

# **The 4<sup>th</sup> of July seminar: Is Brexit Day Independence Day in UK higher education?**

Early conclusions from the 127 CGHE research interviews  
in 12 UK universities, October 2017 to July 2018

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# The 4<sup>th</sup> of July seminar: Is Brexit Day Independence Day in UK higher education?

*The argument:* UK higher education institutions are highly engaged in Europe, in fact partly integrated. The flip side of that high engagement is the widely felt negative emotional responses to the 2016 referendum decision, including profound fear, pessimism, confusion, helplessness, grief and loss.

UK HIGHER EDUCATION'S ENGAGEMENT IN EUROPE: Research projects, collaboration, European doctoral students, merit-based access of European staff, other students

THE CGHE RESEARCH

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO BREXIT: 79% negative, 5% neutral, 16% positive (of the 'we can get through this' kind), who thought what, the question of European identity

# UK HIGHER EDUCATION'S ENGAGEMENT IN EUROPE

# EU and UK higher education:

## The pre-Brexit connections

- Revenues
  - Horizon 2020/Europe and other research programmes
  - European Regional Development Fund
  - Loans from European Investment Bank
  - Incoming EU student fees
- People
  - Contribution of EU doctoral students to UK research
  - EU-citizen staff in UK HEIs
  - Future staff recruitment out of EU countries
- Education
  - Incoming Erasmus students
  - Outgoing Erasmus students

# European research programmes

- In European Research Area's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) cycle UK contributed €5.4 billion out of €50 billion; UK-based research organisations secured €8.8 billion in grants
- In the 2018 round of European Research Commission Advanced Grants the UK was most successful country, 66 applicants were awarded €155 million. UK universities also attracted Framework grant winners from other countries
- European Structural Funds: European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grants in 2007-2013 provided €1.9 billion to UK research organisations; also loans for research activities from the European Investment Bank (EIB)
- Framework Programme grants favour leading research universities, Structural Funds poorer regions, notably Wales

# UK discipline-based HESA cost centres most dependent on EU funding: 2014-15

HESA cost centre	EU share of funding %
Archaeology	38
Classics	33
IT, Software Engineering	30
Media Studies	27
Law	26
Philosophy	25
Modern Languages	24
Anthropology, Dev. Studies	23

HESA cost centre	EU share of funding %
Business/Management	23
Chemistry	23
Area Studies	23
Politics & Int. Studies	21
Archi., Building, Planning	21
Art & Design	21
Sociology	20

## Research papers co-authored by UK researchers with other countries 2016

and propensity to collaborate with each country in the pair relative to the overall co-authorship patterns of both countries (1.00 = expected rate of collaboration): 2016

partner country	propensity to collaborate	co-authored papers
<b>EUROPE</b>		
Ireland	2.16	2,621
Greece	1.74	2,531
Netherlands	1.50	8,039
Denmark	1.43	3,658
Hungary	1.43	1,274
Norway	1.40	2,720
Finland	1.28	2,317
Italy	1.27	10,023
Sweden	1.27	4,967
Belgium	1.26	4,174
Switzerland	1.21	5,720
Portugal	1.19	2,309
Spain	1.16	7,789
Poland	1.12	2,523
Germany	1.07	14,200
Austria	1.03	2,514
France	1.01	10,079
Czech Republic	0.96	1,535
Russia	0.77	2,335

partner country	propensity to collaborate	co-authored papers
<b>ANGLO-SPHERE</b>		
New Zealand	1.35	1,640
South Africa	1.33	2,170
Australia	1.19	8,838
Canada	0.84	6,685
United States	0.77	25,858
<b>EAST ASIA</b>		
Singapore	0.77	1,541
Japan	0.65	3,659
China	0.62	10,472
Taiwan	0.57	981
South Korea	0.45	1,589
<b>OTHER ASIA</b>		
Thailand	0.94	862
Malaysia	0.84	1,428
Pakistan	0.76	847
India	0.67	2,494

