

FORUM

MEMBER
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Discussing international education



BRACING FOR BREXIT

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BRUSSELS’ BREXIT BLUES



EDITORIAL



In this issue of *Forum* magazine, we have sought to collate a range of different perspectives on Brexit, from the United Kingdom and further afield, from individuals and from associations, from experts and from practitioners. We are delighted that Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli, Principal of the University of Glasgow, agreed to be interviewed for this issue. In addition to his role at the University of Glasgow, Professor Muscatelli is Chair of the UK's Russell Group of universities and a member of the Scottish Government's Standing Council on Europe. His interview therefore provides a fascinating insight into the evolving political situation within the UK and the responses which have been formulated.

Other UK authors (including Vivienne Stern, Director of Universities UK International) look to the future relationship between UK institutions and their European partners, with reflections on new opportunities for partnerships in research. Beyond the UK, contributions from Ireland, Spain, the Netherlands and India all seek to shed light on different aspects of Brexit and its likely effect on higher education.

Although the final shape and form of Brexit are not yet fixed, and the 'soap opera' of British politics continues, most international education practitioners in Europe have now mapped out a range of scenarios for their work against both a 'hard' (otherwise known as 'no-deal') Brexit and a 'soft' Brexit negotiated in tandem with the European Union. In particular, guidance has been issued and re-issued to staff and students on the likely

continuation of EU funding to support mobility to and from, and research with, the UK.

For me, Brexit continues to be enormously challenging both personally and professionally. Born in Britain, but now living in Ireland after spending nearly 20 years in Australia, I very much consider myself to be a global citizen. I hold an undergraduate degree in French from a UK university and subsequently took Masters qualifications in French institutions. I now work in a globally-focused, outward-looking role in international education, where national boundaries have little meaning and national identity is not a unitary construct. From my conversations with other EAIE members, I know that many others share my concerns. We worry that Brexit represents a certain failure of the internationalisation of higher education in the UK, and wonder whether this might eventually happen in other countries too.

With this issue of *Forum*, our intention has been to provide new and practical insights on working in European international higher education in a post-Brexit context. Perhaps we will also provide some reassurance to those who are directly affected by Brexit (in terms of residency and work rights). Although it has now been nearly three years since the original Brexit vote in the UK, there is evidently still a long way to go before the true ramifications of Brexit are clear. As such, while we wait for Brexit to run its full course, we trust that this issue will provide some solace along the way.

— DOUGLAS PROCTOR, EDITOR
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Since UK voters voted 'yes' to leaving the European Union on 23 June 2016, initial disbelief within many institutions of higher learning has given way to a weary acceptance of a set of new political norms in society. We appear to have entered a new world in which once 'great' countries are now floundering, and where universities, home to countless 'experts', are increasingly seen as being part of the problem, rather than a key element of the solution.

Brexit therefore poses a fairly existential threat to universities in the UK itself, but what does it mean for universities in other countries in Europe and beyond? What lies ahead for the collaborative initiatives which international educators in Europe hold dear, from student mobility and curriculum alignment to research collaboration and the mobility of academic staff?

CONTRIBUTORS

Vivienne Stern

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Vivienne is responsible for positioning UK universities around the world and enabling them to flourish internationally. She also has a strong track record of making animal-shaped pancakes.

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Deirdre has studied in Ireland and the UK, and now works towards producing global graduates for the Dublin ICT sector. She spends her weekends cycling through the Irish landscape.

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Tom ended up working in education by accident rather than by design, but he has no regrets. In addition to being a lecturer and award-winning journalist, he's also a virtuoso on the gramophone.

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IN CONVERSATION WITH

SIR ANTON MUSCATELLI

LAURA E. RUMBLEY
EAIE

Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli wears many hats in the ongoing Brexit debate. As Principal of the University of Glasgow and one of the UK's top economists, Professor Muscatelli offers a nuanced look at the freedom of movement in Europe and what's ultimately at stake – for education and for the wider European society.

In the hope that a very forthright question here at the start is not inappropriate: Are you personally for or against Brexit, and why?

AM: I'm very happy to answer that question. I am personally against Brexit, and I've been very vocal against it. I'm doing that in a personal capacity, because clearly, as a university, the University of Glasgow cannot take political positions. But I am allowed to take a personal position, and that's as an economist first and foremost, but also as somebody who feels strongly about what universities should be about.

As an economist, there's no doubt that Brexit will have a massive negative economic impact on the UK – that's been quantified and agreed upon by the vast majority of economists. It's going to have a serious impact on our economy relative to where we would have been had we decided to stay in the EU – anywhere from 5 to 10 percent of GDP by 2030, depending on the type of Brexit. And that's a serious fact.

