

EU reform and the EU referendum: implications for Scotland inquiry

Universities Scotland on Europe

Our role in the debate on Europe

It is for the people of Scotland & the UK to decide

Scotland's universities do not get a vote in the referendum. The people of Scotland do.

Just like the rest of Scotland's population, the 250,000 strong community of staff and students at Scotland's 19 higher education institutions will take different views on whether Britain should remain in the EU and under what terms. The 19 Principals and Directors of our institutions are entitled to their own view. Some may make their individual views known. Others may choose not to.

As the representative body of Scotland's 19 higher education institutions we will work with whatever outcome is chosen by the electorate.

Universities Scotland's role is to inform & challenge decision-makers

We do not feel it for us as an organisation to campaign for a particular outcome in the referendum. We see our role as working hard to ensure that:

- 1) policy makers on all sides of the debate are very clear on the implications that their preferred outcome will have for universities.
- 2) policy makers commit, whatever their preference and whatever the outcome, to secure a set of policy and funding outcomes that will enable universities to be successful.

EU membership has supported a strong Scottish HE sector

Scotland has a high-performing higher education sector. We have more world-class universities per head of population than anywhere else in the world. The excellence of our teaching is world renowned, all of our 19 higher education institutions are undertaking 'world-leading' research and our levels of interaction with business on innovation stands far beyond that of many comparator countries.

Our priority is to continue to build on those strengths. In pursuit of that goal we will always seek out partnerships that can support this. Membership of the European Union has offered Scotland policy and funding opportunities that have greatly benefitted higher education directly and Scotland more widely. This paper sets out the facts behind those opportunities and their impact. It also touches on responsibilities, as far as they relate to higher education, of EU membership.

Whatever the outcome of the referendum our priority will be to ensure we have a set of funding and policy decisions that work to

the advantage of our higher education institutions.

Universities are spaces for debate

Universities have a role as places that encourage and support informed debate and discussion of important issues such as Britain's future in Europe. We know our members will be providing a forum for public debate, research and analysis between now and the referendum.

Our Priority: Strong and well-funded research

£1 in every £10 of Scottish HE research funding is from Europe

Europe is a very important source of research income for universities.

Scotland's universities receive £88.8million of research funding a year from EU sources. Most of this, 85 per cent, comes from European Commission programmes. The rest from EU charities and business. This equates to 13% of the total annual research funding Scottish universities receive.ⁱ

£636m for Scottish research in 6 years

The EU Framework 7 programme for research ran from 2007-2013. Scotland did very well from that fund, securing £636 million.

That equates to 10.4 per cent of all Framework funds that came into the UK, relative to an 8.5 per cent share of the UK population. Universities were a major factor in Scotland winning that funding.

Around £5.5m in European regeneration funds. More than Scotland gets from UK

Scottish higher education institutions currently receive around £5.5 million a year in European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) and around £1 million in European Social Funds (ESF) which is a significant contribution to regeneration projects in key parts of Scotland.ⁱⁱ

Over the last five years regeneration funds from European sources have been significantly higher than funds received from the UK Government for the same purpose.

Case study: Significant European funding for pest control in agriculture

The University of Glasgow received €7 million in European grant funding for the development of a form of insect control based on neuropeptides. The nEUROSTRESSPEP project uses insects' own neuropeptides against them to alter the hormones and pheromones of pests but causes no harm to other insects. The

research project will be of value to the agricultural industry. The research funding is from the Horizon 2020 fund and the research will be taken forward by a large international collaboration of partners.

Case study: Supporting patient care & reducing pressure on NHS Scotland

The University of Edinburgh's School of Informatics received €2.9 million from the EU's Horizon 2020 fund to assist with Health in My Language, which translates NHS public information into a variety of languages. This eases the pressure on Scotland's NHS. The translation uses fully automated machine translation but the software addresses the need to ensure a highly accurate translation of the original information on healthcare issues. It is also able to work with morphologically rich, and therefore very challenging languages to translate automatically, such as those found in central and Eastern Europe.

