

Looking to the future – what is the likely impact of Brexit on education establishments?

With less than a year to go until the UK leaves the European Union, our new research has revealed that over half (57%) of Britain's schools, colleges and universities have no plan in place to deal with the impact of Brexit.¹



1 The education sector

As of January 2018 there were almost 147,000 EU students studying a higher education qualification in the UK, contributing £5.1 billion to the UK economy and supporting 20,000 jobs.²

The UK's independent schools may be particularly affected by Brexit. The 2018 Independent Schools Council Census showed that 10% of students in the UK's independent schools are from overseas compared to just 6% across the sector.³

Our research also highlighted the potential impact on teaching staff. One in ten of those surveyed confirmed that EU national staff were already planning to leave the UK following Brexit.⁴

The sector is already stretched when it comes to teacher numbers. In January 2018 a Public Accounts Committee report⁵ highlighted the fact that schools only managed to fill around half of vacant positions during 2015/16 and this, coupled with an increase in teachers leaving the profession before reaching retirement age and the decline in teacher training applications, is putting further strain on the sector.

2 The impact

Just 23% of independent schools feel completely prepared to deal with the change Brexit will bring.¹ Changes to the eligibility of EU students to study in the UK and any increases in fees could seriously affect student numbers and income for independent schools. This could be intensified if companies, and therefore the families of employees, relocate to mainland Europe as a reaction to Brexit and we see a large-scale exit of current students.

Uncertainty around border control, student visas and fee structures may lead to a more complicated application process for higher education EU students, this could result in the sector losing out to institutions on the continent that already offer considerably cheaper fees for university and college students.³

Over half (57%) of British schools and colleges currently employ EU nationals and a third of these are unclear if those staff will want or be able to remain in the UK post Brexit.¹ Depending on the nature and terms of the eventual agreement with the EU, the fallout could leave many in the sector with further recruitment issues.

Our research suggests that for many working in the education sector (25%) there is still too much uncertainty around the split. Furthermore, almost a third (31%) of those surveyed said they wanted greater clarity on the issues that will affect the sector post Brexit to enable them to plan long term.¹

3 The future

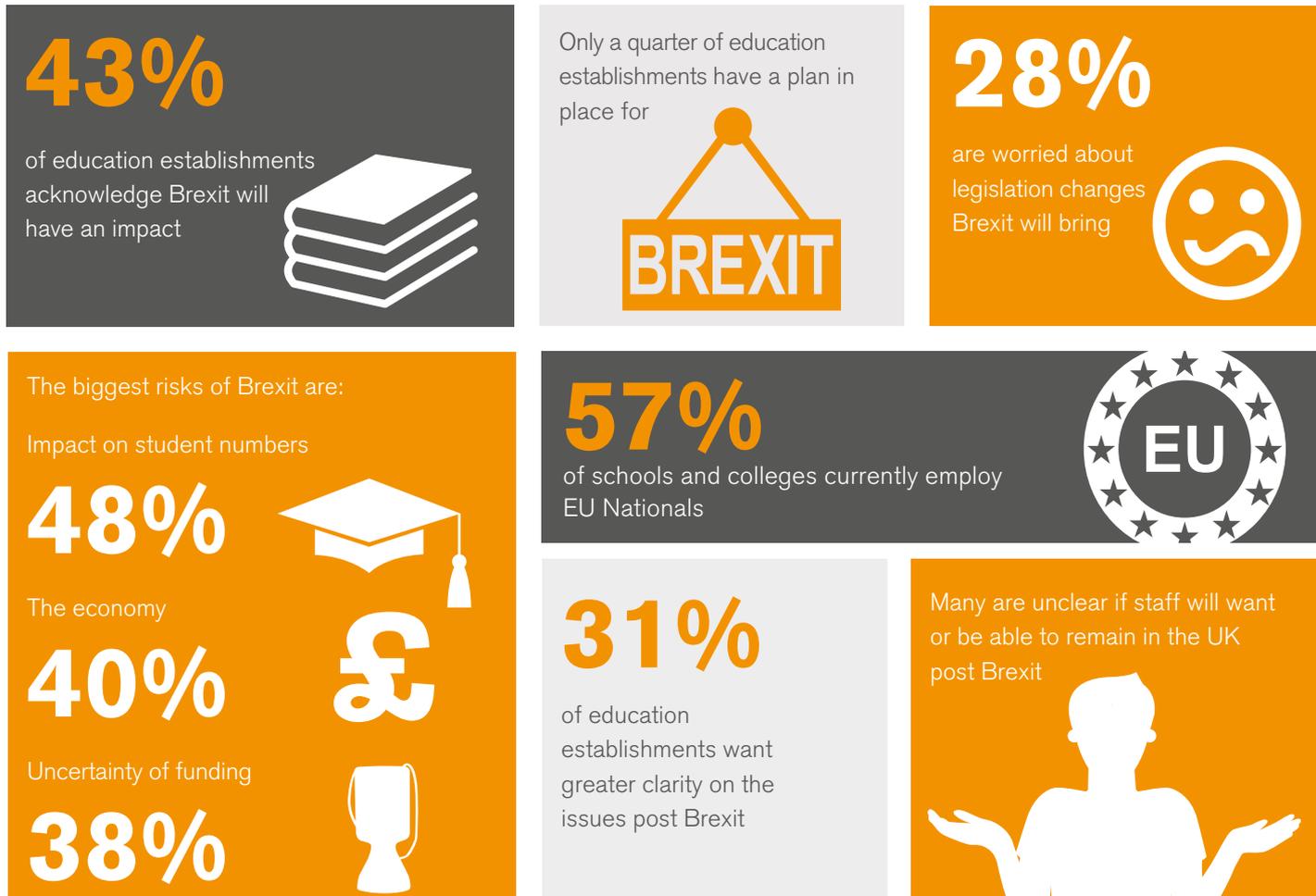
Despite the uncertainty surrounding Brexit, there is still plenty of opportunity for those who are able to plan ahead. While leaving the EU could have a negative impact on the level of European students coming to the UK, the recent drop in the value of the pound has actually made the UK education sector more competitive with the US – a popular destination for students from Asia. As a result, students and parents from Asian countries are starting to see the UK as a more appealing option.

The need to reach out to the rest of the world to find new students, recruit staff and increase investment in our educational institutions could also open the UK up to new and exciting research opportunities globally and attract investments from across the world. And our domestic students could benefit with opportunities to study abroad in countries with which we do not currently have agreements.



Brexit and the education sector

Each year we conduct research to understand the opportunities and challenges in the education sector and Brexit was identified as a key concern for 2018.



Information from our annual education tracking survey, 2017.

About the author



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Faith was appointed Director of Heritage and Education at Ecclesiastical Insurance in July 2015. Since joining Faith has focused on developing new products and propositions for Education, Heritage and Art & Private Client customers. Faith has over 19 years' experience in the insurance industry and is a qualified Chartered Insurer.

1. Ecclesiastical FWD Annual Education Tracking survey 2017
2. The costs and benefits of international students by parliamentary constituency. Report Higher Education Policy Institute and Kaplan International Pathways.
<http://www.hepi.ac.uk/2018/01/11/costs-benefits-international-students-including-parliamentary-constituency/>
3. For a table of tuition fees from a number of EU countries visit <https://www.studyineurope.eu/tuition-fees>
4. Independent Schools Council Annual Census 2018 <https://www.isc.co.uk/research/annual-census/>
5. House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts - Retaining and developing the teaching workforce - 24 January 2018
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubacc/460/460.pdf>

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