

LSE students write: Young people deserve a say on the Brexit negotiations

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Young people deserve a say on the Brexit negotiations, write the MSc EU Politics students **Elettra Di Massa**, **Sjoukje Von Oosterhout**, **Olli Jokinen**, and **Hugo Stratton**, who submitted this article as part of the LSE Brexit [competition](#): **“Brexit means Brexit. But what does Brexit mean to you?”**



Young people are the group that will be most affected by Brexit and one that is systematically left out of the discussion. The nature of Brexit will have an enormous impact on the lives of the young people living in the UK and in the rest of the EU. The UK government has up to this point failed to acknowledge this fact and failed to give young people proper representation at the negotiating table.



The UK government has failed to give young people proper representation at the negotiating table

Much has been said about the role of young British citizens in the referendum, both in terms of voter turnout and in terms of the consequences. During the Brexit campaign and after, the fears of young people are evident. And no wonder, since this is [the generation that defines itself as European](#). [YouGov](#) polls show that 75% of young British citizens want to remain in the EU. Yet, young people have been widely criticised for their [low voter turnout](#) during the referendum. Critics claim if staying in the EU really mattered that much to young people, more should have voted. However, new findings by [Opinium and LSE academics](#) suggests that people in the 18-24 age range actually did exercise their right to vote, placing turnout at 64% for this age group. Why should this be surprising? After all, these are the 18-24 year old voters who will pay the price for Brexit in lower education and career prospects.



18-24 year old voters will pay the price for Brexit in lower education and career prospects

The vote to leave the EU will most likely have a damaging effect on youth wages and career prospects. A [survey](#) of top graduate employers carried out by PathMotion (an employer-to-applicant recruitment platform) confirmed fears that Brexit would most likely have a disproportionate impact on graduates. A significant number of UK companies (roughly half of the top graduate employers in the country) will be forced to reduce their intake. Key sectors like banking, finance, retail, the media and law – all key graduate recruitment sectors – will be affected. And as if the prospect of fewer graduate opportunities wasn't enough the fall in the value of the pound and higher inflation ([possibly 2-3% increase](#)) will most probably lead to lower wages unless employers offer pay rises. That is always unlikely in times of uncertainty. There have also been fears that companies may begin to relocate graduate opportunities abroad in order to focus on the development of their mainland presence instead.



Brexit will undoubtedly affect [students](#). Figures from the OECD show that English undergraduates pay the highest tuition fees in Europe and many are often attracted by universities abroad. With a British withdrawal from the EU, UK students risk losing easy access to cheaper universities in other EU countries. Future access to the Erasmus programme is also a notable concern. There are more than 15,000 British students currently studying in Europe as part of the scheme. Some non-EU members such as Norway and Turkey are able to take part in Erasmus. British students post-Brexit may likely be able to study in the EU too. But it may well be more expensive for them.

The UK has long been an incredibly popular destination for European students. An international, welcoming culture and rigorous, world-class universities have fused into a product of high demand. In 2012/2013 there were an astounding [125,000 students from the EU](#) studying here. Easy movement between the UK and their home countries, access to domestic fee levels, and a European identity among the youth have undoubtedly played their role in facilitating this tremendous success of UK higher education. The shadow of uncertainty over the future of this island nation will reduce its attraction in the hopeful, glaring eyes of the new international generation. Some evidence of this is already at hand, as the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) recently announced [falls of 9% in applications](#) from the EU to universities such as Oxford and Cambridge. One should bear in mind that this will only be the beginning of the decline. The fall is likely due to uncertainty, and the Government's reassurances have not been considered adequate. Whatever the eventual deal, the poorer terms for EU students will most likely have a much more substantial effect than what is witnessed so far.

It would be foolish to assume this is a zero-sum game in which the benefit of German or French youth is not the benefit of English or Scottish youth. A declining pool of applicants means lower standards of access, which could be a serious hit to the academic and professional reputation of universities in the UK. This should be considered in the context of potential loss of access to EU research funds such as Horizon 2020, and further compounded by the difficulty in attracting the brightest research personnel from Europe. Estimates say [as much as 15% of UK academic staff might leave](#) in the future due to fears of uncertainty regarding the country's relationship with the rest of Europe. However one feels about the referendum result, it is beyond doubt that the UK academia, and thus both its domestic and European students, will be at the forefront of carrying the burden of negative consequences.

Young people deserve to have a seat at the negotiating table

When politicians discuss youth, they often state that young people are the future. It is time to admit that future generations are not just the future but should also be taken seriously in current matters like Brexit. Young people are fed up with old men in suits deciding over their future. Yet, with only 2% of MPs under the age of 30 we must look at other options to consult the group that must bear the consequences of this decision for the longest time. Therefore, the outlook of young people should be taken into account when discussing how Brexit should look like by creating

mechanisms to include the views of the younger generation at all stages of the decision-making regarding Brexit. Young people deserve to have a seat at the table.

This post represents the views of the author and not those of the Brexit blog, nor the LSE. Image by [Garry Knight](#): Public domain.

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