

External context

The external situation remains uncertain as we approach ‘Brexit Day’ – 23.00 on 29 March 2019 – but significant impact on UHI is certain. We therefore continue to work with sectoral, national and regional partners on scenario planning, ensuring that UHI’s specific concerns are taken into account at all opportunities.

Some short-term arrangements have been put in place, but there are considerable complexities over what will happen in the post Brexit scenario – be that after a 2-year transition period or, in the case of a ‘no deal’, on 30 March 2019. The nature and range of concerns are broadly the same in either scenario – though the impact of a no-deal case clearly has the potential for far greater impact and in a much shorter timescale. Summarised update on our 3 key areas of interest:

Concerns	Mitigation actions
I EU students and staff	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Although UHI numbers relatively low, they had been growing – and their positive impact is high. 2. Access to mobility programmes (eg Erasmus+, Marie Curie) for Scottish students post Brexit – likely that some access will continue, through UK status as ‘third country’ – but details not yet known. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Participating in SG Brexit Forum on Universities – report on this subject to be presented on 23 Oct. b. Disseminating details on fees for 18-19 and 19-20 and recruitment activities stressing message of welcome. c. Promoting events providing advice and support. d. Promoting EU mobility schemes while still eligible, as well as non-EU opportunities (eg UArctic).
II University research collaboration and funding	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sector most concerned about future access to Horizon 2020 (and successor, Horizon Europe programme). UHI activity small – but was increasing. 2. Participation in future European Cooperation Programmes (INTERREG) a major concern for UHI, as the leading university recipient of grant (€6.7m). 3. Current UHI EU project activity shows EU project budgets, excluding ESIF, of ~£7m, with further ~£0.6 pending approval; APs lever in further funds. 4. Funding allows participation in EU-wide and global projects, helping to develop curriculum and research and access valuable partnerships. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Disseminating information on UK Treasury and SG initial guarantees for EU projects securing funding before Brexit day; update in July 18 provided guarantees in no deal scenario.¹ This confirms successful EU bids until the end of 2020 will receive full financial allocation over a project’s lifetime. b. Lobbying for access to funding with the university sector, which has met with some success. c. Engaging in the Scottish Horizon Forum and INTERREG Support Group, providing details on current and future access; these are circulated to UHI staff. d. Engaging in consultation responses, influencing future access where possible, and direct advice on current issues from the Scotland Europa team.
III EU structural funds and future regional policy	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Little detail yet on replacement for ESIF. Consultation on UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) expected later this year. 2. Changes post Brexit will have major impact on UHI, given significant funds levered in across the network since 1990s – totalling ~£250m. 3. Current ESIF projects include ~£30m Developing Scotland’s Workforce and ~£6.2m ILEX projects, with potential for further funding up to 2023. 4. H&I organisations concerned future regional policy/funding may not prioritise regional disparities, secure high levels of investment or partnership delivery - with high negative impact. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Contributing to ESIF paper for SG Brexit Forum on Universities, recognising UHI is likely to be most affected. b. Contributing to Universities Scotland and UUK debates - but danger that future access to UKSPF could be targeted to research and innovation, whereas UHI’s funding has also supported infrastructure and access to learning and teaching. c. Working with partners in Highlands and Islands European Partnership (HIEP – UHI, HIE and 7 local authorities in the region) to ensure specificities of the region are addressed in policy development and prepare for cliff-edge halt in funding if future regional policy not agreed before 2020.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-from-eu-programmes-guaranteed-until-the-end-of-2020>

