

The UK in Europe: In or Out?

ESRC UK in a Changing Europe Seminar Series: Aberdeen

University of Aberdeen: King's College

22 March 2016

REPORT ON EVENT

EVENT OVERVIEW

The United Kingdom faces a momentous decision, whether to leave or to remain in the European Union. Voters, who will soon be asked to settle the matter in a referendum, are looking for more information and impartial analysis. At this Q&A event, we will discuss the issues at stake with the help of a panel of academic specialists.

Among the matters we will cover are:

- The impact of the EU on the economy and jobs
- Immigration
- European and national security
- The political implications of Europe
- National sovereignty
- Impact on the North East region

PANEL (L-R)

Professor Paul Beaumont FRSE (University of Aberdeen, Chair in EU and Private International Law)

Professor Michael Keating FRSE, FBA (University of Aberdeen, Chair in Scottish Politics)

Professor Claire Wallace (University of Aberdeen, Chair in Sociology)

Professor Margaret Ross (Vice-Principal, University of Aberdeen) (Chair)

Professor Justin Greenwood (Robert Gordon University, Chair in European Public Policy)



JUSTIN GREENWOOD opened proceedings by discussing the current challenges to the EU on what was a sombre day across Europe after the terrorist attacks in Brussels:

“Global challenges do not respect national borders:

- Issues like environmental change: EU environmental standards are some of the most stringent in the world, and as such contribute to an effective tariff on production and trade since compliance is required across the single market.
- Issues like terrorism: Terrorists move across borders, we use international intelligence and co-operate across borders to limit their effectiveness, and we have arrest warrants to return them to justice when we catch them.
- We take flights across borders, using different national carriers, and if we need to utilise them, we have claims processes which are similar to our own national processes.
- We use mobile phones abroad, and as a result of international agreement at EU level, roaming charges will be abolished in summer 2017, meaning that the cost of using your mobile across the EU will be the same as in your own member state.
- Multinational corporations work across borders, so taxation must be regulated across those borders – and when companies like McDonalds (in Luxembourg) or Apple (in Ireland) seek to circumvent national tax systems, they can be sanctioned.
- We eat fish, and fish do not respect borders, so we need a transnational policy on fishing in order to ensure future access to fish and to stop over fishing

Common rules are required for challenges that do not respect national borders – and we need to make collective agreements to deal with these challenges.

At the moment, the EU is dealing with significant internal and external challenges, and has taken action to minimise the impact of those challenges. Mechanisms have been put in place to slow migration from Turkey to Greece – which include an agreement with Turkey to open two further chapters of their accession discussions. A stability mechanism has been put in place for Greece which has slowed the fiscal crisis there, and kept the Eurozone out of the news for a period. Increased information sharing across borders has allowed member states to tackle terrorism activity within their own borders, in some cases stopping terrorist attacks before they occur. And with regards to threatening behaviour in Ukraine and Iran, economic sanctions have been utilised to effect, stopping the latter from developing nuclear weapons.

These solutions are imperfect, but they are international in character, and involve agreements across member states to deal with the respective challenges. The question for the UK in the forthcoming referendum is whether any kinds of similar solutions can be achieved outwith the institutional framework of the EU.”

CLAIRE WALLACE focused her introductory remarks on the principles of migration and free movement across the EU:



“The movement of people is one of the fundamental principles of the EU. Why do we want people to be able to move around Europe? The principle of free movement creates united Europe, the freedom to choose in which part of the Union you wish to live and work. It also increases the size of the market, which is important for employment opportunities and for economic growth. Initially, the take up of free movement was limited, but in the past two decades adjustments in the legal framework have altered institutional structures and educational structures, among others, which have increase economic opportunities across Europe: skills shortages in one part of the Union can be filled by an excess of that particular skill elsewhere in the Union. In the UK, we often see this in our NHS, and in higher education institutions.

Does the UK take in a lot more EU migrants than other countries? Well, no, not really. We’re generally around the middle in terms of countries where internal migrants move to. This can be a reflection on the attractiveness of host countries – so, for example, when the Prime Minister went to the EU to negotiate on free movement and mentioned that there were concerns that Poles were moving to Britain to claim (perceived generous) UK welfare benefits, many had not previously been aware that they *could* claim these benefits.

