



EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

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Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I am writing on behalf of the European and External Relations Committee (EERC) regarding the Europe and External Affairs (EEA) section of the Scottish Government's draft Budget 2016-17. The EERC has reported to the Finance Committee, and this is available on the Scottish Parliament's website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_EuropeanandExternalRelationsCommittee/Inquiries/DraftBudget_2016-17withannexes.pdf

The EERC wished to highlight some specific queries and concerns to you, and ask for your response to them. The Committee would be grateful to receive the response by 26 February.

The EERC would appreciate a response on the following points which are covered in more detail in its report to the Finance Committee:

EEA Budget

The effect of the overall reduction in the Scottish Government's block grant on the Scottish Government's international engagement (see page 2 of the response to the Finance Committee).

Major Events and Themed Years

The Committee has asked for further clarity and explanation on this budget line (see page 2 of the response).

International relations

Whether the Small Grants Programme will continue after the current programme ends in March 2016?

The potential impact of these cuts in this budget line terms on promoting Scotland's reputation abroad, encouraging Scottish companies to export and attracting students and skilled workers to Scotland (see pages 2 and 3 of the response).

European Structural and Investment Funds

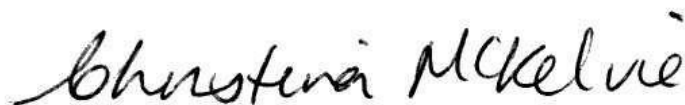
The EERC considered the European Commission's decision to suspend payments under the 2007-13 European Structural and Investment Funds programming period in the context of its potential impact on the draft Budget 2016-17.

The Committee is scheduled to receive its regular biannual update from the Scottish Government before the end of Session, and would be grateful if the Scottish Government could outline any further developments on this suspension of payments issue in that update (see page 3 of the response).

Overall trends

The Committee would appreciate a response regarding its concerns regarding miscellaneous transfers, underspend and an outcomes-based approach (see pages 4 and 5 of the response).

Yours sincerely



Christina McKelvie

Convener

European and External Relations Committee