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Access to EU funding as a third country

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Once the UK leaves the European Union it will cease to be a Member State, and under EU regulations will be considered a third country. This briefing provides some examples of EU funding programmes that are likely to be open to applications from third countries in the EU budget period 2021-27.



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Executive Summary

- The EU's long-term budget process is governed by a multi-year agreement called the Multi-annual financial framework (MFF).
- The next long-term EU budget period begins on 1 January 2021 and will last for a total of seven years until the end of 2027. The UK is due to leave the European Union at the end of January 2020 and will, under EU regulations, be considered a third country.
- The European Commission has published proposals for funding programmes that will run during the 2021-27 MFF. Negotiations on these funding programmes are currently ongoing at EU level.
- The proposals for funding programmes show there are a number that are likely to be open to third country participation in the EU budget period 2021-27.
- The UK could negotiate to participate as a third country in these programmes, but would need to abide by the conditions set out in the appropriate programme regulations. The conditions are likely to include making a financial contribution to the programmes, however, it is currently unknown what level of contribution the UK would be required to pay to participate in individual programmes.
- Participation as a third country would result in the UK lacking the capacity to influence the content and operation of the funding programmes in comparison to its current status as a Member State.
- It is not certain at this time which funding programmes the UK might negotiate to enter beyond 2020, nor whether negotiations will have concluded in time to allow participation in the programmes from their outset in January 2021.
- It is also not certain what role the Scottish Government may have in any negotiations with the EU.

The Multi-annual Financial Framework

The EU's long-term budget process is governed by a multi-year agreement called the Multi-annual financial framework (MFF). The minimum term required for a framework is five years - with the current MFF covering the seven year period 2014-2020.

In May 2018, the European Commission presented their proposals for the MFF for the period 2021-27 with a proposed budget of €1 135 billion in 2018 prices.¹

Since then, the European Parliament and the European Council have considered the proposal. In November 2018, the European Parliament published its interim report on the MFF 2021-27 which proposed to increase the budget to €1 324 billion (2018 prices).²

During its meeting of 17-18 October 2019, the European Council discussed the MFF 2021-2027.³

On 5 December 2019, it was announced that Finland's Presidency (as the holder of the Presidency of the Council of the EU at that time) had [submitted its proposal](#) for the MFF 2021-27. The proposed budget for the 7 year period was €1 087 billion (2018 prices).⁴

The MFF 2021-27 should be approved before the end of 2020, to allow it to come into force at the start of 2021.

As set out in the 2018 SPICe briefing on [EU funding in Scotland](#), the MFF finances most European funding programmes. Funding programmes are of broadly two types:

- Pre-allocated funds where each Member State is apportioned an amount depending on their circumstances. Examples of pre-allocated funds include the European Social Fund (ESF) and funding for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- Competitive funds allocated directly by the European Commission. Examples of competitive funds include Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+.⁵

Once the UK leaves the EU, it will no longer be a Member State and will therefore be treated under EU Regulations as a 'third country.'

The European Commission defines a third country as:

“ A country that is not a member of the European Union as well as a country or territory whose citizens do not enjoy the European Union right to free movement, as defined in Art. 2(5) of the Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code).⁶ ”

As a third country, the UK will be ineligible for pre-allocated EU funds but may be able to participate in some competitive programmes.

The [revised Political Declaration](#) on the future relationship agreed in principle by the EU and the UK in October 2019, highlighted the areas of shared interest between the EU and UK, and noted the potential for future UK participation in EU programmes in areas including science and innovation, youth, culture and education. However the Political Declaration did not identify any specific funding programmes.

This briefing will outline some of the competitive funding programmes that EU draft regulations have identified as being open to third countries in the MFF period 2021-2027, and consequently to which the UK may be eligible to apply once it is no longer a Member State.

The funding streams covered in the briefing are:

- Connecting Europe Facility;
- Creative Europe;
- Environment and Climate Action (LIFE);
- Erasmus;
- Horizon Europe;
- European Territorial Cooperation fund.

How the EU regulations governing funding programmes are agreed

For each of the funding streams outlined [on the previous page](#) the European Commission submits a draft proposal for a regulation to establish the legal basis for the programme, the rules governing the operation of the programme and a proposed budget for the programme. The funding for each programme will also be determined in the overall negotiations for the MFF.

The European Parliament and European Council then undertake negotiations on the draft proposal until agreement on its adoption, implementation and budget has been reached. This usually takes place in the two years prior to the implementation of the programme. Negotiations are underway for the 2021-2027 funding programmes considered in this briefing.

