GLOBALIZATION, CULTURE, EDUCATION, AND KNOWLEDGE

THE POST-BREXIT IMPACT ON THE STUDENT EXCHANGE MOBILITY PROGRAM

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With the retrieval of the United Kingdom from the European Union, several dynamics came into play. The UK's resignation from the Erasmus+ programme created havoc amongst students who aspire international exposure during their studies. However, this resignation led towards the introduction to the Turing scheme which is projected out to be the replacement for the Erasmus+ programme. The research paper analyses the post-Brexit mobility situation in Europe and questions the efficiency of the new Turing scheme compared to that of the ever so thriving Erasmus+ programme. The analysis is done by using primary and secondary sources. In terms of methodological approach, the research is done with using statistical data analysis and contemporary observation of socio-political scenario and behavioural changes that the EU and UK are going through. The authors believe that Turing scheme is not a replacement but is rather just a set of bilateral agreements that the UK has which will never compare to the multilateral cooperation that Erasmus+ has. The authors conclude that the success of Turing scheme is highly dependent on its performance in the upcoming years.

Keywords: *Brexit, Erasmus, student mobility, education policy, Turing.*

Introduction

The Erasmus programme is a multilateral exchange program that is being conducted in the university and preschool levels. This programme aims to support, through lifelong learning, the educational, professional, and personal development of people in education, training, youth, and sport, in Europe and beyond, thereby contributing to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, to driving innovation, and to strengthening European identity and active citizenship (EU Commission N.d.[a]). The recent retrieval of the Great Britain from the European Union has also resulted in its retrieval from the Erasmus+ programme. There have been many other dynamics of Brexit that has opened

a pathway for discussions about its impact, but the student mobility dynamic has been discussed very little.

As mentioned above, the Brexit has a huge impact on the European economy and its people. One of the most discussed effects among the younger population is the end of the United Kingdom's participation in the Erasmus+ programme. Thousands of European and British students are affected and will now need to seek other opportunities for their further studies abroad. European students will not be able to experience the UK's quality of life and get enriched by the education offered top-notch universities such as Oxford University, King's College London, *etc*. Students from the UK, on the other hand, lose an opportunity to study the European Ivy League Universities such as Heidelberg University, ETH Zurich, and KU Leuven *etc*. Apart from academics, the students are also missing out on an intercultural experience that can be useful for personal development (Peltier 2021). Intercultural experiences are not only useful for personal development but can also be useful for academics. For example, a student who studies in United Kingdom and majors in Spanish language and culture can benefit so much if he/she has an opportunity to study in Madrid or Alicante for a semester.

The paper is also going to address the UK's alternative solution to this issue which is the Turing scheme. The Turing Scheme is the UK government's scheme to provide funding for international opportunities in education and training across the world. It supports Global Britain by providing an opportunity for the UK organisations from the higher education, further education, vocational education and training and schools sectors to offer their students, learners and pupils life-changing experiences to study or work abroad (UK government N.d. [a]). It is said that the United Kingdom is ready to fund 35,000 UK students on their exchanges around the world. The Turing scheme commences from September 2021 (PA Media, 2020). Hence, we are still to see whether the Turing Scheme will be a successful replacement of the Erasmus programme.

This research paper aims to answer the question: 1) What does the Brexit mean for student mobility in Europe? 2) How does the Turing program aim to replace Erasmus+ program after Brexit?

The paper will also compare both the schemes and analyse the pros and cons of the Erasmus and Turing scheme. The paper is structured in a chronological design. Firstly, there comes a section about the understanding of Brexit, where Brexit and its implications for the education sector will be discussed. Secondly, the paper will address the Erasmus programme and will talk about the advantages and disadvantages both the European Union and United Kingdom are going to face due to UK's retrieval from the Erasmus programme. Thirdly, the paper will emphasize about the Turing scheme and what it can mean for the UK students and UK graduates as well as for the EU students and EU graduates. Lastly, the paper will round up and adapt to a comparative design where we will analyse and see the pros and cons of both the schemes.

Understanding Brexit

Brexit has been the most major secession of the twenty-first century. The United Kingdom's secession from the European Union has had a major impact on both parties economically, politically, and geo-strategically. Great Britain is an island that is geographically separated from the EU and this along with its sense of exceptionalism from its

post-world war heroics led the pathway towards the EU-UK retraction (The Guardian 2020). On 23 June 2016, the fate of the existence of the UK in the EU was decided through a referendum (whether the UK should leave the EU or not) held by the UK which resulted in 52 per cent voting 'yes' for this referendum. After a series of amendments and extensions, on December 31st, 2020, the United Kingdom completed its separation from the European Union (Walker 2021).