As an educator, I also feel very strongly that what the EU has given us over the last decades has been increasingly a very open and mobile model in which there is increasingly freedom of movement



Photo courtesy of University of Glasgow

and for talent to move across Europe, and that benefits not only the UK but the whole of Europe.

What is the most significant challenge for university leadership in relation to Brexit and the UK's future relationship with the EU? Does the answer to this question vary from a 'UK perspective' versus a 'Scottish perspective'?

AM: In terms of the biggest impact Brexit will have on the sector, there's no doubt that will be on the people dimension of what we do. In Glasgow we have between 2500–3000 EU students who are wonderfully talented, and they come here to study partly because of the freedom of movement, and partly because we're able to treat them like home students here in Scotland. Furthermore, about 21% of my academic

colleagues at the University of Glasgow are from other EU countries. That is talent we don't want to lose.

Then of course there is a funding dimension. I think the UK being part of the European research area through Horizon 2020 and student mobility through

(the next research framework in Europe post-2021), and we also want to be a part of Erasmus+ going forward. Whether we stay in the EU or not, we want to remain associated with these programmes.

From the Scottish perspective, the only difference between Scotland and

I am personally against Brexit; that's as an economist first, but also as somebody who feels strongly about what universities should be about

Erasmus+ has been a huge advantage to us as a country, but also I think it's been beneficial to the EU. And what I would like to see, whatever shape Brexit takes, is for us to participate in Horizon Europe

the rest of the UK is that EU students currently study for free in Scotland. They're treated like home students, and that's been hugely beneficial to the talent we've been able to bring in. Scotland is

experiencing demographic decline, and therefore freedom of movement in the EU has been beneficial to us as a country. And that is another reason why Scotland has a particular need for freedom of movement – economically, culturally and educationally going forward.

In addition to your role as Principal of the University of Glasgow, you wear a number of other hats – including Chair of the Russell Group and Chair of the Scottish First Minister’s Standing Council on Europe. How has scenario planning around Brexit differed or converged between these roles?

AM: As Chair of the Russell Group, I’m effectively chair of a trade association, and as such we obviously have focused very much on the things that matter to higher education – student funding, student mobility, freedom of movement and the future immigration regime. These are the things that matter. As such we have been particularly lobbying the UK government around these matters.

As Chair of the First Minister’s Standing Council on Europe, our role is purely advisory. We don’t make policy; we advise British government on policy. We’re a non-political, independent group, and therefore it’s a wider role in the sense that we’re not just concerned with higher education but with all aspects of how our relationship with the EU impacts on Scotland and its economy and society. In that role I’m acting more as an economist and the advice we’re giving is then taken by government and formulated into policy.

What do students and staff at the University of Glasgow make of Brexit developments and their implications

for the future of Scotland’s universities? Do you have any indications of how students may be considering the effects of Brexit on their future – careers and otherwise?

AM: For students from the EU who are already here, I think they have to consider what Brexit means. The students who have already arrived before Brexit of course have been able to apply for pre-settled status; their time here does count towards gaining settled status in the UK, so they perhaps see it differently from those who might come in the future.

If I have to generalise, there’s been quite a lot of concern from my colleagues

AM: I think I would disagree that Brexit represents a failure of the internationalisation of higher education. I think there are many causes behind the Brexit vote, but I don’t think higher education was a major issue. I think that those who voted for Brexit tended to be those who felt left behind by what had happened to the UK economy, certainly since the great financial crisis in 2007–2008, and arguably some of the cuts in public spending since 2008 also had an impact. People had concerns about the level of public services. And in those situations it’s very easy to blame EU migration as having affected that, but there’s absolutely no evidence whatsoever that EU

The only benefit I can see, to be honest, comes from the fact that it’s exposed some of these debates around freedom of movement

for the EU citizens among our staff. We’ve needed to support them for applications for settled status. Some have wanted to apply for British citizenship. And we’ve had to make sure that we can support them through that. But I think generally there’s been quite a feeling of concern after the referendum vote in 2016 about what this means for the UK’s relationship with Europe.

One view of Brexit is that it represents a failure of the internationalisation of higher education in the UK. Does Brexit highlight a need to rethink what internationalisation is and how it should be acted upon – not only in the UK but also in the wider context of the EU?

immigration generally had an impact on UK living standards.

So I would say that I don’t think it represents a failure of internationalisation. If anything, I think it represents a failure of society to explain the benefits of free movement of talent. As an economist, I know that when you are able to guarantee free movement of talent – whether it’s within or indeed beyond Europe – that is beneficial to the host economy as well as to the economy that perhaps experiences emigration as well, because ultimately there are economic linkages which come from those movements of people. So frankly, I think it perhaps represents a failure of us who favour a liberal and open world economy to explain the benefits of that.

