



University of the  
Highlands and Islands  
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd  
agus nan Eilean

## **REGIONAL POLICY IN SCOTLAND AFTER BREXIT**

**Friday, 7 February 2020**

**Session 4: Priorities and instruments of future policy,  
possibilities and limits**

# **Regional policy and peripherality in Scotland: EU legacies and future prospects**

**Linda Stewart**

**Director of European and International Development  
University of the Highlands and Islands**

# The Highlands and Islands of Scotland

Base map of the EU member states and the administrative sub-divisions used for the map series



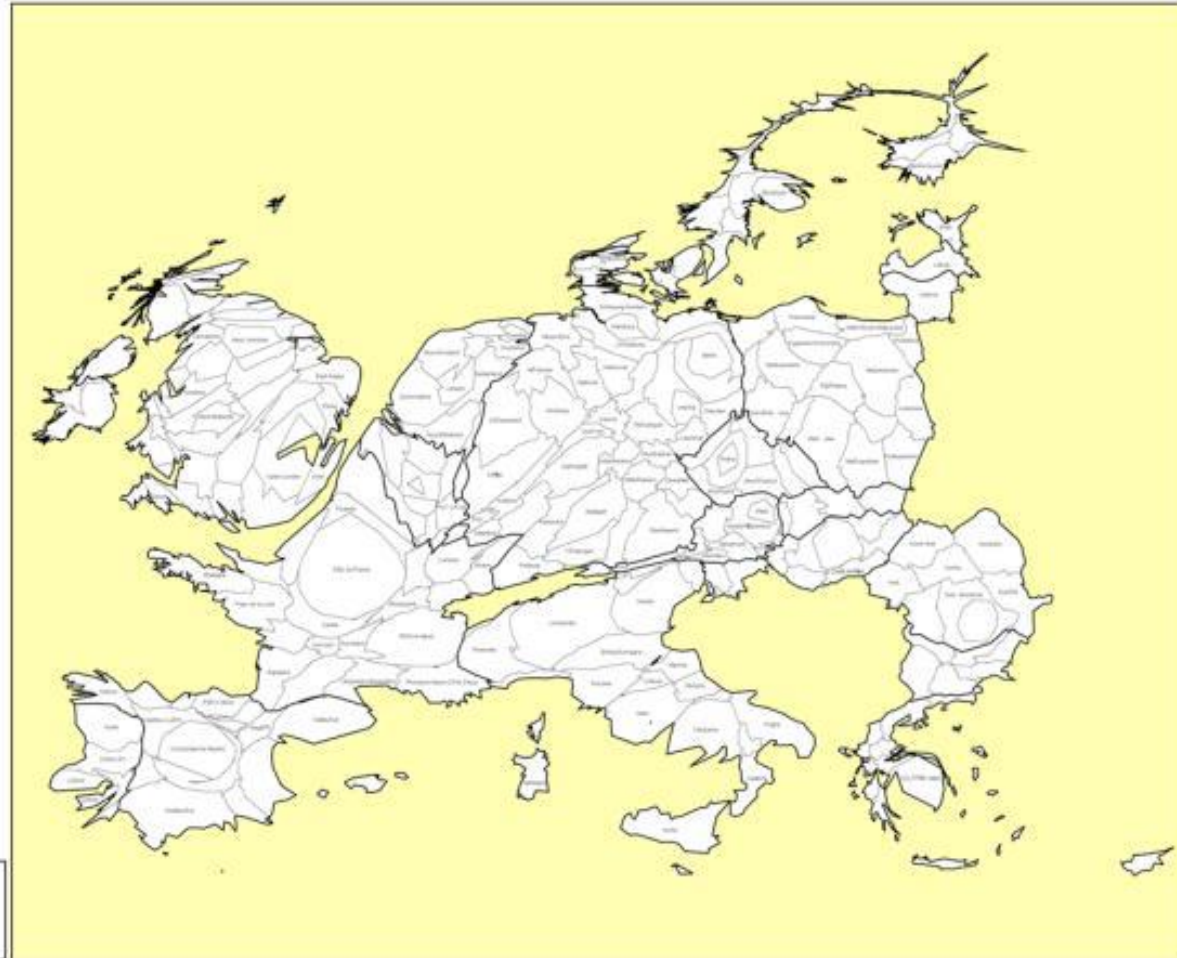
Data source: Eurostat  
Table: educ\_regions  
EuroGeographics for the  
administrative boundaries



