

NO BARGAIN WITH OUR FUTURE

EUROPE'S YOUNG GENERATION SUPPORTS CONTINUED ACADEMIC COOPERATION POST-BREXIT

By Adrian Eppel, Marcel Hadeed & Norbert Wessendorf

The relationship between UK and EU universities has been a story of success up to today. To ensure that both sides can enjoy the various benefits resulting from this cooperation, the relationship should be maintained after the UK has left the European Union. The public approves of it, economies benefit from it, and students cherish it! We provide evidence that this is true on both sides of the Channel in the realms of economics, culture and society. As representatives of Europe's young generation, our recommendations to EU and British negotiators shall set the basis on which this relationship should be continued.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Safeguard student mobility** by maintaining current mobility regulations for EU and UK students
2. **Facilitate student exchange** by allowing students to seek jobs without restrictions while they are enrolled in university.
3. Tuition fees are a key determinant in students' choice of university. **Maintain "home" status for UK and EU students.** EU students have brought £600 million in student fees to the UK in 2014 and 2015.
4. Scientific exchange contributes greatly to the quality of education and science, while being highly appreciated by students. **Britain's partnership in the Erasmus+ programme should be maintained.**
5. **Best practice exchange in the European context** contributes to the dissemination of policy innovations and increases the quality of education policy. It is the EU and the British negotiator's task to implement an accommodating framework.

INTRODUCTION

On June 23 of 2016, the United Kingdom's electorate decided to leave the European Union. In a close call, the majority of people cast their vote in favour of an 'independent' UK. As analyses in the aftermath of the election showed, 64 percent of people aged 18 to 24

had fulfilled their civic duty¹. They had realised that nothing short of their own future was at stake that day. An overwhelming majority of 75 percent of them voted in favour of staying in the European Union. It is now up to those that hold the privilege and duty to represent their respective countrymen in the upcoming negotiations to ensure that Europe's youth can look towards a bright future.

One big achievement of the united Europe is the success of its efforts to facilitate and foster academic exchange. This is based on freedom of movement, one of the pillars of the common market. Due to free movement, the conditions could not be better for anyone seeking an inter-European experience. Students are among the most active in making use of that right. In 2016, 28 percent of international students in the UK came from the European Union. Currently, thousands of Europeans are enjoying their semester abroad in the UK, 4,400 of whom come from Germany alone².

In addition to these students, 32,000 Europeans are currently researching in British universities to excel in PhD programmes or as research assistants and thereby further the quality of world-renowned British academia.³ These accomplishments are now threatened by the potential outcome of the Brexit negotiations.

¹ The Guardian, 10 July 2016: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jul/09/young-people-referendum-turnout-brexite-twice-as-high>

² Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, 2017: <https://www.daad.de/der-daad/daad-aktuell/de/44978-interview-zum-brexite-der-freie-austausch-von-ideen-steht-jetzt-zur-debatte/>

³ The UK's scientific research institutions are ranked second in the world for quality. With only 0.9% of the world's population,

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For the sake of brevity, this analysis takes the viewpoint of EU students in the UK. However, we maintain that the benefits highlighted in this analysis are equally valid vice versa. Thus, we address the interests of both negotiating parties. Moreover, both parties stand a lot to lose:

Risks for the UK	Risks for the EU	Our way forward
Losing EU funding	Losing major contributor to EU education budget	Extend membership in research and education cooperation beyond ET2020
Losing framework for student exchange	Losing number 1 destination for Erasmus students	Remain in the Erasmus network & create accommodating legal framework
No more student influx from the EU to bring capital to the UK economy	Top universities no longer part of EU university network	Maintain current visa & working rights for EU/UK students

