

Brexit Negotiations and Exit Within These Islands

We represent, champion and disseminate excellent research and innovation in the UK and Ireland. Through our Fellowships we bring to bear a great range of expertise on public and international policy matters across all regions of the UK.

We stand ready to engage with the UK Government as it proceeds with the negotiations with the EU and in facilitating the various other arrangements which will be necessary after the UK exits the EU. We welcome the statement in the Queen's Speech that the Government intends widespread consultation as the negotiations proceed. This is vital when so many diverse interests are involved and when the constitutional implications are complex and challenging.

The academic community collaborates internationally; relationships with EU partners have thrived during UK membership and proved a notable success. The capacity to recruit staff and students from other member states should be preserved. The great success in securing EU funding across the disciplines has been vital to the research investment in the UK. Continued participation in EU research programmes is vital due to their distinctive kitemarking of international competitive excellence, collaboration, shared infrastructures and mobility. EU structural funds have been a valuable complementary source of funding for UK universities' infrastructure, including capacity building, which will need to be replaced. Similarly, there will need to be arrangements for engaging with EU regulatory processes, both current and evolving, to take account of their effect on policies in the UK.

Leaving the EU will have substantial implications for the constitutional arrangements within the UK and for the development of policies which presently are implemented within an EU framework. We therefore recommend that:

- New ways of working between Westminster and the devolved administrations, and in broader constitutional terms, will be required;
- In this new context, an effective system of intergovernmental relations needs to be agreed to make a reality of the need for consultation and cooperation;
- The complexity and challenge of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill illustrate why close working cooperation is essential if Westminster is to legislate on policies, previously within the competence of the EU which in large part are the responsibility of the devolved administrations;
- The Sewel Convention is an important constitutional principle and proposals for Westminster to legislate where there are devolved consequences should receive prior consent. A model could be the existing consultation when the UK Government is developing its position for EU negotiations on an EU proposal which covers devolved areas;
- As Northern Ireland is particularly exposed to challenges arising from the UK leaving the EU because of the nature of relationships – social, political and economic underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement – on the island of Ireland, we therefore strongly stress the need for creative solutions to sustain cross-border collaboration;
- Without the direct framework of the Single Market, the UK will have to develop its own internal market. This will be particularly important as potentially four administrations could put in place different policies to substitute for an existing EU area of competence. This raises vital issues of coordination as well as capacity and expertise challenges for governments, as well as UK-Ireland relations.