

European and External Relations  
Committee  
Scottish Parliament  
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### **Submitted by E-mail – September 2016**

#### **European and External Relations Committee call for evidence on the implications for Scotland of the EU referendum result.**

In view of the significant potential impacts on the Highland Council area the Council fully endorses the recent response submitted by the Highlands and Islands European Partnership (HIEP) views on the implications for Scotland of the UK decision to leave the EU. As outlined in the HIEP response the Council also recognises the high degree of uncertainty that remains and that this situation makes a comprehensive response difficult at this time but the Council would however wish to stress its wish to be directly involved in further discussions with the Scottish Government over the coming months.

In addition to the points raised in the HIEP response the Council also wishes to stress how an unfavourable outcome to discussions on the UK leaving the EU could significantly impact on the Highland area in the medium term.

The Highland area showed one of the largest population increases in Scotland between the 2001 and 2011 censuses in stark contrast to the situation in the Highland area in previous decades many of which saw depopulation particularly in some of the more peripheral parts of the Highlands. There is a real concern that without the current mix of policy and financial support for areas such as Highland the medium term outlook could be one of a return to the depopulation rates of previous decades. An element of the population growth in recent years has been due to the influx of EU migrants and while these have been important to sectors such as aquaculture and tourism their importance in sustaining public services through filling health sector vacancies has been arguably more significant.

As is often the case it is the more peripheral areas that are disproportionately dependent on such migrant workers, many of whom also bring their families and help sustain rural communities and their facilities and services such as schools.

While accepting the importance of tackling the short term issues likely to be caused by the UK leaving the EU the Council would also recommend that serious thought be given to the potential for significant negative medium term impacts and that the Scottish government's discussions with the UK government and others take on board the need to either protect the existing policies and support structures or ensure that suitable alternative domestic support is introduced.