Around half of the internal migrants come into the UK from the ‘old EU’ countries those member states who preceded the eastward expansion in 2000s, who tend to work in financial services, education and healthcare professions. The other half are from the ‘new EU’, who generally work in more low-skilled occupations: distribution, hospitality, care services and agriculture. The member states who contribute significant numbers of migrants to the UK are Poland, Ireland, Romania, Portugal and Italy. The migrants from these member states tend to be young – working age population – economic migrants looking for employment opportunities and, as a result, tend to contribute significantly to the UK’s economy and its social security system.

The opposite side of the coin is UK emigration – and the UK is one of the largest exporters of people worldwide. Some 350,000 people leave the UK annually, with Australia, Spain, the US and France the most common destinations, usually for work. There are 300,000 UK expats in Spain alone – mostly those retiring to the sun – and a worldwide diaspora that runs into the millions. So, Britain is a place where people leave as well as where people want to come to.

Is the UK a place where migrants come to claim benefits? Well, again, the answer is ‘not really’. Employment rates tend to be higher among EU migrants than in equivalent UK citizens, and as such a lower percentage tend to be claiming benefits. Non-EU migrants are not able to claim benefits for a long period of time, while EU migrants can only claim after 3 months – and even then, the numbers of benefits they can claim are limited to tax credits, housing benefits, child allowance and Job Seekers Allowance. As a result they tend to contribute to the UK taxation system, rather than take from it.

What about asylum seekers – given the refugee crisis, there is an unprecedented number of asylum seekers coming to Europe at present, mostly from Syria but also from other conflict zones. As a result, the EU’s asylum procedures have been under tremendous strain and have reached breaking point, leading to significant tensions between states. Does Britain take its fair share of refugees? Well, again, no. Per 100,000 of population, the average number of refugees for nation-states in Europe would be around 260. Germany takes over double the EU average at 530 per 100,000 of population, while the UK takes just 60. So other countries would appear to have more justification for concerns about migration than we do.”

MICHAEL KEATING outlined Britain’s history with Europe before focusing on the outcomes of David Cameron’s negotiations with the EU:

“Britain really only wanted an economic agreement, without any of the trappings of institutions – a free trade area which would help support the UK’s economy. But then it changed its mind and joined the EU – albeit in a half-hearted manner. The EU had to develop institutions in order to deal with the issues which arose on its doorstep: so from free trade and single market agreements, it evolved into several other areas – including, among others, on environmental policies, reducing effective trade barriers by creating common regulations, and a common foreign and security policy. If the UK wants to return to a simple single-market relationship with the EU, it would be very difficult to do so without any kind of institutional framework.

The EU issue became interlinked with welfare and migration as part of the political debate. So when David Cameron went to the EU to try to negotiate his ‘deal’ on UK membership, he looked to four specific areas for agreement:

- 1) Parliamentary sovereignty – the nineteenth century idea that Westminster is supreme over all laws. This has changed through the EU, ECHR, and also internally through devolution (as well as the use of referendums). The European body of law determines that European law supercedes national legislation: in effect, outdating this conception of sovereignty. The PM’s negotiations exempted the UK from the preamble to the EU clause on “ever closer union”, which is more symbolic than practical, but it is an important concession. However, it provides a pre-policy ‘opt-out’ provision for the UK, emphasising further the nature of the two-speed EU, and Britain’s position on the slower-speed track for integration.
- 2) Competitiveness – the debate here hinged upon the notions of de-regulation versus *better* regulation. There was an acceptance from other EU members in principle that the issue needed to be addressed, and has been for some time, so agreement here was easier to reach.
- 3) Economic governance – a further outcome of the negotiations was a declaration that the eurozone countries would recognise that the non-eurozone countries should and would have “a voice, but not a vote” in the future of the eurozone. In this respect, the UK could make their concerns known to the eurozone countries, but – explicitly – does not have a veto on what the eurozone countries decide to do in the future.

