



Brexit and the Voluntary Sector

2-4pm, 21st January, in Albany Centre, Ashley Street, Glasgow

Summary of key points

This event considered where we are with Brexit and more specifically, discussed the current [Scottish Government consultation](#) on what happens to EU funding once the UK leaves the EU. A range of voluntary sector/civil society organisations attended, alongside representatives from academia.

Introduction – Ian Bruce, CEO, GCVS

Ian highlighted that it's vital for the voluntary sector to work together around Brexit impacts, not only around the impact on the funding that organisations can access but also more broadly, on what our role will be as we consider the wider impact of Brexit on the people and communities that we support. Many communities are already reeling from economic hits, particularly Glasgow, and as we come out of the last decade of austerity, it is likely that these communities will once again be impacted by any downturn or crisis which may emerge once the UK leaves the EU.

Brexit: Understanding what happens next - Rebecca Zahn, University of Strathclyde

[Slides available online.](#)

Some key points include:

- During the transition/implementation period up until end 2020, there are a huge number of trade deals, legislation, regulations and policy decisions to be made, many of which will have a significant impact on disadvantaged people and communities. For example, the lists of [European Commission Preparedness Notices](#) gives an indication of the breadth of issues to be agreed. During this period, the UK will be a rule taker rather than rule maker, and so will have less influence;
- The Withdrawal Agreement Bill is in its final parliamentary stages. There are some significant changes from the former Bill, including a lesser role for parliamentary scrutiny, no protections around environmental or workers' rights, and no protections for family reunion of child refugees. 19 out of the 40 provisions of the Bill affect devolved areas -the Scottish Parliament withheld legislative consent but this will not affect passage of the Bill;

- There is particular concern around the impact of ending freedom of movement, when EU citizens make up about 4% of the Scottish workforce and have high numbers in particular sectors such as health and social care. Free movement will not end on 31st January, but at the end of the transition period. EU citizens who want to continue to live in the UK *must* apply to the EU Settlement Scheme – this gives settled status residence to those with paperwork to prove that they have lived here for five years, and pre-settled status to those who have not.

SCVO: Brexit and the Third Sector – Craig Wilson and Jamie Flaherty

[Slides available online.](#)

Key concerns that SCVO has highlighted include:

- Brexit will have multiple impacts on Scotland's third sector and the communities that we serve/represent, and yet it has largely been absent from any discussions and planning around Brexit;
- Regression on human rights' protections in Brexit legislation and fall-out;
- Loss of opportunity to engage in networks and collaborations across Europe;
- The impact on the many EU citizens who are employed or volunteer in the sector, highlighted in the #EUarevalued campaign;
- Scotland has benefited greatly from EU funding thus far and still does. SCVO is concerned that there has been a lack of consultation on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to date and that given that it will sit within the UK Industrial Strategy, to what extent will it be targeted to meet the needs of the communities that the third sector works with and serves?

SCVO is planning further work around Brexit and its impact on the third sector, and plans to establish an 'information sharing network' which will allow Scottish voluntary organisations with EU connections to come together.

Summary of event discussion, facilitated by Mhairi Snowden, Human Rights Consortium Scotland

The event discussed the current [Scottish Government consultation on replacement of EU structural funds](#), as well as the key characteristics that should shape future funding after Brexit. Some of the key points raised included:

- There is concern that the Scottish Government may not fully understand the extent of what EU funds currently support, such as local community place developments with Housing Associations which tackle wellbeing and isolation;
- The Scottish Government consultation is focused only on structural funds, but there are also other important streams of EU funding;
- Community level and smaller organisations must be able to access replacement funds directly - not only through local authorities or other public authorities – and the processes must not be cumbersome and overly bureaucratic. The emphasis should be on outcomes, not activity;

- The funding must have strategic aims to tackle inequality and promote wellbeing, and must be designed to work for the most marginalised communities – it should be targeted at communities and places that are the most disadvantaged. It should not be used to fund mainstream programmes;
- Subsidiarity is an important principle that should not be lost – replacement funding should be devolved to Scotland but should go further than that to ensure funding priorities and decisions are made closer to beneficiaries, whether regionally or within communities;
- There must be effective participation of beneficiaries in fund decision-making. The voluntary sector are well-placed to know what works best in tackling inequality and promoting wellbeing;
- The Voluntary sector should be a key decision maker/allocator/manager of funds, as an equal partner who can independently administer funds away from control of Scottish Government and local authorities – a trusted partner who can deliver good outcomes efficiently and effectively;
- Replacement funding should not be linked to City Deals or be held by Scottish, or Highlands & Islands, Enterprises;
- Replacement EU funding must be in addition to other funding, not replacing it
- Funding must be long-term and upfront;
- Replacement funding could be usefully linked to National Performance Framework strategic priorities – will we be able to see the clear link between the NPF and the funding priorities? The funding should be directed towards soft outcomes, not hard monetary GDP-focused, economic or employment data indicators;
- The lack of noise or attention given to the Scottish Government’s mishandling and management of current EU funding, to the point that the funds have been suspended for a long period (possibly irrevocably) is of great concern – the sector and Scotland could lose a considerable amount in potential funding. This is in addition to the previous changes to the current EU funding tranche to fund wider ‘structural activity’ such as Modern Apprenticeships which led to a loss of funding for marginalised communities through the voluntary sector;
- Any loss of a source of funding, particularly that as big as EU funding, is very concerning in the context where public sector budget cuts, together with growing austerity and growing need, are also hitting the sector very hard. This is particularly true in Glasgow where small organisations are being affected by new council funding arrangements;
- The Scottish Government needs to be more transparent around its engagement with the UK Government around Brexit, particularly in discussions around the UK Shared Prosperity Fund;
- We need to learn from the sector’s experience of current EU funding and what has worked well or not so well;
- As part of responding to this Scottish Government consultation, as a sector we need to analyse, evidence and highlight the impact and reach of the third sector as a major economic player;
- What can we do to mitigate the impact of Brexit on the third sector, both as a key deliverer of services and support, but also as an employer?
- Replacement EU funding throws up key questions around what kind of country do we want to be, and what will our priorities be?

The Civil Society Brexit Project is a partnership between the Human Rights Consortium Scotland and SULNE, funded by the Legal Education Foundation.

More information around Brexit and its impacts is available at:

www.civilsocietybrexit.scot

civilsocietybrexitscot@gmail.com