

The European Union's contribution to UK higher education

Key facts

EU staff and students in the UK

- EU staff make up **15%** of the academic workforce, and EU students **5%** of the student body.
- EU students make a huge contribution to the UK economy: in 2011–12, the last year for which data is available, EU students studying in the UK generated **£3.7billion** for the UK economy and supported over **34,000 jobs**.
- In 2012–13, **27,147** EU students came to study or work (train/teach) in the UK with an Erasmus grant.
- **Over half** of ERC Consolidator grantees in the UK in 2014 were non-UK EU – demonstrating the excellence of EU researchers in the UK.

EU research funding

- EU research funding is an engine for growth. The long-term impact of FP7 is estimated at **900,000** additional jobs and a growth of GDP of nearly **1%** across Europe.
- The UK does disproportionately well in securing EU research funding, securing **15.5%** of the funding allocated under the last programme (FP7). Of all 28 Member States, only the Netherlands receives a higher proportion of funding relative to GDP and population size.
- UK HEIs have an excellent track record in securing this funding, securing **70%** of the funding allocated under FP7.
- In 2013/14, UK HEIs received **£687m** of research income from EU sources (this includes sources of funding outside the framework programmes).
- Since the European Research Council was established in 2007, the UK has succeeded in winning over **20%** of the funding allocated (based on excellence).

The benefits of collaboration

- Research has shown that research done through international collaboration has **1.4 times** the impact of research done on a national level.
- Over **60%** of the UK's internationally co-authored papers are with partners inside the EU.

Researcher mobility

- Between 2007 and 2013, **6,053** individual researchers plus an estimated **1,988** research staff members were hosted in the UK through IRSES (International Research Staff Exchange Scheme).
- For all the FP7 researchers/staff members/projects (including the UK nationals mentioned below), British organisations received a total of almost **EUR 1.09 billion**.
- Over **3,500** researchers have been supported by the EU to hone their skills abroad, boosting the profile of UK research. Mobile researchers have been shown to be more productive than their counterparts who stayed at home.

Student mobility

- Over **200,000** UK students and **20,000** UK university staff have spent time abroad through the Erasmus exchange programme, enhancing their employability and promoting understanding between people and cultures.
- Students who have done an Erasmus placement are **50%** less likely to experience long-term unemployment than their counterparts who stayed at home (see Erasmus Impact Study: http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf).
- The number of UK students participating in Erasmus has risen steadily since 2006–07 and was over **14,000** in 2012–13. Erasmus is the single largest source of funding for UK students wishing to work or study abroad.

Structural Funds

- The level of ERDF and ESF income gained by UK universities has risen steadily over the last five years, surpassing **£100 million** in 2012–13 (compared to just under **£43 million** in 2008–09).

Universities for Europe: key messages

The UK's membership of the EU makes our outstanding universities even stronger.

This matters to British people because the EU helps universities to:

- support local growth by educating people and creating jobs, encourage home-grown enterprise and attract top European students.
- carry out cutting-edge research, working together to achieve more than we can alone.
- attract the world's most talented people to the UK and offer life-changing opportunities for British people.

The EU helps universities to educate and employ people in their areas, support home-grown enterprise and attract top European students who contribute billions to the UK economy.

- **With EU support, UK universities help turn ideas and research discoveries into new companies, generating local growth and jobs.** For example, Ulster University's Nanotechnology and Integrated Bioengineering Centre, which received £1.6m of European Regional Development Funding in 1996, has now generated 25 patents and three high-value spin-out companies in medical sensors and electro-stimulation devices. Together these companies are valued at almost £100m with over 150 skilled employees and produce medical innovations which have a global impact on health costs and people's lives.
- **With EU support, UK universities foster entrepreneurship and employability among staff, students and graduates.** For example, Plymouth University is a partner in the EU 'Unlocking Potential' programme which has been supporting people to develop and businesses to grow for over ten years. So far it has helped to create over 1,300 graduate level jobs in over 800 businesses through skills training, placements and a dedicated recruitment platform.

- **The EU makes it easier for UK universities to attract talented students and staff who contribute significantly to the UK economy.** 125,290 EU students studied at UK universities in 2011–12 generating £2.27 billion for the UK economy and 19,000 British jobs in local communities. 15% of the UK academic workforce, responsible for UK universities' world-class reputation, come from other European countries. Among them are some of the most productive researchers in the UK. Over half of the European Research Council's prestigious Consolidator grants awarded to staff at UK universities in 2014 went to EU academics.

The EU helps UK universities to pursue cutting-edge research, discoveries and inventions which improve people's lives and enhance the UK's global influence.