# The Highlands and Islands of Scotland

Population cartogram: Map showing the EU resized according to its population distribution based on an equally distributed population grid

*Selected administrative areas are labelled, national borders are marked by thicker lines*



Data source: Eurostat  
Table: educ\_regind©  
EuroGeographics for the  
administrative boundaries



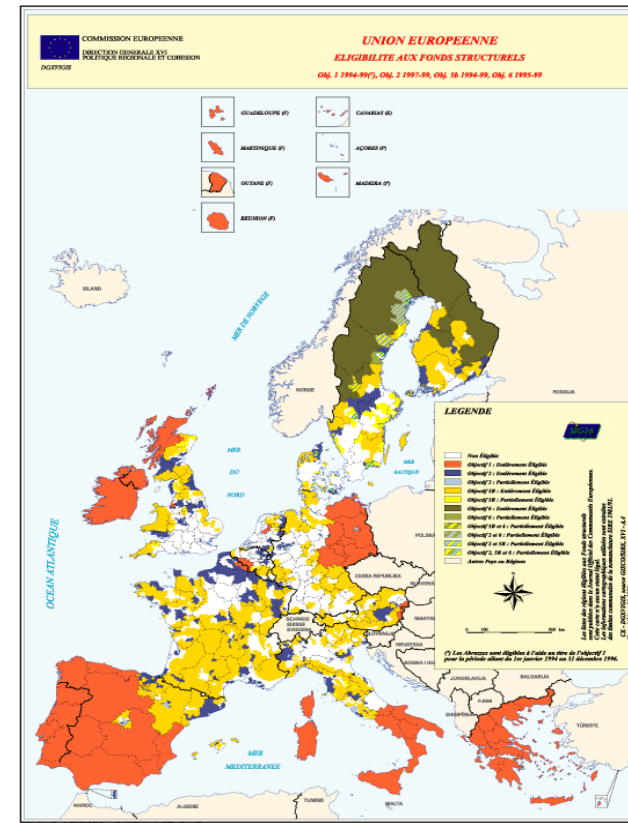
# The University of the Highlands and Islands

- Scotland's newest University (2011)
- First Chancellor, HRH The Princess Royal
- 21st century university and regional model
- 13 partner organisations, including:
  - Further and higher education colleges
  - Specialist colleges
  - Research institutions
- Over 75 learning centres linked by technology
- Largest user of video conferencing for education in Europe
- ***Covering an area larger than Belgium – population less than Brussels!***



