



## **Brexit and the Voluntary Sector**

**103pm, 7<sup>th</sup> February, Inverness**

### **Summary of key points**

This meeting 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.

### **Brexit: Understanding what happens next – Mhairi Snowden, Human Rights Consortium Scotland**

[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 has now passed. 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 did 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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**

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:

- The Scottish Government consultation is focused only on structural funds, but there are also other important streams of EU funding that must be replaced - any replacement funding must consider other important streams such as LEADER and DEAR.
- We can learn lessons from current EU funding, for example there needs to be less bureaucracy overall, and administrative burden should be proportionate to the size of funding and size of recipient. Current EU funding places a huge administrative burden on small organisations.
- Replacement funding should be locally organised and allocated, not centralised to either a UK or Scottish level.
- Replacement funding must be up-front and multi-year, recognising the restrictions of the spending review cycle but providing as much certainty as possible across this cycle.
- There are significant streams of work and activity that will not happen if there is not sufficient continuation of different types of EU funding. For example, Development Education and Awareness Raising Programme supports projects that engage the public in worldwide issues of social, economic and environmental development. DEAR works with civil society organisations and local authorities to promote universal values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. This programme runs very beneficial programmes in the Highlands and across Scotland that may be lost without the EU support being replaced.
- The Scottish Government must quickly explore ways that Scotland can remain part of funding programmes that do not require participating regions/countries to be part of the EU.

- Replacement funding could be linked to community planning partnerships, recognising that these partnerships do not work well in all areas but they provide a valuable model of partnership working.
- Replacement funding should not be allocated simply to the 'loudest voice' -it must be accessible to, and prioritised for, smaller community-based organisations who can have significant impact upon disadvantaged groups. Each part of its future design should enable smaller organisations to apply, manage and report on delivery.
- Replacement funding must retain the same allocation to the Highlands and Islands as it does now – this is particularly important given the level of rural poverty across the Highlands.
- 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 not be used to fund mainstream programmes;
- The voluntary sector should be a key decision maker/allocator/manager of funds – we should look to the model of WCVA's role in managing EU funding for the third sector in Wales.
- The lack of noise or attention given to the Scottish Government's mishandling and mismanagement of current EU funding, to the point that the funds have been suspended for a long period (possibly irrevocably) is of great concern.

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](http://www.civilsocietybrexit.scot)

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