

Briefing note - Impact of the UK referendum decision to leave the European Union

Key facts

1. The loss of European Union support will affect our university more acutely than any other university in the Scottish sector.
2. We are affected through our status as an education institution but also because we benefit greatly from the transition region status of the Highlands and Islands.
3. European Union funding currently represents, on average, 35% of our external income and has levered in over £200m investment over the last 20 years. Planned European funding until 2022 would have increased this substantially.
4. Loss of European Structural Funds, in particular, after 2018 will cut a proposed £19m from funding for additional student places, student support, curriculum development to meet business and public sector skills requirements.
5. Four major INTERREG VA cross border projects, which fund collaborations with Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, are at risk.
6. Loss of opportunity for our research community to participate in Horizon 2020 will curtail key development areas including marine energy and life sciences.
7. Participation for staff and students in the ERASMUS+ programme which facilitates collaborative exchanges is key to our development as an outward-looking, international organisation.
8. We are proud of the achievements and contribution of our European Union staff and students. They are a valuable resource and we need clarity on their status.

Our European background

Over the last 20 years, European Union engagement, whether in terms of financial investment or collaborative work with partners in other member states, has been at the heart of the development of the university.

European Union Structural Funds have been fundamental to the development of our integrated university. Having a university based within its boundaries has an impact on the regional economy of the Highlands and Islands. There has been significant investment in teaching and research facilities, the information and communications technology which underpins this, and course development and delivery.

“The biggest impact on the university is *uncertainty*.”

Our university offers employment and economic development opportunities and is a high priority for the sustainable economic development model for the Highlands and Islands.

We have been involved with European Union funding programmes with many different countries, including the Northern Periphery and Arctic and Atlantic Areas for many years. These partnerships have influenced our development through added investment and collaborative lessons learned.

We are in the process of introducing new structural fund activities in the 2014-20 European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund programmes, including key additional skills provision through the Scottish Funding Council's 'Developing Scotland's Workforce' Strategic Intervention and are planning for future engagement, notably in Scottish Funding Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise's 'Innovation', Skills Development Scotland's 'Developing Scotland's Workforce' and Scottish Government's 'Low Carbon and Circular Economy' plans.

What are we doing about it?

1. We're quantifying and mitigating risks by preparing to take action to secure promised and alternative funds for priority initiatives and maintain important international collaborations.
2. We're ensuring, wherever possible, that existing initiatives are included in categories guaranteed for funding under HM Treasury planning advice.
3. We're keeping up-to-date through our networks: Universities Scotland, Universities UK and Scotland Europa.
4. We're keeping working closely with managing authorities, lead partners and national contact points for structural fund and INTERREG programmes.

"European Union structural funds are aimed at reducing regional economic and social disparities. Although additional funding has made a considerable difference to the Highlands and Islands over the years, there is still more work to be done, as the challenges of geography, peripherality and sparsity of population remain. It is essential that any future domestic policy decisions for regional funding take this into account."

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