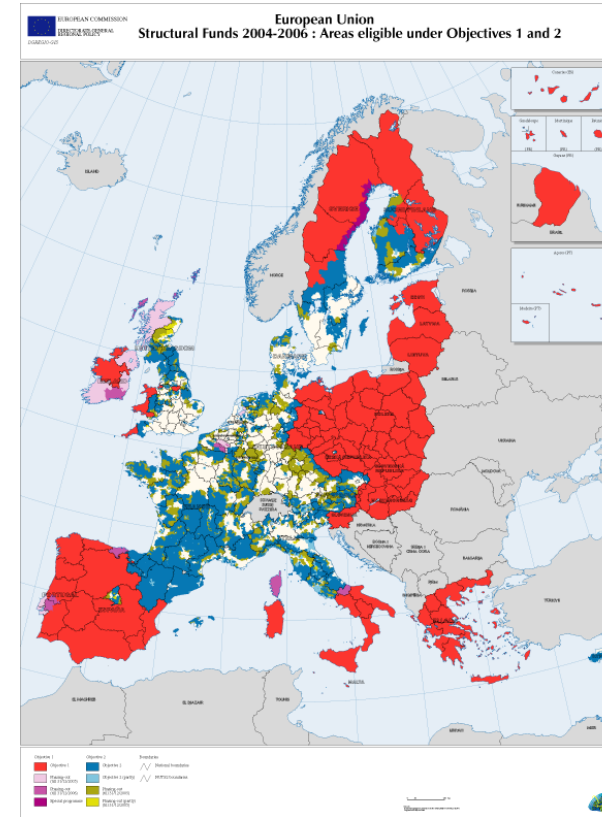
# 1994 to 1999

- Highlands and Islands Objective One Programme
- Early stage development of the University of the Highlands and Islands Project
- Structural funds investment in our academic partners' infrastructure and IT connectivity across the region



# 2000 to 2006

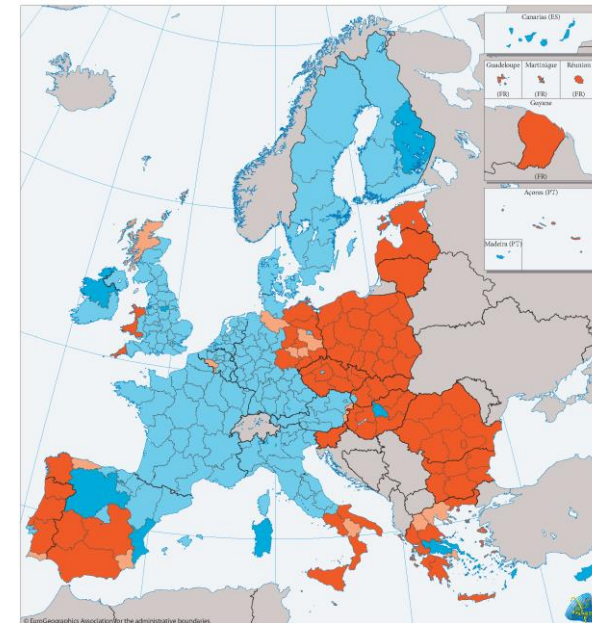
- Highlands and Islands Special Transitional Programme
- UHI Millennium Institute officially created as a higher education institution
- Further structural funds investment in community learning networks, lifelong learning opportunities and research capacity





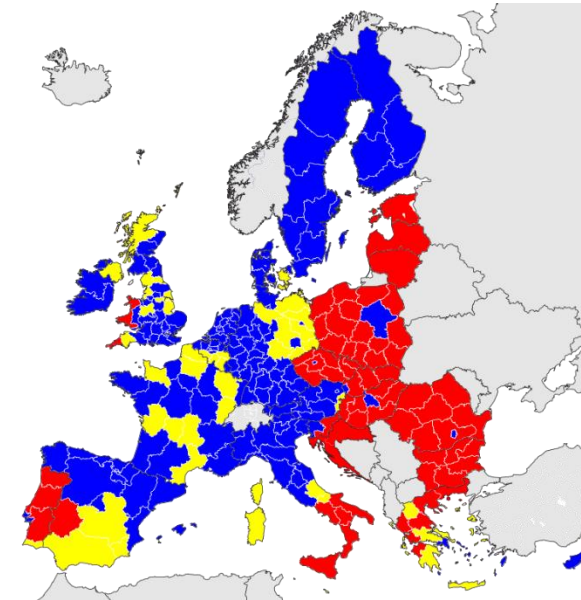
# 2007 to 2013

- Highlands and Islands Convergence Programme
- More targeted structural funds investment, with the university and HIE awarded Strategic Delivery Body status
- SDB funds network-wide activities in research, estates and IT infrastructure, online curriculum development and wider access
- Taught degree awarding powers awarded in 2008 and full university title conferred in 2011!