This separation impacts several countries in the EU and they lose their international prestige and foreign policy influence and have less influence in trade negotiations. Considering the strained relations of the EU member states and the UK due to Brexit, countries are more skeptical when it comes to investing in the UK. Speaking about political influence, the UK has no longer say in the law-making process of the EU and it significantly reduced the UK's negotiating power with the rest of the world (Irvin 2015).

On the other hand, Britain now has more power when it comes to keeping its incoming immigration under control. Previously under the rules of the EU, Britain could not prevent any EU citizens from coming and working in the UK. This in turn resulted in a huge increase of incoming immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Adding to that of the already appalling number of immigrants from the Commonwealth countries, the EU was facing a crisis. The nation's need to stop this flow of immigrants acted as a catalyst to wanting to retract from the EU.

Another key issue because Brexit might affect the EU negatively is by inspiring the remaining members of the EU to withdraw from the multilateral IGO. If the UK thrives and becomes self-sufficient, the other countries in the region might find this as an opportunity to cut loose from the restraints of EU law and function in a form of anarchy. This can increase Euroscepticism which will result in less cooperation between states in all aspects including sensitive social issues that are being experienced by all the EU countries like excessive inflow of immigrants from developing and developed countries. The fear of Xenophobia has also increased due to international terrorism (Estevens 2018).

Several scholars and military officials in the UK have addressed the issue of terrorism attacks in the UK. The former works and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith said that the United Kingdom was leaving its door open to terrorists by staying in the European Union. On the other hand, Michael Fallon (former Secretary of Defense), argues that the United Kingdom would only benefit in security matters by staying in the EU as well as NATO. Although UK and EU member states have promised each other bilateral cooperation when it comes to security matters, the efficiency of this still is at test. Former head of international terrorism at the Cabinet Office, Colonel Richard Kemp stated that Military cooperation would continue to persist between the UK and the EU despite its membership (The Week 2020).

The tourism industry is going to take a hit. The EU's tourism industry is the sixth largest in the world and is the fourth biggest industry in the UK. The European Union contributes a lot to the UK's tourism industry. With 67 per cent of the UK's tourists being from EU member states, the impact on the industry is going to be massive. Most of the tourists are predominantly from France, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands. The UK's tourism sector also depends on the EU migrants, EU migrants make up 12 per cent of the industry's workforce. With restrictions on freedom of movement, fall in the val-

ue of the pound and rising tariffs, the UK is no longer going to be as popular as it once was for European tourists (Buckley 2021).

Finally, the education sector is going to witness a decline in incoming students from the EU member states. It is estimated that 10 per cent of students in independent schools are from the EU. Universities along with high schools will be affected. Although top tier universities like Oxford and Cambridge are not going to be as affected as the lower tier universities, it certainly puts a certain rigidness to exchanges compared to that of the former flexible nature of the program (Hughes 2021).

'Erasmus+' Programme

The Erasmus+ programme is one European Union's biggest achievement in establishing a cooperative European identity (Cairns 2017). It is the most successful multilateral academic cooperation that allows students to work or study for a limited amount of time in countries that are a part of this treaty. The Erasmus programme was established in 1987. Since then, several EU schemes have added on to it and hence the new programme Erasmus+ was established in 2014.

According to the EU Commission website, the main aim of Erasmus programme is

> to support, through lifelong learning, the educational, professional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport, in Europe and beyond, thereby contributing to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, to driving innovation, and to strengthening European identity and active citizenship (EU Commission N.d. [b]).

After 27 years, around 3.3 million students have benefited from this programme. The number of outgoing students is increasing rapidly, and the Erasmus programme is even popular in non-European countries through the Erasmus Mundus Programme which allows students from non-European countries to study abroad in European universities. The budget of the 2021–2027 Erasmus programme is almost double that of the 2014–2020 budget. The programme's budget is €26.2 billion, compared with €14.7 billion for 2014–2020. Erasmus aims to be more eco-friendly, inclusive, and digital with its increase in budget. It supports activities and priorities set out in European Education Area, Digital Education Action Plan and European Skills Agenda. Furthermore, the programme supports the European pillar of social rights, implements the EU Youth strategy 2019–2027 and develops the European dimension in Sport (EU Commission [b]).

