Northern and Western, Eastern and Midland, Southern) and the Gaeltacht areas fall in the Northern and Western Assembly and the Southern Assembly, although mostly the former (Williams & Varghese, 2018). Thus, for the purposes of this section, both operational programme areas are analysed, within the two relevant assembly areas.

From 2007 to 2013, there were three main pillars in the operational programme of the ERDF in both of the regions studied. These pillars are the following: innovation and the knowledge economy, environment and accessibility, sustainable and urban development (Southern Assembly, n.d.a). These funds were widely used in the Irish counties including Gaeltacht areas. For instance, 196 projects were funded in Kerry, 756 in Cork county and 204 in the Waterford county (Southern Assembly, n.d.b). Among these projects, numerous were targeting at developing the local economy and creating jobs at the local level. For example, the Irish Food Awards (Blas na hEireann) which is awarding companies for producing agricultural products at the local level got a grant from the ERDF (Southern Assembly, 2017a). In addition, one project located in the Dingle peninsula has been identified; Camphill Community Dingle, a

project aimed at renovating traditional houses (Southern Assembly, 2017b). In the Northern part of the country, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (n.d.a) does not provide complete data on the entire period. However, it provides data for the years 2012, 2013 and 2014. In these reports, we found 105 projects funded in the Galway county, 34 in Donegal and 67 in Mayo which are territories that include Gaeltacht regions. On top of this, as mentioned earlier, regional development agency Udaras na Gaeltachta is participating in different ERDF funded projects to develops its own activities. For instance, it supported the creation of a coworking space through the Colab project in the Donegal region (European Commission, 2011). Its support shows that this project can create enterprises and jobs close to the Donegal Irish speaking areas. In addition, some key actors in the development of the Gaelic language used the ERDF funds for economic projects such as the National University of Ireland in Galway, which states that it has a bilingual campus (NUI Galway, n.d.). However, the great majority of projects are only related to innovation and business development (Northern Assembly and Western, 2021a). Despite the absence of projects directly supporting Irish language development, these few examples highlight that the ERDF could indirectly help developing the use of the language in the Gaeltacht area through economic support and development.

During the next operational programme of the ERDF, it had four different aims in both studied regions: research and innovation, information and communication technologies, support for SMEs, support for lowering carbon emissions and urban development (Northern and Western Regional Assembly, n.d.b). Through the reports of the 2014 – 2020 funding period, it appears that in the Southern part of the country, very few projects mention cultural heritage and it is not possible to find language related projects in the database of funded projects from 2014 and 2020 (Southern Assembly, n.d.c). The same results can be found in the database of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (2021, n.d.c). In this case, similar results can be found than in the previous funding period.

The ERDF is also the main funding programme contributing to the Interreg programme which has a stronger focus on cultural development. A few Interreg projects can be identified as having links to Gaelic culture and heritage, for example the 'Celtic Routes' project funded by the Interreg V programme between Ireland and Wales (Celtic Routes, n.d.). It aims at creating new tourist routes in Ireland and Wales promoting the Celtic cultural heritage, and one itinerary developed is passing very close to the Waterford Gaeltacht, in the village of Ardmore (Ibid.). The Irish language is a clear part of this culture, plus the project has an Irish version of its website (Ibid.). In addition, Udaras na Gaeltachta participated in different Interreg projects with economic aims such as the ACCESS2SEA and the EMPORIA4KT projects (Udaras Na Gaeltacht, 2021a, 2021b). The first one aims at supporting the aquaculture sector in the Atlantic area including the Gaeltacht, and the latter supports innovation through a closer relationship between researchers and innovative companies. The participation of Udaras na Gaeltachta with its clear Irish language focus, demonstrates that such projects have the potential to increase jobs and opportunities for Irish language speakers.

As a conclusion, the ERDF funds for Ireland do not seem to have a strong direct impact on the Gaeltacht in language terms. It is nonetheless a financial tool mobilised by organisations such

as universities, city councils or regional agencies to finance their activities including the promotion of the Irish language. In addition, ERDF projects can contribute to the economic prosperity of Gaeltacht areas, although the impact on language use needs to be further evaluated.

