



What does Brexit mean for Students?

Tuesday 21 February; 10:00-11:00; Committee Room 21, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

The APPG met to discuss the impact of Brexit on students. The meeting was attended by parliamentarians, students' union officers, and organisations and academics with interest in the students, young people and Brexit.

Paul Blomfield MP, Chair of the APPG, opened the meeting and identified the many implications that Brexit is set to have for a sector and its students that largely did not want this result.

Beth Button, Executive Committee Member at the European Students' Union, opened the meeting with comments on the different factors that need to be considered when regarding the impact of Brexit on students, and the difficult conversations that need to be had in the coming months on campus and at universities. She emphasised that inward-looking and insular trends do not reflect student values, which are increasingly global and outward-looking. She warned against creating a false dichotomy between European cooperation and reaching out globally.

Gemma Gray, Communication Manager at the Erasmus Student Network UK, gave a speech emphasising the importance of student mobility and the Erasmus+ programme. She outlined the benefits Erasmus+ has for student employability, and spoke about some of the practicalities of how Brexit will impact the programme, highlighting that support for student mobility must remain in place. Specifically, Gemma noted that travel to Europe is an essential requirement for some courses – in particular language courses – and forms a crucial part of the student experience.

Lina Dobreva, Vice-President for Education at University of Sunderland Students' Union, spoke about the variety of perspectives on the impact of Brexit amongst students she represents. She raised concerns about the prospect of fewer EU students coming to study in the UK, and the wide-reaching negative impact this could potentially have across the higher education sector. Lina outlined some of the questions and uncertainties that current and prospective EU students may have, and spoke about her own perspective as an EU national studying in the UK.

In comments from the floor, attendees discussed the priorities for students and young people for Brexit:

- An attendee emphasised that students in further education, as well as higher education, face many issues around Brexit, including concerns about access to Erasmus+ and student mobility.
- Discussion was had about the impact of Brexit on the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).
- Questions were raised about what sort of Brexit students and young people want, and attendees from the organisations We Are Undivided and the Intergenerational Foundation referred to research and crowdsourcing that has been emphasising young people's voices.
- Several attendees spoke about the importance of removing international students from the net migration figures.

Attendees discussed the everyday impact Brexit will have, and the practical concerns of students:

- Concerns were expressed about the lack of clarity over whether EU students will be able to access student loans from 2018-2019.
- Discussion was had about course-specific concerns; a representative from the BMA spoke about the need to focus on supporting medical students and keeping courses accessible, as well as preserving the right to work across the EU for doctors and nurses. Others spoke about the danger of courses becoming non-viable if freedom of movement is not preserved, and the serious practical considerations for language students.
- An attendee from Birkbeck Students' Union noted the need for assurances – particularly regarding entitlement to loans – for EU nationals who already living and working in the UK, or for those who have very recently arrived.

For further information, please contact Alexander Lee, Political Affairs and Advocacy Manager, National Union of Students (alexander.lee@nus.org.uk).