Impact of Covid-19 on the Erasmus programme has been drastic. Although the new cycle of the Erasmus programme begins in September 2021, several universities, such as universities in Sweden, are only providing online classes. Some other universities (*e.g.*, University of Bologna, Italy) are offering a hybrid style of classes which include both on campus and online classes. Thankfully, even after the impact of Covid-19, the grant money is going to remain the same. Another aspect that has changed for the students, is that they now have the choice to travel green for which they will be provided additional money. In Poland, students can choose to travel via bus or train rather than an airplane and they are awarded an additional 50 euros to cover their expenses.

The countries that received the greatest number of students are Spain, France, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom. The countries that sent the greatest number of stu-

dents were Spain, Germany, France, Italy, and Poland (Lucas *et al.* 2016). The United Kingdom is one of the countries that is there in the list of the top-5 host countries, but it is nowhere near the top-5 list of the sending countries. The UK's participation in Erasmus+ programme (2014–2020) significantly took a hit as the incoming students were significantly lower in 2019–2020. In 2014–2018, the statistics for applications received and awarded and funded are as follows:

1. 680 million euros awarded in total.
2. Over 167,000 participants took part.
3. 4,846 projects funded (Erasmus, N.d.).

Whereas in 2019, due to the combined effect of the pandemic and Brexit, the statistics are as follows:

1. 144,69 million euros awarded in total.
2. 54,619 participants took part in the programme.
3. Almost 700 projects were funded (EU Commission 2020).

The data indicates a decrease in grants awarded, participants taking part in the programme and overall projects funded when it comes to learning abroad in the UK (this data does not count strategic partnerships). The UK institutions that sent the greatest number of students were University of Edinburgh. University of Warwick and University of Glasgow. The countries that received the most UK students were Spain, France, and Germany. Finally, to give a clear insight to the incoming/outgoing number of students imbalance can be witnessed while analysing the statistics of incoming students and outgoing students in a chronological order from the year 2014/15 to 2018/19. In 2014/15 the number of outgoing students was 9,264 in total. In 2018/19, this number was slightly higher and was 9,993 students. Whereas in 2014/2015, the number of incoming students were 17,645 in total and the same data for the year 2018/2019 was 17,768 students. The data mentioned above indicates that the UK is receiving twice as much as it is sending out. This is one of the reasons why the UK believes that it is not reaping enough benefit from the Erasmus programme compared to other nations (EU Commission [b]).

Turing Scheme

The Turing scheme is the UK's replacement for the Erasmus+ program. The scheme provides funding and allows individuals to study and work abroad. Funding is open to UK and British Overseas Territories organisations and eligible organisations can apply for funding through the Turing Scheme for projects that offer the opportunity to study or gain work experience abroad for the 2021–22 academic year (British Council N.d.). With a budget of around 110 million pounds, the Turing scheme aims to fund up to 35,000–40,000 UK students including international students based in UK and British Overseas Territories schools, universities and higher education institutions. Moreover, the highlight of the Turing scheme is that students are now able to travel and choose their study destinations without any regional limitations. Previously, with the Erasmus programme, the UK students could only travel to European countries for their academic exchange. With the new Turing scheme, students now can travel all over the world including the USA, Australia, and Canada (UK government N.d. [b]).

Comparing Erasmus Programme and Turing Scheme

One of the main disadvantages of the Turing scheme is that it does not provide funding for staff to experience this international exposure. While universities can apply for Erasmus+ for funding for both students and staff, in the new Turing scheme, it is only for students. Although a small fund will be allocated for staff to accompany students for safeguarding purposes, there are no separate funds for staff to pursue their research goals.

Furthermore, Universities could participate with other European universities for collaborative research projects. This will not be possible under the new and supposedly improved Turing scheme. Lancaster & Morecambe College currently has eleven collaborative projects on the go – one former research project with Cyprus, Poland, Italy, Lithuania, and Spain on careers advice produced new resources the college 'uses to this day' (Jess 2021).