4) Migration – the principle of free movement of people is one of the pillars of the EU single market (free movement of people, goods, capital and services) which meant that the UK could not make an agreement to ‘opt-out’ of the principle. However, the PM made an agreement on an ‘Emergency Brake’ to allow *employment* benefits to migrants arriving in the UK to be phased in over four years, beginning at the level of Eastern European benefits. While this is unlikely to have much of an impact on migration in this short-term (as highlighted by Claire) it is both symbolically significant to EU social citizenship (the notion that you should be treated the same across the EU) and to elements of the UK’s more anti-immigration and eurosceptic electorates.”

PAUL BEAUMONT focused on sovereignty and legal issues in his brief opening remarks.

“This is a tragic day for Europe, so discussions about sovereignty seem a bit trivial in light of the terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, we do have a decision to make in a few months, so these kinds of discussions will be important going forward.

I’m not a dyed-in-the-wool ‘Europeanist’ and never have been. I’ve worked within the EU for a long time, and I know much about the institutional framework, and frankly some of the internal mechanisms *are* troubling. I applaud David Cameron’s discussions, particularly on the issue of ‘Ever Closer Union’ – a concept which has always been problematic. One of the things we should get away from the sense that this is solely a UK issue – Denmark have opted out of Justice and Home Affairs, and are equally sceptic when it comes to various issues of integration. The idea of “Ever Closer Union” is one which has its supporters and its critics around the EU. In short, the whole issue, the potential British exit and David Cameron’s negotiations are about the future direction of Europe.

What David Cameron has helped to do is start discussions around decentralisation of decision-making within the EU, rather than centralisation. There is now no sense of ‘one Europe’ – rather, it is now apparent that different member states will travel at different speeds, integration will be different across member states, and we will not get hung-up on ideas that some countries are more integrated than others. There has always been a sense that continental pro-Europeanists look down their noses at Britain’s reluctance to further integrate with the EU, that we are half-hearted Europeans. What David Cameron has achieved is acceptance that this is a normal process of events – that a multi-speed Europe is not an undesirable outcome, that the only way to maintain the Union as a wide organisation is to allow for different member states to integrate themselves in a variety of different ways, ways in which they are comfortable integrating. This agreement suggests that, rather than being an awkward or ‘bad’ European, it simply describes a different vision for the future of Europe, being promoted in different member states – and, indeed, Britain is not the only member state who feels this way, many states (Denmark, Sweden on the currency issue) look to Britain to ‘lead’ on push-back in particular areas, and are very happy with the outcomes of these negotiations. So these discussions may just be a starting point to a Europe which is more accepting of different levels of integration.

1) PETER YOUNG – RETIRED EU COMMISSION OFFICIAL: WE NEED TO HAVE A DISCUSSION ON WHAT WE MEAN BY “SOVEREIGNTY”, AND THE IMPLICATIONS ON OPTING OUT FROM ‘EVER CLOSER UNION’. HOWEVER, MY QUESTION IS FOCUSED ON IF THE UK WERE TO LEAVE THE EU, HOW WOULD IT HAVE ACCESS TO THE SINGLE MARKET IN ANY MEANINGFUL SENSE WITHOUT HAVING TO ADHERE TO REGULATIONS WHICH WOULD BE SET BY THE EU?

MICHAEL KEATING – Yes, on the single market, this is a key question. You could do what you suggest: remain in the single market by joining the European Economic Area (like Norway) but without any input into regulation. Norway see it as a pragmatic compromise – they get the benefits but without the EU membership, which their population do not want. It’s obviously not a perfect solution – being part of a club without being able to help make the rules – but it works for them because they value the trade opportunities the economic area gives them. The other option is to “go it alone” – there are other markets, other than the EU – China, South-east Asia, the US, – we could access those, or make bilateral agreements. David Cameron suggests that he’d rather this model if we vote to leave the EU. I would suggest that the ‘go it alone’ option would appear to be the logical conclusion of an exit vote – the Norwegian model appears to a less coherent position on leaving.