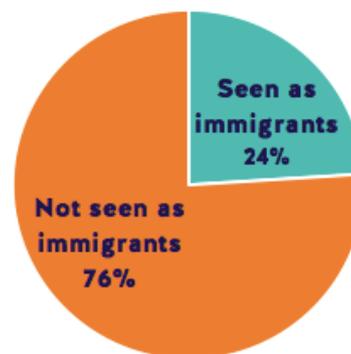
ANALYSIS

As the coverage leading up to and following the referendum showed, one of the main arguments for Leave voters was controlling immigration⁴. However, British

the UK produces 15.9% of the world's most highly-cited articles. The UK ranks first in the world by field-weighted citation impact (an indicator of research quality). Universities UK, 2017: <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/brexit/Pages/policies-post-exit.aspx>

⁴ British Election Study, 2016: <http://www.britishelectionstudy.com/bes-findings/what-mattered-most-to-you-when-deciding-how-to-vote-in-the-eu-referendum/> - .WFJ0t7KLSU!

Perception of international students in the British public



people do not perceive international students as immigrants. According to a survey by ComRes, only a quarter of Leave and Remain voters think of international students as immigrants, whereas 75 percent of respondents said they would like to see the same number or more in the future⁵. The same poll also found out that 91 percent of the British public thinks that after finishing their degree, international students should be granted a right to stay and work for a certain period of time. This is an important aspect of public opinion that should be taken into consideration by the negotiating parties.

Economic Impact of EU Students on the UK

Tangible benefits support this public sentiment. Research by Oxford Economics has emphasised international students' impact on the UK economy⁶. Apart from the £600 million spent annually in tuition fees, EU students and their visitors contribute to supporting over 206,000 full-time jobs off-campus. The most recent data shows that out of the roughly 440,000 international students enrolled in UK universities in 2014-15, 125,000 come from the EU. Friends and relatives visiting EU students in the UK also contribute significantly to the economy. The study calculates that in the same academic year, visitors spent around £300 million in Britain. Furthermore, in 2014-15 Euro-

⁵ ComRes, 2016: http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Universities-UK_International-Students-Poll_Sep-2016_Data-Tables_FINAL.pdf

⁶ Universities UK, 2017: <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2017/briefing-economic-impact-international-students.pdf>

pean students spent £1.49 billion a year in off-campus costs, such as rent and subsistence⁷.

“Academics might think: You know what, I am not going to do this, because I don’t think my status is secured and I would rather be somewhere else.”

Vivienne Stern, Director Universities UK, on the long term effect of the Brexit referendum on EU academics’ mindset when considering a move to the UK

To further and guarantee this positive impact on the UK economy, EU students should face no discrimination when seeking employment while enrolled in universities. Enabling students to earn extra money increases their purchasing power. Leading up to the Brexit referendum, low skilled workers had voiced their concerns about an influx of migrants threatening their jobs⁸. However, students being among those with the highest interest in leisure and spending⁹, they too create demand, sustaining jobs across all sectors of the economy. For example, EU students and the international student community contributed £750 million to the transport industry and £600 million to the retail industry in 2014 and 2015, alone.

Furthermore, the benefits of the soft power developed by international students for the UK must not be underestimated. As stated by a ComRes report in 2015, 55 world leaders from 51 countries have studied in the UK. By gaining a familiarity with British culture, they are more likely to support friendly trade relations with the United Kingdom eventually. Thus, the UK’s ability to attract international students is also a powerful tool of public diplomacy. According to a recent survey, British students also benefit from studying alongside

⁷ The Guardian, 23 July 2016: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jul/23/erasmus-scheme-exclude-british-students-brexit>

⁸ The Economist, 29 September 2016: <http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21707835-economic-migrants-are-seen-threat-jobs-and-welfare-state-reality-more>

⁹ Deutschlandfunk, 5 September 2005 : http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/zielgruppe-studenten.680.de.html?dram:article_id=35051

international students in preparation for a globalised labour market¹⁰.

Visa Requirements

If no solution to the issue of free movement is found, this mass of people largely welcomed by the British public would be stripped of their privilege of having no visa requirements when travelling to, living in or seeking employment in the UK. The UK remains a desired destination for mainland Europeans: In 2016, the number of EU nationals applying at UK universities was at a total of 42 000 - almost as many as overseas students as a whole¹¹. It is also in the interest of British students seeking academic placement in the European Union to maintain the freedom of movement for students.

