



Academic Leave? The Impact of Brexit on British Higher Education

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EDUCATION**

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Abstract: This policy brief looks at the prospective effects of Brexit on British academia, as it focuses on migration (of students and staff) and research (collaboration and funding) as two factors which make the United Kingdom a scholarly force to be reckoned with in international relations. However, the same two factors are also vulnerable to the country's envisioned exit from the European Union. The brief is consequently divided into two parts corresponding to the two main sub-themes. In more detail, the various sections establish 1) why each element is important in the context of Brexit and of British academia in general and 2) the positive impact of current policies on UK scholarship. Finally, 3) the current political climate is discussed and policy recommendations are made based on the previous findings. Instead of shunning migrants, the United Kingdom should embrace them (especially in the case of students and academics). Research should continue to benefit from the EU investment and collaboration which make the UK one of the top innovation hubs in the world. Britain should therefore reject a hard Brexit. Instead of pursuing isolationist policies, the two main parties (Labour and Conservatives) should change course and pursue a softer liberal version of leaving the EU such as the European Economic Area option.

Keywords: *Brexit; EU; migration; students; academia; research.*

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Introduction

The result of the referendum called on 23 June 2016 for Britain to leave the European Union was as momentous as it was unexpected. Among a myriad of other issues, it threw the fate of British universities into sharp relief. For many, the vote represents a step back for the British world-class academic environment. It involves the loss of research funding and collaboration with the EU, as well as deterring future international students and staff from coming to study or work in the UK. For others, this was a chance for Britain to strike out on its own, free from the constraints of European institutions and stifling immigration. What should the country choose then?

In the present paper, I try to answer this question with a case study dedicated to the UK higher education sector. In keeping with the debate highlighted above, I discuss two main areas: immigration and research. In order to do so, I review some of the more relevant literature and primary sources on these subjects and I employ descriptive analysis to determine an answer to our prospective questions.

Simply put, the arguments against immigration do not hold up: EU students and staff do not take away jobs and welfare from the home country, but add to it. Research is not just a matter of more government investment and bilateral relations, but of building collaboration through international institutions. Such cooperation between British academics and those abroad is made possible by current membership in the European project. As such, I conclude by saying that instead of pursuing isolationist policies, the two main parties (Labour and Conservatives) should change course and pursue a softer liberal version of leaving the EU such as the European Economic Area option.

I. Migration

a) *Background*

The British public continues to be divided when it comes to the issue of migration, which was one of the determinant factors of the Brexit vote. Thus, 20% of all Leavers voted to leave the EU because it would bring about more control over migration, compared to 21% who did so for economic reasons (Swales, 2016: 13). In addition, these voters provided a consistent block for the Leave campaign: 88% of those who were against more newcomers to the UK voted for Brexit (Swales, 2016: 13). One of the two campaigns for Brexit, the unofficial Leave.EU, made immigration a centrepiece of their movement. Then United Kingdom Independence Party and Leave.EU leader Nigel Farage unveiled the “Breaking Point” poster showing a never-ending wave of migrants coming to the UK (The Guardian, 2016: para. 1). More broadly, popular discourse has become awash in negative perceptions about immigration such as putting pressure on public services and taking the jobs of Britons. What is more, the same attitude continues to influence public policy after the election. Thus, 47% of Leavers versus only 16% of Remainers continue to believe that the government should act to control migration into the UK (Swales, 2016: 14).

In order to understand better why the UK is in fact lucky to have so many migrants, we should remember what a boon immigration is. The way this benefit occurs can be explained (like many other things in the broad field of economics) in terms of supply (what companies/states are willing to offer) and demand (what consumers are willing to buy). Jobs are no different in this sense from other commodities available on the market. Where advanced

countries require specialized workers, they will be met by people from abroad willing to fill up these positions (Legrain, 2016: 14). Based on the very same logic, we realize that the process does not come at the expense of jobs for locals. That is because the economy is not a static demographic picture where some only gain at the expense of others. Items sold on the market send a signal to suppliers to produce more or less of that item. Similarly, immigrants do not just supply a good, but also create demand for various other amenities (Legrain, 2016: 11). Their demand in turn creates room for other jobs to be filled, which ultimately gives rise to new positions in profitable industries. Newly discovered areas of research by foreigners, for example, breed vacancies for new academics to pursue topics in this direction. Therefore, migration generates growth that benefits the newcomers themselves as well as the host country. In fact, the advantage of an open system can be dramatic. By some estimates, worldwide free migration would consequently fuel an enormous increase estimated to be between 50 to 150% of world GDP (Clemens, 2011: 84).

