European and External Relations Committee

The EU referendum and its implications for Scotland

Written submission from The Royal High School Parent Council

Regarding the Committee’s Call for Evidence, the Parent Council can offer views in the following areas:

- Case studies on how the prospect of leaving the EU is affecting Scotland
- The position of EU Citizens in Scotland

Evidence

1. Certainty for Children and Families

The Royal High School’s catchment area is diverse, and includes households from across the social and economic spectrum. It reflects the population of Scotland’s capital city in being composed of families from around Scotland and from around the world, who have made their home in Edinburgh. There are families whose children currently attend the school whose right to live and work in Scotland is entirely predicated on their citizenship of another EU country.

Right now, local children and families remain deeply concerned that a right to remain in Scotland will be removed at the point of Brexit, and that a programme of study on Scotland’s national curriculum would therefore be interrupted at a key point. Even for those already in their early years of high school, given the possible Brexit timetable, there is no certainty or guarantee from the UK Government that children will have the right to remain in Scotland to complete their schooling. Should the rights of EU citizens to remain in Scotland be removed, the Parent Council is deeply concerned that:

- Children could be forced to relocate to alternative education systems mid-way through key stages in their learning and development;
- A child may have to change their “language of study”, where children have been being educated in English but are forced to continue their education in a language other than English; and
- Children who have already started to specialise their educational choices, as encouraged by the Curriculum for Excellence in secondary school, will find themselves placed in educational systems where such specialisms are not available.

Without entering the debate as to the long-term rights of EU citizens to remain in the UK, the Royal High School Parent Council calls on both the Scottish and UK governments to collaborate to ensure that those families who have chosen a Scottish education for their children are not threatened by Brexit. We seek certainty that children from all EU countries currently at schools in Scotland be allowed to continue their education without any fear of disruption to their status.
2. Reaction of British Citizens to EU Citizens in School

We have been very alert as a Parent Council to the possibility of bullying and abuse being directed towards any of our school pupils on the basis of uncertainty caused by the Brexit vote in relation to their nationality. To date, in our school community, we are aware of no incidents pupil-to-pupil on the basis of EU nationality, and we continue to maintain a watching brief, working in collaboration with the school’s management team.

We call for local councils, through their parent council networks, to ensure that community cohesion in schools is not undermined by the Brexit vote. We believe that strong relationships in schools between parents, staff and pupils continue to be of key importance despite the obvious uncertainty for some of those on the school roll.

3. Implications on Further Study and Work

A number of parents have raised informally their concerns about the impact of Brexit on career choice and on further study. Essentially, this can be distilled into the following areas:

- Doubts over the importance of modern language degrees, in terms of career options should Scotland find itself outside the EU.
- Uncertainty over the viability of some Scottish university courses which currently attract a large number of students from elsewhere in the EU (should those courses become less attractive to EU citizens on financial grounds).
- Concerns over options for Scottish students who hope to benefit from Erasmus-type arrangements.
- That teaching staff who have benefited from “Erasmus Plus” will no longer receive the mobility grants for professional development abroad, with obvious knock-on impact on learning experiences for young people.
- Beyond Erasmus, concerns about reduced opportunities in general for our young people to study in the EU.
- Uncertainty over access to the European jobs market for those seeking to enter work directly from school.

The Parent Council seeks clarity around future funding of courses and access to opportunities in order that our young people can optimise their career planning. We also urge the Scottish Government, through its career agencies, to ensure that children are well informed about all on-going options to utilise their modern language skills despite the Brexit vote.

4. Impact of Brexit on Funding

The Parent Council is certain that any form of British exit from the EU will require resources in order implement the vast number of legislative and procedural changes which will ensue. We would be concerned about any attempts to divert funding from education budgets in order to support the demands of Brexit. While “Children and Families” budgets are often the largest on council balance sheets, there is a huge demand placed on these services and budgets in schools are already under massive pressure. We note that it is too early to see any impact here, but we encourage the Committee to continue to monitor such potential developments.