



Universities Scotland's response to Finance and Constitution Committee's request for input on funding of EU competencies

Following a request from the Finance and Constitution Committee, Universities Scotland is submitting views with respect to post-Brexit research funding. We have focussed our response on our views on the future relationship with the EU's research and innovation programme. We do not consider that the benefits of current EU research and innovation funding can be easily replicated and we see a need for a continued work and energy to secure full involvement with the future Framework Programme.

For reference we are looking forward to Framework Programme 9, which is the successor to Horizon 2020 (the eighth Framework Programme). We expect the formal name of Framework Programme 9 to be Horizon Europe.

Our comments on the successor to the European Structural Funds is available via our recent submission to the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee¹. Our full priorities post-Brexit are available on the Universities Scotland website².

Scotland's current performance

Scotland's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) perform very well in the current Framework Programme (Horizon 2020). Scotland benefits from a world-class research base that performs very well in a competitive, excellence-driven funding system. Horizon 2020 is an almost €80Bn of funding available from 2014 to 2020; a long-term programme of significant value.

The most recent UK level data publication³ (as of 6 March 2018) shows:

- In the latest data showed that the UK performed very well in the 'excellent science' pillar of Horizon 2020 securing 19.7% of all funding from the start of the programme to March 2018; and,
- Looking at Horizon 2020 participations within the UK, seven Scottish HEIs were in the top 50 in the UK institutions securing €317M from the start of the programme to March 2018

Looking at 2016/17 11% of total research grants and contracts income (essentially competitive funding) to Scottish HEIs was from EU government bodies (which would

¹ Universities Scotland, <https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/briefing-evidence/economy-jobs-fair-work-committee-european-structural-investment-funds-inquiry/> (April 2018)

² Universities Scotland, <https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/publications/brexit-priorities/> (February 2017)

³ UK Government, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-participation-in-horizon-2020> (April 2018)



include European Commission Framework Programmes) with 14% of income from all EU sources (including government, charity and industry).⁴

According to Scotland Europa figures (as at January 2018) Scotland had secured 1.61% of the total allocated Horizon 2020 budget to date (which compared favourably with Scotland's ~1% population share of EU countries) and 11.1% of all funding awarded to UK institutions.

The value of the EU-wide research and innovation system extends beyond monetary value alone

Our view is that we want a close relationship that includes full access to the EU research and innovation system. The value of the EU-wide system extends far beyond the monetary value alone. Briefly, those areas of added value include:

- Facilitating cooperation with partners to share knowledge and drive research quality;
- Enabling the nurturing of internationally-linked and experienced researchers at all career levels;
- Having a consistent approach to funding across national boundaries without requiring academics to navigate several funding systems;
- Allowing pooling of expertise (and data) to reach critical mass for research into worldwide challenges;
- Creating value for individuals and teams in winning competitive funding on an EU-wide scale to underline the quality of work; and,
- Providing a long-term funding settlement to support a longer-term approach to research.

Our views on developing Framework Programme 9

In terms of the design of the future Framework Programme we have eight key recommendations, which are:

1. Increase the budget for FP9
2. Continue to focus on excellence
3. Invest in highly successful programmes (e.g. European Research Council, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions)
4. Provide support for different types of impact
5. Enable research and innovation excellence across Europe
6. Be open to the world
7. Improve diversity and inclusivity in FP9
8. Simplify further

⁴ HESA Finance 2016-17 Table 7 – income analysed by source



The full detail of these recommendations, to build on the success of Horizon 2020, are available in our position of development of Framework Programme 9⁵.

We understand that the proposal that will be published by the European Commission (due in early June) will present a Framework Programme 9 that delivers on many of our ambitions including growing the funding available for excellence science, and maintaining the emphasis on excellence.

The importance of funding based on excellence (recommendation 2)

Research excellence should be funded wherever it is found; evidence shows that excellent research leads to beneficial impact (defined as ‘an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia’)⁶.

Scottish HEIs highly value this structure of excellence-driven funding with an important example being the European Research Council (ERC). This oversees excellence-driven research funding and a recent study showed that ‘curiosity-driven research, free from any thematic constraints, benefits society at large’ with 50% of projects (at the time of evaluation) having made an impact on economy, society and policy making, with close to an additional 10% delivering a major impact to date⁷.

We would strongly support the continued funding of research by the principle of funding for excellence, as identified by peer review.