4.4 Scotland / Scottish Gaelic

The Scottish Government is the Managing Authority for the ESIF in Scotland, due to its devolved powers from London. As mentioned above, the traditional Gaelic speaking areas fall into the region of the Highlands and Islands. For the period of 2007-2013, Highlands and Islands was designated as a 'convergence' region due to its lower GDP in relation to the rest of the EU (European Commission, n.d.). For the period 2014-2020, the area was advanced to a 'transition' region, with its GDP above 75% of EU average (European Commission, 2014). The following paragraphs list projects which have been identified by our research as having a link to Scottish Gaelic, from both the ERDF and the ESF.

In terms of direct links to Scottish Gaelic, of particular interest was the £2.6m funding for the Creative Industries and Media Centre in Stornoway, which created office space for creative businesses as well as MG Alba – the Gaelic media service working on production for BBC Alba (Hebrides Today, 2012). Praised by local politicians and stakeholders who stated its cultural importance as well as economic impact and potential for business growth (Ibid.). On top of this, the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) has received a substantial number of funds from the ERDF since 2000, funding buildings, equipment and research staff (University of the Highlands and Islands, n.d.). Whilst much of this only has indirect links to Scottish Gaelic, projects involving Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, part of the UHI situated on the Isle of Skye and operating exclusively in Scottish Gaelic, have a clear language link. In the 2007-2013 funding period, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig received almost £2 million for its 'Leasachadh Na Cille Bige/ Kilbeg Village' project which aims at building a planned village that include infrastructure for a new research centre (Scottish Government, 2014; Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, 2014). The project and the been praised by many local stakeholders also for its potential benefits in the wider local community, as well as the promotion of Gaelic (Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, 2014), Moreover, it is recognised that Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in general has been a significant driver in the local economy which has grown thanks to EU funds, with concerns expressed that ERDF funds will need replacing post-Brexit (LGiU, 2018; University of Highlands and Islands, n.d.).

Regarding indirect links to the Scottish Gaelic-speaking community, one of note was a Priority 1 project sponsored by Sealladh Na Beinne Moire on the Isle of South Uist, within Na h-Eileanan Siar (Scottish Government, 2014). The ERDF provided funds for the 'Loch Carnan Community Wind Farm' under the control of the community-owned Stòras Uibhist whose aim is "to put the interests and wellbeing of the island's inhabitants at the heart of all our activities" (Stòras Uibhist, n.d.). Given that South Uist has one of the highest percentages of Gaelic speakers at 66% of its 1,897 population (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, n.d.), it is fair to conclude that any economic activity is directly affecting Gaelic speakers and their community. Indeed, the wind farm is "expected to raise in excess of £20m for the community in the next two decades" (BBC News, 2014), offering some evidence of how ERDF funds can have a multiplier

effect in the context of traditional Gaelic communities. In a similar vein, The Harris Tweed Investment Fund received ERDF funds in the 2007-2013 period which in part has funded new buildings equipment for Harris Tweed manufacturers (Scottish Government, 2014). Moreover, the 2007-2013 period also saw ESF funds for the training weavers for Harris Tweed, with a specific focus on employing women in the industry and consequently creating a number of jobs on the Isle of Lewis (Broughton et al., 2019, p. 78). Gaelic is said to be an inherent and implicit element of the Harris Tweed industry, including amongst local employees (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, 2014, p. 67)

Another significant institution which has been a sponsor for ERDF funds is the Highlands & Islands Enterprise, the "economic and community development agency for the north and west of Scotland". Although it is not possible to find any direct language related projects, this institution has demonstrated how the local businesses it helps are linked to Gaelic (Ibid.). Finally, in the most indirect and generalised link would be projects applied for at the local level by councils, of which 15 were applied for by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (the local council for the Western Isles, based in Stornoway), dedicating several million euros to projects such as road improvements and infrastructure in rural areas of Na h-Eileanan Siar (Scottish Government, 2014).

