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A pledge by Nicola Sturgeon to double the number of staff working for Scottish Development International (SDI) has led to just one new appointment.

Addressing the SNP conference a year ago, the First Minister promised that “we will more than double the number of Scottish Development International staff working across Europe”.

In the same speech, Sturgeon said the SNP would ‘establish permanent trade representation in Berlin – adding to our Investment hubs in Dublin, London and Brussels’

However, new information from the Scottish Government has confirmed – more than 12 months on from the pledge – there has been just one new worker hired.

The parliamentary answer to fellow Scottish Conservative MSP Rachel Hamilton has revealed that, at the time of Ms Sturgeon’s promise, there were 35 staff working for SDI in Europe, Middle East and Africa. There are now 40, only one of which is a new post.

Ms Sturgeon’s conference pledge last October followed pressure from the Scottish Conservatives to boost the work of SDI across the world in response to the Brexit vote months before.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

“Last year, Nicola Sturgeon made a very clear promise that the number of SDI staff would be doubled.

“Now, more than 12 months on from that, the organisation has succeeded in appointing just one.

“That’s woefully short of the pledge set out by the First Minister, and the SNP now has to explain why it made such a fanciful commitment.

“Brexit provides an opportunity for Scotland to stretch its legs across the globe, but the Scottish Government has done virtually nothing about this.

“Instead, it has spent all its energy on complaining from the sidelines and stoking grievance.

"I appreciate no definitive time limit was placed on this pledge, but to have made such shocking progress in the space of a year is unacceptable."