

Brexit also means losing diversity

Uncertainty for students in and from the UK through Brexit

By Sophie Weresch

The Brexit referendum keeps students in the UK in the dark. Worried about their future nobody can give answers to their questions. University staff fears the loss of diversity in students due to the financial pressure that Brexit means for Europeans.

„Nobody really knows what is going to happen“, says Sicily Scarlet, a 21-year old BA Culture, Criticism and Curation student at the Central Saint Martins (CSM) college. A statement that perfectly describes the uncertainty what Brexit will mean for both students from the UK and the European Union.

On June 23th 2016, the majority of the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. Britain's exit (Brexit) is not negotiated yet and until then the UK remains part of the European Union with all its advantages and disadvantages.

Walking through the halls of the Central St Martins college, which is located close to Kings Cross St Pancras, shows a wide range of diverse people from all over the world.

The college of CSM belongs to the University of the Arts London. It offers several creative programmes such as design, fashion, art and culture related studies.

“No one seriously thought that Brexit would really happen”

Sicily Scarlet was born and raised in London. Four weeks ago she started her Bachelor studies in Culture, Criticism and Curation at CMS. Before this she went to UCL for a year where she studied politics.

“In a sad mood she says: ”No one seriously thought that Brexit would really happen“, she says. “London is such a open- minded city and loads of people from all over the world live, work and study here together”, she continues.

Scarlet herself travelled Europe after she finished school and lived overseas for a few months. She finds it really sad and also frustrating that this will as soon as the negotiations are through not be possible anymore in the way it was before the referendum

Dr Diana Silverthorne runs the second year of the BA (Horn) Culture, Criticism and Curation at CSM. She also emphasizes that students from the EU who want to start studying during the next two years shouldn't worry about a change in fees, because they are fixed for the next two years. “But beyond these two years, nobody really knows what is going to happen”, Silverthorne admits and adds that everyone, students from the UK as well as students from the EU, asks about the consequences of Brexit but unfortunately nobody can give an answer to this right now.

“If you look around you see what makes our college so lively – the diversity in students”, Silverthorne says. She is concerned that Brexit means a cultural loss to CSM.

No change in fees and loans for the next two years

At the moment there are about 60% UK students and about 40% International and European students who study at Central St Martins according to the college secretary. A consequence of Brexit Scarlet can think of, is that the “diversity in students at the CSM will definitely change”, she says. Further she explains that the most likely consequence of Brexit will be, that students from the European Union who come to the UK to study will need to pay international fees. These fees are, with £15,180 for a three years Bachelor, much higher than the fees for Europeans, which are about £9,000 for three years, at the moment.

Silverthorne also agrees that international fees for EU students are a possible result of Brexit, as soon as the UK leaves the EU for good. Nevertheless she thinks this is not likely to happen because the UK and the EU are really close in terms of an educational manner. “This is why I hope for a special agreement when it comes to the educational negotiations”, Silverthorne says emphatically.

But yet Silverthorne thinks that International fees for Europeans will discourage them to come to the UK for their studies. Further this leads to the result that the college will offer more study places to international students from far away who are more likely to go back to their home countries when they have graduated. “A Not that I don’t want international students to study with us, but the variety of UK, EU and international students made the perfect mixlot of EU students who graduated from CSM stayed in the UK and got a job here which is a economical benefit for us as well until now”, Silverthorne adds. She also emphasizes that through losing European students the CSM also needs to face the loss of money.

Central Saint Martins supports cooperation with the EU

“The day after Brexit, we received an e-mail from Jeremy Till, the head of CSM, who said we should not worry”, Scarlet says. He stated that the university will do everything to support their European students and staff as well as the UK students to go abroad. Till confirms that the fees and loans for students won’t raise and get higher for Europeans for the next two years at least.

“Although this decision does not affect me directly at the moment I have a lot of friends from the EU who study with me I am worried about”, Scarlet says and looks at her friend Elisabeth Aisher who originally is from Spain.

“Concerning my future studies I always wanted to go abroad for an Erasmus exchange for one or two semester”, Scarlet mentions.

According to a statement from the UK government on higher education and research the Erasmus programme also faces an uncertain future.

All in all the uncertainty and a lot of questions for all students remain because nobody knows yet when the UK will finally leave the EU. This could be in about ten years but also next summer as the negotiations start in March 2017.