4.5 Wales / Welsh

Wales is divided into two regions for the purposes of ESIF funds: West Wales and the Valleys and East Wales. The former of these is less developed economically and thus qualified for extra EU support (European Commission, 2014). Evidence of this can be seen with the 2007-2013 funding period showing that the vast majority of EU structural funds allocated to Wales were received by West Wales and the Valleys; projected at £1.4 billion out of a total £1.5 billion (Stokes, 2008). As mentioned above, this is the region in which all of the council areas of high-percentages of Welsh speakers reside. In terms of managing this fund, similarly to Scotland, Wales has devolved powers from Westminster and thus the Welsh Government is the Managing Authority for the European Funds, including the ERDF and ESF. This is administered through the Welsh European Funding Office. In the 2014-2020 funding period, West Wales and the Valleys was classed as a 'less developed area' by EU categorisation, whereas East Wales is a 'more developed area'. As outlined above, this means that the area of West Wales and the Valleys is applicable for a larger amount of EU structural funds, although both regions still receive ERDF and ESF support. Both regions also received ERDF and ESF funding during the 2007-2013 period. However, as also outlined in section 2.5 above, West Wales and the Valleys is the area in which the traditional Welsh-speaking areas are located, and is therefore the prime focus of this subsection.

As a broad headline, the Welsh Government states that "in the last decade, EU-funded projects in Wales have created more than 48,000 jobs and 13,000 new businesses, while helping 86,000 people back into work" (Welsh Government, 2019b). Regarding the Welsh language, one example of this being explicitly mentioned in this context is in the official documentation of the 2007-2013 Operational Programme for the ERDF. Here the Welsh European Funding Office specifically mentions Welsh language and acknowledges the aims of the Welsh

Government in moving Wales towards a 'truly bilingual nation where people can choose to live their lives through the mediums of Welsh or English or both' and states that this Convergence Programme will 'fully reflect this commitment' in its implementation (Welsh European Funding Office, 2010, p. 71). However, it does not elaborate in any detail as to how this will be done. The following subsections therefore aim to contribute to specifically identify projects linked to Welsh language, directly or indirectly, in the traditional Welsh-speaking areas.

In terms of specific projects with direct link to Welsh language, one prominent example is the £7.6 million the ERDF funded for the Pontio Arts and Innovation Centre at Bangor University which opened in 2015 at a total cost of nearly £50 million (Welsh Government, 2016; Crump, 2015; Bangor University, n.d.b). The Centre features regular Welsh medium content and also sometimes features collaborations with or guests from other Celtic language settings, plus states that part of its mission is "an exploration of Welsh culture and language through the arts, defining and redefining our cultural identity" (Pontio, n.d.). Another example is the non-profit social enterprise Mentor Môn which applies for funding in Anglesey and Gwynedd, which states that amongst its aims is to add value to the region of North West Wales, including through the themes of heritage and language (Mentor Môn, n.d.). The organisation states that EU funding has been an important source of income for the centre and in the period 2007-2013, it received funds from both the ERDF and the ESF, to the tune of around £5 million in total (Ibid.; Welsh Government, 2016). Another direct example is the charity Ymddiriedolaeth Nant Gwrtheyrn which received £2.2 million in ERDF funding for its restoration of a local village and development of a centre to teach Welsh to adults (Nant Gwrtheyrn, n.d.; Welsh Government, 2016). Similarly, Coleg Gwent received £7.3 million from the ERDF to develop its Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone building complex, where it offers a variety of courses to A-level students, including Welsh language classes (Coleg Gwent, n.d.; Welsh Government, 2016). A further example related to teaching in Welsh language is the Advanced Media Production degree programme operated by Aberystwyth University. This received £1.8 million from the ESF to finance the programme, aimed at boosting Welsh media's contribution to cultural heritage and the creative industries (Welsh Government, 2020b; Advanced Media Production, n.d.). The programme offers tuition discounts specifically to students living in the West Wales and the Valleys region and offers modules in Welsh but not exclusively (Aberystwyth University, n.d.).

Moving on to indirect links, there are a number of different angles this can be approached from, the following paragraphs unpack this. Due to the much larger numbers of Welsh speakers, in comparison to Scottish Gaelic for example, it is harder to pinpoint exactly where such funds directly affected language, as such there are many further examples of local projects which operate bilingually and contribute to increasing the exposure and mainstreaming of the Welsh language. On top of the projects mention above, another example is the BEACON project which focuses on biotechnology research in a collaboration between Aberystwyth University in Ceredigion County and universities in Bangor (Gwynedd) and Swansea. This received almost £10 million from the ERDF (Welsh Government, 2016) and operates an entirely bilingual website and offers some of its publications fully in Welsh as well as English (BEACON, n.d.). Another infrastructure project linked to Bangor University is the Menai Science Park (M-SParc) which provides office space and facilities for small-medium sized local businesses, including