# Non-UK EU citizens in UK postgraduate research: 2016-17

- 69,925 EU citizen researchers in science fields, 14.3% of total
- This includes 22.1% in mathematics, 17.3% in physical sciences and 15.6% in engineering
- 42,595 EU citizen researchers in non-science fields, 11.7% of the total, including 15.8% in social studies and 13.8% in law
- Only 6.3% in education, lowest of all the discipline clusters
- Much higher than average concentrations in leading UK research universities, especially those strong in STEM research



# Non-UK EU citizens in postgraduate research

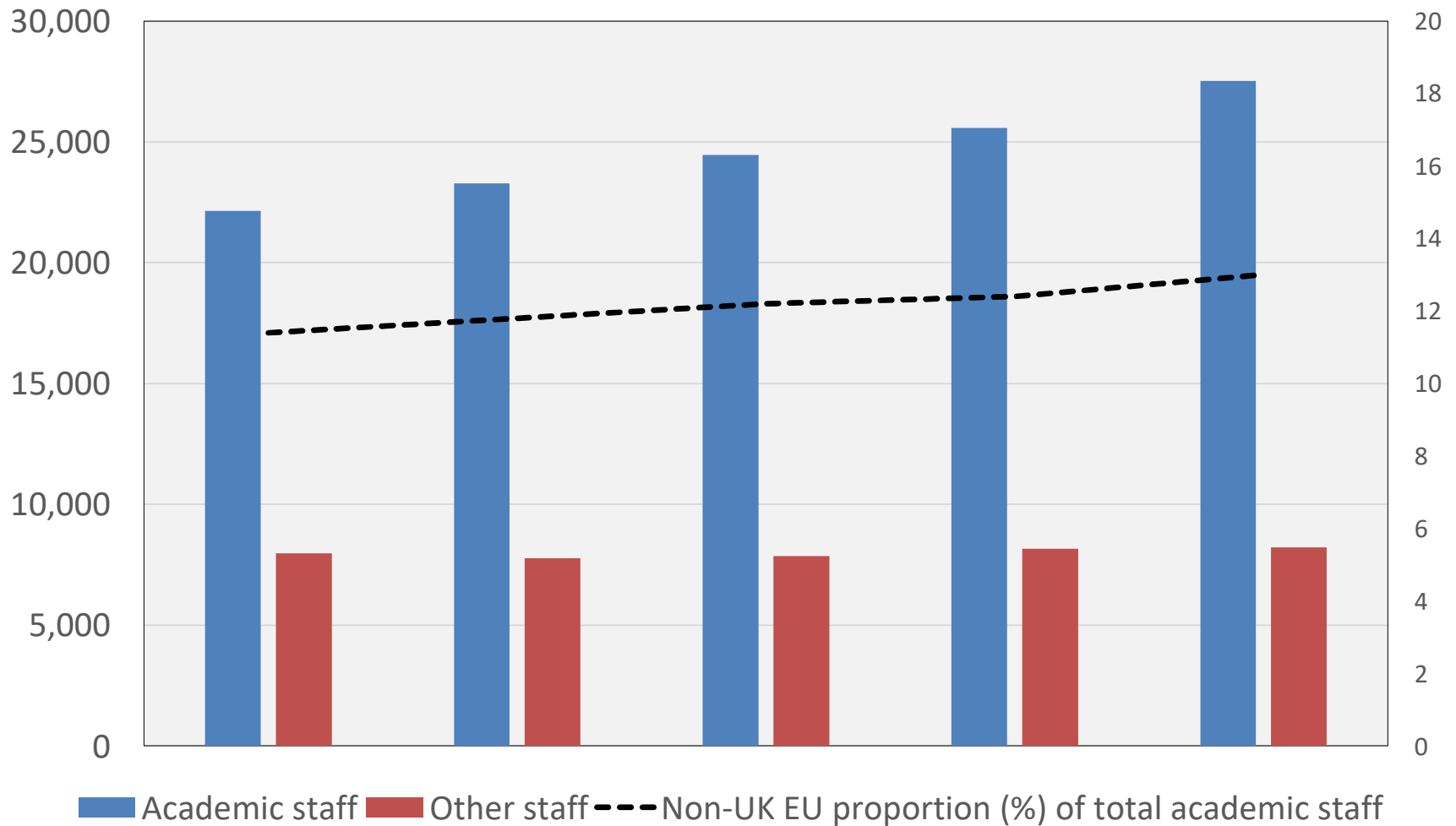
12 largest populations in individual UK universities, 2017-18

