



PRESS RELEASE

Arts and Humanities Alliance warns of dangers of hard or no-deal Brexit

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Director of the Francis Crick Institute Sir Paul Nurse observes that Brexit threatens the health of UK science¹ and notes that the deal to be voted on the 11th of December affords no reassurance that UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) will continue to be able to hire talented European researchers or replace lost EU funding opportunities². The Arts and Humanities Alliance (AHA) concurs: Brexit, especially a 'no deal' Brexit or one inadequately protective of the relationship UK HEIs currently enjoy with HEIs in mainland Europe, is likely to be highly damaging to all HE disciplines, not just to science.

Arts and Humanities subjects benefit from the expertise of colleagues of multiple nationalities, many of whom come from mainland Europe. The best minds in the study of all disciplines are found across the globe: to maintain our cutting edge we must be as accessible as possible. Visa restrictions on individuals from outside the EU already hamper such exchange. If EU citizens become bound by the same visa restrictions as those to which non EU individuals are already subject, this will be to the detriment of all of our disciplines.

Arts and Humanities subjects, like scientific ones, benefit enormously from access to research funding through the European Research Council (ERC), and new post-Horizon 2020 initiatives. Such financial support is crucial to the health of Arts and Humanities disciplines in the UK.

Arts and Humanities disciplines benefit to the same degree from the free movement of students and staff across Europe. We attract students from mainland Europe to study with us and send our students and researchers to mainland Europe. All of us, within the academy and in the towns that house our universities, profit from this enviable mobility.

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-45944817>;

² https://www.crick.ac.uk/news/2018-11-15_paul-nurse-responds-to-proposed-brexit-deal

Individual disciplines flag particular causes for concern:

Area Studies: Area Studies explicitly encourages UK institutions, scholars and students to see themselves as part of a wider international academic and civil society – the kind of society that is acutely threatened by hard Brexit. If the UK becomes more insular, fewer students will wish to enquire into the wider world and they will be less equipped to understand and thrive in it.

Classics: Classics has particularly strong European connections. The ability to stay and work in Italy and Greece in particular is essential for research on manuscripts and epigraphic texts, visual and material culture. Modern foreign language skills acquired through exchange schemes are crucial for PhD success.

English Literature, Language and Creative Writing: English language is a global language; Anglophone literature produced throughout the world. UK English Language and Literature scholars and Creative Writers work with mainland European colleagues on comparative literatures as well as those written in English, and on the history of language(s). Restrictions on free movement will seriously impoverish not only the UK academic community, but also the creative industries with which they are intertwined.

History: Brexit will adversely affect History in student recruitment and undergraduate study (Erasmus exchanges confer vital language and inter-cultural skills); in postgraduate education (students from continental Europe provide essential skills in European and Asian languages); in staffing and in research. UK History has been a key beneficiary of European funding streams. Marie Curie Fellows and collaborative large grants and networks have transformed our understanding of the past and its impact on the present; ERC funding has been a vital lifeline in an era of shrinking UK research council funding opportunities.

Modern Languages and Linguistics: Most Modern Languages degrees currently involve a compulsory year abroad. Interruption to Erasmus+ student and staff mobility schemes will reduce the attractiveness of our programmes to UK and international students; jeopardise their intellectual and pedagogical coherence; and further accelerate the decline in the study of languages highlighted by the British Council³, exacerbating the serious deficit in UK language skills. In creating a more hostile environment for EU language teachers in the UK it will cause a shortage of teachers, Almost everything we teach is about communication with, and openness to, European cultures, languages, history and peoples.

³ https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/languages_for_the_future_2017.pdf

Music and the Performing Arts: Research and creative practice have benefited immeasurably from the free movement of musicians and theatre practitioners across Europe. Cultural exchange is the lifeblood of innovation across the arts: restriction on this mobility will seriously threaten Britain's leading international position in the creative industries.

Publishing: Students from across the EU study on UK Publishing Studies programmes and frequently stay on to work within the UK publishing industry, enriching the cultural and linguistic diversity of our book trade and its economic prosperity. Other EU students find employment in their home or in third countries within the EU, increasing the strongly networked nature of the publishing industry. Withdrawal from the EU will substantially damage the recruitment base and attractiveness of our programmes.

Religious Studies: Religious Studies relies heavily on students and colleagues, not to mention research environments and funding streams, from across Europe.

Slavonic and East European Studies is especially dependent on collaboration with scholars from the most recent accession states, as well as employing in British Universities an exceptionally large number of people from East Central Europe, the Balkans and Northern Europe (the Baltic States).

Notes:

The Arts and Humanities Alliance (AHA) is an association of almost 50 learned societies that work together to promote the interests of the arts and humanities, particularly with respect to higher-education and research policies at UK and EU level.

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