Dear Joan,

Thank you for your letter of 29 January in which you sought a number of clarifications in relation to the Scottish Government’s bi-annual reports on Horizon 2020, European Structural Funds, 1+2 Language Policy and EU Obligations, which were submitted to the Committee in December last year.

As Minister for Europe, I have co-ordinated the Scottish Government’s response to this letter on behalf of my ministerial colleagues. Please accept my apologies for the delay in this response.

**Horizon 2020**

The Scottish Government recognises that Brexit is “the single biggest risk to universities, threatening our ability to attract and retain EU staff and students”. We are undertaking regular discussions with the sector including the Scottish Funding Council, Universities Scotland, Scotland Europa and institutions themselves on issues that affect them in order to inform our priorities for this work which focus on two scenarios: “a withdrawal agreement” and “no deal”.

The draft UK Government withdrawal agreement from the European Union sets out that, if agreed with the Commission, UK organisations will continue to be eligible for Horizon 2020 projects until the end of the programme. We therefore expect no direct financial consequences for research and innovation funding in this scenario.
The UK Government has published a Technical Notice and Q&A on a no deal Brexit scenario would affect the participation of UK organisations in Horizon 2020. In the event of a no deal scenario, we expect Scottish organisations already in receipt of Horizon 2020 funding to continue to receive this funding, either from the EC (for 2019), or otherwise receive replacement funding from the HMT guarantee. UKRI has launched a portal where all UK organisations in receipt of Horizon 2020 funding have been asked to register projects and it is expected that a system of payments would be activated in the event of a no deal. After a no deal Brexit, the UK will be able to participate in Horizon 2020 only as a third country and access to certain parts of the programme will be restricted. This will reduce the amount of funding available to Scottish organisations by an estimated £50 million. The UK Government is considering replacement domestic schemes to fill this funding gap but details on this are lacking which makes the potential impact on funding levels post-Brexit difficult to estimate. Scottish Ministers continue to press the UK Government for more clarity on this.

The UK Government is also considering the UK’s involvement in the successor programme from 2021, Horizon Europe. The Scottish Government agrees with the UK Government’s position that the preferred option is to fully associate to Horizon Europe. That said, the Scottish Government is clear that the best way of protecting Scotland’s access to EU funding is to remain a member of the EU.

I have repeatedly raised through the Joint Ministerial Committee on Europe the critical importance of EU funding programmes to support development, research and innovation. I will continue to press the UK Government for clarity on its approach to providing support for programmes of vital importance to Scotland’s world-leading research endeavours.

**European Structural Funds**
The largest component of the de-commitment at the end of 2017 stems from an underspend in the European Social Fund (ESF) programme’s Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). This initiative was only available in south-west Scotland and only for projects up the end of 2018. Keith Brown’s update to the committee in March 2018 highlighted that reducing youth unemployment in the region meant that some of the funding allocated to the initiative was no longer required. European Commission rules mean that this underspend could not be allocated to other parts of the ESF programme. This lower requirement continued into 2018 and results in a further de-commitment against YEI of €13 million. At current exchange rates, the available EC funding covers all SG commitments made to stakeholders.

During 2017, we identified slower than anticipated levels of expenditure and activity in the programmes. We brought forward a review originally scheduled for this year to explore ways of ensuring the available funding could be fully utilised. This resulted in changes, which were agreed with the EC, including reducing the amount of match funding Scottish beneficiaries bring to projects and introduced new areas of activity that could be supported by the programmes.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)
YEI has supported four projects delivered by the Ayrshire local authorities and a pan-Scotland project led by Scottish Funding Council, which supported participants through Ayrshire College. Each project is required to report on the results achieved by the project, and these are being collated by the funding recipients. In parallel, we commissioned an evaluation of the overall YEI which identified that at least 1,152 participants were supported by the Ayrshire local authorities, and concludes that: “The YEI does appear to have played its part in reducing youth unemployment through preparing young people for work, connecting young people into local work experience and employment opportunities, including clear routes into different sectors, and in funding additional college courses in subject areas where young people would have a better chance of finding employment. However, it is also important to recognise that the intervention was one of a number of projects and programmes operational at this time and aimed at this target group.”

1+2 Language Policy
The Committee have asked for:
- Clarification in relation to the figures provided in Annex A of our report on the implementation of the Languages 1+2 policy. This provided information on participation and attainment in the SQA qualifications in modern languages;
- Further clarification on the numbers of modern languages offered in schools and on numbers of modern language teachers; and
- An update on what consideration the Scottish Government has given to the impact of a range of Brexit outcomes on language learning and teaching in Scotland.