The importance of international collaboration (recommendation 6)

Researchers want to work with the best, world-leading researchers – regardless of where they are based. The Framework Programmes already play a very important role in facilitating collaboration between the UK and EU countries. There is evidence to support the value of internationally co-authored research:

- 51% of UK articles (2014) resulted from international collaboration and this is associated with increased field weighted citations impact⁸; and,
- Analysis of those scientific publications that have already been produced from Horizon 2020 are world class – being cited more than twice the world average⁹.

⁵ Universities Scotland, <https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/briefing-evidence/universities-scotlands-position-development-framework-programme-9/> (March 2018)

⁶ Publication patterns in research underpinning impact in REF2014, Higher Education Funding Council for England, July 2016. Available here: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2016/refimpact/>

⁷ What’s the impact of ERC-funded research?, European Research Council, Autumn 2016. Available here: <https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/content/pages/pdf/ERC-Newsletter-Autumn-2016-impact.pdf>

⁸ International Comparative Performance of the UK Research Base 2016, Elsevier/BEIS (2017), https://www.elsevier.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/507321/ELS-BEIS-Web.pdf

⁹ 1 Key findings from the Horizon 2020 interim evaluation, European Commission, 2017. Available here: https://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/brochure_interim_evaluation_horizon_2020_key_findings.pdf



The Framework Programmes provide a platform for international collaboration which helps to bring together the best researchers and deliver impactful research.

Scottish Government's position on involvement with the future Framework Programme

We support Scottish Government's position on being as 'fully involved as possible' in Framework Programme and their support that 'funding of research excellence should be a fundamental principle of the entire Framework Programme'¹⁰.

UK Government's position on the future Framework Programme

On 21 May 2018, the Prime Minister made a speech¹¹ in which confirmed the UK Government's position on the future UK-EU science and innovation partnership, including:

"The UK would like the option to fully associate ourselves with the excellence-based European science and innovation programmes – including the successor to Horizon 2020 and Euratom R&T"

"Of course such an association would involve an appropriate UK financial contribution, which we would willingly make.

In return, we would look to maintain a suitable level of influence in line with that contribution and the benefits that we bring."

The UK Government's vision for the future partnership is detailed in a Department for Exiting the European Union position paper¹² and we would very much support the goal of a 'far reaching Science and Innovation Pact'. We were pleased to see the aim of maintaining a level of influence in future decisions as continued influence over the strategic direction that informs EU research and innovation funding is within the interests of all the UK and the higher education sector.

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, Ms Somerville, welcomed the UK Government's announcement at an event on Framework Programme 9 (22 May). We look forward to working with Scottish and UK Government to secure this outcome.

¹⁰ 'Scotland's position paper on the 9th Framework Programme for Research and Innovation in response to the European Commission public consultation on EU funds in the areas of investment, research and innovation, SMEs and the single market', <https://portal.scotlandeuropa.com/file/download?id=2334> (March 2018)

¹¹ UK Government, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-on-science-and-modern-industrial-strategy-21-may-2018> (May 2018)

¹² UK Government, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/framework-for-the-uk-eu-partnership-science-research-and-innovation> (May 2018)



The importance of researcher mobility

Freedom of movement in the EU has been hugely important in building up the UK research base, allowing the free circulation of people and ideas.

This issue of ensuring that the UK remains a globally attractive place for talent is critical to future success. In the Prime Minister's speech she also noted:

“And today over half the UK's resident researcher population were born overseas.

When we leave the EU, I will ensure that does not change.

Indeed the Britain we build together in the decades ahead must be on in which scientific collaboration and the free exchange of ideas is increased and extended, both between the UK and the EU and with partners around the world”

We have responded to the recent Migration Advisory Committee call for evidence of EEA workers in the UK¹³, and have highlighted the huge contribution of EU staff to Scottish HEIs. Our evidence shows that Scotland's non-UK EEA workforce is disproportionately young and concentrated in academic roles, particularly in science, engineering and technology disciplines. Those staff will often be early-career researchers and they support a lot of the research effort in Scottish HEIs. It is critical that the future migration system supports mobility of talented researchers (and the best staff for the operation of HEIs in the broadest sense) and retention of talent in Scotland. Reflecting the demographic challenges in Scotland we offered evidence to the Scottish Government debate on a migration system that meets the needs for Scotland¹⁴.

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¹³ Universities Scotland, <https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/briefing-evidence/universities-scotlandresponse-migration-advisory-committee-call-evidence-eea-workers-uk/> (October 2017)

¹⁴ Universities Scotland, <https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/briefing-evidence/briefing-scottish-government-debate-migration-system-meets-needs-scotland/> (February 2018)

