

Highlands and Islands of Scotland European Partnership



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European Partnership**

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External
Relations Committee
Scottish Parliament
Holyrood
Edinburgh
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Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee call for evidence in relation to the Article 50 withdrawal negotiations and their implications for Scotland.

In view of the significant potential impacts on the Highlands and Islands, the Highlands and Islands European Partnership (HIEP)¹ welcomes the opportunity to contribute views in relation to the Article 50 withdrawal negotiations and their implications for Scotland. HIEP has previously submitted evidence to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee (September 2016) and the Economy, Jobs & Fair Work Committee (November 2016). These responses emphasised the importance of migrant labour to the area and HIEP would request that this is considered in any Scottish Government response regarding the implications for Scotland and EU citizens in Scotland of the Article 50 withdrawal treaty.

Building on this point, HIEP would look for an early agreement on the issue of the rights of EU citizens (Essential Principles on Citizens Rights) resident in the UK as a priority because of its impacts across our area in terms of population growth and the economy. Clarity is urgently required to build confidence and to allow adequate business planning for a range of public and private sectors. If there is curbing on migration or tighter controls on the movement of people then it will impact adversely on regional and local economies. Many businesses depend on EU27 nationals and any restriction on these individuals working in the UK could have a considerable negative impact.

¹ . The Highlands and Islands European Partnership has a membership of:

Argyll & Bute Council	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Moray Council	North Ayrshire Council
Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council
The Highland Council	Highlands & Islands Enterprise
University of the Highlands & Islands	

Previous HIEP responses to Scottish Parliamentary Committees have referenced our challenges around geography, higher costs, insularity and peripherality. There is little doubt that the Highlands & Islands have received significant benefits, derived from EU membership, in the form of European Programmes and its associated funding which have positively impacted on these issues. This has made a huge difference to our local communities, businesses, research & development, rural development, economic development, poverty & social inclusion, agriculture, access to markets, fisheries, education and public services. The challenges faced by the Highlands and Islands need to be recognised without detriment. A reduction in the current support or one size fits all approach that benefits the more populous areas of Scotland and the UK will only disadvantage our area.

Given the foregoing, HIEP would expect that Local Government will have an influencing role in ongoing discussions – either individually or through COSLA to ensure a commitment to a fully funded Scottish regional policy and an immigration policy which is sympathetic and effectively addresses the diverse needs of the Scottish and regional economies

Yours sincerely

Angus MacLeod
Policy Coordinator
Highlands & Islands European Partnership