PAUL BEAUMONT – A point on the sovereignty issue. The EU treaties are designed with the idea of “Ever Closer Union” clearly in mind as a guiding principle for the future development of the union. They have also established institutions like the European Court of Justice which imply that the whole project is established with this single-ended outcome – federalism – in mind, and who interpret legal issues through this lens. So, yes, although primarily symbolic in negotiating an opt-out from the preamble relating to “Ever Closer Union”, by changing the language – or, at least, reducing the significance of this principle – you change the very nature of the EU, and make that project much more open-ended.

JUSTIN GREENWOOD – We do have to think about access to other markets, and the agreements with those markets that have been made *through* the EU, which may be difficult to maintain, or indeed make new agreements, which also might be difficult to negotiate. One example which has recently been concluded is that of Canada’s free trade deal with the EU, which took 7 years of negotiation, and does not extend nearly so far as the EU’s internal single market. So that is a model we could attempt, but we’d need to recognise that these agreements take significant time to negotiate.

2) ANNE LITTLE – “JUST A NORMAL CITIZEN”: THE ISSUE OF THE REFERENDUM NEEDS TO BE PUT IN VERY SIMPLISTIC TERMS OR DECISIONS IN THE REFERENDUM WILL BE DECIDED UPON IN AN EMOTIONAL WAY. THE DEBATE HAS BEEN LIMITED IN INFORMATION – WE NEED MORE OF IT, IN PLAIN LANGUAGE. CAN YOU SUGGEST HOW TO GET THE PUBLIC UP TO SPEED?

MICHAEL KEATING – That’s what we’re trying to do – we’re trying to get information over to people, avoiding the partisan nature of the public debate. The problem is that much of the

discussion is speculative – we just don't know what the answer is. We can't predict what will happen with the economy. On

the website for the programme we have blogs which are non-academic. We're producing a book called "17 Questions" which will be out in April. The RSE will be producing issue-based papers on its site too. We're very much trying to engage with the public as much as we can. Without being partisan, we'd rather the referendum was in September so we could have more time to engage and inform, but we are where we are.

JUSTIN GREENWOOD – I think we need contestation, we need debate, as this brings key issues to the fore and allows for extensive public debate. For those of you who put stock in these things, Ladbrokes have the odds of "remain" emerging victorious in the referendum rated at a 70% chance.

CLAIRE WALLACE – The website gives much information, and I would highly recommend visiting it.

PAUL BEAUMONT – The sad truth is that this is incredibly complicated, and there are no easy answers, and reducing some of the issues to simplistic terms is neither possibly nor desirable. We have to take some of the responsibility to inform ourselves. But I do think at the end of the day, you can be as informed as you want to be, but you probably make this decision based upon an emotional idea. It should turn on whether we want to be part of a European project which doesn't want to become a state, but which wants to control some of the aspects of what goes on within member states, allows for pooling of sovereignty while also allowing for national decision-making. I'd say, on balance, we're probably better *people* if we stay than go – there are faults with the EU, for sure there are, but it'd be better for the UK now that we have these safeguards on sovereignty particularly agreed through the opt-out of "Ever Closer Union".

ANNE LITTLE – A SHORT FOLLOW-UP QUESTION, WHAT HAPPENS IF WE VOTE DIFFERENTLY ACROSS THE UK?

MICHAEL KEATING – in 1975, Scots voted more narrowly to stay than in England, but attitudes have changed significantly – England is now more Eurosceptic (polls suggest a marginal support for remain currently) while Scotland is around 65% in favour of remaining.

This means there are two potential difficult scenarios that could emerge after the referendum:

1) England votes to leave, Scotland votes to remain: the outcome is leave –

This raises the possibility of a second Scottish independence referendum, which, given the changed circumstances around EU membership, would effectively give Scots a choice between membership of the UK or EU membership, but not both.

2) England votes to leave, Scotland votes to stay: the outcome is stay –

Here is a problematic representation of the West Lothian Question, which sees the English electorate forced to remain in the EU against their preference to leave on the basis of Scottish votes in favour of remaining.

