From the Chair 5 March 2018

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The future of the European Social Fund

On 28 February the Committee took evidence on the future of the European Social Fund (ESF).\(^1\) During our session it became clear that, on leaving the European Union, Britain will have an opportunity to design a truly world-leading successor to the current fund.

It is our intention to publish a short report on priorities for a successor fund. I would be grateful if you would provide us with a memo, detailing the Government’s current position on the future of ESF funding and plans for establishing a successor. Specifically:

1. Is it the Government’s intention to retain a separate pot of funding for employment support for disadvantaged groups, as ESF currently provides, either within or outside the Shared Prosperity Fund?
2. Within which Department(s) will the funding for ESF’s successor sit? Has any consideration been given to allowing it to be held by a non-Departmental public body?
3. What consultation have been undertaken, or are planned, with beneficiaries on the current fund on designing a successor? Are you able to share any early plans or design principles?

One of the key issues that emerged from our evidence session is the need for government to act quickly in designing the successor. Given this urgency, a speedy response to these questions would be very much appreciated, so that we can proceed with our report and recommendations. I would be grateful to receive your reply by Monday 19 March.

With best wishes and I look forward to hearing from you.

Rt Hon Frank Field MP
Chair