What is more, the United Kingdom was able to put economic theory to the test. Britain is still a member of the Single Market, which means that its citizens possess four freedoms – of movement, capital, goods, and services (Portes, 2016: 14). The first of these fundamental rights was established in its current form through the 2004 Free Movement of Citizens Directive, a document which established the legal power of EU citizens to work, seek employment, bring family members, and enjoy benefits in a host country (Portes, 2016: 15). This decision coincided with the 2004 accession of ten new Member States and was succeeded by Romania and Bulgaria's accession to the Union in 2007. The new additions to the European family included Eastern European countries which were less well-off than their Western counterparts; they were therefore the most “tempted” to take the route of migration. Subsequently, the number of EU immigrants has more than doubled in the last decade to more than 3 million (Portes, 2016: 16).

What were the consequences of this policy? Contrary to the political rhetoric then, the results are positive: Britain has in fact gained from migration. That is because the mechanism of supply and demand has encouraged a positive selection effect among migrants. Most EU nationals coming to the UK are more qualified than the locals. Therefore, they do not compete with local British workers – or as the popular narrative puts it “stealing their jobs”. On the contrary, they complement locals' abilities and help create new jobs for natives. We would then expect them to differ in characteristics from the local population (again in a positive sense). Not surprisingly then, we find that they tend to be highly educated (43% compared to 23% of British nationals) and overwhelmingly in employment (81.9% compared to 72.6% of natives) (Wadsworth et al., 2016: 4-5). Owing to such high numbers, they are neither welfare nor workfare scroungers. Moreover, migrants are net contributors to British society. A 10% increase in their numbers is associated with a per capita income gain of 2.2% (Wadsworth et al., 2016: 15). Even more so, these very same characteristics mean that the UK economy has grown also because of migrants (leading to more work for the British): a 1% rise in the migrant share of the population means a 2% increase in productivity and GDP (Vox, 2017: para. 7). Finally, all these statistics include (and therefore apply) to Romanian migrants (Ambrosini et al., 2011: 2).

b) Migration and the higher education sector

One of the biggest contributions migrants have made is to the UK's educational sector. British academia is not just a source of international soft power, not only in terms of the immense reputation of old universities like Cambridge and Oxford as well as the influence of newer red brick ones like the University of London (LSE, UCL, King's College London). It is also a source of economic benefit to the country. The total direct financial contributions that

the 162 British universities and colleges bring to the economy is estimated to be around 27.9 billion pounds (Kelly and White, 2014: 8). Foreign students contribute a significant portion of this figure. Thus, there were 437,000 migrant pupils studying in the UK in 2014-2015, where 125,000 of them are from the EU (Kaur, 2017: 2). Together, these students have spent more than 6.1 billion pounds in the UK economy in 2015 alone: a sum which includes transport and retail sectors (750 million pounds and 690 million respectively) and 5.1 billion subsistence spending on items outside campus (Kaur, 2017: 2). The demand driven by these students alone helps account for more jobs in the economy not less. Thus, the students' tax contributions add up to 1 billion, enough to pay for 31,700 full-time nurses or 25,000 full-time police officers (Kaur, 2017: 2). So even those migrants who do not in fact have a job increase the number of positions for Britons!