I will take each of these points in turn.

SQA Qualifications

It is for schools to offer a curriculum and a choice of subjects in the senior phase that best meets the needs of their learners, in consultation with young people and parents. As such, there will be a range of reasons for the trends in participation and attainment in the modern languages qualifications and many of these will be related to the individual circumstances of each young person. It is worth noting that the overall size of the senior phase cohort (S4-S6) has reduced by 1.9% between 2017 and 2018. Within that, the S5-S6 cohort, where the majority of Highers are taken, has reduced by 2.4% between 2017 and 2018. The figures for modern languages need to be considered in that context. The overall numbers participating in qualifications at SCQF level 3 are relatively low so small fluctuations in these numbers can appear more significant. The body of the report details activities that have been undertaken to promote language learning, communicate its benefits and to support teachers to provide high quality language learning.
Each school and local authority should plan a curriculum that meets the needs of their young people and we expect them to work closely with their partners and parents to inform, shape and develop their approach. Schools should be providing clear advice on the qualifications necessary to support young people in the next steps of their learning journey.

Wherever possible schools should ensure that young people can choose their preferred subjects, however, timetabling, staffing and resourcing issues may mean that this is not always possible. Where a subject cannot be offered by the school, national guidelines encourage flexibility, enabling schools to consider alternative approaches that best meet learners’ needs and aspirations.

In order to offer the broadest possible range of opportunities to their students, many schools and local authorities across Scotland are taking innovative approaches to ensure greater choices for their young people, for example through creative timetabling, partnership approaches and digital learning options.

*Languages offered in schools*

Information provided by local authorities in April 2018 shows that pupils are being introduced to a range of languages, particularly as the second additional language (L3), beyond those which are available at National Qualification level. The survey did not collect exact numbers of the languages being offered in schools but the results indicate that the languages offered most commonly either as a first additional language (L2 from P1 onwards) or a second additional language (L3, from P5 onwards) tend to be French, Spanish, German, Gaelic, Italian, Mandarin and Urdu. The survey also indicates that the following languages are also being offered under the policy in some schools: Scots, British Sign Language, Latin, Russian, Japanese, Dutch, Portuguese, Polish, Swedish, Norwegian, Arabic, Welsh, Greek and Swahili. Please note that the numbers of schools offering some of these languages is likely to be quite low. Information is currently being collected from local authorities for this year and we will update the Committee further in our June report.

In line with the 2012 recommendations from the Languages Working Group, there is no hierarchy of languages within the 1+2 languages policy. We expect schools and local authorities to give consideration to teaching both modern European Languages as well as languages of the strong economies of the future within their approach to delivering 1+2. We also recognise that bringing expertise from bilingual and multilingual homes into schools enriches language learning. Education Scotland’s guidance for schools on languages 1+2 encourages them to involve native speakers in language learning including parents.
The Scottish Government continue to work with Education Scotland and Scotland’s National Centre for Languages (SCILT) to support local authorities to help them develop language plans which take account of local circumstances and priorities. This ensures that schools and teachers are presented with information and resources, and have access to Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) so that they are able to teach a range of languages in innovative ways.

**Numbers of Language Teachers**

According to the 2017 teacher census, there were 1,294 teachers of Modern Languages in Scottish secondary schools. This reflects only those teachers teaching modern language as their main subject. We do not have information on language specialisms of these teachers. An update to these figures will be published later in March and we will include this information in our June report to the Committee.

**Impact of Brexit outcomes on language learning**

We are actively considering the impact of the range of possible Brexit outcomes on language learning in schools in Scotland. We share the Committee’s concerns about the potential withdrawal of Erasmus+ funding on language learning in schools in Scotland. This is both in terms of the impact on trainee teachers being able to gain their residency requirements to become registered as language teachers and on the on-going career long professional development of teachers once qualified in terms of their ability to take part in overseas exchange visits. Scottish Government officials have raised these issues with the UK Government’s Department for Education in our frequent discussions around Erasmus+ and EU Exit. The Scottish Government’s 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 coming to learn or work in Scotland. We continue to make this case for continued participation to the UK Government, and to clarify its position around any proposed ‘UK-EU youth mobility domestic alternative’.

I trust you find this information helpful. The Scottish Government will provide its next bi-annual reports in June.

Yours sincerely,

Ben Macpherson MSP
Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development