Institution	Non-UK EU research students	All research students	Non-UK EU proportion (%)
University of Cambridge	1130	2820	40.1
University of Oxford	910	2495	36.5
Imperial College London	845	2105	40.1
University College London	845	2240	37.7
University of Edinburgh	745	1850	40.2
University of Manchester	470	1880	25.0
Kings College London	385	940	41.0
University of Nottingham	380	1295	29.3
University of Glasgow	335	1000	33.5
University of Birmingham	320	1110	28.8
University of Southampton	300	980	30.6
University of Sheffield	300	1295	23.2

# Non-UK EU citizen staff

- 37,255 academic staff and 14,515 non-academic professional staff from EU countries other than UK in 2017-18 - 17.5% of academic staff, 6.7% of non-academic professional staff
- Pronounced increase in non-UK EU staff in last four years
- Non-UK EU one third of UK academic staff in economics, modern languages; a quarter in maths, physics, chemical engineering
- 35.0% of non-UK EU academic staff were in research only positions compared to 23.4% of all academic staff in UK
- Non-UK EU academic staff much higher proportions in leading Russell Group universities, especially recent appointments. In 2016-17, 32.0% all academic staff from Imperial (1385 persons), 27.2% UCL (2020), 26.1% Cambridge (1555), 25.1% Oxford (1700). Dependence highest at LSE (39.0%), and at Ulster (35.3%) which recruited heavily across the soft Irish border

# Non-UK EU citizens in UK higher education staff: 2017-18



# Non-UK EU students

- 139,150 non-UK EU students in 2017-18 at all levels of study (5.9% of total) including 13.1% of those in postgraduate research, 6.7% taught postgraduate, 5.3% undergraduate
- The European student share varies considerably by institution, and tends to be higher in Scotland where they pay no fees: the largest populations of non-UK EU nationals in 2017-18 were 4930 at UCL, 4080 at Kings College London, 3725 at Edinburgh, 3245 at Coventry, 3175 at Glasgow
- At Aberdeen non-UK EU students were 19.9% of all students, at LSE 17.7% of all students with high concentrations in some taught Masters programmes

# Financial implications

- Loss of net income from EU research, EU student fee revenues decline in at least the bottom half of the system, loss of EIB loans for infrastructure which have supported major projects across the country (€365.7 million at UCL in 2015 and 2016)
- Damien Hinds stated recently that UK universities have escaped austerity. This is true – they have benefitted from not one but two public sector streams of funding, as well as the scope to generate international student fees
- Now they face Augar's 18% cut in unit funding over five years and loss of the second public sector funding stream from Europe, which benefitted all tiers of UK higher education in different ways – main research programmes in top and middle tier institutions, structural funds at all levels including poorer regions, EU students wherever institutions made it a priority

# THE CGHE RESEARCH

# Origin of the project

- Following the 2016 referendum the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) commissioned a set of research projects designed to investigate the consequences of Brexit and post-Brexit developments in different parts of UK polity and economy.
- These projects were grounded in the ESRC's own UK in a Changing Europe programme.
- CGHE was awarded a grant for work on Brexit in higher education in the four UK nations

# Project research questions

1. What are the perceived implications of Brexit for UK HEIs as their executive leaders and other operational personnel see it?
2. What are the organisational capabilities of UK HEIs to monitor their environment and to judge, strategize, respond, initiate and make changes, in relation to Brexit?
3. How are these factors differentiated by HEI? What does this mean for HE system design?

