

EU ENGAGEMENT REPORT	
Minister	Angus Robertson (AR) Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
Type of engagement	Meeting
Date	3 August 2021
Who	Simona Leskovar (SL) Slovenian Ambassador to the UK
Key points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidency: SL said this was her first visit out of London since taking on her post, and that it was especially important to visit as Slovenia takes on its second EU presidency. This presidency came with very different challenges to their first, following multiple crises, including the pandemic, with SL explaining that Slovenia would be focussed on helping build a stronger, more resilient EU. • COP26: SL noted that the Embassy are preparing plans for the Slovenian delegation to COP26. AR pointed out that Scotland has much to show visiting delegations and that SG are ambitious in renewables and determined to be a major exporter. SG officials would aim to be as helpful as possible as the Embassy draws up plans. • Bled Strategic Forum (BSF): SL delivered AR a personal invitation from Foreign Minister Logar to attend this year's BSF, saying climate change would be one of the priorities for the conference and that the organisers have suggested SG participation in a relevant panel discussion. • EU relations: SL said that Slovenia regrets to see the UK leave the EU, however respects the sovereign decision of British people at the referendum. AR responded that Scotland is very proud to be European and that the recent elections to the Scottish Parliament returned a majority in favour of an independent Scotland rejoining the EU. AR stressed, however, that the SG is currently focussed on the pandemic. • Scottish-Slovenian relations: SL said Slovenia are proud to have a representative in Scotland (the Honorary Consul) and pointed to ties between Scotland and Slovenia in trade and tourism. SL added that building on these ties for future economic and social relations was important to Slovenia. • Education: SL suggested that Scotland and Slovenia have much to share in the field of education, and reiterated Slovenia's regret that the UK will no longer be part of the Erasmus+ scheme, especially as the UK was a popular destination for Slovenian students. • Western Balkans (WB): AR asked about the WB, with SL explaining it is Slovenia's aim to put the WB back on the EU's political agenda, with Slovene governments of all political persuasions supporting the eventual accession of WB countries into the EU, and more broadly into the transatlantic alliance. SL stressed that, first, WB countries need support in their post-COVID economic recoveries. AR noted Scotland's support in peace and reconciliation efforts, such as the Beyond Borders initiative.