The possibility of residing and working in the UK after successful completion of a university degree forms an integral part of the issues surrounding visa requirements. Only if a reasonable time for seeking employment is granted, will studying in the UK remain an attractive option to the benefit of EU students and the British domestic economy.

Tuition Fees

Legal access alone does not secure the safeguarding of this exchange. For most students, tuition fees are an important factor for choosing their university. Their absence attracts, their presence deters applications. In the UK, as in most other countries, most universities charge different fees for “home” and “international” students. Rates for the former will cap at £9,250 in 2017 for undergraduate studies, while costs for the latter start at around £10,000, but go as high as £35,000. Similar arrangements exist in some EU member states, such as Denmark, Sweden or the Netherlands. Currently, British students in the EU, and EU students in the UK enjoy the “home” classification.

¹⁰ Higher Education Policy Institute, 2015: <http://www.hepi.ac.uk/2015/06/25/home-students-think-studying-international-students/>

¹¹ Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, 2017: <https://www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/applicants-uk-higher-education-down-5-uk-students-and-7-eu-students>

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Additionally, this status qualifies them for other funding opportunities, such as grants and scholarships, effectively removing some of the financial barriers to education. Facing significantly higher tuition fees would further limit students' freedom to choose their educational path, while simultaneously shrinking the talent pool top universities thrive on.

Funding And Programmes

A significant facilitator of successful academic exchange has been the Erasmus programme. With the UK leaving the Union, its continued participation in this programme is at stake. Engulfed in the joint efforts of Education and Training 2020 (ET2020) and now running under the name of Erasmus+, 2.1 billion Euros per year are made available for the development of education and training staff, as well as youth workers and for cooperation between universities, colleges, schools, enterprises and NGOs. This financial and organisational support enables Europe's youth to expand its academic competence and/or professional experience¹². The number of UK students having benefited from it has already surpassed a total of 200,000. Currently, 46 percent of all British students studying away from home do so within the Erasmus framework¹³. Participation in the Erasmus programme does not predicate EU membership.

"The decision to leave the EU represents no desire to become more distant to you, our friends and neighbours."

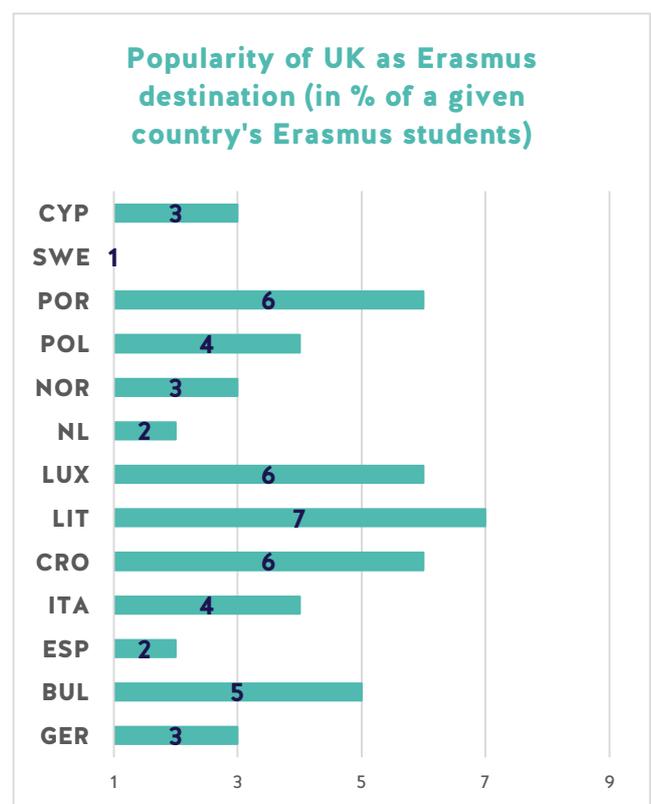
Theresa May in her speech on January 17th 2017

This flow of knowledge has additionally created transnational friendships, having resulted in over 1 million so-called "Erasmus babies". It has brought cultures together, improved communication and enabled young Europeans to have the time of their lives. In fact, as the British director of the Erasmus scheme

¹² Operating budgetary balances – listed below – show the relationship between a Member State's share of total allocated EU operating expenditure and its share of 'national contributions'.

