



Brexit Survey 2021

Society of Spanish Researchers in the United Kingdom (SRUK/CERU)

October 2021

Executive Summary

1. The Society of Spanish Researchers in the United Kingdom (SRUK, <http://sruk.org.uk>) is an independent non-profit Society whose aim is to promote communication among Spanish researchers in the UK and to facilitate collaborations between private and public R&D institutions, both in the UK and in Spain.
2. A survey run among Spanish researchers currently living in the UK during spring of 2021 showed that 94% of our members believe that the UK's exit from the EU will impact their lives and 65% think that the UK has lost attractiveness. Additionally, many are worried about the future migration policies and their access to public services post-Brexit.
3. 41% of our members are considering leaving the UK in the near future, and 57% of them link their decision to Brexit.

Background

4. With over 800 members, the Society of Spanish Researchers in the United Kingdom (SRUK) is an independent non-profit organisation officially established in 2012 that represents a large proportion of Spanish nationals working in R&D in the UK. Our members work and study in all research disciplines and



are at different stages of their careers, ranging from undergraduate students to professors.

5. SRUK has been actively monitoring the challenges and opportunities associated with Brexit and their impact on Spanish researchers both in the UK and elsewhere. For this purpose, SRUK has conducted several surveys and produced evidence (including some submitted to the UK Parliament and to the Spanish Parliament) on the impact of Brexit in 2018 [1] and 2020 [2], on an immigration system for research in 2018 [3], and on the consequences of a no-deal Brexit for research in 2019 [4]. Additionally, we have monitored the views of our members throughout the process with several surveys, the latest previous one being conducted in June 2020 [5].
6. SRUK has now run a survey among Spanish researchers in the UK to understand how the effective withdrawal of the UK from the EU in January 2021 may have changed their perceptions. We aim to understand if their views and behaviours have been affected, but also to identify the main areas of concern.

Survey

7. The current survey was designed by SRUK's Science Policy Department and approved by SRUK Board of Directors. It was distributed among our regular members living in the UK. The survey opened on the 6th of April 2021 and it was closed on the 6th of June 2021. A total of 87 researchers answered all the questions in the survey.

Background of the respondents

8. All respondents were members of SRUK and were based in the UK during the polling period. A broad majority of them (81%) work at universities, with the remaining participants working in other public, mixed or non-profit organizations as well as in industry. Research assistants, PhD students and



9. As for the date of arrival in the UK, 16% of the respondents have been living in the UK for over 10 years, 36% between 5 and 10, 22% between 3 and 5, 20% between 1 and 3 and 6% of the respondents have been living in the UK for less than 1 year.
10. Most of our respondents (95%) have applied for the EU Settlement Scheme and got at least the pre-settled status.

Comments about the survey

11. Respondents were asked about the impact of Brexit on different aspects of their work and personal life, comparing the transition period to the effective exit of the UK from the EU.

Perceptions of our members concerning Brexit

12. An overwhelming majority (94%) claims that Brexit affects their life, with 31% selecting the highest impact tier.
13. We asked about specific subjects that could be affected by Brexit, as follows:
1) Movement of relatives with skilled workers, 2) bureaucracy and costs to live and work in the UK, 3) British economy, 4) access to European research funding, 5) opportunity to lead on European research programmes, 6) access to British research funding, 7) opportunity to progress in your career, 8) changes in regulation in your research field, 9) academic fees of undergraduate and postgraduate students, 10) change in the rights of European residents in the UK and discrimination and 11) social tension. In all of these categories, a shift is detected between the transition period (with most respondents considering that the impact of Brexit on these issues were either of 'none' or 'some relevance') and after Brexit (with relevance increasing).
14. When asked if they are planning to leave the UK in the near future, 41% would



leave the UK and 25% feel unsure about this matter. Among those planning to leave the UK, 57% of them claim that Brexit has influenced their decision, while 20% of the respondents feel unsure.

15.If moving to another country, our members would choose to move back to Spain (49%) or to another country in the EU (39%) as their preferred options.

16.When asked about whether they would have been able to come to the UK if the Global Talent Visa or the Skilled Worker Visa had been in place, 63% of the respondents answered in the affirmative. However, if they had to pay for the NHS surcharge themselves, only 7% of respondents claim that they would apply for a visa, with 37% being unsure and 56% saying that they would not apply.

17.Regarding the Turing programme (rolled out to replace the EU's Erasmus+ programme), 27% of our respondents are likely to apply or recommend others to apply, whereas 34% are either likely or unlikely, and 39% are unlikely. When asked to compare how attractive the UK is in 2021 compared to when they moved to the country on a scale from 0 to 6 (0-3 being less attractive and 3-6 being more attractive), the respondents gave an average score of 1.9. Among the reasons for this score, almost 80% of the respondents mention the new immigration policies for EU citizens, around 60% mention the political and economic situation in the UK, and around 40% identify access to both public services in the UK and to research funds as reasons.

Commentary

18. Most of our respondents have an academic background and have successfully applied for the EU Settlement Scheme. Half of them moved to the UK before the Brexit referendum in 2016 and the other half during the negotiation of the withdrawal agreement and the subsequent transition period. A considerable



fraction of them are planning to leave the UK because of Brexit.

19. Most of our respondents have an academic background and have successfully applied for the EU Settlement Scheme. Half of them moved to the UK before the Brexit referendum in 2016 and the other half during the negotiation of the withdrawal agreement and the subsequent transition period. A considerable fraction of them are planning to leave the UK because of Brexit.
20. The responses of our members show a loss in attractiveness of the UK as a destination for life and work and a high number of them point to migration policies, the political and economic situation in the UK, access to research funds or access to public services as reasons for such a loss.
21. Over a half of the respondents claim that they would not apply for a visa if they had to pay for the NHS surcharge themselves.



References

[1] Spanish Researchers in the UK (SRUK) - written evidence on the impact of Brexit in research.

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/science-and-technology-committee/brexit-science-and-innovation/written/77840.html> (Accessed on 23.01.2019).

[2] Briefing for the Spanish Parliament about consequences of the UK's exit from the EU (in Spanish).

<https://sruk.org.uk/report/briefing-for-the-spanish-parliament-about-consequences-of-the-uks-exit-from-the-eu-october-2020/> (Accessed on 29.10.2021).

[3] Spanish Researchers in the UK (SRUK) - written evidence on an immigration system that works for science and innovation.

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/science-and-technology-committee/an-immigration-system-that-works-for-science-and-innovation/written/84256.html> (Accessed on 23.01.2019).

[4] Results from the SRUK survey on "What will 'No Deal' mean for science and innovation?"

<https://sruk.org.uk/report/what-will-no-deal-mean-for-science-and-innovation-january-2019/> (Accessed on 19.10.2021).

[5] Executive summary of survey conducted in 2020.

<https://sruk.org.uk/report/brexit-survey-2020/> (Accessed on 19.10.2021).

[6] SRUK annual reports. <https://sruk.org.uk/whats-sruk/>

Declaration of interest

The Society of Spanish Researchers in the United Kingdom (SRUK) is an independent non-profit Company Limited by Guarantees established in 2012. Our objectives are:

- To develop collaborations between our members and R&D-led institutions and businesses in Spain and the UK.



- To help to close the gap between researchers and the general public through scientific outreach.
- To represent Spanish researchers in the UK to British and Spanish organizations, the society and the media.
- To promote networking within the community of Spanish Researchers working in the UK.

Annual reports of our activities can be found at [6].

The Society of Spanish Researchers in the United Kingdom (SRUK) does not declare any conflict of interest.

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