

EU Referendum Outcome: what it means for post-16 education and training in Wales

Context

In the referendum on the UK's continued membership of the EU on 23 June 2016, the UK voted to leave the EU (Brexit).

Wales and England both voted to leave. | [Assembly Research Service](#)

First Minister for Wales, Carwyn Jones, has said that the popular vote must be respected. | [BBC](#)

Scotland, on the other hand, voted to remain and the way forward for Scotland is in debate. Northern Ireland also voted to remain although its results were not as clear as those for Scotland.

When will Brexit happen?

The vote to leave the EU has no immediate legal effect on UK law. As yet, there is no timetable to begin the process of withdrawal.

Prime Minister David Cameron has announced his intention to resign and that it will be for the future UK Government to set out the timetable and begin the withdrawal process. A new Conservative Party leader – which by default becomes also the new Prime Minister – is expected to be installed by 9 September 2016. | [BBC](#)

The process of withdrawal begins when the UK Government formally announces to the EU its intention to withdraw. It does this by invoking Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty on the European Union. Article 50 has not yet been invoked.

Once Article 50 is invoked by the UK Government, the UK will have up to two years to negotiate new agreements with EU member countries. This two-year period can be extended with **unanimous** agreement of **all** parties concerned.

Theresa May MP, a candidate for new leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister by the same token, has said that Article 50 should not be invoked before the end of this year.

She has in addition ruled out holding a snap general election if she becomes Prime Minister in September, insisting that the next general election should be held as planned, in 2020. | [Independent](#)

Immediate consequences for EU projects and monies for Wales

Realistically, then, it appears unlikely that the new UK Government will begin the two-year withdrawal process until at least the end of 2016, with a view to new agreements with EU members being in place by the end of 2018.

In the intervening period, the European Commission has confirmed the following:

“... Until this process of negotiations is over, the United Kingdom remains a member of the European Union, with all the rights and obligations that derive from this. According to the Treaties which the United Kingdom has ratified, EU law continues to apply to the full to and in the United Kingdom until it is no longer a Member.” | [European Commission Statement/16/2329](#)

For Erasmus+, UK Government Minister for Universities and Science has confirmed that: “The referendum result does not affect students studying in the EU, beneficiaries of Erasmus+ or those considering applying in 2017”. | [UK Gov](#)

And the UK National Agency has clarified that: “There is no immediate change to the UK’s participation in the Erasmus+ programme ... All participants and beneficiaries should continue with their Erasmus+ funded activities and preparation for the published application deadlines in 2016 and 2017.” | [Erasmus+](#)

So the key question is:

<p style="text-align: center;">What will happen between the end of 2018 (or when the period of withdrawal ends) and the projected end of EU structural funds in 2020?</p>
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Prominent Conservative MPs signed an open letter a couple of weeks pre-referendum in which they said that all programmes would be funded at current levels until 2020, “or up to the date when the EU is due to conclude individual programmes”. | [BBC](#)
However, as the BBC points out: “while some of the signatories of this letter are ministers in the government, they are not currently in a position to make spending pledges”. | [BBC](#)

Welsh Government’s priorities

Following a meeting of the Welsh Government’s Cabinet on 27 June to discuss implications of the EU referendum for Wales, First Minister Carwyn Jones issued a statement outlining the steps the Welsh Government is now taking. | [WG Statement](#)

He has also set out six priority actions which include: revision of the Barnett formula; a new relationship to be established between the devolved administrations and the UK Government; the Welsh Government to be involved in the Brexit process and timetable, with a view to protecting jobs and access to the single market, plus:

“... we should negotiate continued participation, on current terms, in major EU programmes like CAP and Structural Funds up until the end of 2020. This will facilitate continuity for citizens, communities, businesses and investors while arrangements are made for the longer term.” | [WG](#) | [BBC](#)

ColegauCymru's priorities

ColegauCymru met the Secretary of State for Wales on 4 July where it raised these issues as well as its concerns on regarding the planned introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in April 2017. We are also seeking meetings with Assembly Members including Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers to discuss the way forward.

In a statement on the outcome of the referendum, Chief Executive of ColegauCymru Iestyn Davies said:

“The Welsh Government will need to work with the UK government to ensure that the current round of EU structural funds, including the planned investment in skills, continues at least until 2020 as planned.” | [CollegesWales](#)

ColegauCymru will seek assurances that:

- the monies that Wales expects to receive for education and skills via **EU structural funds** and other sources continue as expected at least until 2020
- Wales continues to have access to **Erasmus+** opportunities for apprentices and colleges students and staff beyond Brexit
- Wales continues to be part of European qualifications initiatives such as the **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** | [SkillsforEurope.Wales](#)

Further Information

Assembly Research Service, Legal Service and EU Office Briefing (June 2016) “[Wales and the EU: What does the vote to leave the EU mean for Wales?](#)”

House of Commons Library Briefing Paper (June 2016) “[Brexit: what happens next?](#)”

House of Commons Library Briefing Paper (February 2016) “[Exiting the EU: UK reform proposals, legal impact and alternatives to membership](#)”