many which work in the tech and innovation sectors and operate bilingually (M-SParc, n.d.). The ERDF funding amounted to £10 million of a total £20 million project (Welsh Government, 2017, p. 54). Another example is projects led by Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, a group of colleges in north-west Wales which supplies the local labour market with educated students, sponsors many projects which received ERDF and ESF funding (Welsh Government, 2020b). Several of these funded projects link to training programmes and equipping the local workforce with skills needed by local business, but in addition some of the colleges also offer bilingual training courses within its prospectus, plus all of the institutional websites are bilingual and explicitly state their stance towards Welsh language in a language policy and annual reports on their compliance with the Welsh Language Standards (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, n.d.). Examples like those outlined in this paragraph demonstrate how the knock-on effects of ERDF funding can lead to further opportunities for Welsh language websites and publications, presumably sometimes with work for English to Welsh translators.

Regarding Interreg programmes, there is one project of note with an indirect link to language. Wales is eligible for the Ireland – Wales Programme, of which the website is available in Welsh and the programme has financed projects having a possible effect with the support of the language. The programme of interest is the LIVE (Llŷn IVeragh Ecomuseums) project, through which the University of Bangor and the council of Gwynedd obtained a budget of €1,370,620 and €527,585 respectively. The aim of the project is to bring tourists in these areas outside the peak season by developing eco-museums promoting natural and cultural capital assets (Ireland Wales Programme, n.d.). This initiative has the potential to increase the interest of local tourists in the Welsh culture and language and thereby increase the number of Welsh speakers.

Further indirect links can be found by looking at geographic areas which received funding and relating this to the percentage of Welsh speakers in that area. For example, dozens of projects were funded by the ERDF and ESF with local councils as the lead sponsor, including; Gwynedd Council, Isle of Anglesey County Council, Ceredigion County Council, Carmarthenshire County Council, Conwy County Borough Council and Denbighshire County Borough Council, amongst others (Welsh Government, 2016). These council areas range from 75.1% Welsh speakers to 36.8% (Welsh Government, 2020a), thus forming the six highest in the country (all above the national average), thus making it feasible to state that structural funds improving the local area are likely to have a positive impact on Welsh speakers too. In this vein, 'key indicator achievements' of the ERDF and ESF were made available for the 2007-2013 period, broken down by council area (Welsh European Funding Office, 2016). For the ERDF, this shows enterprises assisted, enterprises created, gross jobs created, and it can be observed that many of the six council areas mentioned above often benefited much more than the urban hubs such as Cardiff, Swansea and Newport, in relation to their population size. For example, Gwynedd saw 2,326 gross jobs created in comparison to 3,381 in Cardiff (with the latter having almost three times as much population size) (Ibid.). Moreover, much of this local funding went into improving infrastructure including transport links, broadband infrastructure, office developments, town-centre regenerations etc. Key indicator achievements were also made available for the 2014-2020 period; however, the figures were lower than the previous period (Welsh European Funding Office, 2019). Out of 11,970 jobs created, 7,989 of these were in the West Wales and the Valleys area, with 2,392 of these being in the six council areas identified

as the traditional Welsh-speaking areas. Thus, the figures are less impressive than in 2007-2014, although it is unclear why.

5 Comparative Analysis and Discussion

The past four subsections demonstrate areas of similarity as well as significant differences between the four Celtic language regions, this summary analysis aims to evaluate this and identify what conclusions can be drawn from the research at this stage.

It is apparent that the most direct links to language which could be found were for Scottish Gaelic and Welsh, rather than Breton and Irish; these are summarised in Table 5.1 below. Here examples were identified which show ESIF contributing to projects which were undoubtedly related to language, in most cases involving infrastructure construction for buildings to house institutions or companies working in the fields of education and media. Many of these were linked to the fields of education or media, which is not a surprise given these are two of the obvious areas of language use, however there were also projects linked to industry. Unsurprisingly, more industry related links were found to be indirect. One aspect of note was that there was only one culture related project (in the narrow sense, more broadly of course media and education can be seen as part of culture), this may be because there are other more targeted EU funds related to culture.