Although Brexit has been described in international higher education circles as a highly negative development – in both philosophical and practical terms – is there potential for any positive outcomes over the short or long term?

AM: I don't think there is a direct benefit. The only benefit I can see, to be honest, comes from the fact that it's exposed some of these debates around freedom of movement, around the benefits that come from attracting talent from around the world. For instance, in the UK we've recently seen some opinion polls which show that, after a number of years where immigration was viewed as a negative, all of a sudden we think that people view it as a positive. So it could be that the debate itself post-referendum has allowed us to finally come to grips with some implicit assumptions about the costs and benefits of immigration.

I actually think that's very positive for the UK – all the causes of Brexit had nothing to do with that and I think the fact that we've been able to have an open debate may actually be the prelude towards hopefully a more liberal and open society. I'm an optimist.



movement within Europe for staff and students at your institution?

AM: I did move around when I was a child and I grew up in different countries. During those times there wasn't any freedom of movement; it was much more restricted. I have seen the shift toward more open and freer movement for our students, who

cohesive society. I think we are creating real European citizens, people who feel that they don't just belong to one of the 28 member countries, but they genuinely have a European identity as well. But more generally, even beyond Europe, what it's creating is a much more internationally-oriented student body, one that genuinely is multicultural and which embraces global values.

I think I certainly have been influenced by my own experience growing up in different countries where you have a different perspective, and I think all students are now getting that perspective, and they're using this to their advantage. And we mustn't lose that.

I think we are creating real European citizens, people who feel that they don't just belong to one of the 28 member countries, but they genuinely have a European identity as well

You were born in Italy and lived in the Netherlands before coming to Scotland. How does your personal story influence your thinking about the reality of removing automatic freedom of

now have the advantage of being able to study and work in different places.

There are two dimensions to this: first, in the European dimension, it has really helped to create a much more



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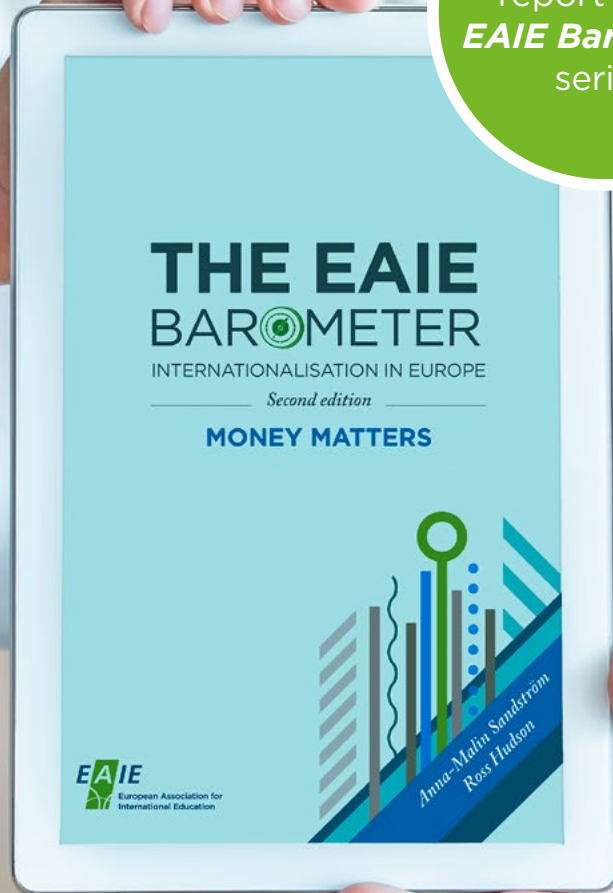
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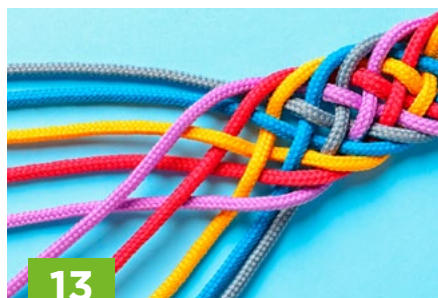
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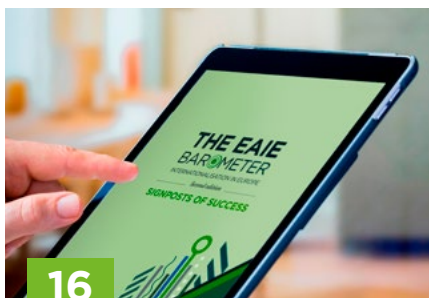


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