

BREXIT: Attracting and retaining talent pool

Local engagement, regional representation, global opportunity

This statement outlines the Thames Valley Chamber's policy position for allowing talent migration and flows, post BREXIT, and the implications for business and academic organisations based in the sub-region. The purpose is to provide partners and stakeholders including media channels with a position statement which to draw upon.

Background / Current Position

The Thames Valley and UK economy has thrived on its ability to attract the best skills and entrepreneurial talent from across the European Union (EU) and the rest of the world.

However, as the Government's Industrial Strategy plans reveal, there is a shortage of skills needed to support a range of key business and service sectors relevant to the Thames Valley and British economy. If the UK can no longer benefit from the free movement of people, including the skills and talent they bring, a new 'smart immigration' policy needs to be put in place that prioritises the needs of the UK's high growth, high value, innovative sectors including technology and life sciences sectors. Such a policy needs also to recognise and respond to and meet the needs of sectors where lower-skilled or migrant

workers are employed, e.g. hospitality and agricultural sectors.

"The best academics attract other top academics as well as smart early career academics. They attract the best students & the most competitive research funding, so it really is a virtuous circle. The key is to take nothing for granted, to be constantly open to innovation & adaptation and to continue to invest."

Louise Richardson
Vice-Chancellor, University of Oxford

Within the technology sector there is a consistent need to source the talent needed to support the transformation opportunities offered by the widespread adoption of cloud and the digitisation of the economy. With some success, companies in the industry are investing in addressing the skills needed. In a year when China and India each produced 300,000 computer science graduates, Poland produced 40,000 and the UK producing 7,000 more needs to be done. The technology sector in the UK is very reliant on attracting and importing talent to meet its needs.

However, by way of example, a change in the visa arrangements for other European countries might deter high calibre academics to join British universities, like the University of Oxford.

Allow Talent Migration

The UK must continue to retain specific sector talent (notably in STEM related industries) and attract the best of the world's innovative brains and scientists to ensure it has a prominent place in the global economy. The Chamber agrees with Lord Selborne, Chair of the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee, that the "UK should not only expand and enhance existing programmes, but should also search out the world's most accomplished scientists and persuade them to pursue careers here."

The Chamber strongly urges the UK Government to:

1. Do everything within its power to allow employees in key sectors, including the likes of the hospitality industry, who are non-British EU citizens and their families, to remain in the UK (whether as part of free movement of talent or as part of an arrangement of automatic visa or residency status. We believe this is an essential part of the ability of the Thames Valley's businesses to retain the appropriate talent, entrepreneurs and high calibre of skills necessary to maintain the UK's position as a highly developed, innovative technology driven nation).
2. Ensure that business can continue to recruit from wherever talent exists, across the EU and beyond. The success of technology companies, including Microsoft, relies on them hiring the best and brightest people from across the EU and bringing them to the UK and Thames Valley to work.

The UK's outstanding reputation and performance, most particularly in sectors including technology, life sciences and the broader scientific world, critically depends on redoubling efforts to persuade many of the world's most talented people to pursue careers in the Thames Valley and the UK as a whole. We support the Government in its continued aspiration to invest in, particularly, STEM skills to ensure the UK's current and next generation workforce - not just our millennials - are fit for purpose.

Other BREXIT issues we are specifically monitoring

Five additional points contribute to a continued post-Brexit economic success:

- Business friendly environment: The Chamber encourages the UK to remain "*open for business*" by: (i) maintaining (or even lowering) corporate income tax rates; (ii) simplifying and rationalising anti-abuse rules in a manner consistent with international norms; (iii) minimising regulatory and compliance burdens, and; (iv) ensuring clear and predictable tax administration, interpretation of longstanding treaty provisions, and dispute resolution. Tariffs and customs agreements should be optimised to facilitate imports of hardware, including data servers.
- Dual Hardware Standards: The Chamber recommends that the UK Government does not waste resources removing manufacturing and safety requirements that are necessary for manufacturers selling into the EU.
- Intellectual Property (IP) & Trade Marks: IP investment should be secured by protecting and encouraged existing IP rights. The Chamber recommends that the UK Government provide for the automatic creation of equivalent parallel design rights in the UK for all Community Design Rights that are currently in force. For EU trade marks, the automatic creation of parallel UK rights risks cluttering the UK trade mark register.
- Process of Divergence: There are many reasons for maintaining a range of EU-based rules and regulations that help to strengthen the brand recognition of Britain. They benefit UK businesses, as much as they benefit European businesses, in doing business globally. We need to avoid a creep away (over the long term) from rules and regulation that are good for business here in the Thames Valley and UK.
- Securing Data flows: The UK remains the largest cloud market in Europe and is set to more than double in value over the next four years to more than \$9.2bn. Data must be accessible across borders in order to serve customers on the move. This creates an absolute necessity for the UK government to secure the free movement of data between the UK, EU and other countries, with the EU, Canada & the United States (US) immediate priorities.

For further information on this policy statement or the Thames Valley Chamber please contact Gareth Ralphs on 01753 870 500 or email on garethralphs@tvchamber.co.uk