Table 5.1: Summary of Direct Links

Language	Beneficiary/Project Name	Link to Language
Breton	Stal.bzh	Start-up developed a smartphone application and a website to geolocalise shops and businesses where Breton is commonly used (ERDF funded)
Scottish Gaelic	Creative Industries and Media Centre, Stornoway	Office space used by MG Alba, Scottish Gaelic TV production company
Scottish Gaelic	Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, University of Highlands and Islands.	Campus operating solely in Scottish Gaelic, funding provided for new buildings/expanding campus capacity.
Welsh	Pontio Arts and Innovation Centre, Bangor University	Arts centre hosting regular Welsh language events in an area with a high percentage of Welsh speakers.
Welsh	Coleg Gwent, Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone	Funding for a new building complex, where the college offers a variety of courses to A-level students, including Welsh language classes.
Welsh	Advanced Media Production, Aberystwyth University	ESF funds to finance a degree programme and reduced tuition fees, with the aim of boosting Welsh media's contribution to cultural heritage and creative industries. Many modules taught in Welsh.
Welsh	Ymddiriedolaeth Nant Gwrtheyrn	Adult Welsh learning centre in rural West Wales.

All four language areas had a variety of indirect links which could be made, some reasonably substantial and convincing, whereas others perhaps more tenuous. The links made to specific projects are listed in Table 5.2 below, which show how specific projects involved Celtic culture or were seen to be of benefit to Celtic language speakers. Some others were linked to industries or institutions known for their language links.

On top of these, there were of course a number of local council-led projects in the geographical areas with high percentages of Celtic language speakers. This includes for example the 15 projects sponsored by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, which aimed at improving local infrastructure

such as roads, in rural areas of the densest percentage of Scottish Gaelic speakers reside. It also includes the numerous bilingual websites and project reports we found for projects in West Wales and the Valleys.

Table 5.2: Summary of Specific Projects with Indirect Links

Language	Beneficiary/Project Name	Link to Language
Breton	CORLAB	Diversification of radio programmes broadcasted by radio stations, some of which are using Breton.
Breton	La Fibre Pour Tous En Bretagne	Develop internet connection in the whole territory include remote rural and coastal areas
Irish	Colab	Creation of office space in the Gaeltacht region of Donegal, supported by Udaras Na Galtachta.
Irish	Blas na hEireann	Organisation awarding companies for producing agricultural products received an ERDF grant for its activities
Irish	Camphill Community Dingle	Renovation of traditional houses in the Dingle peninsula
Irish	ACCESS2SEA	Interreg project for the development of opportunities for new aquaculture farms in coastal areas (Udaras Na Gaeltachta)
Irish	EMPORIA4KT	Interreg project for strengthening links between Research and businesses (Udaras Na Gaeltachta)
Irish/Welsh	Celtic Routes	Interreg project supporting the development of new tourist activities oriented toward the Gaelic culture.
Scottish Gaelic	Harris Tweed Investment Fund	Gaelic seen as an inherent part of the industry, employs many in the Outer Hebrides.
Scottish Gaelic	Loch Carnan Community Wind Farm	Wind farm expected to raise £20m for the local community of South Uist across two decades, an area with 66% Gaelic speakers.
Welsh	Menai Science Park, Bangor University	Office space for small-medium sized businesses, including companies operating in Welsh.
Welsh/Irish	LIVE (Llŷn IVeragh Ecomuseums)	Developing tourist itineraries in Celtic areas outside the peak season by creating eco-museums promoting natural and cultural capital assets

One possible reason that there were more projects with direct language links in Scottish Gaelic and Welsh over Breton and Irish could be that the former regions are lesser-developed and thus qualify for great levels of ESIF. This could be especially observed in the 2007-2013 period for the Highlands and Islands, whereby there was a drop off for 2014-2020 when the region was upgraded from a convergence region to a transition region whilst West Wales and the Valleys stayed the same. On the contrary, Breton and Irish traditional speaking areas were always economically more prosperous in comparison and therefore language related projects possibly had to rely on alternative national funds due to less ESIF possibilities. Evidence for this could definitely be seen in the case of Irish whereby there is a substantive national strategy. Interestingly, there seems to be no correlation between number of direct links and number of speakers, given that we were able to identify the most projects for Scottish Gaelic and Welsh yet these are vastly differing with tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands respectively, whereas Breton and Irish fall somewhere in between.

