



House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee “*Leaving the EU: implications and opportunities for science and research*”
GuildHE’s Written Response to the Call for Evidence

19 August 2016

GuildHE

1. [GuildHE](#) is an officially recognised representative body for UK Higher Education. Our members include universities, university colleges, further education colleges and specialist institutions from both the traditional and private (“for profit” and “not for profit”) sectors. Member institutions include some major providers in professional subject areas including art, design and media, music and the performing arts; agriculture and food; education; maritime; health and sports.

Opening comment

2. GuildHE broadly agrees with the points raised by the previous witnesses to the Select Committee. We also welcome the UK Government’s recent announcement that UK businesses and universities should continue to bid for competitive EU funds while we remain a member of the EU and that the Treasury will underwrite the payment of such awards even when specific projects continue beyond the UK’s departure from the EU. However, during the negotiation period, post Exit funding opportunities need to be secured.
3. We emphasise the need for similar immediate, strong reassurance to staff and students that the UK research environment is open to all and over their status in post Brexit UK.
4. The below offers evidence collated from members on the possible implications following exit from the EU.

People

5. UK universities have a reputation for openness and collaboration which has helped them to build networks and attract talented staff, students and researchers. Freedom of movement throughout Europe has been fundamental to the development, diversifying and maturing of the UK HE sector. Staff and students from other European countries have brought specialised areas of research and alternative viewpoints which have complemented and enriched research and teaching in the UK. In addition, mobility is key for the development of UK graduates in the global environment.
6. Any perception that the UK is pulling up the drawbridge will send potential partners and collaborators towards other more welcoming countries, many of which are eager to invest and build the reputations of their universities as well as to exert soft power.

7. Given the smaller size of our institutions, changes to free movement may cause a greater impact where the proportion of EU staff and students is high. Many of our institutions have a high percentage of early career researchers within their research departments, for whom developing effective research networks is essential. Increased bureaucracy around movement could more severely impact such researchers especially given the fact that many will be starting their research career later in working life and that there is therefore an increased need to establish research networks quickly.
8. Institutions require reassurance beyond 2016/17. It would be useful for a Government body to undertake modelling, over the summer if possible, in mobility, recruitment and research to plan for a number of scenarios.

Encouraging Diversity

9. Maintaining and encouraging the diversity of the UK's research and innovation community during negotiations is also crucial. As other witnesses have pointed out, the definition of science must include humanities and social research. In particular, arts and design specialist institutions and the providers of research and teaching in the broader creative industries must not be forgotten.
10. We add that small and specialist institutions particularly have benefited from being part of EU driven collaborations as they assist in developing partnerships with other UK institutions as well as institutions elsewhere in Europe. They also have a higher bid success rate and EU funds have assisted in capacity building for such institutions. There is therefore a continued need to continue to fund and support cross-border collaborative projects.
11. The availability of EU funding has meant that a much wider range of projects have been funded than are funded solely by UK sources. This diversity has been particularly helpful in ensuring that research has been undertaken in conjunction with business, industry and SMEs. The UK currently ranks second behind Germany for industry funding and UK SMEs have drawn down more funding than any other Member State. Furthermore, of the funding to UK industry, 70% goes to SMEs compared to an EU average of 50%. For some of our members, as much as 68% of research funding since 2006 has been from EU sources. On the other hand, some members receive no EU funding.

European Higher Education Area

12. We agree with the QAA's statement on continued UK membership of the European Higher Education Area – particularly, as QAA says, “mutual recognition of standards also helps facilitate university-level partnerships across Europe and ensures that UK graduates are globally employable.”

EU Structural Funds

13. In addition, many of our members are embedded in their local communities and make valuable contributions to the economy through effective business partnerships through high quality applied research. Several have benefitted from EU Structural Funds, further enhancing their contribution to the economy and wider society. Therefore decreased access for businesses to EU networks and funds will also impact the research environment and speed of innovation (for example, by destabilising established partnerships). However, there is the opportunity for schemes such as the Global Challenges Research Fund to be used strategically to enable continued collaboration.

Digital Single Market

14. The DSM is a key concern for our members who have digital and media specialisms. During the two-year negotiation period the potential impacts on science, research, Digital Media, and the DSM should be at the forefront of the UK's negotiation with the EU. Key points on potential impacts and necessary negotiation:
- “Geo-blocking” (a form of territorial segmentation) that according to the EC represents an obstacle to a single digital market. Negotiations should aim to prevent geo-blocking.
 - Related evidence on the DSM has already been presented to Parliament in April 2016, and is worth the Science & Tech Committee referring to. See <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/eu-internal-market-subcommittee/inquiries/parliament-2015/online-platforms/>
15. In terms of impact of leaving the Digital Single Market on UK job markets and the potential loss of opportunity with Brexit:
- “Europe’s public service media organisations invest approximately EUR 20 billion in content and predominantly air domestic and European content.” (see <https://www.ebu.ch/contents/news/2015/05/the-ebu-welcomes-the-european-co.html>)
 - About 7 million people in Europe earn their livelihoods from core creative industries such as film, music, and television. There has been little empirical analysis to date to forecast how large an economic impact (e.g., lost jobs and wages) copyright changes may have on this group.
 - Innovation in technology would also potentially become more difficult.
 - Also see the EU DSM: http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/digital-single-market_en

HER Bill

16. We welcome the fact that the HER Bill is progressing through Parliament. During Brexit negotiations, Government should not risk pausing on the Bill and risking further damage to our international reputation for quality through regulatory failure. It would be a mistake – particularly when the referendum result makes the UK look a less welcoming place to anyone “other”, including overseas students and staff. At the very least, we must be able to point to safe, high quality and improving products.

Risk Indicators (metrics)

17. It is hard to identify exact metrics that would act as risk indicators. However some areas to consider are as follows:
- Monitoring annual income to institutions from EU funds
 - Tracking movement of EU staff currently within UK institutions and monitoring whether they leave the UK
 - Monitoring number of successful bids to Horizon 2020 and EU structural funds during negotiation period
 - Monitoring bids to other non-EU funds
 - Monitoring whether there is an increase in UK institutions collaborating with each other through schemes such as the Global Challenges Research Fund
 - Slowing down of the HER Bill passing through Parliament
 - Reduced citation of UK researchers.