Our Priority: Active in research collaborations

Collaborative research is better research

Studies have found that collaborative research on an international level is 1.4 times more impactful than research within national boundaries. It is in the interests of high quality research that Scotland's universities maintain access to as wide a pool of potential research partners as possible.

Scottish-specific figures on co-authorship are not available but at a UK level 48% of research is internationally co-authored. Articles of this nature are more highly cited. Scotland has the highest field-weighted citation impact of all the UK devolved nations. Scotland also receives 15.5% of the UK's total citations.

We support the dismantling of barriers to international collaborative research rather than their creation.

The links that our members have at Scottish, UK, European and international level are all important to the sector's success in different ways. Universities will continue to operate in all of these spheres irrespective of the outcome of the referendum.

Case study: Accelerating the discovery of medicines in the European Lead Factory

The European Lead Factory concept, is a pan-European platform for drug discovery based in Scotland because the University of Dundee forms part of its hub. The Factory is the first of its kind and it was supported by Innovative Medicines Initiative,

which is Europe's largest public-private initiative working in medicine. The initiative, announced in 2013, brought €19 million to Scotland. Possibly more important than the funding is the collaborative approach to drug discovery the Factory takes and the unprecedented access, on a European-basis, that it gives to researchers. It represents an international consortium of 30 partners from industry and academia which offers promising new targets for research into drug discovery and new medicines. The partnership brings libraries of chemical compounds together to create a joint European Compound Collection of over half a million compounds, accessible to European partners.

Our Priority: Able to employ the best and brightest people

16% of academic staff are from the EU

Scotland's universities are part of a teaching and research ecosystem that transcends national borders.

High levels of staff mobility are characteristic of a strong and successful higher education sector.

Staff with EU nationality are a significant part of academic staff in Scotland's universities with responsibilities for both teaching and research.

Our ability to attract top talent from across the EU demonstrates the quality of teaching on offer to our students. It will remain essential to maintaining that excellence.

More than 1 in 5 of our research-only staff are from the EU

The flow of people and their ideas across national boundaries contributes to high quality research that fuels innovation and economic growth.

23% of Scotland's research-only staff are from the EU. This makes them an integral part of our research teams and the quality of Scotland's academic research.ⁱⁱⁱ

Our Priority: Catalysing innovation

Over £60 million into Scottish HE for innovation-focused projects

Innovation has been a key strand of the EU's Structural Funds since 2014. The resource available through structural funds has become an important part of Scotland's mix of financial support for innovation between universities and business.

14 different Scottish universities were the lead partners in 60 ERDF projects between 2007 and 2013 to a value of over £62.5 million. Many of these projects have helped build and embed the infrastructure needed to support closer engagement with the

business community and to increase the commercialisation of university research.^{iv}

Innovation-focused projects to receive ERDF funding include Strathclyde University's Technology Innovation Centre which received a contribution of over £6.5 million of funding towards the total investment of £90 million needed. The University of Edinburgh's Scottish Centre for Regenerative Medicine received over £5 million of funds from the EU fund.

EU support for collaborations in Scotland

In recent years EU funds have been important to cross-sector initiatives focused on innovation and university-business engagement.

ERDF funds supported the expansion of services provided by Interface, the innovation match-making service for universities and SMEs. This grant stream was also important to the establishment of Scotland's Innovation Centres. Backed by industry, Innovation Centres draw on the research expertise in Scotland's universities and research institutes to work on industry-defined projects.

Structural funds have always focused on specific niche investments which would otherwise not take place, or at least not to the same scale and timeframe.

Case study: Strathclyde University's Technology Innovation Centre

The Technology & Innovation Centre at the University of Strathclyde was developed with industry, for industry and aims to accelerate the way in which researchers in academia and industry collaborate and innovate together, within a new specifically designed building in the heart of Glasgow. The Centre has already attracted Scottish and Southern Energy, the Weir Group, Scottish-Power and several other major cross-sectorial industrial companies. By working together both will benefit from participation by large corporations and a large group of innovative SMEs. The TIC and surrounding International Technology & Renewable Energy Zone are expected to generate 700 new jobs and attract millions of pounds of inward investment to Glasgow.