An example of the timeline for negotiations of the 2021-2027 Horizon Europe programme is presented below. The details have been taken from the [European Commission website](#) and a [report commissioned by the British Council](#).^{7 8}

Table 1: Horizon Europe timeline

Time period	Activity
June 2018	European Commission proposal on establishing the Horizon Europe programme for the MFF 2021-27
November 2018	European Parliament's Industry, Research and Energy Committee adopts the report and amendments to the Horizon Europe programme
November 2018	European Council reaches partial agreement (without budgetary provisions) on the Horizon Europe programme
December 2018	European Parliament plenary adopts draft report and amendments to Horizon Europe programme
January 2019	Negotiation period begins for the European Council and European Parliament to reach agreement on Horizon Europe
March, April 2019	The European Parliament and the European Council reach a provisional agreement on Horizon Europe
17 April 2019	The European Parliament endorses the provisional agreement
2019-2020	The Council and European Parliament negotiate and subsequently adopt the programme
1 January 2021	Horizon Europe is launched

Third Country Participation in EU Programmes

The European Commission has submitted draft proposals to establish the legal basis for EU funding programmes for the period 2021-27. Draft proposals for the following six funding streams were submitted in May and June 2018:

- Connecting Europe Facility;
- Creative Europe;
- Environment and Climate Action (LIFE);
- Erasmus;
- Horizon Europe;
- European Territorial Cooperation fund.

These draft proposals include the framework for third country participation in the programmes and consequently the criteria the UK would need to agree to, if it were to join any of these as a third country. The criteria for the first 5 funding programmes (i.e. excluding the European Territorial Cooperation funding) are broadly similar in that they are all open to third countries who are one of the following:

- a member of the European Free Trade Association and the European Economic Area (subject to conditions of the European Economic Area agreement);
- acceding countries, candidates and potential candidates (in line with pre-agreed terms and conditions for their participation in EU programmes);
- covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (in line with pre-agreed terms and conditions for their participation in EU programmes)

In addition, the draft proposals allow for the participation of third countries who do not fall within these categories - subject to the agreement of pre-determined conditions. As this latter category is likely to be the option pursued by the UK, the rest of this briefing will focus on the pre-defined conditions the UK might be required to adhere to in order to participate in each funding programme.

Third country financial contributions

Third country participation in an EU funding programme will require a prior commitment to contribute financially to the programme. A House of Commons library [briefing paper](#) on the EU budget noted that the amount will "be linked to the EU's budget for the programme." ⁹

In its 2018 report on [EU trade deals](#), the House of Lords European Scrutiny Committee addressed UK participation in EU programmes as a third country. The report noted that the UK Government has accepted that participation would involve a financial contribution, but has said that 'such payments should give the UK a "suitable level of influence".' ¹⁰

The report also stated that:

" In practice, should the UK obtain participation as a third country, its financial contribution is likely to be linked to the specific costs of the agency or programme to the EU budget and the UK's economic size relative to the EU's: therefore, the spending limits in the new MFF, once translated into specific financial allocations in the EU's annual budgets from 2021 to 2027, will have a direct effect on what the UK contribution might be. ¹⁰ "

It is not certain at this time which funding programmes the UK will seek to participate in, nor the financial contribution the UK would be obliged to pay. It is also uncertain whether the financial contribution will offer the UK the level of influence it seeks, though it is likely to be less than the influence it currently enjoys as an EU Member State.

Third country negotiations

It is not certain at this time whether the UK will seek to participate as a third country in all the EU funding programmes identified in this briefing; and whether negotiations would be completed in time to allow for UK participation at the outset of each programme in January 2021.

If negotiations are not concluded until after the 2021-27 programmes have begun, it is uncertain how this may impact on the UK's participation as well as the calculation of its financial contribution.

The unfavourable consequences of reduced participation in the life of a programme has been highlighted by Switzerland's temporary exclusion from the Horizon 2020 programme in 2014. As reported in an [article on the Science|Business website](#), the President of the research council of the Swiss National Science Foundation revealed in September 2019 that the:

“ number of research projects its scientists participated in "dropped from 4,300 to 300 and we're still catching up and suffering". ¹¹ ”

As also reported in the article, the European Commission has indicated that negotiations with third countries for funding programmes post 2020 are likely to begin in 2020. The article reports that this is causing concern for third countries who may wish to participate in specific EU funding programmes, noting that as of September 2019, at least 24 countries were:

“ considering joining Horizon Europe, but first want to see the membership terms that the law would spell out [...] The ultimate cause of the delay is Brexit. When (or if) it leaves the EU, the UK is expected to join the queue of non-EU countries seeking Horizon membership. The Commission has not wanted to show its negotiating hand to any other country lest that prejudice the difficult negotiations with the UK. But at the same time, EU leaders can't finalise the Horizon legislation until they know the size of the budget, and again, that depends on whether the UK is in or out of the EU. ¹¹ ”

It is likely that the UK's intentions towards participation as a third country in EU funding programmes post 2020 will become clearer as the new UK Government agrees its position in relation to EU programmes.

Summary of programmes

The infographic below provides an overview of the proposed budget for the six funding programmes considered in this briefing (in 2018 prices), a brief description of their purpose and a short summary on third party participation.

Multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2021-27

as proposed in 2018

Horizon Europe	Erasmus	Connecting Europe Facility	Interreg	LIFE	Creative Europe
€100 billion	€30 billion	€42.3 billion	€8.43 billion	€5.45 billion	€1.85 billion
EU's main funding programme for research and innovation.	EU funding to promote and modernise education, training, youth work and sport across Europe.	EU funding to support transport, telecommunications and energy sectors.	EU funding to support cooperation across borders.	EU funding to improve the implementation of EU environmental and climate policy and legislation.	EU funding to support the European cinema and cultural and creative sector.
Programmes are open to third party participation – either as an associated or non-associated third country			Programmes are open to third party participation		

Source: SPICe

Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

The [Connecting Europe Facility](#) (CEF) offers EU funding to support networks and infrastructure across Europe in the sectors of transport, telecommunications and energy.

According to the European Commission, CEF funding:

“ promotes growth, jobs and competitiveness through targeted infrastructure investment at European level. It supports the development of high performing, sustainable and efficiently interconnected trans-European networks in the fields of transport, energy and digital services [...] The CEF benefits people across all Member States, as it makes travel easier and more sustainable, it enhances Europe’s energy security while enabling wider use of renewables, and it facilitates cross-border interaction between public administrations, businesses and citizens. ¹² ”

The European Commission proposed a [draft regulation](#) establishing the legal basis for the Connecting Europe Facility for the period beyond 2020. It proposed a budget of €42.3 billion (2018 prices) for the CEF from 2021-27. ¹³

In December 2018, [MEPs adopted their position](#) on the Connecting Europe Facility for 2021-2027 and proposed a budget of €43.85bn (2018) prices. ¹⁴

The Connecting Europe Facility programme allows for participation of non-EU countries, in "accordance with the conditions laid down in a specific single agreement covering the participation of the third country to any Union programme provided that the agreement

- ensures a fair balance as regards the contributions and benefits of the third country participating in the Union programmes;
- lays down the conditions of participation in the programmes, including the calculation of financial contributions to individual programmes and their administrative costs;
- does not confer to the third country a decisional power on the programme;
- guarantees the rights of the Union to ensure sound financial management and to protect its financial interests." ¹³

Therefore, should the UK negotiate to join the CEF programme after 2020 under these four conditions, it would commit to payment of the appropriate financial contribution on the understanding that it has limited influence on the direction and purpose of the programme.

Funding secured in Scotland

Between 2014 - 2019, a number of different projects in Scotland benefited from funding from the CEF Energy and CEF Telecom programmes. Examples of these are provided below.

CEF Energy

The European Commission agreed to provide maximum funding of €33.76 million towards the Cluden to Brighthouse Bay gas pipeline project. ¹⁵

The project involved the "construction of the remaining 50 km system of transmission pipeline" that would "operate as a high pressure transmission pipeline and transport an additional quantity [...] of natural gas to Ireland." ¹⁵

Once completed, the project would:

“ reduce compressor fuel gas usage and increase pipeline storage and technical capacity, bringing about environmental benefits through a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. ¹⁵ ”

And a separate project to allow a "reverse flow of gas between Ireland and the UK, by building a compressor station in Ireland and deodorisation facilities at Moffat in Scotland" secured EU funding of up to €925 000. ¹⁶

This action would "enable bidirectional flow of gas from Great Britain to Ireland and for the first time from supply sources in Ireland to Great Britain." ¹⁶

CEF Telecom

The EU agreed a maximum contribution of €717,726 from the CEF Telecom programme to support the "uptake of [...] eInvoicing by the Scottish public bodies". The project "updated the existing solution used in Scotland to support the European eInvoicing Standard" which meant that Scottish public bodies could consequently "receive and process EN compliant e-Invoices from their suppliers, including cross-border ones." ¹⁷

The EU also agreed to make a maximum contribution of €243 302 towards a project to support an Access Point for the Scottish Government - to support the cross-border exchange of electronic documents. ¹⁸

This CEF funding would:

“ support public administrations to exchange electronic data and documents with other public administrations, businesses and citizens, in an interoperable, secure, reliable and trusted way. ¹⁸ ”

Creative Europe

The [Creative Europe programme](#) supports the European audiovisual, cultural and creative sector. The programme supports tens of thousands of artists across Europe. The [2018 SPICe briefing on European Union funding in Scotland](#) states that the programme supports:

“ artists, cultural professionals and cultural organisations in the performing arts, fine arts, publishing, film, TV, music, interdisciplinary arts, heritage, and the video games industry, allowing them to operate across Europe, to reach new audiences and to develop the skills that are needed in the digital age. By helping European cultural works to reach new audiences in other countries, the programme contributes to safeguarding and promoting Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity. ⁵ ”

Article 8 of the proposed EU [draft regulation](#) establishing the Creative Europe programme (2021 to 2027) states that non-EU Member States may participate in the programme - with their participation dependent on meeting the conditions set out in the relevant article.

As with the Connecting Europe Facility programme, a third country may apply to the Creative Europe programme providing it agrees to a number of specific commitments including contributing financially to individual programmes and their administrative costs and allowing the EU authority to ensure "sound financial management and to protect its financial interests." ¹⁹

In addition, a third country would acknowledge that it has no decision making powers on the programme. In practical terms, this means a third country wouldn't have a seat at the Creative Europe Programme Management Committee, which has representatives from each of the EU Member States.

