

# Response by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

## Education Select Committee Inquiry: the impact of exiting the European Union on higher education

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is the learned society and professional body for geography.

Geography, by its very nature, looks outwards and acts inclusively. As an independent, self-financing learned society and professional body, so does the RGS-IBG. We are absolutely committed to the importance of international collaboration in research, scholarship, teaching and field science and the value of sharing ideas, understanding and perspectives widely.

Geography in the UK is world-leading, as shown by its first rank in a recent international benchmark exercise, carried out independently by the Economic and Social Research Council. Geographical research helps to underpin an understanding of pressing regional and global, as well as national, challenges including climate change, flooding, migration, etc. Part of this strength derives from straightforward arrangements for collaboration fostered by EU membership, and the free movement that allows UK science projects to recruit the best possible people, and UK researchers to take up residence elsewhere in Europe.

EU staff and research students are integral to the UK's research strength in geography, bringing new perspectives, insights and skills, notably in quantitative data skills. Among younger staff EU nationals represent a significant and growing minority (17% of under 35s, slightly above the national average).

EU students are also well represented in postgraduate programmes, ca 10% of the geography student body across all institutions. This fraction is much higher in some programmes.

Many undergraduate geographers participate in and benefit greatly from Erasmus programmes. Such experiences enhance key knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin the strong levels of employability of geographers.

The health of UK geographical research relies on our ability to collaborate with European and international colleagues, and to attract the best and brightest researchers, teachers, and students to this country.

We strongly support the statements from the seven national academies, urging the Government to make 'a bold public commitment' to retain the UK's world leading position in research and innovation, and in future negotiations we would like to see a Government focus on the following areas:

- Freedom of movement of researchers, scientists and students;
- Development of appropriate visa policies for UK universities and research should that be necessary;
- Access to collaborations and partnerships;
- Access to funding and funding strategy

We also support the recommendations of Academy of Social Sciences that the government should ensure the participation in the negotiations of a representative of the UK higher education and science community.

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