

Motion of support to the position paper “*Young People and Brexit*” by the British Youth Council and on the role of young people in the withdrawal negotiations between the European Union and the United Kingdom

The decision of the British people to leave the European Union will without a doubt present new challenges for every citizen both in the United Kingdom and in the European Union.

Young people are a vulnerable demographic group whose present and future are still to be determined, and are at risk of suffering the political, social and economic consequences of the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the European Union.

The European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations endorse the British Youth Council position paper on “*Young people and Brexit*” adopted by the board of BYC in February 2018.

The European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations express their solidarity with all young people in the United Kingdom and in the European Union.

The European Youth Forum will ensure not only that their voices are heard but their rights as citizens are protected and upheld throughout the negotiation withdrawal and the discussions on the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union.

The European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations express their support to the British Youth Council to take part in the withdrawal negotiations and the discussions on the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union.

Based on the British Youth Council position paper on “*young people and Brexit*”, our key demands to both the European Union and the United Kingdom:

- Ensure that young people and youth organisations play a role in the withdrawal negotiations and the discussions on the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union;
- Ensure that the political, social, economic and environmental consequences of the withdrawal will have limited impact on young people and youth organisations;
- Maintain space for dialogue and exchange between young people and youth organisations in the European Union and in the United Kingdom both during the withdrawal negotiations and in the framework of the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union;
- Maintain meaningful funding opportunities, such as the Erasmus+ programme and its successor, for young people and youth organisations both during the withdrawal negotiations and in the framework of the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union;
- Take the necessary measures to prevent, mitigate and condemn hate speech which increased during and after the Referendum campaign.

Young People and Brexit

Position of the British Youth Council concerning withdrawal negotiations, future opportunities, EU funding, economic growth, hate and discrimination, the Irish Border and environmental standards as Britain leaves the European Union

Preamble

As the national youth council of the UK, the British Youth Council exists to empower young people to find their voice and use it for social and political change. In the aftermath of the EU referendum, we must prioritise the voices of young people as we consider the terms of withdrawal from the EU, as they are a target group which will bear the consequences for the longest. Among the British Youth Council's consultations with youth across the UK in the past year, as well as numerous other youth organisations' consultations, an overwhelming majority of individuals want young people to participate actively and meaningfully in the Brexit negotiations. Youth from varying regions of the UK ranging in age from 11 - 25 were consulted by the British Youth Council as well as by numerous other organisations like My Life My Say, UK Youth, and Undivided. Young people should play a meaningful role in our wider political landscape for the long-term, and taking part in the negotiations for transition and withdrawal from the EU is an ideal showcase of what this means. Young people demonstrate concern for the availability of opportunities across the UK and the EU in a post-Brexit Europe, and specifically echo concerns about how youth funding will be affected. They express concern for the UK's economy after Brexit, while also expressing concerns for environmental regulations and the recent rise in hate and discrimination. A majority of young people want to be involved genuinely, not for the purpose of creating an image of inclusivity. The government must not only listen to youth, but also take their input into consideration in every step of the negotiation process.

Opportunities in the UK and the EU

Young people voice a major concern about how the benefits of EU membership will be altered by UK's withdrawal. Specifically, many young people report feeling "uncertain" and "concerned" about their ability to work, study, and live abroad as a direct result of Brexit.¹ Established in EU Regulation No. 492/2011 and Directive 2004/38/EC, freedom of movement allows EU members to work within the Union, but also move and reside freely in EU member states. Freedom of movements acts as an important right within the EU's internal market, providing UK and EU citizens and Europeans access to more opportunities outside of their own country. In Next Generation UK's 2017 report, they found that 61% of respondents were "very" or

