

## Children, Young People and Education Committee

### Inquiry on the Impact of Brexit on Higher and Further Education

#### Your contact details

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#### Submitting evidence

If you wish to submit evidence, please send an electronic copy of this form to:  
[SeneddCYPE@assembly.wales](mailto:SeneddCYPE@assembly.wales).

Alternatively, you can send it to:

Sarah Bartlett,  
Deputy Clerk,  
Children, Young People and Education Committee,  
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## Learner Outcomes and Employability

**Question 1: What are the potential challenges to learner success and employability post-Brexit, and what is and could be done to meet these?**

### Stakeholder Response to Question 1:

- In some subject areas, a reduction in opportunities to take part of courses abroad may affect employability prospects (see Question 2). Some qualifications are recognised across the EEA through the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive. The risk is that after Brexit, it might be more difficult for graduates to pursue their chosen careers if mutual recognition is lost (including some staff from the EU now working in UK universities). Government should seek to ensure that the qualifications continue to be recognised as they are at present.
- Wales needs to be able to recruit able and highly qualified staff. Reduced mobility of staff might affect the quality of provision in specialised subjects.
- ESF funding has been valuable in stimulating skills training. We hope that this funding will be replaced from other sources.

**Question 2: To what extent would any loss of the EU ERASMUS+ mobility scheme impact on the sector and what are the opportunities for alternative mobility schemes which currently exist or could conceivably be developed?**

### Stakeholder Response to Question 2:

Students benefit considerably from the opportunity to go abroad during their course. Erasmus + has been a valuable mechanism for the exchange of students (and staff). We understand that over 15,000 UK students participated in 2015-16 and that the number is increasing. Our University Chaplains confirm that it provides a greatly valued opportunity to experience the culture of other countries and benefit from the expertise of colleagues elsewhere in Europe. We are pleased that, following the December 15 agreement, the UK will be able to participate in Erasmus+ until the end of the programme in 2020.

The risk is that the UK will fall behind competitors in enabling students to follow part of their degree in other countries. We hope that UK government will engage to the extent that it is possible in the process of designing the successor programme to Erasmus + and that the Welsh Government will seek to



support such programmes.

We hope that proposals designed to enable non-EU countries to participate in the successor to Erasmus+ will be implemented and that Wales will be able to benefit from them.

## **Financial Sustainability and Investment Opportunities**

### **Question 3: What potential challenges might Brexit pose to the financial sustainability of Further and Higher Education institutions?**

#### **Stakeholder Response to Question 3:**

International students form an important part of the 'Higher Education economy'. According to a recent report by Viewforth Consulting for Universities Wales, overseas students (from the EU and elsewhere) generated £716m of Welsh output in 2015/16 and 6850 fte jobs. Spending by international students and their visitors was equivalent to 3.7% of Welsh exports.

There are students in Wales from about 140 different countries. The economic effect is considerable but as valuable in our minds is the richness of the different backgrounds and traditions brought to our communities. A significant proportion of academic staff and, especially, postgraduate students are from overseas.

A decline in enrolments from European countries could have an obvious, and far-reaching, effect, on the financial resilience of institutions, and consequently on the contributions of institutions to the economies of their localities. The increased fee paid post-Brexit by students from the EU is almost certain to reduce the number of students, though the increased fee combined with exchange rate changes could conceivably ameliorate the impact. The key is that it should be no harder for students to obtain visas than it is at present, and Wales must continue to be a welcoming and desirable location for overseas students. Immigration policy should not militate against this.

A further threat to financial sustainability could be the loss of funding from European Structural and Investment Funds. Clearly alternative sources of income should be put in place.

### **Question 4: How dependent are Further and Higher Education institutions investment plans on European funding and what are the opportunities for alternative sources of investment funding?**



#### **Stakeholder Response to Question 4:**

Wales has been a significant beneficiary of European Structural and Investment Funds, and many universities and colleges have been involved. The Committee will be familiar with the wide range of valuable projects that have been supported in this way – including support for skills training, several research projects on environmental issues and sustainability, support for innovation and the application of research.

European Structural and Investment Funds should be replaced by alternative mechanisms at UK and devolved level to ensure that a focus on innovation is maintained. We understand that the UK and Welsh Governments are considering how to replace the funding. However, there is an obvious risk that any replacement funding will be less, more uncertain and not needs based; any new arrangements should guard against this.

#### **Research and Innovation Funding and Collaboration**

#### **Question 5: To what extent do Further and Higher Education institutions rely on future EU research and innovation funding?**

#### **Stakeholder Response to Question 5:**

Please see response to Question 4. The availability of EU funding has played a significant part in the financial planning of institutions and in the delivery of their objectives.

#### **Question 6: What is currently being done, and what might be done to safeguard EU research collaborations and networks in preparation for and after Brexit?**

#### **Stakeholder Response to Question 6:**

Researchers will collaborate with those who have the most valuable ideas and input and to some extent this does not depend on funding regimes. However in science disciplines and increasingly in others funding is essential and in this regard Horizon 2020 has been extremely valuable.

We welcome the fact that, according to the December 15 agreement, the UK will remain part of Horizon 2020 and other EU programmes that are part of the multinational financial framework (MFF) until the end of 2020, and participate fully in the projects for their entire lifetimes.



The risks after 2020 are that UK universities will lose access to key funding mechanisms to support research excellence and that their reputation as collaborators of choice will be reduced. We hope that the EU and UK will work to ensure that an association agreement to the Framework Programme 9 (FP9) – the successor programme to Horizon 2020 - can be agreed when it is established. Meanwhile the UK should work to influence the shape of FP9 and its emphases. Welsh Government should ensure that it is involved in any such discussions and plays an active part in them.

Thereafter we hope that the Welsh Government will support initiatives taken by the sectors and individual institutions to ensure that contact with researchers across Europe is maintained.

### **Any other relevant issues**

### **Question 7: Are there any other matters relevant to this inquiry?**

### **Stakeholder Response to Question 7:**

Higher Education is inherently an international activity. Research and scholarship rely on the global exchange of ideas and collaboration; the transnational movement of students is significant, and the UK is, of course, deeply embedded in European scholarship. Wales benefits enormously from attracting high calibre academics and researchers from across the world. We hope that the UK and Welsh governments will encourage mobility of teaching and research staff, and be aware of any unintended consequences of policy decisions.

