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## European and International Affairs

# European and International Affairs

The European and International Affairs team leads for Birmingham City Council on:

- European funding
- European policy
- International affairs.

This is done through the delivery of our European and International Strategy, Distinctly Birmingham, which sets out the priorities for European and international engagement.

The European and International Strategy has a geographical focus on the areas of Europe, North & South America, the Commonwealth, and China and the Far East. Our team brings together partners through four area-based associations to deliver the Strategy. The area-based associations are made up of a range of stakeholders in the city with a track record, or interest in, engaging with these parts of the world.

## More information

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For further information about the team please visit the website [Distinctly Birmingham](#) or email ([distinctly@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:distinctly@birmingham.gov.uk)).

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## Europe

Birmingham has a long and successful track record of engagement in Europe:

- We lead on European funding, including providing advice and guidance to council departments and external partners on European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and transnational EU programmes. Examples of how the city uses EU funding can be found [here](#) and [here](#). This results in the City and partners accessing several million pounds of grant a year for the benefit of citizens and business.
- We are responsible for Birmingham's relations with its four European partner cities: Frankfurt, Leipzig, Lyon and Milan.
- We co-ordinate our engagement in the EUROCITIES network. Birmingham is a founder member of EUROCITIES which represents over 130 of Europe's largest cities and is a widely respected urban network for lobbying and influencing on issues of EU policy and funding.
- We also have our own representation at the heart of Europe through our Greater Birmingham and West Midlands Brussels office whose aim is to support the city and partners to secure funding and to develop stronger links with EU institutions and decision-makers.

The Europe Association aims to bring organisations in Birmingham together where there are gaps in local European collaboration and where there are future opportunities which will lead to greater reputation building for Birmingham and grant capture. Its priorities are:

- Deepening exchange, exposure and partnerships.
- Maximising large-scale, pan-European initiatives to support the development of Birmingham's key growth sectors.
- Supporting the city's competitiveness and innovation agenda through European working.

- **Developing greater joined-up working among local partners, as well as closer working with our ambassadors in Europe to further enhance Birmingham's reputation and influence**

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# China and the Far East

We support the China & Far East Area Association which co-ordinates, develops and communicates Birmingham's engagement, across all sectors of the economy with China and countries in the Far East region.

Its focus is on:

- **Education:** Connections between schools, colleges and our four universities.
- **Trade, investment and commercial partnering:** Working with our colleagues in UKTI, Business Birmingham and Marketing Birmingham.
- **Cultural and civic links:** Artist and cultural exchanges are underway with the city of Guangzhou, and the Library of Birmingham and the Library of Guangzhou have an active Memorandum of Understanding. There are also regular outbound and incoming trade and government visits.

We are helping to give meaning to the sister city relationships with Guangzhou, Changchun and Nanjing in particular, but our work is not exclusive to those cities; through our network we are in contact with other areas such as Chongqing, Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin and Shenyang.

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# Commonwealth

The purpose of the Commonwealth Association is to promote and develop local government, business, education, culture and other activity of mutual benefit between the people and organisations of Birmingham and counterparts within the 53 countries of the Commonwealth. We are keen to build on our existing relationship with Johannesburg, our sister city, as well as enjoying excellent connections with other Commonwealth countries through the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. The Birmingham Commonwealth Association has also become a branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society giving access to a broad range of partners across the Commonwealth.

The Birmingham Commonwealth Association aims to build on these connections to the benefit of Birmingham and its citizens. Our three subgroups reflect the interest of our members and comprise:

- Education
- Communities
- Trade and business.

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# North and South America

The North and South America Association's mission is to promote activity of mutual benefit to the people and organisations of Birmingham and North America. America ranks as the biggest investor into the city, almost twice the number of investment projects to the next biggest investor, Germany.

Chicago, our sister city, is the focus of our activity and Birmingham's North America Association works in partnership with its counterpart in Chicago, the Chicago - Birmingham Sister City Committee, to oversee activities between the sister cities.

Our engagement with Chicago includes local government collaboration such as the tri-city social work exchange project, as well as joint educational and cultural projects. The Association also plans to develop a greater emphasis on the business and trade agendas.

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