

Universities
Scotland



Mr James Dornan MSP
Chair
Education and Skills Committee
T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

13 December 2017

Dear Mr Dornan,

I am writing in response to your letter (dated 4 December 2017) regarding the European Commission's Horizon 2020 Programme.

The [report](#) of negotiations published on 8 December to go forward to the European Council summit (14th-15th December) is an important step forward. This agreement in principle is to protect the rights of EU citizens in the UK, and UK citizens in the EU, address the Irish border and agree the financial settlement. It also states that:

- The UK will continue to participate in the EU programme financed by the MFF 2014-2020 'until their closure' (para 71) - *this includes Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+*
- Para 71 also notes that 'eligibility to apply to participate in Union programmes and Union funding for UK participants and projects will be unaffected by the UK's withdrawal from the Union for the entire lifetime of such projects'
- The UK has also highlighted that it may wish to participate in some EU budgetary programmes of the post-2020 MFF as a non-Member State (para 73)

This is a satisfactory outcome given the circumstances and we will promote this to our members to ensure continued engagement with Horizon 2020. The focus now must be on what follows Horizon 2020.

At present, we are looking forward to working with the Scottish Government, Scotland Europa and the UK Government on feeding into the development of Framework Programme 9 (the successor to Horizon 2020).

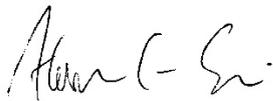
Our comments on the development of FP9 are contained in our response to the [interim evaluation](#) of Horizon 2020.

We believe it is vital that there is a continuing focus on excellence to drive research funding to deliver societal and economic benefit. The Commission should grow highly valued, effective approaches such as grants via the European Research Council and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. Further, FP9 should increase support for bottom-up curiosity-driven research and more should be done to strengthen social sciences and humanities through the equivalent to Societal Challenges (Pillar 2) in FP9.

We would be pleased if the Committee decided to raise these issues both with the Scottish Government and the UK Government, neither of whom we believe would disagree with our line of reasoning.

As ever, we are more than willing to provide members with further details on this topic or anything other matters relating to higher education in Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alastair Sim'.

Alastair Sim
Director, Universities Scotland