

**BRUSSELS AND EUROPE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS SUBMISSION
Balance of Competences Review**

Education, Vocational Training and Youth

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/298427/Balance_of_Competence_-_Consultation_Document.pdf

Call for Evidence

8 Education and training questions

8.1 General Issues

Does EU action, as opposed to national government action, in the areas of education and vocational training generally benefit or disadvantage the UK?
Can you point us to any published evidence or analysis in support of your view?

Yes – it benefits the UK without doubt: EU action is predicated on breaking down barriers between nations and peoples. At the secondary and tertiary levels of education, there is nowadays a remarkable exchange of young people across the EU – remarkable both in depth and breadth. This “enabled learning from others” pays enormous dividends.

Compare this with personal experience: Before the UK joined the EU, one of us took part in a limited exchange scheme with Germany. He was shocked to realise the poor standard of British technology at the time compared with the situation in the German company that hosted him, and was impressed with the dynamism of the people he met. The trickle of such instructive exchanges then has been replaced by a flood today, leading to exchanges of good ideas and practices for the benefit of all.

Much has been published about this but at the tertiary level, the report by the International Unit of Universities UK on Horizon 2020 is very positive.

Are there any specific EU activities in the areas of education and training that you consider particularly beneficial or particularly disadvantageous to the UK?

The Erasmus programme and its successor the Erasmus plus programme are particularly beneficial to the UK, providing unparalleled opportunities for UK

students (networking, technical experience, language skills, job opportunities, etc.). The Marie Curie fellowship programme is also very beneficial in terms of research training and opportunities.

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is building an international reputation and providing many opportunities in the tertiary sector.

On a negative note, the EU provides copious high quality materials and training opportunities for schools but this seems not to have had the success in the UK that it deserves because of the apparent insularity of some British authorities.

Do you think the EU, as opposed to national government, should do more or less in relation to education and training? If so, where and why?

The current balance, with the expansion related to the Horizon 2020 programme, seems about right to us. However, there needs to be greater UK involvement at all levels.

What other areas of EU competence or activity have an impact on education and training in your sector and how?

They are mainly in the research field through the building of multi-national research teams to participate in Horizon research projects. However, they can also be found in the regulatory field where EU agencies need high calibre advisers from across the EU.

What challenges or opportunities are there for the UK in further EU action on education?

There are challenges and opportunities in the secondary sector where students need to be exposed to visiting speakers from the EU institutions. This is a challenge but also an opportunity to broaden student's knowledge of the EU.

What international bodies or arrangements other than the EU are important to education and training in the UK? How does your experience of dealing with them compare with the EU's activity in this sphere?

One of us has participated in the US International Visitor's Programme (post-tertiary). The EU operates similar programmes which, in our view, are very successfully. At a lower level, the EU's traineeship programme provides fantastic opportunities but there need to be more UK applicants.

GENERAL COMMENT: Unfortunately, many of the advantages, benefits, etc., of the programmes referred to above are predicated on students having gained at least a basic linguistic skill at school. This is sadly not the case for many UK students who then struggle to benefit fully from their EU experience.

8.2 The Programmes

For the specific programmes which are funded and managed via the EU (such as Erasmus or Leonardo), what are the benefits or disadvantages of having EU rather than national responsibility and funding for these activities?

Leaving aside the budget which is available, national programmes could not hope to compete with the scale of opportunities offered by the Erasmus and/or Leonardo programmes (range of disciplines, languages, countries, etc.).

Can you point to evidence which shows that language learning has improved through participation in the programmes?

Personal experience with Japanese officials who have participated in the traineeship programme and with British participants in cross-border research collaboration is very positive on the language front. We think it should be self-evident that students who travel will improve their linguistic skills but we know of no systematic analysis.

How would you describe the costs and benefits to your organisation of participating in the programmes?

Very few costs (complicated application procedures in the main) with considerable benefits from participation.

8.3 Policy Coordination

Have you noticed any change in EU activity or emphasis since the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon and the introduction of Europe 2020, and, if so, where has this manifested itself and in what ways? Have these changes been helpful or unhelpful?

No comment is offered on this point.

Is it appropriate that Europe 2020 focusses on early school leaving and the completion of tertiary education?

Yes.

Has the adoption of EU education policy frameworks or Council Recommendations had any impact on your sector?

No comment offered on this point

How does policy cooperation on education in the EU compare with other organisations, for example the OECD?

No comment offered on this point

Can you point to examples of reform in national policy which have resulted from EU co-operation in education and training?

Regrettably “No”.

How would you assess the costs and benefits to policy makers of participation in education policy cooperation at EU level?

From all of the above comments, it is obvious that we would consider the benefits to be considerable (and the costs minimal).

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