When it comes to staff, EU citizens make up 20% of all full-time employees or 22,880 academics (Russell Group, 2016: 1). While the number may not seem significant, the distribution of these stats reveals a much bigger contribution made by newcomers. Consequently, 38% of those pursuing a career in maths, physics and biology are from outside the UK and overwhelmingly from the EU (BBC, 2017: para. 7). However, the situation is even starker for PhD researchers such as the author of this policy brief. Half of all PhDs come from abroad; they perform tasks integral to the UK academic system such as teaching seminars and marking assignments. Thus, the UK system is different from that of other European countries. For example, in Romania the full time "seminar assistants" are considered full-time employees. The British system, by contrast, frees up time for professors to do their own research while providing aspiring academics with first-hand experience at teaching – a win-win situation made possible by the high enrolment of newcomers to Britain.

Yet this is true not just of the public sector but of the private one as well. Academic STEM contributions in the UK help make companies competitive on the world market as well. Hence, the UK accounts for 2.4% of patent applications and 10% of all citations in journal articles – the academic and private sector interact to make Britain a more innovative place (Department of Business, Skills, and Innovation, 2013: 8). If these migrants were to leave, other countries such as China would benefit from an influx of top brains to generate new patents of increasing quality (Department of Business, Innovation, and Skills, 2013: 3). Vital sectors of British industry (pharmaceutical, engineering, aerospace, IT to name a few) therefore depend upon this outside staff to provide them with the tools to stay competitive.

Romanian academics and students themselves are also contributing to enriching British universities. As of 2015 (unlike what popular political discourse imagined), Romanians only represented a minority of newcomers, or about 7% of all EU nationals in the UK (Wadsworth et al., 2016: 3). In the case of students, there were 7,200 Romanians in the 2015/2016 wave (HESA, 2017, chart 7). No data is currently available on the number of Romanian academics in the UK for this report (neither on the UK government website nor on research centres like Universities UK or HESA), though the experience of the academics the present author does know (his own and that of a professor in the Department of Political Economy) corresponds to the EU general experience. Romanians too contribute to the enrichment of British academia.

c) Politics and policy

Yet the response of both major political parties to this *status quo* has been negative. Hence, the Conservative Party Manifesto for 2017 set out a plan to end freedom of movement from the EU and exiting the Single Market (i.e. the "hard Brexit" option). The paper was scarce on the details of when and how the departure will occur. The possibility of a transitional period (where current freedom of movement continues to apply until a negotiation is reached) was hinted at. It was also supported by Prime Minister Theresa May's comments about such a

period in the past (Barnard et al., 2017: 14). However, the transitional arrangement was uncertain given that the PM promised to walk away from negotiations if a good deal for Britain was not reached (the “no deal is better than a bad deal” mantra). The situation of many EU migrants already in Britain was therefore left unresolved. In addition, the Tories planned to reduce the number of newcomers in the country to “tens of thousands” according to the net migration target (Conservative and Unionist Party, 2017: 54). What is more, they included students in their criteria – thus, the manifesto claims “We will toughen the visa requirements for students, to make sure that we maintain high standards. We will expect students to leave the country at the end of their course, unless they meet new, higher requirements to allow them to work in Britain after their studies have concluded...” (Conservative and Unionist Party, 2017: 54). The “visa requirements” currently apply to non-EU students but were extended to Member States citizens as well in the future to accommodate the net migration target (Barnard et al., 2017: 14).

The opposition too wanted to restrict immigration, though not to the same extent. In its manifesto, the Labour Party promised to end freedom of movement without “scapegoating migrants nor blaming them for economic failures” (The Labour Party, 2017: 28). Instead, the party committed itself to guaranteeing the rights of EU newcomers already in the country (The Labour Party, 2017: 28). This gave a level of assurance that was missing in the Conservative pledge – the windfall of ending freedom of movement need not lead to a radical exodus from Britain. In addition, it could ease Brexit negotiations by complying with the Working Paper on the Withdrawal Agreement set out by the EU Commission, which states that EU27 nationals and their UK spouses must be guaranteed their existing rights (EU Commission, 2017: 1). Moreover, the manifesto explicitly acknowledged the contribution that students make to the economy (estimated by Labour to be 25 billion pounds) and excludes them from the net migration number (The Labour Party, 2017: 29). Hence, Labour’s policies were an improvement over the current Tory approach by providing a measure of certainty to people who would otherwise have to question their future in the UK.