Differences between the four regions may instead be explained through national institutions and policies toward languages. Indeed, in the case of Wales and Scotland, these regions have devolved powers from London and are able to implement regional policies. We saw that both of them have recognised their language as an official language within their respective regions. However, the lack of funds available at the regional level can create an incentive to use the

ESIF funds to support the development of Scottish Gaelic and Welsh as a complementary fund. In the Irish case, this complementary aspect does not appear to be necessary to support directly the development of Irish Gaelic as the Irish state is already providing programmes in favour of its development with a substantive budget. Indeed, we have demonstrated that the regional agency Udaras na Gaeltacht already has a safe and consistent budget to support the language at the local level. If they participate in some ERDF projects, these are not directly linked with the language as they have other important means for this purpose. In the case of Brittany, a national strategy for Breton does not exist and the Britany region has less power than Scotland or Wales with devolved powers. Thus, even if the Britany region supports the development of the Breton language at school, it appears that public incentive for regional language is weaker than in the three other Celtic regions covered in this research. This can explain the lack of interest from companies to use the ERDF for the development of the Breton language. Nonetheless, ERDF project opportunities remain a possible leverage for economic stakeholders to launch projects with links with the regional language.

The different programmes of the ESIF are also mentioning cultural and language development very rarely compared to classical economic goals such as the creation of jobs, new companies, growth or the development of infrastructures for economic. This orientation indicated that beneficiaries need to be able to link language and economic development to obtain a grant from one of the ESIF programmes. Thus, the aims of the ESIF can be seen as a reason why more indirect links were found for all regions than direct funds. Moreover, as mentioned above, separate funds for culture related projects exist. However, it is worth highlighting that the large budgets for the ESIF can provide vast amounts of funding that can be of use to communities living in these Celtic language speaking areas.

6 Conclusion

It is clear that despite the linguistic similarities and cultural overlaps, these four Celtic languages and traditional speaking areas differ significantly in economic terms. This is reflected in the findings of this research, whereby direct links were identified mostly in just two of the linguistic spheres. Nonetheless, there are some common aspects which can be highlighted as well as some key areas which would benefit from deeper research.

Whilst these links cover a range of spheres including education and media but also manufacturing and industry, what is not identifiable in this research is the effect on language. This is the reason we have chosen to use the term link, because the question on whether there is a positive or negative effect for language maintenance and revitalisation efforts is unclear and likely varies with each project. It is plausible to suggest that in the cases of direct links such as to education and media, the funds are likely to be boosting language maintenance and revitalisation. However, in the indirect links related to general job creation and construction of infrastructure, there could be negative effects on language if this is fuelling inward migration of non-speakers into traditional speaking areas. Thus, here it is clear that ESIF can only be beneficial alongside a strong language policy/strategy. In the cases of Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh, it is obvious that such strategies do exist, with language commissioners and boards set up as well as certain levels of official status. However, with Breton the situation is less clear on that front. If managed well, the ESIF can therefore provide rural areas, which had often been

economically neglected throughout the 20th century (conversely often the reason the Celtic language had survived there), with much needed economic funds and jobs. This is also where more culture or research focused EU funds can play a role, such as Creative Europe, Erasmus + and Horizon 2020. Yet this brings in a timely point, the issue of Brexit. Scottish Gaelic and Welsh were the two spheres in our research which seem to have benefited most from ESIF funds, yet these are two which no longer qualify for such funds. Therefore, this research reinforces the point that post-Brexit funds need to be put in place and continued by Westminster in order to fill this gap, over the coming decades.

Aside from the issue of reverse effect, there are some other limitations to our research which need to be noted. Given the vast number of projects funded across the four regions in the two funding periods totalling 14 years, it is almost certain that we did not identify every project with a link to language. For instance, no data were available online on funded projects in Brittany for the period 2007 – 2013. Further scrutiny on each sphere is necessary and this could form the basis for standalone articles concentrating on each. Moreover, we only looked at four Interreg projects and it is possible that others exist – this is certainly a suggested an area for future research. Moreover, the ERDF and ESF are the main two structural funds but there are other economic focused funds which could be scrutinised for links to Celtic language. In particularly the European Agricultural Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund are two substantial pools of funding which have obvious links to rural and coastal, populations. Given that the four Celtic regions in focus are all coastal and relatively rural, it is likely that these may be impactful. Moreover, these industries are also quite politically salient and so there may be some political use for language activists to make this link. This also links to a final point of interest for possible further research, do the EU structural funds have any normative standing with Celtic language speakers – are they seen as prestigious and a boost to the status of the language?

7 References

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