

# FUTURE FRAMEWORKS FOR INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION ON RESEARCH AND INNOVATION: CALL FOR EVIDENCE

## SUBMISSION FROM THE SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is the national, strategic body for the funding of further/higher education and research in Scotland, and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the call for evidence. Scotland has a strong reputation for world-class science and research. Our universities are successful and influential participants in the European Union's (EU) research funding programmes, with research funding from EU Commission sources representing around 11% of Scottish universities' research income each year<sup>1</sup>.

We would like to caveat our answers below that we have not had specific engagement with our stakeholders for this call for evidence. However, we have had extensive discussions with institutions on the wider topic of the impact of leaving the EU. One of the messages we consistently received was how beneficial Horizon 2020 has been, and how concerned institutions are about the future of research if the UK focuses on a domestic scheme. On the basis of the feedback we have received we believe that, to achieve the UK's future ambitions for international collaboration on research and innovation, it would be best to associate to Horizon Europe.

1. Methods by which new funding arrangements can:
  - support research discovery of outstanding quality in all disciplines through international partnerships;
  - attract to the UK researchers of outstanding capability from around the world; and
  - attract further R&D investment to the UK, thereby contributing to the Government's 2.4% agenda

Scotland has benefitted greatly from Horizon 2020 funding.<sup>2</sup> We believe that Scotland would benefit from continued membership of European programmes such as Horizon Europe, and that the UK should seek to become a member. This is in addition to the UK Government's commitment to spend 2.4% of GDP in research and development (R&D) by 2027. Ultimately, we believe that funding for research should not suffer due to the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

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[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/corporatepublications\\_sfccp012018/SFCCP012018\\_EU\\_Exit\\_and\\_Scottish\\_colleges\\_and\\_universities.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/corporatepublications_sfccp012018/SFCCP012018_EU_Exit_and_Scottish_colleges_and_universities.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> As at March 2018, €468 million had been secured by Scotland; this is almost 11.1% of the total funding awarded to UK organisations. Higher education institutions and research institutes in Scotland are collectively the main beneficiaries by organisation type, securing almost 77% (Almost €360 million) of the funding awarded to Scottish organisations. <https://portal.scotlandeuropa.com/file/download?id=2334>

If the UK Government decides not to seek membership of Horizon Europe, any new funding arrangements must align with Scottish Government and EU priorities. We value the relationship we have with our European partners and believe that any domestic scheme should support existing European partnerships, in addition to supporting wider international partnerships.

Outstanding researchers play a critical role in the UK's success as a base for research and innovation. Our researchers come from all over the world so it is vital that future immigration policy allows continued flexibility for academics, researchers and their teams so that they can easily relocate and collaborate. In addition to attracting international talent, we want to ensure that we develop our domestic skills base. To achieve this, future funding arrangements should support researchers at all stages of their careers.

Funding decisions should continue to be based on excellence. This will ensure that funding arrangements maximise the impact of future research and innovation.

To attract R&D investment, any new funding model should encourage match funding from industry or other collaborators. It should also be noted that other areas of Government policy can strongly influence R&D investment. For example, a supportive taxation policy will stimulate investment.

2. The optimum balance of emphasis for any new funding arrangements in each of the following dimensions:
  - European collaboration, Overseas Development Assistance and global collaboration;
  - support for: outstanding individuals; blue-skies research; business innovation and research impact; and research facilities and infrastructure; and
  - research and innovation domains (research disciplines, business sectors etc).

Collaboration is vital to quality research. It increases efficiency and reduces duplication. It also enables access to shared research infrastructure and facilities. Geography should not be the deciding factor when considering international collaboration, but who is best to collaborate with.

There needs to be a careful balance of support across all elements mentioned in question 2. All of them play an important role in solving global challenges. For example, investment in fundamental research is crucial to ensuring the flow of knowledge into innovation.

However, the optimum balance between the above dimensions may be different in each of the devolved nations, and may vary between different institutions according

to local priorities and circumstances. Therefore a flexible funding approach would be welcome.

It should be noted that Scottish universities have warmly welcomed the Global Challenges Research Funding (both the formula and the project funding streams), as a boost to their international and inter-disciplinary research activities. The application of research to the UN Sustainable Development Goals helps to raise Scotland's reputation for world-class science and drives sector engagement with international development issues.

3. Methods and timescales for introducing any new funding arrangements for international collaboration, including those that
  - reflect the ambitions of small and large businesses
  - foster new systems of international peer review and funding

There is a strong commitment to Open Science in EU Research and Innovation programmes. European research funders (including UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Wellcome) have announced 'Plan S' - a collective commitment to make full and immediate Open Access to scholarly publications a reality by 2020. In addition, Jisc has joined the Open Access in the European Research Area as a core member. SFC supports the principles of Open Science as realising value from publicly-funded research, and as drivers of international research collaboration.

A continuing commitment to Open Access from UK research funders will help maintain UK and EU policy alignment on access to research outputs, and minimise potential barriers to collaboration.

4. The roles of Government, UKRI, National Academies and other organisations in defining the agenda for European and international collaboration and administering any new funding arrangements for such activities.

Research funding is a fully devolved policy area, so it is essential that the devolved administrations and their agencies are included in setting priorities and in the ongoing running of the scheme to ensure that the distinctive requirements are taken into account.

Jisc is (currently) a member of GÉANT and has very effectively represented UK higher education interests in planning the EU digital research and innovation agenda, and the development of international e-infrastructure for collaboration. We need to support the coherent development of the UK e-infrastructure, in a way which enables international collaboration to continue.

5. Existing evidence on the efficiency and effectiveness of funding for international collaborations.

SFC believes that individual institutions are better placed to provide this evidence.

6. Any other issues relating to this work that you wish to bring to our attention

Please see our previous comments on Horizon Europe.