¹ BYC: Roundtable on Young People and Brexit p.1

“fairly” interested in working in a region different than the UK, with 56% interested in working in a European country.² A lot of young people consider freedom of movement “as a valuable and valued opportunity for them educationally, economically (in terms of both individual job opportunities and economic benefits to the UK), and in terms of cultural exchange”.³ Although the exact provisions of the current freedom of movement policies can no longer realistically exist once the UK has withdrawn from the EU, we must find a viable alternative that allows young people to have global opportunities. Tuition fees differ all around Europe, and if young people are to lose access to universities with lower tuition fees, the UK needs to ensure that subsequent opportunities are available across the UK for people from different socio-economic backgrounds. The younger generation must take part in the dialogue surrounding how migration and travel will change with the withdrawal of the UK from the EU because their future might depend on it.

EU Funding

As outlined in the British Youth Council’s manifesto, we believe that all young people should have access to high quality youth services that aid their development.⁴ A few key programmes provide large amounts of funding to organisations, programmes, and causes that serve young people. Schemes such as Erasmus+ and Youth Employment Initiative provide the UK approximately £55 million per year.⁵ Nearly all young people want continued access to the youth funding that allows them to pursue opportunities across Europe as well. Specifically, concerns about Erasmus+ were prevalent among young people, but youth funding in a general sense also holds importance. If the UK is to withdraw from the EU funding schemes, we must replace the lost EU funding that supports education, training, and community programming.⁶ Outside of specifically allocated youth funding, there are other sources of support that affect young people through job creation, education, or developmental training. Funding programmes like Erasmus+ are scheduled to continue through 2020, but Brexit negotiations could lead to an end to the UK’s access to this important funding scheme. It is crucial that funding for youth services across the UK is continued through their designated terms or replaced by comparable funding. Funding schemes are important for the development and empowerment of young people, and the British Youth Council is committed to advocating for the support of these schemes in alignment with our organisation’s manifesto. However, maintaining

² Next Generation UK: Ian Wybron, Simone Vibert, Josh Smith

³ UK Youth Perspectives and Priorities for Brexit Negotiations, Dr. Sam Mejias & Dr. Shakuntala Banaji, 18 October 2017, p.25

⁴ British Youth Council: Manifesto 2016 -2017 p. 4

⁵ UK Youth: Brexit and Youth Services in the UK, June 2016 p. 2

⁶ UK Youth: Roundtable on Young People and Brexit p.8

funding for youth services is not the only condition for a better Brexit for young people.

Economic Growth

The majority of youth express concern and uncertainty for the UK's economy in the wake of Brexit. Almost all young people want a strong economy that can provide adequate education, housing, and employment for now and in the future. As part of a YouGov survey, 76% of respondents aged 18-24 felt that it was either extremely (58%) or very (18%) important that university education, public transport and housing be made affordable for everyone.⁷ Most young people demonstrate a firm understanding of the “disproportionate impact that economic stagnation could have on young people”, and prioritise “building a fairer and more equitable future for people in the UK”.⁸ Specifically, some young people are concerned about leaving the single market. The single market provides the UK the ability to move goods, services and capital across member state borders freely. Because of this, trade agreements between EU member states and the UK are at risk. Some advocate for maintaining full membership in the single market, while others want the government to focus on creating strong trade deals with the EU and the other global markets to maintain economic stability. Whether the UK stays in the Single Market or not, the UK government needs to ensure that the economy is strong so to provide appropriate education, housing and employment opportunities for young people.

Mitigating Hate and Discrimination

Among those surveyed, many young people believe that the outcome of the referendum legitimised hate, discrimination, and xenophobia. Young people across the UK are already reporting increased cases of hate speech and hate crimes. It is a responsibility of the government to help mitigate these effects of the referendum through dialogue that consults young people about their experiences with racism and xenophobia. The Home Office reports that in 2016/17, there was an increase of 29% in police recorded hate crimes, the largest increase since 2011/12.⁹ With this, they document a clear spike in number of hate related offences after the commencement of the EU Referendum campaign.¹⁰ The 62,685 recorded race-related hate crimes encompass “any group defined by race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national