This is before we even mention the complicated situation in Northern Ireland and the partisan viewpoints on the EU there:

the nationalist community is broadly (93%) in favour of remaining in the EU, the unionist community is split rather more evenly (50-50), the political parties are in a bind: the DUP are anti-EU, but leaving the EU would create a 'hard' EU border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, which in turn would have an impact on citizenship, movement between the two, and the peace process. So there are a whole range of 'unintended consequences' of the referendum.

PAUL BEAUMONT – Legally, the entity which is the member of the EU is the UK, so regional breakdowns don't matter legally. Whatever the overall outcome is, that is what the outcome will be. Politically, that's a different matter – but legally, I think we cannot see an issue. However, in the first scenario that Michael describes, a second Scottish independence referendum, we'd probably need an agreement between Scotland and Westminster like the Edinburgh Agreement, which is unlikely to be forthcoming, so it may be resolved in the courts – never a good place for political decisions to wind up. So, effectively, remaining in the EU might also be a requirement in order to 'save' the UK from breaking up. That said, if we vote to leave the EU, it makes a Scottish independence referendum a more difficult sell for the SNP, given the currency (pegging to a pound) and a 'hard' EU border with England, which were not factors in the same way the last time around.

3) ELIZABETH RUSSELL – RETIRED ACADEMIC: WHAT SEEMS TO CONCERN PEOPLE MOST SEEM TO BE THE COURTS OF JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS (IF WE LEAVE MIGRATION ASIDE FOR THE MOMENT). WHAT CHANCE DO WE HAVE TO INFLUENCE THESE INSTITUTIONS

PAUL BEAUMONT: We should clarify what we're talking about here: The European Court on Human Rights will still have jurisdiction, since it is not an EU institution – it derives authority from the European Convention on Human Rights, which we'll still be signed up to irrespective of the outcome of the referendum.

The European Court of Justice is part of the EU, and is *highly* relevant to this discussion. What can we do to control it? Not much is the answer – holding it up to scrutiny and transparency. But given the lack of a common language and a limited public view of it – and limited media interest in looking at its workings for those reasons – accountability is lacking. One solution is that member states should be required to nominate judges to the court who are "Euro-realists", who take things on their merit rather than from ideological positions, but that hasn't really been the case so far.

JUSTIN GREENWOOD – We have a teeming population of lobbyists and NGOs at EU level, who can fulfil an accountability role in place of what we would normally see from the press and politicians at national levels. The low levels of voting in European elections means that this accountability needs to come from these organisations, since the interest in European institutions and decision-making is somewhat lacking on the part of the public.

4) RICHARD KYLE – “JUST A NORMAL VOTER”: THE REFERENDUM WILL BE DECIDED ON A STRAIGHT MAJORITY VOTE – SHOULD THERE HAVE BEEN SOME KIND OF THRESHOLD IN THE REFERENDUM.

MICHAEL KEATING – Well, given the chequered history in Scotland with thresholds, we probably would have resisted any kind of threshold. Broadly speaking, lacking a threshold makes the process more democratic – those who don’t show up to vote are not being denied a voice, they have simply decided not to use their voice, and as such, their view shouldn’t be taken into account. A simple majority is the most straightforward, democratic means of delivering a fair, legitimate outcome.

A low turnout will probably benefit leave, since those are the voters who will be motivated to get out and vote. We’re probably projecting something in the region of 65-70% turnout (the Scottish referendum was 84%) but it really is very difficult to predict. Worryingly for those who want to remain, it may come down to Labour voters in England, who have themselves limited interest in the referendum: the party leadership are not leading on it, with Jeremy Corbyn lukewarm on the issue, and the probability that if there is a vote to remain, it’d likely save David Cameron’s job as Prime Minister. So Labour voters are hardly going to be motivated to vote, and may remain at home, which would probably help the leave camp.

PAUL BEAUMONT – One thing we should be clear about is that we won’t have a second referendum. Boris Johnson made comment that if we voted to leave, we could use it as a negotiating position for even *more* concessions – effectively just using the vote as emphasis of the British public’s dislike of the way the EU operates. However, the EU council has said that if the vote is to leave, that is it. There would be no going back.