In April 2019, the European Commission published [updated tables](#) outlining the non-EU countries that may be eligible to participate fully or partially in the Creative Europe programme (2014-2019). 41 countries (28 EU Member States plus 13 other countries) participate in the programme, of which 6 partially participate - Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Tunisia, Armenia and Kosovo.

In the draft regulation published in May 2018, the European Commission proposed a budget for the period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2027 of €1.85 billion (2018 prices). As the negotiations on the Creative Europe programme continue, a [report commissioned by the British Council](#) says the European Parliament is "proposing an increased budget of up to €2.806 billion" ⁷ and that:

“ the Council, in its partial general approach, did not cover any budgetary aspects; these will depend on the agreement reached in the MFF. ⁷ ”

Funding secured in Scotland

In a submission to the Scottish Parliament's Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee, Creative Europe Desk UK wrote that between the start of the Creative Europe programme in 2014 and November 2019:

“ 37 Scottish organisations have been involved in 53 projects receiving Creative Europe support, totalling over €17 million, ranging from direct support for film development, through to partnership projects working in collaboration with other European organisations in 34 of the 41 countries participating in Creative Europe. These beneficiaries range across Scotland, from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee to Shetland, South Uist, Inverness, Aberdeenshire, and Isle of Lewis. ²⁰ ”

In addition to funding, the programme offers wider opportunities for participants in the form of increased networks and connections, and opportunities for combined innovation and collaboration.

Creative Europe has three strands:

- MEDIA (which covers film, television, video games and other audiovisual activity),
- Culture (which covers all the other creative and cultural sectors), and
- Cross-Sectoral (which bridges both areas).

The impacts of this funding range across diverse areas including research and innovation, audiences and cultural impact and Europa Cinemas.

Future participation

UK collaboration in the forthcoming 2021-27 Creative Europe programme would be dependent on the outcome of negotiations between the UK and the EU.

In a July 2018 UK Government publication outlining its [ambitions for the future relationship](#) between the UK and the EU, the Government wrote that:

“ The UK is open to exploring participation in the successor scheme, and continued involvement in Creative Europe to support the cultural, creative and audiovisual sectors. ²¹ ”

The UK Government provided an update to its position on future participation in response to a [written question](#) on Creative Europe submitted in February 2019. The then Minister of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Margot James wrote:

“ The PM has previously made it clear where possible, the UK will continue to participate in EU programmes where there is mutual benefit to the UK and the EU. The UK is exploring continued participation in EU programmes, including on culture and education where it is in the EU and UK's mutual interest. UK participation in programmes will be agreed between the parties and depend on the nature of the next generation of EU programmes and wider UK priorities. Any ongoing participation would need to be value for money for the UK taxpayer. ²² ”

Creative Europe Desk UK have outlined some of the benefits of participating in the 2021-27 programme. In a submission to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee's Arts Funding Inquiry it wrote:

“ The next programme will be even more relevant to the needs of the Scottish arts sector. With sector-specific actions in fields such as music and architecture planned, as well as a new initiative for supporting the mobility of artists and individuals, and the inclusion, for the first time, of the media and journalism sector, the next Creative Europe programme looks even more attractive to Scotland’s creative and cultural sectors. ²³ ”

The submission also included the following analysis of why it believes the future programme is particularly well-suited for Scotland and the UK:

“ It responds very well to current sector needs – skills, growth, business development It prioritises areas in which the UK sectors have been leading at European level: innovation, diversity, access and inclusion and cultural diplomacy/culture in external relations It will most likely have an increased budget and will therefore make even more of an impact There will be a specific budget for individual mobility support and cultural works and content which would speak more clearly to national agendas, supporting their artists’ international development, taking a pressure off national culture budgets The Media sub-programme is increasing focus on collaboration and the principles of multilateralism and reciprocity It applies UK-wide. ²³ ”

In September 2018, [more than 60 experts from European cultural and creative industries](#) met in Brussels to consider the impact of Brexit on their fields. The experts called on the Brexit negotiators to reflect on the groups concerns around mobility, funding and partnerships. The group issued a number of actionable recommendations in the cultural and creative sectors including:

“ The cultural and creative sectors in the UK and the rest of Europe recommend that EU Institutions and the UK Government ensure full UK participation in European culture programmes post-2020- in particular Creative Europe. ²⁴ ”

At the time of publication, it is unknown whether the new UK Government will pursue negotiations with the EU on the UK’s continued participation in the Creative Europe programme, and whether any negotiations will be concluded ahead of the beginning of the new programme in January 2021.

