

CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

Question 1 – Are there other areas you think the Partnership Agreement should address?

Simplification. A barrier to participation could be the lack of clarity over the multiple structures presented in the proposals and a structure that appears to be very complex.

Question 2 – Do you think these thematic objectives will best address Scotland's short-term and long-term challenges?

The strong focus on research and innovation, SME competitiveness and skills development presents a key role for universities in the delivery framework for structural funds. Enhanced collaboration between universities, the public and voluntary sector and industry is needed to improve the structure and impact of projects. Sustainable innovation-led economic growth requires a simplification of processes; universities are a critical intermediary to SMEs through established partnerships and networks.

Question 3 – Do you think there are any other thematic objectives which should be addressed?

Question 4 – Do you think the Scottish Themed Funds will address Scotland's key challenges?

We should continue to develop and build on current programmes and experiences gained through Scotland's strategic approach in developing a knowledge based economy through its Smart Specialisation Strategy.

Question 5 – How do you think the governance and delivery arrangements will impact on your sector?

We strongly support measures for improved coordination and clarity of priorities for different funds. Universities must be able to maximise synergies between Horizon 2020, ESF and ERDF, to promote a more holistic dialogue between European research and innovation policy and national regional development.

Question 6 – How do you think the governance and delivery arrangements will impact on your organisation?

We recognise and welcome the requirement to work with regional stakeholders in order that matched funds are pre-identified in advance, however there is a significant challenge in identifying and co-ordinating match funding for future projects and managing the implications for long term planning, sustainability and legacy of project activity.

Question 7 – Are there any unidentified governance or delivery arrangements that could aid simplification of the future programmes and ensure that the Structural Funds complement each other?

Simplification will only be effective if changes are embedded across the whole administrative process of all of the Funds.

Question 8 – What other delivery options do you think would be feasible for delivering youth employment initiatives?

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Question 9 – What other measures could be taken to reduce the audit and control pressures?

Question 10 – Do you have any further comments on the proposals?

We would welcome the opportunity for increased dialogue with the Scottish Government on the future delivery of Structural fund programmes.

Our main comments relate to:

- the streamlining of European Funds more broadly i.e. Horizon 2020 and structural funds to ensure a more inclusive approach in responding to barriers to innovation led economic growth, including youth unemployment and entrepreneurship;
- a more strategic and collaborative approach in the use of match funding by aligning national funding sources through more proactive engagement with the industry bodies and the private sector; and
- an increased emphasis on the role of universities as a conduit to social equality through regeneration, social and cultural capital, widening access and participation. In both economic and social contexts, the HE sector is key in its role as a fundamental driver of skills development, employment, innovation and research.