¹³ Universities UK, 2017: <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/brexit/Pages/policies-post-exit.aspx>

Ruth Sinclair-Jones reports, 98 percent of returning British Erasmus students assess their academic experience on the continent as hugely beneficial¹⁴. Moreover, the European exchange programme has produced a broad array of multilingual, highly educated individuals, making the job market more competitive, to the advantage of European businesses. Ultimately, this system has contributed to the strength of the UK's economy, especially with regard to its flourishing financial sector, as well as filling the gap in demands in medicine and technology.



This exchange is not limited to people, as knowledge is exchanged as well. In ET2020, the EU member states commit to regularly discussing educational policy. The exchange of best practices is a strong driver of policy innovation through mutual learning to the benefit of all participants. For the United Kingdom, it is a vehicle for reaching the goal of maintaining and furthering its status as an academic stronghold attracting students from across the world.

¹⁴ The Guardian, July 23 2016: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jul/23/erasmus-scheme-exclude-british-students-brexit>

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As the British government has stated in its recent White Paper and Theresa May had stressed in her speech in January, the country's status as an academic stronghold should be maintained - and even developed upon in order to create a more "global Britain" that attracts talent from across the world, including the European Union. But at the same time, Theresa May stressed in her speech that Great Britain has no interest in holding on to the freedom of movement or any of the other three pillars¹⁵. It remains dubious how these goals are to be achieved with the EU funding and legal framework for exchange cut out.

"...the Union shall negotiate and conclude an agreement with that State, setting out the arrangements for its withdrawal, taking account of the framework for its future relationship with the Union..."

From Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty

RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to recent developments, we make five recommendations on how the mutually beneficial relationship between the UK and the EU in higher education and training can be maintained.

1. Visa

Uphold current visa regulation for EU & UK students. The often observed tension between economic rationality and public sentiment is absent in this case. International and European students are both wanted and needed. This must be built on reciprocity. The same freedom and opportunities must remain open to British students and academic staff seeking placement in the EU. This recommendation responds to popular demand among students as the history of applications to UK universities by EU nationals for full-time as well as Erasmus programmes shows.

¹⁵ The Telegraph, 17 January 2017: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/17/theresa-mays-brex-it-speech-full/>

2. Work Permits

Uphold current work permission rights for EU and UK students. That creates the long-term prospects needed for students to commit themselves to study abroad. Moreover, academic staff and researchers must have their rights ensured to guarantee the continued quality of research programmes. Decreasing EU and UK students' barriers when seeking opportunities to finance their studies through work will also ultimately lead to an increase in their purchasing power. With leisure and spending being of high interest to them, low-skill workers will eventually benefit.

3. Tuition Fees

Maintain the current classification of EU and UK students as "home" students in the other's jurisdiction in order to prevent financial barriers from hindering academic exchange. Tuition fees are a key determinant for students' choice of university. Increasing fees will limit academic exchange and with it the quality of education, with detrimental effects for the development of the future workforce.

4. Maintain Academic Exchange

The UK has an interest in further investing in and participating in Erasmus+ which benefits its students and facilitates an exchange of scholars and expertise. This is in the best interest of the UK government as it has vowed to uphold the UK's status as one of the world's academic strongholds. The UK is one of the most attractive Erasmus destinations. Similarly, the programme enjoys increasing popularity among UK students, with an increase of 115 percent in applications between 2007 and 2013 alone. 98 percent of returning UK students view their experience as beneficial.

5. Maintain Policy Exchange

Best practice exchanges between higher education policy-makers from the EU and UK should be upheld as it benefits both sides. The improvement of higher educational systems comes as a consequence of mutual learning and the dissemination of policy innovations. Therefore, the negotiating parties should set a framework that ensures the exchange to be continued.

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