

Transforming lives: Universities in Wales



Universities Wales - General Election 2019

Universities in Wales are at the forefront of a progressive Welsh education system serving people, society, and the economy. Universities act as place-makers for their communities and bring benefits to the people of Wales through their activities.

While many of the key issues for universities and higher education in Wales are devolved, there are areas where decisions made by the UK Government and UK Parliament have direct and indirect consequences. Areas such as our relationship with the European Union, migration, and research funders.

The priorities outlined in this document are three areas where the UK Parliament can make a difference.

1. Shared Prosperity Funding

We are asking parties to commit to:

- **Replacing structural funds in Wales in full**
- **Devolving a future shared prosperity fund to Wales**

European Structural and Investment Funds play an important role in the Welsh economy.

Since 2014, Welsh universities have been awarded over £280 million of European Structural and Investment Funds as lead partners in projects.

This funding has supported universities in driving economic growth, creating jobs, and delivering research and innovation. The UK's withdrawal from the European Union means that the benefit this investment has brought to Wales is at risk.

Universities Wales believes that these funds should be replaced in full. The UK Government has previously pledged to set up a 'Shared Prosperity Fund' to replace this funding. Universities Wales believes that this funding should be devolved by design and operate on a needs-based investment model.

These asks should be read alongside the publication from Universities UK: 'General Election 2019: Skills, Jobs and Opportunity'.

Why this matters

Welsh universities have led a huge range of collaborative projects using EU Structural Funds. These include:

The Advanced Sustainable Manufacturing Technologies project (ASTUTE) which, in its first phase, supported more than 250 Welsh enterprises in West Wales and the Valleys in 2010-15 creating an economic impact in excess of £200 million, returning £8 of economic impact for every £1 invested.

The Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships 2 (KESS 2) project which promotes high level skills development by increasing the research capacity of small to medium-sized enterprises, placing Master's or PhD students with those businesses. The first KESS project achieved 230 PhD and 223 Research Masters projects with businesses across Wales.

You can read more about the projects funded by EU Structural Funds at www.uniswales.ac.uk

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2. Making the UK work for all its nations

We are asking parties to commit to:

- **Ensuring that the future UK Government considers the impact of its decisions on the devolved nations**

Decisions made by the UK Government can have a fundamental impact on areas of devolved responsibility. For example, UK Government decisions on student mobility, student fees, funding for higher education or changes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme all have consequences for higher education in Wales.

Universities Wales believes that, when making decisions on issues that will impact devolved responsibilities, the UK Government should have due regard to that impact. This might be through a more formal process for assessing the impact of UK Government decisions on the devolved nations or a strengthening of the role of the Joint Ministerial Committee: a forum of the UK and devolved nations.

Get involved

If you share our priorities, or want to find out more about why these issues matter for Wales, please get in touch:



www.uniswales.ac.uk



[@Unis_Wales](https://twitter.com/Unis_Wales)



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3. Universities at the heart of communities

We are asking parties to commit to:

- **A renewed focus on place-making, including the role of universities in raising productivity**
- **Seeking full association with key programmes such as Horizon Europe and the successor scheme to Erasmus+**

Universities play vital important social, economic and cultural roles in their communities. They bring investment, jobs, and people to an area. They support local supply chains and the foundational economy. There is an opportunity for a future UK Government to reimagine regional regeneration and how they support universities in lifting productivity across the UK.

Replacing and devolving European Structural and Investment Funds is one key part of this. But there are additional opportunities including the use of city deals and growth deals, and the use of investment by UK Research and Innovation to support the development of excellent research in all parts of the UK.

European programmes such as Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 have also played key roles in supporting people and places across the UK. To date over €82 million (67%) of all Welsh Horizon 2020 funding has been awarded to Welsh universities. We are asking parties to seek full association with the successor programmes to Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020.