Encouraging student mobility

A belief in inward and outward mobility for

Universities believe in the benefits of student mobility. We support the flow of our 'home' students to Europe, and beyond, and are pleased to welcome students from across the EU to our classrooms and laboratories. We consider this important to an enriched

students

educational experience and the development of our graduates as global citizens.

Over £150 million spent off-campus every year by EU students 1 in 5 of our postgraduate research students are from the EU

EU students make a significant economic contribution to Scotland. The off campus expenditure of the 24,000 EU students studying at all levels in Scotland is estimated to be £156 million a year.

There are short and long-term benefits of this highly-skilled immigration from the EU. In the short-term, EU students contribute £17 million a year in fees at postgraduate level study in Scotland. Over the longer-term EU students are able to stay and work in Scotland, unlike their international peers, and so contribute to the Scottish economy.

Students of EU nationality are more likely to be studying science, technology, engineering and math in our universities than their UK peers. The figures are 33 per cent of EU and 23 per cent of UK students respectively. Scotland currently faces significant skills shortages in many of these areas. EU students who are able to stay and find high-skill employment in sector's in Scotland after their higher education are making an important contribution to Scotland's short to medium-term skills needs.

1,600 Scottish students go to Europe every year

1,600 Scots go abroad to European countries with Erasmus every year. Erasmus is an EU student exchange programme and the single largest source of funding for Scottish/UK students wanting to study or work abroad.

Numbers of Scottish students taking up opportunities for outward mobility through Erasmus are going up. They have increased by 50% over the last 7 years. The opportunity for student exchange within Europe enriches the learning experience, enhances graduate employability and promotes greater understanding and respect of different people and cultures.

A student body with an international outlook

The presence of large numbers of EU students in Scottish universities contributes to a cosmopolitan campus environment and enriches the learning experience for home students.

73 per cent of undergraduate in Scotland thought they had an international outlook and 79 per cent of employers consider this to be an important skills in their recruits.^v

Case study: Sarah Pollock, student at Glasgow Caledonian University

"I recently studied business abroad in Milan, Italy for four months and have never made a better decision. Academically, it has also influenced me to further my studies and apply to do a masters degree, which I would love to do abroad again. Personally

I feel more confident as I have proven to myself that I can achieve these things in another country so why not my own?! My Erasmus experience in six words would be “the best time of my life!”

Ensuring availability of places

Access to HE on ‘equal terms’

Universities Scotland supports the cross-border flow of students in all directions. We are very happy to welcome students from the EU to study here. Their presence brings educational and social benefits to our home students and to Scotland more widely.

EU students are eligible to access higher education in Scottish universities on the same basis as Scottish-domiciled students under articles 18 and 21 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union. This is a responsibility that Scotland, and the UK, must adhere to as a member of the EU.

Interplay between the Scottish Government policy on free undergraduate education for Scottish-domiciled students and the EU’s Treaty requires EU-domiciled students to receive the same entitlement to a free higher education in Scotland.

The number of EU students studying at undergraduate level in a Scottish university increased by 25 per cent over the last five years.^{vi}

The cost of the free higher education for EU students must be met by the Scottish Government. This has previously been estimated to be in excess of around £90 million a year based on current EU student numbers.

Conclusion

Our priority is to secure the best policy and funding environment for our higher education institution members.

Universities Scotland will work with Universities UK to ensure that politicians, whatever their position on Europe, understand the implications of the outcome of the referendum for universities.

References

ⁱ HESA Finance 2013/14

ⁱⁱ HE-Business Community Interaction Survey

ⁱⁱⁱ HESA Staff 2013-14

^{iv} Scottish Government ERDF 2007-2013
^v Universities Scotland (2013) Richer for It
^{vi} HESA Student 2009/10 – 2013/14.