Scottish Government position

In a document [published by the Scottish Government](#) recognising the impact of European Union funding in Scotland, the Government wrote that:

“ The EU’s Creative Europe programme is an innovative and important source of support for Europe’s culture and creative sectors. Scottish organisations have had significant success in accessing the programme. ²⁵ ”

On 14 June 2019, the Scottish Government [announced funding](#) to support worldwide cultural partnerships. The news release referred to continued participation in Creative Europe stating that:

“ the Scottish Government wishes to see continuing participation in EU programmes supporting international cultural collaboration, such as Creative Europe. ²⁶ ”

Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)

The [LIFE programme](#) aims to improve the implementation of EU environmental and climate policy and legislation. The [2018 SPICe briefing on European funding in Scotland](#) outlines that the programme seeks to:

“ contribute to the shift towards a resource efficient, low-carbon and climate resilient economy, to the protection and improvement of the quality of the environment and to halting and reversing biodiversity loss. ⁵ ”

The [draft regulation](#) for the 2021-2027 LIFE programme proposed by the European Commission in June 2018 suggested that the future initiative would consist of two main portfolios - Environment and Climate Action. These main portfolios would cover the following sub-programmes:

Environment

- Nature and Biodiversity;
- Circular Economy and Quality of Life.

Climate Action

- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation;
- Clean Energy Transition.

The draft regulation confirms that the programme should be "open to third countries in accordance with the agreements between the Union and those countries establishing the specific conditions for their participation." ²⁷

Article 6 of the draft regulation deals specifically with third countries associated to the programme. The main criteria for participation reflect those outlined for the Connecting Europe Facility and Creative Europe programmes.

The proposed budget for the programme in the MFF 2021-2027 was €5.45 billion (2018 prices). ²⁷ In December 2018, the European Parliament proposed an increase to the budget for the LIFE programme to €6.44 billion in 2018 prices. ²⁸

Funding secured in Scotland

A search of the LIFE programme [project database](#) for the period 2014-2019 reveals 18 projects in Scotland have benefited from LIFE funding. These include safeguarding Orkney's native wildlife from invasive non-native stoats, inland shipping and reducing carbon emissions through sustainable diets. ²⁹

Future participation

The UK Government has not yet confirmed whether it intends to seek to participate in the programme as a third country.

On 5 November 2019, in response to a written question on LIFE programme funding once the UK has left the EU, Rebecca Pow, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (DEFRA) stated that:

“ ... Once the terms of the UK’s exit from the EU are clear, we will decide as part of the next multi-year Spending Review, whether the UK will seek to associate with the LIFE programme as a third country or whether domestic arrangements should be established.³⁰ ”

Erasmus+

[Erasmus+](#) is an EU programme which aims to promote and modernise education, training, youth work and sport across Europe.

The 2018 SPICe briefing on EU funding states that projects supported by Erasmus+ are:

“ intended to promote the movement of learners (students, trainees, apprentices, young people, volunteers) and staff (professors, teachers, trainers, youth workers) across national boundaries, as well as exchanging good practice, promoting young people's democratic participation and other outcomes. ⁵ ”

The [proposed budget](#) for the Erasmus programme in the MFF 2021-2027 was €30 billion (2018 prices) - double the budget of the previous programme. The proposed budget saw the following breakdown of resources:

Table 2: Budget indicative distribution:

Area	Budget (€)
Education and training	€24.94 billion
Youth	€3.1 billion
Sports	€550 million
National Agencies	€960 million ³¹

The proposed budget for the programme has been discussed by the European institutions and a [report commissioned by the British Council](#) notes that:

“ The Parliament wants a budget of €46.7 billion. However, the Council is already questioning the €30 billion budget increase in the Commission proposal. Negotiations on the total budget are linked to the negotiations on the total EU MFF for 2021–27. ⁷ ”

The EU [draft regulation](#) to establish the Erasmus programme for 2021-2027 outlines the criteria for participation of third countries. Third countries will be able to participate either as associated to the programme or not associated - subject to the outcome of negotiations.

Entering as an associated third country generally allows for greater influence in the programme and the opportunity to take part fully in the actions of the programme whereas a non-associated third country can only take part in some of the actions of the programme, subject to conditions. In addition, the funding available to non-associated third countries is limited as are the opportunities for students from these countries to undertake work placements and benefit from future partnerships with their peers.

Associated third country

The UK is currently a member of the Erasmus+ programme by virtue of being a Member State. Its participation in any future iteration of the programme once it has left the Union has not yet been determined.

According to the report commissioned by the British Council, should the UK negotiate to join as an associated country, it would participate fully in the programme in line with:

“ the association agreements which have been concluded with the EU, and provided that they respect the conditions of their agreements as well as fulfil the obligations of the Erasmus regulations ⁷ ”

The report also noted that associated third country status would mean the UK would "be able to attend Erasmus programme committees but would lose its voting rights, reducing its strategic influence over the programme." ⁷

Non-associated third country

With reference to the possibility of the UK's future participation as a non-associated country, the same [report commissioned by the British Council](#) wrote that:

“ Non-associated countries do not fully participate in the programme and their participation depends on certain conditions. ⁷ ”

While a [House of Lords report](#) on 'Brexit: the Erasmus and Horizon programmes' wrote that should the UK enter the Erasmus programme as a non-associated third country, it would:

“ not even have a seat at the table in Erasmus programme committees, and UK participants would have access to less funding and fewer exchange opportunities. ³² ”

Funding secured in Scotland

In October 2019, the Erasmus+ UK National Agency published a [factsheet](#) containing data on Erasmus+ funding in Scotland between 2014-2018.