Project personnel: Simon Marginson (U Oxford), William Locke and postdoc Ludovic Highman (previously UCL Institute of Education); Vassiliki Papatsiba (U Sheffield); postdoc Xin Xu (U Oxford)





# Project research activities

- Nested case studies, entailing interviews and review of documents - in 12 contrasting UK universities in the four nations. Interviews with institutional leaders and senior administrators, professors and researchers (sciences, health sciences, social sciences), others (more junior staff, governing body members, student leaders, etc).
  - England: UCL, Manchester, Durham, Sheffield Hallam, Coventry, Exeter, Keele, SOAS
  - Scotland: St Andrews, Aberdeen
  - Wales: South Wales
  - Northern Ireland: Belfast
- 127 semi-structured interviews across the 12 universities
- Public circulation of data on Brexit/UK higher education

# Data analysis

- Data coded using NVivo 12
- Coded in relation to aspects of Brexit and higher education, including
  - implications and consequences of Brexit for the institution, such as student enrolment, staffing, financial sustainability
  - institutional capabilities and responses such as strategy, planning
  - differential effects of Brexit between kinds of institution
  - differential effects by discipline (STEM and non STEM)
  - emotional content (all 127 interviewees expressed emotions)
- Emotions matter because people matter. When structures change, changing agency filters the effects. Emotions affect institutional capability and shape action/non-action
- 11 clusters of emotions ('affective codes')

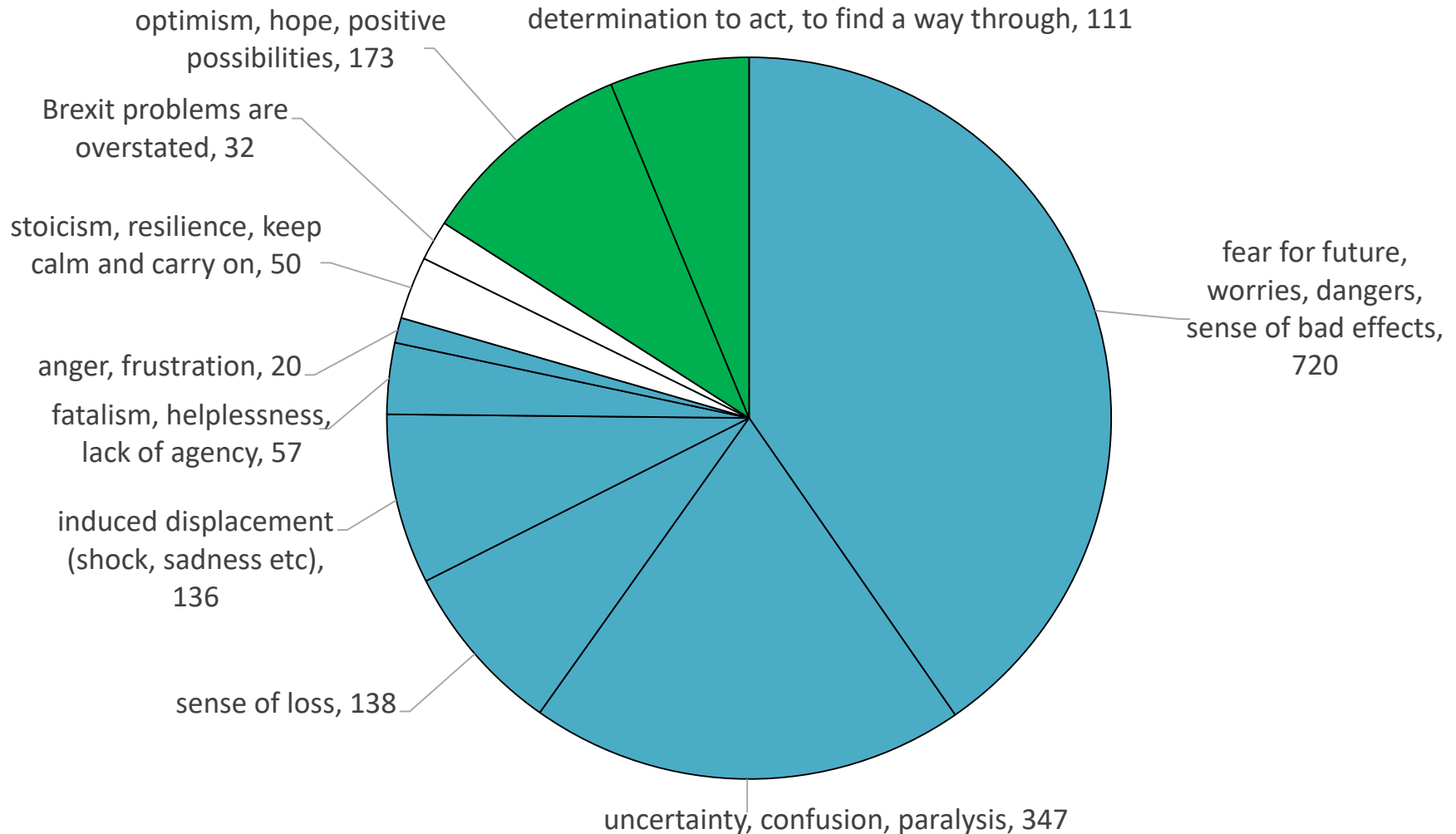
# EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO BREXIT