Despite what seemed like a better policy on migration though, Labour understood “fair immigration rules” to “include employer sponsorship, work permits, visa regulations or a tailor mix of all these which works for the many not for the few” (The Labour Party, 2017: 28). These measures would be a step back from the current open migration system and lead to lower immigration. Visas or work permits involve an opportunity cost in the form of actual money to be paid for the application, alongside the cumbersome nature of the application process. These factors would affect the migration labour market – the demand for positions in Britain could grow much weaker. Finally, Labour’s policy is confusing given that they also commit themselves to staying in the single market. On the one hand, this encourages collaboration with the EU. It shows that Labour was more prepared to be flexible in government than the Tories. Yet on the other, the EU has made clear that freedom of movement is an integral part of the Single Market.

In the aftermath of the 2017 general elections, the current prospects for the United Kingdom seem to be negative. The results (a hung parliament with the Tories at 318 seats and Labour at 262) have left the UK with a Conservative minority government instead of the majority most pundits had anticipated. This has further complicated Brexit by introducing internal political instability. Theresa May remains Prime Minister, but by a thin majority supported through a “confidence and supply” deal with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), meaning that the Northern Irish group will vote for Brexit related legislation with the Tories. The overall strategy to be pursued is currently unclear: some in May’s cabinet continue to favour the option of a hard Brexit (David Davies, the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU) while others would like a less dramatic separation (Damien Green, current first secretary).

Markets promptly responded to the current political situation by lowering their confidence in the British economic landscape. Thus, the pound responded to the news by dropping in value relative to the dollar by 2.34%, or 1.2690\$ (The Telegraph, 2017: para. 2). The economic context in the UK has further deteriorated, with growth slowing down to just 0.2% (The Guardian, 2016: para. 2).

The political and economic depreciation set off a vicious cycle when it comes to migration too. As their prospects deteriorate and their future in the country uncertain, migrants are beginning to leave the UK, a situation which will further depress growth. Unsurprisingly, we had a recent drop in immigration of 84,000 (down to 248,000 net migration) reported by the Office of National Statistics (Office for National Statistics, 2017: 2). Emigration was driven primarily by EU citizens – 117,000, an increase of 31,000 compared to 2015. More specifically, the academic sector has suffered a drop of foreign students of 32,000 mostly due to EU migrants opting to study somewhere else (Office for National Statistics, 2017: 2). What is more, the rate of academics leaving has also increased substantially. Thus, departures of EU staff have risen by 30% in the last two years, with 1,300 teachers having left the country (The Guardian, 2017: para. 1-2). If the benefits of inflows we have discussed are enormous, then consequences of the outflow are also dire. If immigration keeps dropping to 50% of its current level, this would reduce UK productivity by 0.32% every year (Wadsworth et al., 2016: 15). The effect on the academic sector should be clear by now: in the worst-case scenario, we are talking about entire research departments who would have to find staff somewhere else.

At the same time, the situation opens a window of opportunity for other policies to be implemented. Instead of a hard exit, the UK should opt for a soft version. Britain could remain in the Single Market with a deal similar to Norway's. This is the so-called European Economic Area option – opting out of the political structures of the EU but subscribing to the economic benefits of the European project. Given the overwhelming advantages of migration (and the dangers that shutting out people entails), this would be the least-damaging way out for Britain. A first step towards this better outcome is to settle the situation of migrants in the country. The guarantee would reduce the outflow of migrants away from the country since many foreign academics and students are concerned about their future in the UK. The situation is confirmed via statistical evidence. Hence, according to a UCL census, 78% of all EU academics thought of leaving the country after the Brexit result and a third already knew colleagues who had left (Yougov, 2017: 2). In addition to putting people at ease, guaranteeing their rights would give the EU a chance to reciprocate with British immigrants living in the Union, thus easing negotiations overall.