⁷ UK Youth Perspectives and Priorities for Brexit Negotiations, Dr. Sam Mejas & Dr. Shakuntala Banaji, 18 October 2017, p.27

⁸ UK Youth Perspectives and Priorities for Brexit Negotiations, Dr. Sam Mejas & Dr. Shakuntala Banaji, 18 October 2017, p.35

⁹ Home Office: Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2016/17 by Aoife O'Neill 17 October 2017 p. 1

¹⁰ Ibid

origin”.¹¹ The data speaks volumes to the reality of the referendum’s consequences, and mirrors young people’s concern. In the same line, another potential factor that can contribute towards successful mitigation rather than stimulation of hate crime is the careful and holistic approach towards the case of Northern Ireland. We believe that a peaceful outcome that would not trigger further community divisions between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland would be additionally beneficial in addressing hate crimes and discrimination. As outlined in the British Youth Council’s manifesto, we advocate for tolerant communities where young people can thrive regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation.¹² Youth in the UK need to have structured voice in negotiations and consultations as we attempt to find a unifying way to leave the EU.

Maintaining Environmental Standards

Some young people are concerned about the UK’s determination to mitigate the effects of climate change as EU regulations are at risk of termination during negotiations. Articles 11 and 191-193 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union outline explicit objectives for EU member states to reduce their contribution to climate change. As a shared competence, the UK can legislate its own regulations regarding environmental matters that the EU has chosen not to address. With this, the UK currently must abide by the regulations outlined in the 7th Environment Action Programme, and can create their own regulations for any environmental standards that are not outlined in EU legislation. Many young people are concerned that the UK will decide to terminate many of the standards formerly set by the EU. However, UK young people are dedicated to the implementation and continuation of these environmental policies. Among young people, there is a strong emphasis on supporting continued efforts to combat climate change after leaving the EU.¹³ 91% of those consulted agreed that even more regulations should be implemented to reduce carbon emissions.¹⁴ The government needs to make a commitment to continue its efforts to reduce the UK’s contribution to climate change. Many young people want an environment that promotes healthy, sustainable living. Without the maintenance of strong environmental policies, young people fear for the health and prosperity of their communities.

¹¹ Home Office: Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2016/17 by Aoife O’Neill 17 October 2017 p.2

¹² British Youth Council: Manifesto 2016-2017 p. 18

¹³ Undivided: Youth Manifesto Report p. 23

¹⁴ Ibid

Final Remarks

As the UK transitions out of the EU, a majority of young people across Europe are concerned about their future as global citizens. It is crucial that the UK government

and the European Union take youth voice into careful consideration throughout the negotiations. As the generation that must deal with the consequences of Brexit for the longest period of time, young people must be involved in the negotiations.¹⁵ Young people's opinions should be considered a key priority by decision makers throughout.

When supported accordingly, young people express a clear, informed and nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in negotiating the UK's exit from the EU, and have key concerns that the British Youth Council believes should be considered thoughtfully. Of the many issues discussed across the UK by young people, a few stand out. Many young people want to maintain the ability to work, study, and live abroad easily as it has been done so far. Concerns regarding how EU funding will be affected and replaced are of major issue to young people. A lot of young people are also concerned for the UK's economic well-being, and desire an economy that provides adequate education, housing, and jobs for all UK's younger generation. Some youth have also experienced the rise in hate as a result of Brexit, and demand that comprehensive actions be taken to decrease discrimination, xenophobia, and racism in the UK. Finally, most young people want to maintain efforts to decrease the UK's contribution to climate change.

The British Youth Council stands with young people in an effort to promote the importance of youth voice in the Brexit negotiations and in the wider political landscape. The UK Government and the European Union must consider the opinions of young people genuinely for the sake of a better, more progressive Europe.

¹⁵ Making Brexit Work for Children: The Impact of Brexit on Children and Young People, November 2017