

EU Exit (research and innovation)

- This paper briefs RKEC on the key areas of work SFC is undertaking in preparation for the UK's departure from the European Union with regards to research and innovation. The paper invites REKEC to note this work and comment as appropriate.

Recommendations

- To note the summary of the key areas of work SFC is undertaking in preparation for the UK's departure from the European Union with regards to research and innovation and comment as appropriate.

Financial implications

- There are none.

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Purpose

1. This paper briefs RKEC on the key areas of work SFC is undertaking in preparation for the UK's departure from the European Union with regards to research and innovation. The paper invites RKEC to note this work and comment as appropriate.

Background

2. RKEC last, formally, discussed the (research and innovation) implications of the UK's exit from the EU in November 2017 (paper RKEC/17/32). Since then it has formed a key theme in discussions on various topics related to our strategy.

What SFC is doing

3. The EU Exit team will lead SFC's preparations for EU Exit in partnership with Colleges Scotland, Universities Scotland and the Scottish Government. This will comprise two Assistant Directors, one Senior Policy Officer, and two Policy Officers. The team will be structured under two areas 'universities, research and innovation' and 'co-ordination, colleges and skills'. Recruitment is practically complete with only the Senior Policy Officer appointment outstanding. A fuller update on the priorities of the team will be provided at the meeting.
4. SFC is contributing to various relevant fora, including:
 - **Brexit Forum on Colleges** (Scottish Government, Colleges Scotland, Unison, SFC and various Colleges) – considers the short/medium and longer term implications for relations with the EU as they relate to the college sector.
 - **Brexit Forum on Universities** (Scottish Government, Universities Scotland, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, National Union of Students, University and College Union, SFC, and various Universities) – considers the short/medium and longer term implications for relations with the EU as they relate to the universities sector.
 - **Brexit Response Steering Group** (Scottish Council for Development and Industry, Skills Development Scotland, Highland and Islands Enterprise, SFC, and Scottish Enterprise) - facilitates the sharing of information across the enterprise and Skills agencies in relation to Brexit preparedness.
5. SFC is continually supporting the Scottish Government process for briefing Scottish ministers on research and innovation. For example, we did this for the

Scottish Parliament debate on ‘Safeguarding Research Collaborations and Research Excellence’ on 7 November¹. We also prepared briefing and analysis for the Scottish Government’s EU Exit Summit, at University of Glasgow on 22 November – this is intended for future publication.

6. We are proactively working with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands Islands Enterprise and our existing assets such as Innovation Centres to help ensure Scotland remains an attractive partner in Europe whatever the outcome of the EU Exit negotiations. Two areas of note are:
 - **European Institute of Technology:** following advice from Scottish Government we, in partnership with SE and HIE, have been in discussion with EIT Digital (www.eitdigital.eu/), an EC funded organisation as part of the Knowledge and Innovation Community of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, on a proposal to co-fund a satellite office and Doctoral Training Centre in Scotland. Strengthening links with European partners is seen as a key outcome of this investment.
 - **Science Foundation Ireland:** this opportunity arose from an approach by Science Foundation Ireland, strengthened during the Irish trade mission in late September 2018. SFC met SFI and the Irish Trade Minister. We agreed to bring Innovation Centres and SFI’s Research Centres together in early 2019 to explore joint work with mutual economic benefit. We are developing a proposal to fund pilot joint activity to accelerate the partnership as a pathway to longer term funding, which could be sought from UKRI.
7. SFC is a member of Scotland Europa. This service provides us with important data - particularly on Horizon 2020. In SFC’s interactions with Scotland Europa, a ‘business as usual’ message has been put forward.
8. Following, in part, SFC advice Scottish Government agreed to allocate Barnett consequential funding to SFC to enable uplifts to both REG and UIF in AY2018/19. Future consequentials could afford us opportunities to strengthen the global connectedness of our universities – highlighting Research England’s International Investment initiative (I3) as an example of an approach underway in England. At this stage of the budget process it is not possible to predict how Scottish Ministers will choose to allocate the 2019/20 consequentials, having received SFC advice. We will keep RKEC engaged.
9. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is asking recipients of Horizon 2020 grants to enter selected information about their awards into a special portal. This will ensure that UKRI can keep researchers and businesses informed of the next

¹ www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11759

steps should the UK Government need to underwrite Horizon 2020 payments. SFC has promoted this message and associated links on its website².

Risk assessment

10. This paper is provided as an update on various matters therefore there is no specific risk directly associated with it. Potential risks associated with EU exit are documented in earlier referenced publications by SFC.

Equality and diversity assessment

11. Not applicable.

Financial implications

12. There are none.

Recommendations

13. To note the summary of the key areas of work SFC is undertaking in preparation for the UK's departure from the European Union with regards to research and innovation and comment as appropriate.

Publication

14. This paper will be published.

Further information

15. Contact: Keith McDonald, email: kmcdonald@sfc.ac.uk; Stuart Fancey, email: kmcdonald@sfc.ac.uk; Morag Campbell: mcampbell@sfc.ac.uk.

² www.sfc.ac.uk/research/research-funding/research-funding.aspx