Recent developments have been encouraging in this sense, though political worries remain. Prime Minister Theresa May has already backed away from the more stringent promises of the Tory manifesto. Thus, the government has scrapped the migration target of reducing immigration to the “tens of thousands” and student inflows. Moreover (and in line with our suggestions), the Conservatives have proposed a policy where EU migrants who have lived in Britain for five years before the “cut-off date” (taken to be the invocation of Article 50 in March 2017) would be granted permanent settled status; those who came after the cut-off point have to apply for permanent residence (like non-EU newcomers). Nonetheless, it is true that unilaterally granting full current rights to EU citizens could pose political challenges. The deal might not be acceptable because it gives migrants moral entitlements that not even Britons possess (for example, the right to bring non-EU spouse into the country free of visa restrictions). And the minority government continues to be divided over Brexit.

However, the British government would do well to secure in any scenario at least a minimum amount of freedom of movement. In the latter case, both government and opposition

should adopt the EEA option and guarantee this liberty for the most highly skilled individuals to ensure that the United Kingdom remains one of the top performing countries in the world for researchers, students, and teachers. In the event of a hard Brexit, the second best option would be a Sweden-style labour domestic migration policy: work permits are issued on a two-year basis to those who are willing to come and have the requisite skills, with no limit on the number of people allowed in (Legrain, 2016: 27). This way, businesses and universities will be able to recruit for new positions without discrimination. What is more, the supply and demand mechanism of the labour market would be preserved, meaning that migrants would still find the UK an attractive place to work in. Furthermore, students should be allowed to come to the UK unhindered, while still providing tuition and maintenance loans for those who choose to study in Britain.

II. Research

The pro-Brexit camp argued that exiting the EU would provide an opportunity to connect more with the world. Not only was this to be the case for trade deals (where Britain would be “open for business” when it came to free trade deals with anyone), but also with regards to the realm of research. As such, the UK was bound to be free to invest more in its innovation and build better scientific relations with countries outside the European Union – the group Scientists for Britain, for example, advocates joining another 16 non-EU states in bilateral scientific projects (Scientists for Britain, 2016: para. 3).

British universities are already among the best in the world in terms of research. Overall, its research is ranked second globally according to quality (Jarvis and Hurley, 2017: 1). How does this break down according to the gold standard of academia, citations? Britain ranks fifth in number of scientific/technical articles produced, ahead of comparable countries like France and Italy (Hook and Szomszor, 2016: 2). However, it well outperforms every other country when it comes to the quality of the material it creates. The United Kingdom thus generates 15.9% of the most highly cited papers in the world, well above the 0.9% of the population of the world it represents (Jarvis and Hurley, 2017: 1). It has consequently managed to overturn the United States in 2013 and became the country with the highest impact citations in the world (Department of Business, Innovation, and Skills, 2013: 2). This is despite the fact that the United Kingdom’s public expenditure on higher education was only 1.20% of GDP, below countries such as France (1.26%) or the United States (1.41%) (Universities UK, 2016: 22).

a) The benefits of collaboration

A lot of this research is done via collaboration with countries from the European Union. Given the interdisciplinary nature of many problems and the concomitant specialization of disciplines, cooperation is becoming increasingly important. Take for example the case of the author of this paper, as a PhD student. I am currently working on a project connecting environmental ethics to economics. There are few academics in the UK with knowledge of both specific areas of research; I therefore have to reach out to professors in the United States and in the EU to collaborate on the matter. These mutual relationships result in new findings that could not have been obtained otherwise – just like the migrant’s demands for a job are matched by the market’s supply of academic positions, so does an open market for research meet demand through a global supply of scholars. The increasing importance of cooperation is reflected in the primary metric of research, the impact factor of publishing. Academia relies on this factor (having at heart the number of citations used for a specific piece of work) to gauge the quality of one’s work. Again, globally recognized papers are the ones with the highest

impact factor, with the difference between local articles and those being produced with international collaboration being as high as 0.52 of an impact factor (Adams and Guerney, 2016: 3). The UK's status as a leading hub of research is due in no small part to combining its efforts with people all around the world.