Table 3: Key facts for Scotland 2014-2018

Area	Figures
Number of projects in Scotland	844
Number of participants in Scotland	13,957
Funding awarded in Scotland	€90.7M ³³

Future UK participation

The UK Government has been asked to indicate its intentions regarding participation in the Erasmus programme once the UK has left the EU. The [House of Lords European Union Home Affairs Sub-Committee report](#) on 'Brexit: the Erasmus and Horizon programmes' published on 12 February 2019 noted:

“ The ongoing lack of clarity over the future availability of EU funds for mobility and research is causing considerable concern among students and researchers in the UK. Although association cannot be secured until negotiations on the draft 2021–2027 Horizon and Erasmus Regulations are complete, the Government should confirm its intentions regarding future UK participation in these programmes as soon as possible to maximise certainty and stability for potential participants, and enable them to plan for any changes. ³² ”

Meanwhile, a [written PQ](#) lodged in the House of Lords on the Erasmus+ Programme was answered by Baroness Berridge in October 2019. The response indicated the UK Government was still considering whether to participate in the next Erasmus+ programme:

“ ... If it is in the UK’s interests, we will seek to participate in specific EU programmes as a third country. While the regulations for future EU programmes are still in the process of being developed, the draft Political Declaration envisages the possibility of UK participation in EU programmes like Erasmus+ and the negotiation of general terms of participation. Officials are preparing for all eventualities and are considering a wide range of options with regard to the future of international exchange. These include potential domestic alternatives to the Erasmus+ programme for the 2020/21 academic year and beyond, should we need them. ³⁴ ”

During the [debate on the European Union \(Withdrawal Agreement\) Bill](#) on 8 January 2020, the UK Parliament voted by 344 votes to 255 against a clause that would have required the UK Government to negotiate full membership to the Erasmus programme after 2020. ³⁵

The result of the vote does not prevent the UK Government from negotiating full membership during the future relationship negotiations.

Scottish Government position

On 15 July 2019, Higher Education Minister Richard Lochhead [wrote to EU education ministers](#) to "reiterate that Scotland’s colleges and universities remain open and welcoming to EU students and staff." ³⁶

In the letter, the Minister said of Erasmus+:

“ I am pleased to say that Scotland benefits enormously from Erasmus+ with over 2,000 Scottish students taking part in the programme each year, proportionally more than from any other country in the UK. We believe that Scotland’s interests are best served by remaining a part of the Erasmus+ programme: we have made our position clear to the UK Government, and are urging them to prioritise access to the programme in their planning and negotiations with the European Commission. ³⁶ ”

In [correspondence to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee](#) in January 2020, the Scottish Government noted its:

“ preference is to continue full participation in Erasmus+ for its broad educational, cultural and economic benefits, for both Scottish students, volunteers and staff and for Europeans Nationals coming to learn or work in Scotland. We continue to make this case for continued participation to the UK Government. ³⁷ ”

Horizon Europe

Horizon 2020 is the EU's main funding programme for research and innovation. It is scheduled to be replaced in January 2021 by Horizon Europe.

On 7 June 2018, the European Commission published details of proposed [EU funding](#) for research and innovation for the period 2021-2027. The Commission proposed a budget of €100 billion (2018 prices). Broken down this equated to €94.1 billion for Horizon Europe, (complimented by a €3.5 billion contribution from the InvestEU Fund) and €2.4 billion for the Euratom research and training programme.³⁸

In April 2019, it was [announced](#) that the European Parliament had asked the European Council to increase the Horizon Europe budget to €120 billion.³⁹ However in a report commissioned by the British Council it was suggested that the European Council is "unlikely to accept the increase of budget proposed by the European Parliament."⁷

According to the European Commission, the Horizon Europe [funding programme](#) would:

“

- Strengthen EU science and technology thanks to increased investment in highly skilled people and cutting-edge research; ”
- Foster the EU's industrial competitiveness and its innovation performance, notably supporting market-creating innovation via the European Innovation Council and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology;”
- Deliver on the EU's strategic priorities, such as the Paris Agreement on climate change, and tackle global challenges that affect the quality of our daily lives.³⁸ ”

Options for joining Horizon Europe

In terms of third country membership, Horizon Europe is open to membership as an

- associated third country or
- non-associated third country.

Non-associated third countries have reduced decision making powers in comparison to associated third countries, who themselves have less influence than Member States. The UK's level of participation would depend on which of these options the EU and the UK agree on.

The EU [draft regulation](#) seeking to establish Horizon Europe contains provisions for third country association to the programme. It states "the programme should promote and integrate cooperation with third countries [...] association of third countries to the programme should be promoted."⁴⁰

Article 12 of the draft regulation deals specifically with third country association membership of the programme. The proposals outline that Horizon Europe would be open to third countries and territories who fulfil the following criteria:

- "a good capacity in science, technology and innovation
- a commitment to a rules-based open market economy, including fair and equitable dealing with intellectual property rights backed by democratic institutions
- active promotion of policies to improve the economic and social wellbeing of citizens."

