WRITTEN SUBMISSION FROM JOHN EDWARD

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The following is provided as a personal opinion and does not reflect the views of any current or previous employer. That said, it is written from the experience of five years in Brussels as EU Policy Manger at Scotland Europa (pre- and post-devolution) and over six years as the Head of the European Parliament's Office in Scotland.

What is the value of membership of the European Union for Scotland?

The value of participating in history's largest and most legally-secure single market, supporting four basic freedoms of movement, cannot be underestimated. At the same time, EU membership facilitates an unparalleled level of interaction between political, professional, private, third sector and cultural bodies across the Member States of the EU that political discussion of EU membership often overlooks. A state in the European mainstream today is either defined by being in the EU, or responding to it.

What are the potential alternatives to European Union membership for Scotland, for example the European Free Trade Association?

None that bear serious consideration for an open, trading country that is currently part of the EU.

What are the factors that determine the role that small states can take in the international sphere?

It may be true that the smaller EU Member States “are relatively more successful in Council negotiations by achieving legislative outcomes closer to their preferred position than are the larger Member States.” However, that is in part at least due to the fact that achieving successful outcomes are vital for smaller states, where the key areas of activity or key concerns may be limited to a few main priorities. Larger member states, by definition, will have a more diverse range of issues that require support or attention.

Smaller member states were traditionally those that “made the most” of the rotating Presidency of the Council of Ministers, seeing it as an uncommon opportunity to put key national issues in the EU limelight. In addition, they were often able to administer negotiations between member states without some of the larger diplomatic “baggage” that some larger member states bore. This requires the national administration to have a clear sense of those policy areas it wishes to progress, and a national parliament with the resources and expertise to scrutinise those areas in forensic detail.
However, this comes to, for me, the core issue for Scotland in whatever format or status it is represented internationally. Small member states can influence decision-making in the European Union if they are adept and skilful at:

- identifying those few areas of key concern for their administration;
- accumulating support from the range of other national, regional and sectoral interests represented in Brussels (for example – support on fisheries issues may not come from other states that produce, but states that consume);
- securing the services of the brightest and best from within the government administration, and beyond, to form the core of their governmental, parliamentary and non-governmental representation in Brussels (and Strasbourg) and provide the best possible advice to Ministers and other bodies in their negotiations. It should go without saying that this requires not only an experience of, and affinity for, the EU institutions, but a (sadly uncharacteristic) enthusiasm for modern languages.

Scotland House in Brussels, both pre- and post-devolution, was recognised as a focus for innovative thinking and partnership precisely because it did not solely represent governmental lines of negotiation. Any member state that seriously intends to position itself as an active, interested and informed partner in the European Union – as Finland did before and after accession in 1995 – needs to support a representation on the ground, and network at home, that is both big enough to scrutinise in detail and brave enough to seek ideas and support in new places.