This is so because of its collaboration with European Union countries. Thus, the highest single country which had papers co-authored with UK based researchers was Germany which accounted for 92,914 papers (Frenk et al., 2016: 11). In fact, 60% of the UK's externally co-authored papers are with EU nationals (Frenk et al., 2016: 4). This is important given that the collaboration between the UK, Germany, and other countries such as France has increased ten-fold over the last two decades, while the authored papers within each country has remained the same (Adams and Guerney, 2016: 2). What is more, universities with the best results are also the most international – the University of Cambridge has seen its international collaboration rise to the point where it represents 60% of its academic output (Adams and Guerney, 2016: 5)! Romania too contributes to the UK's output, though less significantly – if we were to interpret the data in a normalised version (from 0 to 1) then Romania represents 0.009 compared to Germany's 0.064 of the UK's output (Frenk et al., 2016: 12). And even articles with non-EU nationals are facilitated by the UK's presence in the Union. Thus, between 2007 and 2014, the Marie-Sklodowska Curie Actions enabled 800 Chinese nationals to work in Britain as well as 850 British nationals to work in China in order to produce new interdisciplinary research papers (Frenk et al., 2016: 4).

Collaboration does not just end at writing articles, though. These papers are often merely the basis for further gatherings among academics to put their plans into motion. Projects at larger scale (those which cannot be realized efficiently unless they employ thousands of people and very expensive machinery) like the International Space Station, the Hadron Collider or CERN in Switzerland would not be possible without international collaboration (Royal Society, 2011: 16). The number of specialists and equipment simply exceeds the capacities of any single country. This also involves extensive infrastructure projects coordinated by the European Union – hence, we have the European Research Consortium which ensures the uniformity of research measures between countries (Frenk et al., 2016: 18). At the same time, you have a harmonization of research standards within the Horizon framework. Finally, the individuals in these massive projects mutually benefit from the environment in ways that cannot directly be put into numbers. Thus, such larger projects provide the basis for improving one's academic knowledge (by talking to the best in the field), updating equipment or databases with the latest findings and (last but not least) enhancing one's career prospects in academia.

In turn, EU funds facilitate international cooperation. As much as 16% of all UK grants come from outside sources: 68% of the money used to produce top-rated research being from the European Union (Universities UK, 2016: 26). Apart from the Curie Action, there is the wider Horizon 2020 project which aims to channel 74.8 billion euros into academic projects in the 2014-2020 timeframe (Frenk et al., 2016: 17). Horizon 2020 allows Britain to go beyond bilateral research (the type conducted with Germany and France described above) and establish consortia with at least three countries as long as there is one European Member State (Frenk et al., 2016: 17). Again, the collaboration does not stop in the Single Market though. Horizon 2020 includes the European Research Council which funds STEM discoveries according to ranking of excellence. Hence it is not surprising that the UK has benefitted the most from this program attracting non-EU academics to Britain (Frenk et al., 2016: 6). But it has also helped British academics benefit from research from around the world – 70% of all UK researchers have published their work with non-UK institutions (Frenk et al., 2016: 9). This of course shows how the EU has had a positive impact on the mobility of native scholars (again highlighting the mutual benefits of freedom of movement). All in all, this cooperation helps

create 19,000 jobs in the UK and contributes 1 billion pounds to Britain's GDP (Universities UK, 2016: 4).

b) Politics and policy

On the policy side, the Tories were relying more on the UK's funds than on the EU's collaboration going into the election. The Conservative text does acknowledge the leading global role Britain plays in fostering research and development. It hence reads: "The UK has an outstanding science base and world leading tech companies" (Conservative and Unionist Party, 2017: 19). Thus, the Tory manifesto proposes an increase in spending: up to 2.4% of Britain's GDP will be spent on Research and Development, with 3% being the target in the future (Conservative and Unionist Party, 2017: 19). In a tacit recognition of the importance burden-sharing entails for projects of scale, the Tories had committed themselves to setting up university investment funds as common pools resources and listing these funds on the market for businesses to invest as well (Conservative and Unionist Party, 2017: 20). Again, this is in recognition of the current failure of British businesses to engage with investment in scholarly innovation: thus, firms in the UK contribute only 1.06% GDP to projects, a full 80% lower than in comparable countries such as Germany (Hook and Szomszor, 2017: 2). Meanwhile, no mention is made of Horizon 2020 or of any equivalent European project in the Tory manifesto.