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In addition to the fulfilment of these criteria, a third country must additionally agree with the conditions laid down in a specific programme agreement to include financial contribution, and ensuring a fair balance regarding the contributions and benefits of the third country. Any agreement must also consider the objective of driving innovative economic growth in the EU.

Associated third country participation

A [House of Lords European Committee report](#) noted that should the UK negotiate to participate in the Horizon Europe programme as an associated third country, it would join on the basis of having:

“ observer status in Horizon Europe programme committees but no vote and so would not have the same influence over the strategic direction of the programme as an EU Member State. ³² ”

The UK Government would also need to consider the financial implications for an associated third country. These are acknowledged in a [report commissioned by the British Council](#):

“ The UK government has stated that it would like to explore the option of an association with Horizon Europe. This would involve an appropriate UK financial contribution. Given the anticipated increase in the budget for Horizon Europe, the future financial contribution of the UK to the programme is likely to be larger than its contribution to Horizon 2020. The financial rebalancing mechanism set out in the draft Horizon Europe regulations would also prevent the UK from being a net beneficiary of EU research funding, as is currently the case. Nonetheless, an increased programme budget means that Horizon Europe will be able to support more grants and collaborative research projects than its predecessor. An appropriate level of financial contribution will need to be provided to ensure the UK can access these strategic opportunities. ⁷ ”

The UK Government would also need to consider value for money and the potential added value of participating in Horizon Europe. The [Wellcome Trust published a paper](#) in November 2019 on 'Why the UK should associate to Horizon Europe.' The paper highlights four key benefits:

- "The EU Framework Programmes are the most ambitious multilateral funding schemes in the world, and participation is increasingly global
- Europe is the UK's biggest collaborator on research, and these links are a national asset

- The benefits of associating to Horizon Europe will be more than financial
- There are no quick and cheap ways to replace Horizon Europe." ⁴¹

Non-associated third country participation

The UK Government may agree to participate in Horizon Europe as a non-associated third country. According to a [report commissioned by the British Council](#), Article 19 of the draft regulation to establish Horizon Europe 2021-27 states that in principle, a non-associated third country should, "bear the cost of their participation" ⁷ however:

“ low to middle income countries and some other third countries could be eligible for funding (if the Third country is identified in the work programme adopted by the Commission, or if the Commission considers their participation essential for implementing the action). ⁷ ”

The House of Lords [European Union Committee's report](#) from February 2019 set out the "unfavourable conditions" a non-associated third country would have to accept. These include losing access to key funding opportunities (particularly European Research Council grants and Marie Skłodowska- Curie Actions) and being without any "credible means of influencing the future development and funding priorities of the programme." ³²

Funding secured in Scotland

Scotland Europa have advised SPICe that as of July 2019, "Scotland has secured almost €649 million of Horizon 2020 funding. This represents 1.47% of the total allocated Horizon 2020 budget to date, and 10.93% of the total funding awarded to UK organisations.

Higher education institutions and research institutes in Scotland are collectively the main beneficiaries by organisation type, securing almost 80% (over €521 million) of the funding awarded to Scottish organisations. This is €486 million to higher education institutions and almost €35 million to research institutes.

Scottish businesses have secured €97.5 million of the Horizon 2020 funding awarded to Scotland to date, with SMEs accounting over €84 million of this." ⁱ

Future UK participation

In May 2018, the UK Government published its '[Framework for the UK-EU partnership Science, research and innovation](#).' The document outlined its intention to discuss the option of full association to Horizon Europe with particular reference to the areas of structure, influence and contribution. In terms of influence, the framework stated:

ⁱ Source: Written correspondence with Scotland Europa/Scottish Enterprise. Figures as of July 2019.

“ As an associate country we would look to agree an appropriate level of influence on the shape of the programme. This should be greater than current non-EU precedents, recognising the quality and breadth of the UK’s contribution. ⁴² ”

And in terms of contribution:

“ Subject to the structure of the programme, the level of influence provided for in the terms and an assessment of value for money, we would be willing to offer a fair contribution to the programme costs. ⁴² ”

In a July 2019 response to a [written question on Horizon 2020](#), Chris Skidmore, the Minister of State (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) (Universities and Science) (Joint with the Department for Education) explained:

“ The UK and EU have a long history of jointly tackling global challenges, with strong links between our research and innovation communities. We wish to continue collaborating with European partners and are considering association to Horizon Europe. We have been fully participating in Horizon Europe negotiations, and are pleased with the significant progress and constructive way in which Member States and EU Institutions have worked together. After the UK leaves the EU, we will build on existing relationships in Brussels and seek to influence Horizon Europe in line with UK priorities. The Horizon Europe programme must be finalised before we can make an informed decision on future participation. We would not be able to seek association until the programme has been adopted and we have exited the EU. The Government is committed to backing UK researchers and innovators by supporting measures to enable world-class collaborative research, including support for small businesses. As a responsible government, we are considering alternative options in case the UK does not associate to Horizon Europe, but this does not change our policy on considering association to Horizon Europe. ⁴³ ”