## 2014 to 2020

- Highlands and Islands Transition Region
- Structural funds delivered through a new model of lead partners and strategic interventions
- Key UHI projects in skills (Developing Scotland's Workforce - ESF) and new health science research facilities (ILEX - ERDF)
- Align with 30+ EU transnational and inter-regional projects in Horizon 2020, Northern Periphery & Arctic, INTERREG VA Cross Border, Atlantic Area, Erasmus+





# Brexit - where next?

- Regional concerns
- UHI concerns:

EU students and staff

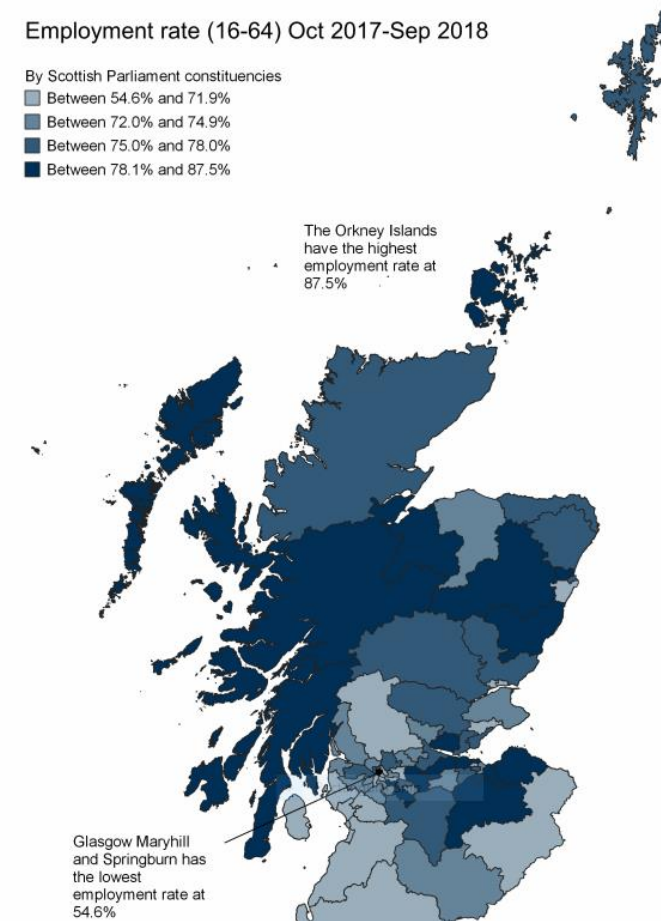
Research collaboration and funding

EU structural funds and future regional  
policy



# Regional economic challenges today

- ❑ Peripheral and fragile communities
- ❑ A high percentage of 'non standard jobs'
- ❑ Underemployment not unemployment
- ❑ Decline in working age population
- ❑ Labour market/skills supply and demand
- ❑ Productivity below Scottish Average
- ❑ Brain drain of younger population



# Implications for the Highlands and Islands – possibilities?

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- ESIF to be replaced by Shared Prosperity Fund?
- *‘Tackling inequalities between communities by raising productivity, especially in those parts of our country whose economies are furthest behind’*
- Quantum of funding to be at least the same?
- Align with UK Industrial Strategy?
- Include inclusive growth?



# Implications for the Highlands and Islands – limits?

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- Shared Prosperity Fund amounts will be limited – and what all will it include and when will it be operational?
- How much recognition will there be for ‘geographic disparities’?
- How much flexibility will there be for tailoring plans to fit distinct regional circumstances?
- Will partnership planning and delivery be encouraged, or will it be further centralised?
- Skills shortages – particularly in food & drink and health & care sectors?

**AND**

- We’ll still be on the periphery of UK/Europe, distant from markets, challenging geography and sparse population.





# Future prospects for the Highlands and Islands?

- EU Cohesion Policy critical in previous regional development
- The region is more robust now, due to investment since 1994
- BUT – geographic and demographic challenges remain



**Place-based and partnership approach key to sustaining the legacy of EU structural funds in the Highlands and Islands**