5) VAL LOCKHART – “A CITIZEN”: THERE MUST BE AN ELEGANT AND COMPELLING ARGUMENT TO LEAVE EUROPE THAN WHAT THE “BREXITEERS” ARE SUGGESTING – IS THERE ONE?

MICHAEL KEATING – I’m not allowed to give away my own voting intention, but I do think that the argument for going it alone is more convincing than the Norway model as I mentioned – I’m not sure that putting yourself in a position to access the market and be subject to regulations without being part of the framework to make those regulations is a coherent position. It works for Norway, but they have different justifications for doing things that way. If you were inclined to, you could make the argument that the EU is a declining global power, that it is burdensomely regulatory, and that leaving would provide more flexibility for a state in determining their trade partnerships and priorities, and the regulations for their own goods and services. So, there are legitimate, coherent arguments in favour of “Brexit”, yes.

JUSTIN GREENWOOD – I think the question emphasises that we don’t really have a vision of what the alternatives will be – those who recommend leaving the EU take different views themselves, and as a result, we’re not sure what the proposal to leave would look like. Objections to pooling sovereignty play a large role in opposition to the EU, but working with other countries at any level requires giving up a portion of sovereignty, but how much of that sovereignty are we willing to give up is the question.

CLAIRE WALLACE – This isn't an argument for leaving, though it could be construed this way I think. Europe spent centuries fighting internally, and what the EU has done in the last half century is to stop that warfare, and to provide free movement and discussion. Arguably, it has served a purpose, and that purpose – securing peace – is no longer relevant?

PAUL BEAUMONT – I can play Devil's Advocate and give you a position. The UK can be a player in the globe – we have a seat on the UN Security Council. We don't need the EU to be a global power. We could be very happy and prosperous (especially in the long term) outside the EU, rebuilding Commonwealth relationships – in particular, the Commonwealth could become a substantive organisation for trade, with the UK leading it – and building relationships with other states around the world. We could be very good players in the WTO and other fora where UK positions tend to be more pragmatic and consensus-based. But equally, I think the UK plays that role in the EU – that semi-detached role that we have is what helps the EU move in a beneficial way.

MARGARET ROSS – A QUICK SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION ON THAT POINT: IS THERE A SENSE OF HOW EU MEMBER STATES WOULD BEHAVE TOWARDS US IF WE LEFT?

PAUL BEAUMONT – We'd have to negotiate with the EU as a whole on trade issues, and the immediate post-leave position would be tricky, as those relationships would be sensitive. We have more natural allies within the EU, especially with regards to "awkwardness", so some may try to work with us afterwards, but short-term we'd find building relationships a bit more difficult.

6) UNIDENTIFIED CONTRIBUTOR – AFTER ANSWERS EARLIER, I'M NOW TERRIFIED THAT THE DECISION WILL BE MADE BY A LIMITED NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO TURNOUT. WILL THERE BE A NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROCESS FOR THE REFERENDUM?

MICHAEL KEATING – How do we engage with people? In 1975, there were leaflets provided by the government, but that won't be happening this time. We're trying – academics – to get around as much as we can, and to distribute material to community groups – but it is difficult to reach some groups. But unfortunately, we cannot rely on the print media now, which are less rich than they were in 1975, and social media, which has its up and down. But we have plenty of people who are willing to come and talk to local groups and share information in their areas of expertise, so if this is something you think would be useful, we can arrange that.

JUSTIN GREENWOOD – The 1975 referendum moved from 66-33 against staying in the European Economic Community, as it was then, to 66-33 for remaining in the actual vote, which shows what happens when the public can get informed, a significant shift in public opinion. I'm not sure that would happen this time around, but when the public do get informed, it can lead to changes in opinion.

