



Written evidence by the 'Britain in Europe' think tank on the impact of Brexit on EU academics in the UK

The current written evidence is submitted to the House of Lords' EU Justice Sub-Committee as a follow up to oral evidence presented by the director of the Britain in Europe (BiE) think tank, Dr Dimitrios Giannouloupoulos, at the House of Lords' EU Justice Sub-Committee [hearing](#) on EU citizens' rights on 31st October 2017.

The written evidence concentrates on the impact of Brexit on academics from the EU who are working in the UK higher education system. The Committee made brief inquiries about this issues during the October 31st hearing.

Prof Andrew George, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and International) at Brunel University London, comments on the issue, on behalf of BiE, that:

The UK university system is highly dependent on academic and research staff from the EU, as well as on students. At present 10.7% of professors and 13.6% of senior lecturers are from non-UK EU countries. They have been recruited because of their highly specialised knowledge and skills and ensure that we continue to provide education at the cutting edge of their disciplines, as well as making major contributions to our research.

If the rights of existing non-UK EU staff are not guaranteed this would have a disastrous impact. Some academics may be forced to leave the UK and return to the EU if they have not established residency rights. Even those staff who have right of residence and work in the UK (or who are given that right as a result of their high value to the UK) are likely to feel unwelcome and unwanted and may leave (something that is likely to be exacerbated by any reduction in access to EU research collaborations).

It is difficult to quantify what the loss of staff will be. Even if we do not lose all the staff immediately, there will be an attrition over a number of years. A low attrition rate of just a few percent will have the potential, over relatively few years, to lead to a major loss of expertise. The best staff will also be the most attractive to other countries, especially where their knowledge is of benefit to industry!

This issue is exacerbated by the collaborative nature of modern research, in particular in technological subjects. The complexity of modern research, and the issues faced by industry, need teams of researchers with complementary skills in order to have maximal impact. These teams can take a decade to build up. Clearly there is always turnover in any team, but anything that unnecessarily destabilises groups of researchers will have a knock on effect.

The best academic staff will often have unique knowledge and skills. A professor is likely to be the world expert in their subject. They cannot simply be replaced by someone else. The loss of these individuals will impact on our research, reducing its quality and also the impact it has. This will have serious implications for UK industry, both in terms of the direct advantages of research but also in knowledge transfer and the ability to do research that is motivated by industry. It will also impact on our

education, as we want individuals who are in the forefront of their subjects, leading education at undergraduate as well as taught and research postgraduate levels.

In the lead up to the October 31st hearing at the House of Lords' EU Justice Sub-Committee, BiE has also received evidence from a number of concerned EU academics from around the country. We consider useful to submit it here as written evidence to the Committee:

One of the academics who contacted BiE inquired about whether the new immigration skills charge would apply to EU citizens in the future, including those that will have obtained permanent residence status or settled status. S/he feared that recognition of EU citizens' rights would not be meaningful unless there existed equal rights to access to work.

Another EU academic explained to us that s/he was looking for alternative career opportunities outside of the UK. S/he expressed the view that the naturalisation process had been 'designed to put off residents from applying', as it was 'very complex and expensive'. The academic concerned also explained that the requirement to prove proficiency in English via an IELTS test was puzzling, and that the application process was complex and required the use of a solicitor which was bringing up the cost of applying.

A third EU academic who had already obtained UK citizenship explained that s/he was feeling alienated and was already looking for a job elsewhere.

Finally, a representative of the Hellenic Academics Association informed us that the majority of the members of the Association were agonizing over their future, adding that 'most of [their] junior members ha[d] Greek passports only.

A number of experts at BiE take the view that Brexit will have a damaging effect on the ability to retain academic staff from the EU in UK Universities, and they have expressed significant concern over the wider impact of Brexit on UK higher education.

In our October 2016 report on [Brexit: Opportunities, Challenges and the Road Ahead](#), Prof Andrew George's analysis of the effect of Brexit on higher education highlighted that

Undoubtedly leaving the EU will impact on the education we provide in universities. The debate is dominated by two things; student numbers and student mobility. However, other factors are also important; the high proportion of non-UK EU staff (nationally 10.7% of professors, 13.6% of senior sector provides, together with staff from outside the EU (7.1% of professors and 10.1% of senior lecturers), an important enriching element to our education. This contributes to the internationalisation of our education offering, ensuring that all our students are exposed to a global perspective. In addition our educational offering is inseparably intertwined with the research that we do, as our students are taught by staff who are involved in extending knowledge and applying it at the highest level (and students often contributing themselves to research). Therefore anything that impacts on our ability to carry out research will also impact on our education.

The full analysis can be found at pp. 35-41 of the [report](#).

BiE calls upon the House of Lords' EU Justice Sub-Committee to continue to press for the unilateral recognition of the rights of EU citizens in the UK. In the light of evidence suggesting the departure from the UK of a significant number of EU academics, unilateral recognition should provide some reassurance that, after Brexit, EU academics will continue to exercise the same rights as before.

To reduce the number of departing academics, the Government must also take measures to reassure them that those who are already here, will retain equal rights to access to work after Brexit and that, to the extent possible, research collaboration opportunities with the EU will be retained.

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Dr Dimitrios Giannouloupoulos, director BiE



Britain in Europe (BiE) is an innovative think tank based at Brunel University London. The think tank brings together Brunel academics from a number of disciplines, legal practitioners, politicians, former civil servants, business experts, members of international human rights organisations and other third sector experts from across Britain and Europe.

Britain in Europe members produce original research and influence public policy, offering a platform for evidence-based evaluations of Britain's interactions with the EU and its institutions. The think tank's strengths lie in the area of criminal justice and human rights, and extend to key areas of EU law and European Policy research.

BiE has the following key aims:

To analyse the socio-legal, economic, and political effect of Brexit in the UK and Europe.

To provide a research platform that will contribute to the construction of a future relationship between the UK and the European Union.

To ensure that the UK and European countries will remain fully aligned on the protection of human rights after Brexit.

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