In November 2019, the same Minister [noted in a written statement](#) that:

“ Any decision about associating to the programme will need to take place after both the Horizon Europe proposal and the Multiannual Financial Framework discussions have been completed in Council. ⁴⁴ ”

Scottish Government position

The Scottish Government has acknowledged the benefits from EU research funding programmes and collaborative working arrangements, including the Horizon 2020 funding stream. On 5 November 2018, it [published a report](#) on 'Scotland's place in Europe: science and research.' The report outlined its ambitions for continued participation in European research programmes, which it said:

“ gives Scottish universities and other organisations access not only to EU funding but also to collaborative networks, expertise, facilities and data that add immense value to their work. ⁴⁵ ”

In terms of future participation in Horizon Europe, the Scottish Government stated:

“ In the longer term, we wish to be as fully involved as possible in the future research and innovation programme, Horizon Europe. ⁴⁵ ”

European Territorial Cooperation funds (INTERREG)

European Territorial Cooperation (otherwise known as Interreg) programmes are EU funding programmes that give money to organisations from different (though often neighbouring) countries to work together on a project.

The current European Territorial Cooperation programmes run from 2014-2020.

These programmes cover different geographical areas and have different aims. The organisations delivering the project must normally be from the geographical area covered by the programme. Non- EU countries also take part in these programmes.

The European Commission website explains that:

“ European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), better known as Interreg, is one of the two goals of cohesion policy and provides a framework for the implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors from different Member States. The overarching objective of European Territorial Cooperation is to promote a harmonious economic, social and territorial development of the Union as a whole. Interreg is built around three strands of cooperation: cross-border (Interreg A), transnational (Interreg B) and interregional (Interreg C).⁴⁶ ”

Funding secured in Scotland

Scotland is currently part of 7 European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes:

Cross border (Interreg A):

[Northern Ireland_Ireland_ Scotland](#)

Transnational (Interreg B):

[Atlantic Area](#)

[North Sea](#)

[North West Europe](#)

[Northern Periphery and Arctic](#)

Interregional (Interreg C):

[Interreg Europe](#)

[Urbact](#)

The data in the table below shows the amount of European Territorial Cooperation funding in Scotland between 2014 and 2020.

Table 4: European Territorial Cooperation 2014-2020 funding in Scotland Source: Written correspondence from the Scottish Government (2019, November)

Projects by programme	ERDF value to Scotland (€)
Cross Border programme for Northern Ireland, Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland	24,227,536
Atlantic Area	5,243,301
Northern Periphery & Arctic	6,811,420
North Sea Region	12,121,706
North West Europe	23,165,362
Interreg Europe	1,968,480
URBACT III	38,234
Baltic Sea Region* ⁱⁱ	30,000
2SEAS*	490,554
Channel*	1,722,063
Total	75,818,656

Future ETC programmes and UK participation

In May 2018, the [European Commission outlined a new framework](#) for regional development and cohesion post 2020, including proposals for a new generation of interregional and cross-border cooperation programmes. The proposed regulation states:

“ It is necessary to continue supporting or, as appropriate, to establish cooperation in all its dimensions with the Union's neighbouring third countries, as such cooperation is an important regional development policy tool and should benefit the regions of the Member States which border third countries. ⁴⁷ ”

Both article 4 (geographical coverage for cross-border cooperation) and article 5 (geographical coverage for transnational cooperation and maritime cooperation) name the UK as a country that may be covered in any future co-operative partnership. Therefore, subject to negotiations and any agreement reached between the UK and the EU, the UK could be part of the 2021-27 ETC programmes.

The proposed budget for European territorial cooperation funds in the MFF 2021-27 was €8.43 billion (2018 prices). ⁴⁷ It was [reported in a briefing in January 2019](#) that the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development had proposed an increase in the ETC budget to €11.16 billion (in 2018 prices). ⁴⁸

Scottish Government position

The Scottish Government is keen to continue to take part in European Territorial Cooperation programmes. On 16 September 2019, the [Scottish Government wrote](#) to

ii Awards have been made to Scottish partners outside the eligible programme area. Baltic Sea Region, 2Seas and the Channel are also European Territorial Cooperation programmes. These programmes do not cover Scotland, however they do have the ability to award funding to organisations outside the programming area provided they are able to justify this (e.g. no-one within the programming area has the necessary expertise).

Northern Periphery and Arctic project partners. The letter included the following statement on its hopes for continued Scottish participation in European Territorial funding post 2020:

“ For the future programming period from 2021 the UK is named in the draft EU ETC regulations as a third country and like other third countries such as Norway and Switzerland we see no reason why Scotland and the rest of the UK should not continue to participate after Brexit. It is the Scottish Government’s policy to continue to cooperate with our European neighbours through these programmes and we are doing what we can to ensure that that happens, including pressing the United Kingdom Government to ensure that funding is made available. ⁴⁹ ”

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