PAUL BEAUMONT – Michael has been referring to the UK Government’s ‘Review of the Balance of Competences’, which actually constitutes 32 separate reports that are available on the UK government’s website at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/review-of-the-balance-of-competences> But everyone here is competent to make their decision – and I’m not worried about it. People don’t tend to vote in European Parliament elections because it seems a remote parliament, their vote isn’t perceived to matter much, and there is a limited connection between the act of voting and the outcome. This isn’t a European Parliament election – this matters much more. So people will take an interest in this – there is much more of a connection between the vote and what happens afterwards, which you can’t see easily in the context of the European Parliament.

7) **PETER YOUNG – JUST A COMMENT: I THINK THE POINT ABOUT INFORMING IS HUGE IMPORTANT. I’VE ORGANISED PUBLIC MEETINGS ON THIS – WE CAN ALL DO IT, AND GET MORE PEOPLE ENGAGED IN THE PROCESS.**

8) **UNIDENTIFIED CONTRIBUTOR – AGAIN, JUST A COMMENT, BUT I THINK WE MAY BE QUITE SURPRISED BY THE LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT IN THIS, AND THE TURNOUT MAY REFLECT THAT. PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN THIS REFERENDUM AND THE OUTCOME.**

9) **“JUST AN AVERAGE MAN IN THE STREET” – ONE CONCERN I HAVE ABOUT THE EU IS ABOUT UNLIMITED IMMIGRATION, AND THE PRESSURES ON INFRASTRUCTURE, HEALTH, EDUCATION, FINANCES ETC, AND I CAN’T SEE HOW THE EU CAN GET A HANDLE ON IT, GIVEN THE DISPARITY ACROSS THE EU IN ECONOMICS. I’M ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE DEAL WITH TURKEY WHICH SUPPOSEDLY PLACES TURKEY ON A FAST-TRACK TO EU MEMBERSHIP – WHAT DO THE PANEL HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THOSE ISSUES.**

CLAIRE WALLACE – Contrary to some revisionist views, the initial vision of the EU was indeed about free movement and to help those who were economically worse off, to benefit financially those member states that were not as economically advanced as some of western Europe. The deal with Turkey is an attempt to deal with migration from outwith the EU, and in particular, the ongoing refugee crisis. It doesn’t have as its focus Turkish membership of the EU – it’s about helping Turkey to manage the influx of refugees and to provide logistical and infrastructural support..

PAUL BEAUMONT – There is no prospect in the near future of Turkey joining the EU imminently. To join the EU you require unanimity from all of the current member states, and there is simply no chance of that at the moment – even if you discount Greece’s historically hostile position with regards to Turkey and Turkish EU membership, there are plenty member states that are simply concerned with the implications of a large member state with a significantly different population would do to the unity of European citizenship. And on the other side of the coin, Turkey’s desire to join the EU is limited broadly to economic thinking – it is less interested in the institutional and cultural aspects of membership.

But your broader point is valid – concerns about migration – which are widespread in the UK. I don’t have a problem with it – I think it enriches our society – different cultures, mindsets, approaches to work help to provide some variation. We did get a major influx of immigrants

after the 2000s EU enlargement, but predominantly those were economic migrants, who are working, which actually helps the economy. But there is a question whether we have the infrastructure to cope in some areas, and while this isn't directly linked to immigration, it has been played out that way in public debates.

JUSTIN GREENWOOD – Turkey is in a pivotal position geographically, but as Paul said, it is not really in a position to join the EU as yet. This agreement opens up two more chapters of the EU accession discussions – which makes 9 in total that are open with Turkey. To put that in perspective, to join, there are 35 chapters in total, which have to be agreed – and even those that are open have not yet been finalised. So we're a long, long way from Turkey joining. But we do have to be aware that Turkey is an entry point to get into the visa-free travel in Schengen, and that's why it is important in this discussion.

10) I AM AN EU IMMIGRANT INTO THE UK – WHO CANNOT VOTE IN THE REFERENDUM – AND I THINK OF MYSELF AS A EUROPEAN CITIZEN. HOW WILL THE REFERENDUM OUTCOME AFFECT US – ESPECIALLY IF WE VOTE TO LEAVE?