# Distribution of coded emotions (n= 1784)

Emotion codes	Number of interviewees (n= 127)	Proportion of interviewees (%)	Times in interviews (n=1775)	Proportion of emotions (%)
<b>NEGATIVE</b>				
Fear for future, worries, dangers, bad effects	122	96	720	40
Uncertainty, confusion, paralysis	106	83	347	19
Sense of loss	71	56	138	8
Induced displacement *	59	46	136	8
Fatalism, helplessness, lack of agency	33	26	54	3
Anger, frustration	12	9	20	1
<b>NEUTRAL</b>				
Stoicism, resilience, keep calm and carry on	33	26	50	3
Brexit problems non-existent, over-stated	14	11	32	2
<b>POSITIVE</b>				
Optimism, hope, positive possibilities	76	60	173	10
Determination to act, find a way through	59	46	111	6

\* includes: shock, annoyance, sadness, regret, distrust, ironic feelings, disappointment, disillusion, depression

Negative emotions 79%, neutral 5%, positive 16%



- All 127 interviewees expressed negative emotions, and 93/127 (73%) expressed positive emotions, with 42 (33% making neutral emotional statements
- Some interviewees expressed more than one kind of emotion in the same sentence or adjoining sentences
- Average of 11 coded negative statements and 3 coded positive statements per interview
- Interviewees from the two universities in Scotland most frequently expressed emotions, of all types
- Interviewees from the three post-1992 universities more frequently expressed all types of emotions, and the most likely to be positive. Pre-1992 interviewees most negative
- Men (89) more often expressed emotions than women (28)
- Academics were most likely to express emotions, with social sciences most negative, health sciences most positive. Students expressed least emotions, governing body persons most positive



# Negative emotions: fears, anxieties about future, loss and displacement, anger

- *Fear*: ‘what we’re quite worried about is mobility of researchers, capability to spend time in different countries, to ensure that engagement. Because it’s very easy to engage at the moment. I guess that’s our greatest worry about it, that the very open, very easy engagement might be constrained’
  - senior executive, other pre-1992 university
- *Anxiety* ‘I’m interested in ensuring that we can attract, continue to attract and retain the best talent ... it’s a concern if there's a sense that the UK isn’t welcoming of people or the UK isn’t able to offer work to talented academics from Europe’
  - senior administrator, post-1992 university
- *Anxiety*: ‘it will affect our reputation if one of the consequences of it is that we are less outward looking and more inward looking as a sector’
  - governing body, post-1992 university



- *Uncertainty*: ‘it’s almost become a bit of a meaningless... because we don’t know what Brexit is yet. Because no-one knows what it is and no-one knows what it means’
  - lecturer, humanities, other pre-1992 university
- *Uncertainty*: ‘one of the difficulties is the ...black hole of what's going to happen. It’s quite difficult to communicate that there is nothing to communicate’
  - professor, humanities, Russell Group university
- *Sense of loss, often linked to a sense of mission or belonging*: ‘I think it takes away from our European identity and personally, for me, you know, as an individual, I think that’s a shame’
  - senior administrator, other pre-1992 university
- *Frustration and anger*: ‘we have no idea what the fees are, no idea what the visa policy is, no idea is what the policy is for EU citizens and it’s just a giant cluster fuck really ... if it becomes some sort of hard Brexit...I think it’s going to be really grim here. I'm leaving, personally I'm German, I'm out of here. That’s it, goodbye UK, screw you guys’
  - senior administrator, other pre-1992 university