Yet the difficulty of relying solely on UK funds post-Brexit is presented by the structure of British funding and the uncertainty of cooperation post-Brexit. The former refers to the qualitative-based funding in the UK which awards money in the form of block grants to those who follow the government Research Excellence Framework (Hook and Szomszor, 2016: 1). In addition, Britain provides its own researchers with money through the Research Councils UK according to one's field (ESRC for Social Science, HRC for Humanities etc.) and the Innovate UK project. Though important, all these government sources of money make up only 37.4% of all academic support (Hook and Szomszor, 2016: 1). The Conservative Party manifesto's commitment to more spending and encouraging corporations to participate are gestures meant to address this "underinvestment"; yet the sum produced (of 4.7 billion pounds) still falls significantly short of Horizon 2020's budget. And resources have to be redirected from other areas of government spending just to maintain the UK's current global status. As such, Britain will no longer be able to obtain great research value for less money. Furthermore, taxes would rise to accommodate the change in policy if one wants to maintain spending levels in other areas. Extra complications could still appear in the form of research standards and the infrastructure needed to sustain STEM projects. The Tory manifesto is scarce on details on how to handle the implications of these virtual complications (Barnard et al., 2017: 13).

In turn, political decision-making further complicates the situation. Funds by the UK would be subject to bilateral negotiations with other countries. This is hailed as progress by groups such as Scientists for Britain, but is a step down from the multilateral approach guaranteed by EU structures (Hook and Szomszor, 2016: 1). Re-negotiating bilateral agreements would take time, effort, and increased economic investments. Without EU rules, regulations and standardisations require revisions (which in turn are bound to generate political debates over deregulation). On top of this, the difficulties of establishing the situation of foreign researchers already in the UK will spur further discussions. All these variables will take away time and material resources from actual research. Even if the UK could come up with the financial resources to compensate for the loss of European collaboration funds, there is no guarantee that collaboration can be delivered under the Tory manifesto.

By contrast, Labour has committed itself openly to maintaining the UK's collaboration with EU institutions. Their manifesto subsequently reads: "A Labour government will ensure that the UK maintains our leading research role by seeking to stay part of Horizon 2020 and its

successor programs and by welcoming research staff to the UK...” (The Labour Party, 2017: 25). In addition, it too will adhere to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s target of 3% GDP to be spent on Research and Development by 2030 (The Labour Party, 2017: 14). However, even in Labour’s case, details are scarce on how these commitments will be upheld; there is no reason given for why the EU should accept UK membership in Horizon 2020, Euratom or the European Medicines Agency when the country will no longer be part of the Union. This is doubly so given Labour’s continued support for a hard Brexit scenario, which again looms as an incoherent position: rejection of migration would mean a rejection of the academic mobility championed by EU research institutions.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the British universities are already among the best in the world in terms of research and teaching. And their status as leading academic hubs is due in no small part to combining their efforts with people all around the world, especially with those from the European Union, and to accessing EU funds that facilitate international cooperation. To preserve this achievement, Britain should choose to pursue a soft exit instead of the hard version, as the difficulty of relying solely on UK funds post-Brexit is presented by the structure of British funding and the uncertainty of cooperation post-Brexit.

The overall strategy to achieve this is ultimately straightforward – take any measures possible to remain within the Single Market and EU organizations dedicated to the higher education sector. Here however, the divisions can run deep. Some in the post-election cabinet want a clear separation from both EU academic/research institutions and the Single Market since they tie these structures to continued membership in the European political project.

However, they should listen to the voice of prudence and adhere to a principled pragmatism which would favour the soft scenario. As we have seen, a clean separation from the EU leaves the academic community worse off and unable to design or fully participate in international research projects. This would be an ironic reversal considering Brexit discourse: promises of sovereignty and happiness would end with a loss in decision-making and well-being.

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