



## **Devolved Nations - Third Sector National Representative Bodies' Joint Statement on Brexit**

The implications for devolution from Brexit are deep and wide-ranging. The outcomes of the current Brexit negotiations could have profound and potentially harmful impacts upon the third sector and on the wider society it serves in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. As a consequence the National Representative Bodies for the Third Sector in the devolved nations believe the following measures are essential to avoid or minimise potential harmful impacts:

### **For the UK to Remain in the Single Market and Customs Union**

By taking the decision to remain in the European Union Single Market and Customs Union, the UK will continue close regulatory alignment with the Republic of Ireland and prevent the need for a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland or between the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland and Great Britain. We believe that this outcome is vitally important for protecting the peace process and preventing the major economic and social impacts for people and businesses that would be presented by the creation of a hard border.

### **A Sufficient Transition Period**

Figuring out what comes next will be incredibly complex and putting new processes and arrangements in place will need time. We call for a sufficient transition period, in order to minimise confusion and uncertainty. The Government should avoid arbitrary deadlines and prioritise getting it right in a smooth and orderly transition period. This may need to go beyond the government's stated aim of 24 months.

### **Ensure Transparency and Scrutiny**

With so much of our daily lives closely linked to the EU, its institutions and regulations, there is a need to ensure decisions that affect us are made in an open, participative, democratic and transparent way. As part of this process, we believe that civil society must have a stronger voice and an active role in shaping decisions and informing debate.

### **No Regression on Rights and Protections post Brexit**

We want the UK to maintain the highest possible standards in terms of human and environmental rights. EU regulations and legislation underpins many protections for workers, volunteers and service users. These rights must be protected. Many of these rights such as habitat and species protections, workplace rights and gender equality were driven by civil society. We must build on this and have no regression on current rights post Brexit. Nor do we wish the UK to remain 'frozen in time'. It must continue to enhance and adopt high standards of rights and protections.

### **Funding**

Funds repatriated from the EU must continue to be ring-fenced for the key social policy themes such as social cohesion, combating poverty, social inclusion, rural community-led development, employability and the environment. Funding should be distributed based on

need and respect the devolved nations. New funding streams should continue to follow long term cycles and be designed and delivered in true partnership with civil society organisations. There should be a UK-wide process, with full participation across the devolved nations, reviewing the financial and policy implications of the withdrawal, post 2020, of current levels and types of Structural Funds support across the UK and an equally inclusive process of assessing need and designing appropriate local, regional and devolved national domestic UK social, economic and environmental funding programmes.

### **Maintain EU Connections for UK Civil Society**

The European Union is much, much more than a free trade area for civil society. There is a fundamental desire for, and are benefits from, close co-operation between European civil society. The UK Government needs to ensure that civil society's European connections and networks are underpinned by the right support mechanisms and investment if they are serious about no regression and addressing societal challenges in an increasingly interconnected and uncertain world. Fundamentally, civil society is an exporter of participative democracy. This extends from neighbourhoods to the global stage, where citizens can fully participate in and influence decisions that affect the world around them. Brexit must not diminish our European engagement and connections.