# Positive emotions: hope, resilience, coping, new possibilities

- *Business as usual*: ‘intrinsically there's no reason why we shouldn't still have the same ability to work with European counterparts... the telephone will still work, as will the internet, neither are going to be cut off’
  - governor, post-1992 university
- *Attitudes matter*: ‘Brexit will have all sorts of consequences politically, psychologically, culturally, but I also believe that one is the mistress of one's own destiny, and culture change can be effected by the views that people take’
  - other pre-1992 university
- *New vistas*: ‘we will redouble our efforts to work with other parts of the world, which we were doing in any case, global R&D has shifted to the Far East’
  - senior executive, Russell Group university
- *KCCO*: ‘we've been through these kind of troubled waters in the past and you've just got to keep calm and carry on really and try not to worry about it, because as individual academics, there's not an awful lot we can do about it, we're not going to change government policy’
  - professor, STEM, post-1992 university

# Remainers have over-reacted

(2% of coded emotions ,11% of interviewees)

- *There are no problems:* 'I've not been aware of any problems and there shouldn't be any problems, unless people are being fed silly propaganda, rather than the truth. We've hired quite a few non-EU people in relatively recent times who are in a more vulnerable position than the EU people, it hasn't stopped them coming here because they want a good academic job'  
- professor, other pre-1992 university
- *Things will settle down again:* '[in] that very short period after Brexit... the world went mad, lots of people went mad. Ultimately the rational thinking people can see through that politics ... universities have existed for 1,000 years, regardless of what the political environment is, it's going to be business as usual for universities.'  
- senior administrator, Russell Group university

# Who are we?

- *Brexit will make us more global:* ‘for some time now, we've seen ourselves as a global institution ... the Brexit stuff has meant that we think so even more, as it were ...you spread your risk’
  - executive leader, other pre-1992 university
- *Brexit makes us less global:* ‘those who are in favour of Brexit see this as a great opportunity, it will make us more international in terms of orientation, but it takes two to tango, so the question is what the others think of us. So I think Brexit, in the circles that I communicate with internationally, The States, Far East, Europe and given my job, I do a fair bit of that, is seen as an indicator that we're turning inwards.’
  - professor, social sciences, post-1992 university
- *Brexit makes us less global:* ‘we want our students to think of themselves as international and actually this goes in exactly opposite directions’.
  - executive leader, Russell Group university

- *How international are we?:* ‘The nature of a university is to look out, it’s not to look in, to be a little Englander... that’s not who we are. We survive and thrive through those international networks and collaborations, most of which happen organically, some of which happen through strategic steer’
  - senior administrator, Russell Group university
- *European or not?:* ‘it does raise more existential issues around identity and the extent to which British universities are European universities’
  - senior administrator, Russell Group university
- *We are not the problem:* ‘to fail to recognise the importance of the UK to higher education and research in the world, not just in Europe, would be a petty act of self-harm on the part of European partners and institutions.’
  - senior lecturer, social sciences, other pre-1992 university
- *European or not?:* ‘It’s funny in the UK, how people refer to Europe as, you know, the continent ... We never actually became that European. That’s the problem. If you ask anybody, oh, well, you’re European, no, it’s always been it starts at Calais.’
  - governing body, Russell Group university

# Ever closer union over time, and then ...

- The financial effects of Brexit are symptomatic of the size of the European community in which UK universities have flourished
- **Mainstream British politics rejected the EU goal of ever-closer union over time. But UK higher education has embraced and practised that goal, becoming partly integrated into Europe**
- The very negative emotional responses of UK staff to Brexit in the CGHE study are the other side of the integration coin. **This is a forced divorce in higher education. The couple, UK and EU higher education, are being pulled apart against their will**
- British exceptionalism is strong and few UK-born staff in the CGHE study identified themselves as 'European'. Much ambivalence on the question of identity. Many evidence a sense of an important secondary association, and some talked of how they have been moving closer to Europe, in a personal transition