- **The EU makes working across borders easier so UK and European researchers can pool their knowledge, infrastructure, data and resources to achieve more together than they could do alone.** For example, the FORECEE project which involves 14 partners across Europe including UCL is using a unique resource held by the Karolinska Institute in Sweden to develop a pre-emptive test for female cancers. Dr Widschwendter, the Project Coordinator, says 'These sorts of scale projects [are] only really feasible if top institutions across Europe join up'.
- **European programmes help UK researchers collaborate with talent across the world, not just in the EU – recognising that global problems require global solutions.** An example of what can be achieved through global collaboration, with support from the EU, is the International Rare Diseases Research Consortium (IRDiRC) which aims to foster international collaboration in rare disease research. IRDiRC has set itself the bold aims of delivering 200 new rare disease therapies and diagnosis for all rare diseases by the year 2020. The initiative was spearheaded jointly by the European Union, the United States National Institutes of Health and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the IRDiRC now numbers 29 member funding institutions across the world.

- **Inside the EU, we are part of the strongest knowledge-producing region in the world and benefit from increased visibility and global influence.** This matters because working on a larger scale makes our researchers even more globally competitive. In the words of Dr DL Clements, Senior Lecturer in Astrophysics at Imperial College London, ‘overall the EU allows UK and other European scientists to perform at a level matching larger countries like the US. Without it, we would be fragmented and much reduced in capability’.
- **The EU provides vital funding to the UK’s most talented researchers, supporting their work in areas from disaster prevention to curing cancer.** Thanks to the excellence of UK research, the UK accessed 20% of grants allocated by the prestigious European Research Council which exists to reward and encourage academic excellence. In 2013–14 alone, the UK received £687m of research income from EU sources.

The EU brings people together, helping universities to attract top talent to the UK and give life-changing opportunities for British students and researchers.

- **The EU makes it easier to bring the most talented European students, staff and researchers to UK universities.** This is important because they contribute to our global reputation for research and teaching excellence and help to give British students an international university experience.
- **Over 200,000 UK students and 20,000 UK university staff have spent time abroad through the Erasmus exchange programme, enhancing their employability and promoting understanding between people and cultures.** Students who have pursued an Erasmus work or study placement have been shown to be 50% less likely to experience long-term unemployment.
- **Over 3,500 researchers have been supported by the EU to hone their skills abroad, boosting the profile of UK research.** This matters because international connections and collaboration are crucial for excellent research. Mobile researchers have been shown to be more productive than their counterparts who stayed at home, and research done internationally has more impact than research done at a national level.
- **European graduates from UK universities often go on to leadership positions in their home countries.** This matters because it helps to strengthen the UK’s diplomatic and trading relationships.

Universities for Europe: responding to common myths and misconceptions

1) 'The UK can still enjoy the same benefits from EU research programmes outside the EU.'

We have no idea whether and on what terms the UK could negotiate access to EU research programmes outside the EU. Even if we could, we would move from leading European science and research to a peripheral position with no influence over the rules of the game.

- It is by no means certain that the UK could enjoy the same benefits from EU research programmes outside the EU. Continued participation would depend on negotiations with the 27 remaining Member States, and would require unanimous approval. Given the UK's success in securing EU research funding, it would be unlikely that other countries would want to offer the UK access on the same terms as currently.
- Even if the UK did succeed in securing participation in future EU research programmes through complex negotiations, outside the EU the UK would move from an influential position at the centre of European research programmes to picking up scraps from the sidelines.
- We would pay to participate, but would lose out on the ability to shape or influence the programmes – despite still having to follow rules and regulation set in Brussels. The example of Switzerland, whose participation in Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+ was suspended after a vote to limit freedom of movement, demonstrates how precarious a peripheral position in relation to EU programmes can be.

2) 'We could invest the money we spend on EU research nationally and achieve the same results.'

This argument betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the value of international collaboration for international research. When researchers collaborate they can pool resource, data and infrastructure to tackle global problems and achieve more together than they could do alone.

- It has been proven that research done internationally achieves more impact than research done at a national level, and that diverse teams achieve more than homogeneous ones. Knowledge is international by nature, and the best minds in the UK want to collaborate with the brightest and the best globally, no matter where they come from. EU programmes bring together talented people from across Europe and beyond to tackle major challenges, recognising that today's global problems require global solutions.

- Furthermore, there are no guarantees that money not spent on the EU budget would be invested in science and research. The UK already spends significantly less on research than our competitors. Our current public investment in research is 0.55% of GDP while the average among other advanced countries is 0.8%. We cannot confidently predict that a UK government would prioritise additional investment in research and science – particularly as we have a poor track record in this area compared with our competitors.

3) 'The real research powerhouses are outside the EU; we should concentrate on working with them, not waste time on Europe.'

The two aren't mutually exclusive. UK universities' global success depends on sharing knowledge within the EU, as well as internationally. EU programmes help UK universities to collaborate with partners not just in the EU but all over the world.