Turing scheme's procedures will include more paperwork since the placements will be further away. Getting a visa within the European Union is much simpler for students of European countries or residents of European countries studying in European universities. Now students would have to face the added pressure of visa procedures which makes the Turing scheme's application process time consuming and complicated. Moreover, since the UK universities have never partnered with some of the universities in other countries, the relationship between the host and receiving university will be new and both parties probably would have to build their relationship from scratch which can be met with lack of understanding which in turn can affect the student's mobility. To tip things in favour of Erasmus+, the EU Commission has confirmed it is soon going to be expanding its vocational education placements to countries around the world – just like Turing, but with staff placements and project work thrown in too.

In terms of scholarships for pursuant of the Turing scheme, every education institution will get £315 per participant in 'organisational support' for the first 100 participants, and £180 for groups bigger than that. Turing scheme also covers travel costs, which is an area the Erasmus+ programme lacks (except the green travel). The Turing scheme calculates the travel costs depending on the distance travelled by the student. So, it is £165 for sending learners anywhere between 100 km to 499 km away – while visiting Tanzania, for instance, at 11,000 km, would qualify for £905. In exceptional circumstances, the scheme will also provide a financial contribution towards the costs of expensive travel. If the selected travel rate does not cover at least 70 per cent of the actual costs of travelling between the sending organisation location and receiving organisation location, up to 80 per cent of those actual costs will instead be covered. Learners will also get £135 each to access language resources (again an area Erasmus programme lacks in) if they are going away to a non-English-speaking country for more than 19 days (UK government N.d. [c]).

The scholarship amount is calculated based on the cost of living in each country and is classified as Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3. Some countries in Group 1 are the United States of America, Australia, Barbados *etc*., countries in Group 2 include Italy, Austria, Belize *etc*. and finally some Group 3 countries are Afghanistan, China, Fiji *etc*. Learners in group 1 countries get £109 a day for two weeks, and £76 a day after that. Those in Group 2 countries get £94 a day then £66 a day, and those in Group 3 coun-

tries get £80 a day and £56 a day after that. Pupils and staff accompanying the students on their exchange shall receive £53 per day for the first 14 days, £37 per day after the 14th day to all destinations (UK government N.d. [d]).

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds on a higher education placement could be offered a higher cost of living grant, of up to £147.50 per month for four to eight weeks, or £445 per month for a placement over eight weeks, plus funding towards travel costs – based on the distance of the round trip. For students with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) Additional funding is also available to cover up to 100 per cent of costs for support directly related to the additional needs of students with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). This will also cover risk assessments to make sure students will be able to equally access and participate in all elements of their placement (UCAS N.d.).

Clearly the UK students tend to benefit from the Turing scheme in terms of greater funding as the amount allocated for them is greater than that of Erasmus scheme with added benefits of covering the travelling costs. Erasmus also does not offer staff to accompany students, and this might be crucial for some students travelling to other countries where English language is not spoken, the help of an adult with direct contact with the host university would always be helpful.

Conclusion

The Erasmus programme is a 34-year-old agreement between the EU countries. Hence, without any doubt this resignation from the 34-year-old agreement is going to strain the academic relationship between EU member countries and the UK. Students at universities in the EU member countries are going to be hesitant in pursuing the Turing scheme since it is a new concept and students do not completely believe in its efficiency compared to that of Erasmus. Presenting Turing scheme as a replacement for Erasmus is not ideal since the Turing scheme lacks the historical roots and cooperation that Erasmus has. Turing scheme is merely a set of bilateral agreements whereas Erasmus is a multilateral cooperation with a set of values in the region. Another reason that the Turing scheme might not have a successful start is due to the lack of popularization of the scheme. Students simply are not aware of the opportunity and the UK has not done much to popularize it by any means. However, the Turing scheme does offer a more attractive amount for students to help them with their expenses, which can act as a motivator for students to pursue this scheme. Although by a long shot, decline in UK's popularity as a study destination can occur in the European region and worldwide if the Turing scheme is not successful. EU is still going to be UK's main region for academic exchanges but with lengthier visa procedures and limited number of spots, UK will not accommodate students like it once used to. Furthermore, it is likely that there will be an increase of incoming students in universities in Germany, Spain, and Italy *etc.* as students who previously were going to the UK will now flock towards other popular study destinations. Turing scheme on its own is quite comparable to bilateral academic exchanges offered by universities in USA, China, and India *etc*. But it is not comparable to the Erasmus programme. In short, the expected stand-off between the Turing scheme and the Erasmus programme is likely to not happen.

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