

Introduction

South Lanarkshire College has been reliant on European funding since incorporation in 1993. Bidding for discrete funding in early days has been replaced by a more structured income; mostly via grant-in-aid allocations from Scottish Funding Council, but a significant portion of its income also come from less direct EU supported funds. Importantly, a significant part of student support funding also comes from EU-supported programmes.

Capital Funding Support

The College has also benefitted greatly from grants to support new building projects. The main building at East Kilbride replaced three tired buildings which were not fit for purpose, all being former school buildings with serious structural issues. The College was fortunate to receive ERDF funding to allow it to realise its ambitions to build a state-of-the-art facility to cater for the undoubted demand from Scotland's sixth biggest conurbation, East Kilbride. Without European support, the project would have been unviable to the required extent and a much smaller facility would have been built. The merit of that project is that the College consistently meets, and exceeds, its activity target, year after year, and generally has waiting lists for the majority of its courses.

The College received £5 million in ERDF grants out of a total project cost of approximately £33 million. More recently, the College built a smaller annexe with, again, essential ERDF support. The total cost of the project was £2.4 million with ERDF support amounting to £670k. In both cases, the projects would not have been viable, or would have fallen short of proven requirements, without European structural funding.

Support for Teaching and Students

Year on year, the College has met its activity target and has been fortunate to be allocated ESF-funded activity. **Table 1** details the core and EU-supported activity that has been offered to the College by the Scottish Funding Council. Demand for education in the local area is still not fully satiated. As it is, the College, and the local community, rely heavily on EU-funded places. The table shows that in the past three years, between 12% and 14% of course places have only been possible through support from the EU. These percentages are also reflected in the percentage of the College's core income.

Very importantly, the activity funded by Europe comes with relevant student support. It is not enough to support places, it is just as important to make it financially viable for students to attend. This is vital as the students targeted for EU funding are generally those most remote from the workplace and from further education; those with challenges.

The College also works with major local partners, delivering teaching and learning to complement programmes being run by, in particular, South Lanarkshire Council. The Council have a busy and committed programme of measures to address key priorities and the College works very closely with them to deliver what they, and their clients, require. Again, the students are often those with more acute requirements in term of support and the programmes are tailored accordingly. **Table 2** shows the extent of EU-supported work that the College has delivered on behalf of the Council, who see the College as an important ally in meeting its own targets.

Table 3 shows the income from programmes that are part-funded by the EU. Prime in this is, again, the local authority although the main construction industry training agency, Construction Skills (or CITB) places a significant proportion of its trainees in the west of Scotland at the College. More recently, supported programme in Modern and Foundation Apprentices are starting to develop a prominence.

As per **Table 4**, in total, income from EU-supported courses averages at around £800,000 per annum for the College. Adding this to the core EU-supported activity, an average of 20% of the College's income has come directly from EU programmes or via a managing agent.

Staffing

The College has nine full time members of staff who are EU citizens. They are concerned about their future, particularly those who have married UK citizens or who have had children since coming to the UK.

Students

The College has welcomed over 500 students from 18 EU countries in the past three years. They have studied both part-time and full-time and College staff feel that they have added a more cosmopolitan feel to the student body as a whole. Part of the learning experience is broadening horizons and the addition of overseas students is the perfect way of doing that.

The potential implications of Brexit for the College

The financial implications of Brexit are very apparent from the financial tables. To summarise, at present, 12% of our core income comes directly from the EU. Importantly, 15% of the support given to our students comes from the EU. When we add the other sources of income that rely on the EU for support, over 21% of our income depends on European support. To do without this would be a massive blow

to the staff and students, not to mention the local community many of whom rely on the College for a significant element of their business.

There is no doubt that the financial impact of Brexit is of great concern to the College, its staff and students. Whilst the Scottish Funding Council have given assurances regarding their own activity until 2018/19, we have no such assurances from other organisations. 2018/19 is not far off; the College have to be thinking about future plans now.

As far as non-financial issues are concerned, many have been raised that cause us some concern. We have three academic faculties and they are all uneasy at the potential fallout following Brexit.

Our Faculty of Construction place a heavy emphasis on health and safety. Given the nature of the subject areas, it is essential that there is a structure of rules and regulations that safeguards construction workers. At present, these tend to be driven by the EU. Our Construction Faculty does have a concern that this very structured arrangement may not be as rigid if abiding by EU directives were removed.

These concerns have also been echoed by our Head of Estates, who is responsible for the maintenance of the College estates, where we have a large number of staff looking after our buildings. As with the Faculty of Construction, our Estates team place a very heavy emphasis on the health and safety of our staff and students. Again, legislation is driven very much by the EU, with legislation from that organisation being subsumed into UK law. We have been in contact with the relevant industry bodies and whilst it is not expected that any legislation would be repealed, the concern is that any future EU legislation may not be brought into UK jurisdiction where there is a lack of agreement within the industry.

The Faculty of Care have similar concerns on health and safety legislation. Again, they strive to instil the importance on adhering to legislation, which is EU led. They are unsure as to what line their governing body will take post-Brexit.

As regards the Faculty of Business, this incorporates Hospitality and the same concerns arise re health and safety, with the additional concerns re food hygiene and waste management. At present, there are more than 4000 laws and regulations which relate directly to EU legislation in the UK. They are also concerned about the effect that Brexit will have on food prices. We estimate that over 30% of our food comes directly from the EU and, on a much smaller scale but equally important, Horticulture supplies such as bulbs largely come from the EU. The Faculty face a potentially significant uplift in prices and in sourcing.

Erasmus +

The Erasmus project allows both staff and student exchanges within the EU and the College has found great benefit from overseas visits and overseas visitors. Staff in our vocational areas have benefitted greatly from exposure to a different way of doing things. As an example, our Faculty of Care staff visited Finland to observe and learn from the world-leading work being done there in their subject areas. Without EU support, the College would not be able to sponsor such visits. Structural funding also, of course, allows staff and students from the EU to bring their perspective on learning and teaching to East Kilbride and this is one area that we have found very rewarding. Visits both ways enhance the learning experience and bring a fresh perspective.