- It is misleading to suggest there is a choice between Europe and the rest of the world. UK academics collaborate with partners across the globe and the EU supports this through funding, networks and support. The last EU research programme, which ran from 2007 to 2013, involved participants from as many as 170 countries.
- Our ability to work with partners beyond the EU would be impacted by leaving the EU. We would lose access to valuable support and networks. We would also lose the enhanced visibility and influence that being part of the world's largest single bloc of knowledge entails.
- Also, as collaboration is increasingly multi-country, any barrier to collaboration with Europe could also impede our collaboration with other countries.

4) 'European students and researchers will still come to the UK even if we're not in the EU.'

The EU helps universities to attract talent by enabling the free movement of students and researchers. Leaving the EU and putting up barriers to work and study makes it more likely that European students and researchers will choose to go elsewhere – strengthening our competitors and weakening the UK's universities.

- Attracting the best students and top researchers from across the European Union makes our outstanding universities even stronger and makes a major contribution to the UK economy.
- Staff from other European countries add to the excellence of UK research and ensure our students are taught by the best minds in their fields. EU students' presence on our campuses gives our students an international experience at university and creates jobs in towns and cities across the country. In 2012–13 alone, EU students at UK universities spent £2.27bn and generated £19bn for the UK economy.
- An exit from the European Union would put at risk this contribution and jeopardise the UK's position in an extremely competitive global market.

5) 'UK universities and academic staff are world-class and don't need the EU to be successful.'

UK universities and academic staff are world-class in their own right; however, the EU helps to make our outstanding universities even stronger.

- A major reason why UK universities are so successful is our international outlook and connections. This helps us to attract top researchers from across the world, enhancing our research and discoveries and increasing our impact.
- Inside the EU, we are part of the strongest knowledge-producing region in the world. This matters because working on a larger scale makes our researchers even more globally competitive. Inside the EU we have access to vital funding and collaborative network which increases the reach and impact of our world-leading research. Inside the EU we can play a leadership role in the future of European research, science and higher education, rather than choosing to isolate ourselves in an era of growing interdependency.

6) 'Universities UK should stay neutral and clear of this political debate.'

No. The UK's membership of the European Union is an issue of importance to the UK's universities and directly of relevance to the success of our higher education sector. As major employers and intellectual stakeholders in their own right, UK universities have both the right and a responsibility to be a voice in this crucial debate, and to highlight the value of EU membership for UK research, science and higher education.

- University leaders have chosen to take a stance in this debate as EU membership has a positive impact on the universities they lead. They are taking a stance that is in the best interests of the institutions they lead. Support from the EU enhances university research and teaching and contributes to economic growth. It helps universities create employable graduates and make cutting-edge research discoveries.
- While Universities UK has taken a clear and strong pro-European position this will not stop universities hosting open debates on the pros and cons of EU membership. In fact Universities UK is actively encouraging universities to organise and host debates. We want university campuses to be places for debate and our academics to provide expertise to all sides. University students and staff will be encouraged to debate, to register to vote, and to exercise their right to have a say on the day.

Resources for universities

Universities UK campaign microsite

Further resources, case studies, campaign materials and articles will be regularly added to the Universities for Europe microsite, www.universitiesforeurope.com On the site you can also sign up for a fortnightly e-bulletin with updates about the campaign.

Relevant blog content

What has the European Union ever done for us? Alistair Jarvis, October 2015 <http://wonkhe.com/blogs/what-has-the-european-union-ever-done-for-us/>

Europe, Universities and the British People: 5 reasons why EU membership matters, Lucy Shackleton, October 2015 <http://blog.universitiesuk.ac.uk/2015/10/12/europe-universities-and-the-british-people-5-reasons-why-eu-membership-matters/>

Universities, Europe and migration, Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge, April 2015 <http://blog.universitiesuk.ac.uk/2015/04/13/uk-universities-europe-and-migration/>

Europe and the cultural and creative industries, Professor Barry Ife, Principal, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, April 2015 <http://blog.universitiesuk.ac.uk/2015/04/08/europe-and-the-cultural-and-creative-industries/>

Freedom of movement is the main route to knowledge, Nigel Carrington, Vice-Chancellor, University of the Arts London, March 2015 <http://blog.universitiesuk.ac.uk/2015/03/31/freedom-of-movement-is-the-main-road-to-knowledge/>

Europe and research excellence in the UK, Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow, February 2015 <http://blog.universitiesuk.ac.uk/2015/02/09/europe-research-excellence-uk/>

Universities for Europe speeches

Dame Julia Goodfellow, Universities for Europe launch speech <http://universitiesweek.uuk.ac.uk/register/Pages/Julia-Goodfellow-speech.aspx>

Dame Julia Goodfellow, Speech for All-Party Parliamentary Group on Universities <http://www.universitiesforeurope.com/news/Pages/SpeechtoAPPG.aspx>

UK Government Review of the Balance of Competences reports

Report on research and innovation https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/279331/bis_14_592_balance_of_competences_review_government_reponse_to_the_call_for_evidence.pdf

Report on education, vocational training and youth https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/279331/bis_14_592_balance_of_competences_review_government_reponse_to_the_call_for_evidence.pdf