CLAIRE WALLACE – In the short term, it probably won't have much of an effect, but longer term, it'll be more difficult, particularly in terms of visas, which take longer to process for non-EU citizens etc, and entitlement to various benefits and rights of EU citizens would no longer apply.

11) DAVID MCHARDY – ENGINEER: I HAVE TWO RELATED CONCERNS, ABOUT THE COST OF THE EU, IS IT VALUE FOR MONEY, AND IS IT TRANSPARENT ENOUGH. ARE THESE FOUNDED CONCERNS?

PAUL BEAUMONT – Is it good value for money? It's not bad – not compared to some national parliaments/ systems, which seem to have extensive networks of civil servants, quangoes and related bodies. It is quite transparent at the European Parliament level, but not at the European Council level, which is where much of the European decision-making is made. This is less of an issue if you think of the European Parliament more like the House of Lords. The real power in the EU lies with the Council, and in theory, there is more accountability there because the Council represents national governments who have been elected by their own national electorates, with significantly larger turnouts than European Parliamentary elections – thereby imbuing their decisions with more legitimacy.

JUSTIN GREENWOOD – I agree with Paul on the issue of transparency, that transparency is good at EU level – you can access almost any public document and get it sent to an email address within 15 days. Where I disagree with Paul is on his categorisation of the European Parliament as akin to the House of Lords. I think it has evolved to much more of a co-legislature, and it plays a key role in transparency and engagement.

MICHAEL KEATING – I think transparency can be a bit of an issue – there is a lack of connectivity between the EU level and the daily experience of people, a limited relationship between where the decisions are made and the impact of those decisions. The EU has to

show that it is relevant to “the person on the street” and that should be a priority if we do vote to stay in.

11) GREG STEWART: WITH REGARDS TO LEAVING, WHAT WOULD THE PROCESS BE UNDER ARTICLE 50 OF LISBON TREATY, AND THE 2 YEAR LIMIT TO NEGOTIATIONS, AND IF WE COULD NOT GET AN AGREEMENT WITHIN THAT TIMESCALE, WOULD WE BE IN LIMBO?

PAUL BEAUMONT: You should be able to leave through an agreement under Article 50, but if you cannot agree within two years – and this does require acceptance with member states – there is a default leave. However, this has not been tested yet, so we don’t really know what would happen. My thought is probably that this process itself would be less problematic than what would come *after* it – the post-divorce discussions and re-establishment of relationships with EU members after a Brexit. The only thing that Brexiteers agree on is a Brexit – they all disagree on what the UK should do *after* an exit, so it’s incredibly uncertain as to what the UK would do if it was outside the EU.

JUSTIN GREENWOOD – This process would keep lawyers in jobs for years. It’d be uncertain. Undoubtedly, it’d take longer than that 2 year period – I mentioned earlier that Canada’s trade agreement took 7 years. Some Swiss trade agreements with the EU took as long as 18 years... so yes, it’ll be problematic, and it will not be a straightforward process.

MARGARET ROSS: A FEW OF YOU HAVE SAID “I’M JUST A VOTER”. WELL, OUR PANEL WILL BE THE SAME WHEN IT COMES TO THE REFERENDUM, AND THEIR VOTE COUNTS JUST THE SAME AS YOURS, SO KEEP HAVING THESE DISCUSSIONS, KEEP GETTING INFORMED, KEEP ASKING QUESTIONS AND KEEP DEBATING. THIS HAS BEEN AN ENGAGING AUDIENCE, AND THERE ARE SEVERAL MEANS OF CONTINUING THAT ENGAGEMENT, SO PLEASE, IF YOU DO WANT TO FIND OUT MORE, VISIT THE WEBSITE AND GET IN TOUCH WITH THE PROGRAMME.

Acknowledgements

This event was a collaboration between several different organisations, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude. In particular, the ESRC funded the event through the **UK in a Changing Europe** programme, and the event was organised in association with the **Royal Society of Edinburgh**. The **University of Aberdeen** kindly hosted the event at their King's College Centre. Clare de Mowbray at the **Centre on Constitutional Change** took care of the media and advertising. Our grateful thanks also go to the speakers for their time and expertise.

