

## **The RSE Young Academy of Scotland Position Statement on the UK's Withdrawal Agreement with the EU**

**16 January 2019**

Following the rejection of the UK Government's proposed EU-withdrawal deal in the House of Commons, the RSE Young Academy of Scotland urges the UK Government to renew its negotiation with the EU, with an open mind, to avoid a damaging no-deal Brexit. In order to facilitate this negotiation, we encourage the UK Government to dispense with its "red line" on the ending of freedom of movement.

In particular, we emphasise that:

- Whilst the result of the 2016 referendum was that the UK should leave the EU, the ending of freedom of movement was not an option given on the ballot paper. No majority has voted for an end to freedom of movement, either in the 2016 EU Referendum, or in the 2017 General Election, or indeed in any UK Parliamentary vote.
- Dispensing with this self-imposed red line will enable a broader range of options to be put on the negotiation table and help to maintain an economically viable future arrangement with the EU, especially in relation to the UK's access to the Single Market and membership of a Customs Union (e.g. a "Norway-plus" deal).
- Maintaining the free movement of people and goods between the UK and the EU will avoid the necessity of hard borders between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, and will thereby ensure that the UK's withdrawal from the EU does not undermine the Good Friday Agreement.
- Freedom of movement is a crucial benefit in and of itself; it is a precious, reciprocal right enjoyed by all EU citizens to the mutual benefit of the individual and the country in which they choose to make their home. Historically, freedom of movement has long enriched our societies, cultures and economies, and is especially crucial for the continuing vitality of Scotland, in view of our ageing population and declining birth rate. Ending freedom of movement will have lasting negative consequences for the people of Scotland, the UK and Europe which will far outweigh any advantages.<sup>1</sup>

We believe that the defeated withdrawal deal was likely the best the UK Government could have expected to negotiate given its insistence upon the ending of freedom of movement. Nevertheless, it is the RSE Young Academy of Scotland's position that this represented a

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<sup>1</sup> Freedom of Movement is discussed in some detail in the YAS report *Brexit: The Impact on Scotland* [https://www.youngacademyofscotland.org.uk/images/downloads/publications/BREXIT\\_the\\_impact\\_on\\_scotland.pdf](https://www.youngacademyofscotland.org.uk/images/downloads/publications/BREXIT_the_impact_on_scotland.pdf)

bad deal for the UK, and for Scotland in particular. We are similarly disturbed by the prospect of a no deal outcome. Only by committing to a continuation of the right to freedom of movement will the UK Government succeed in negotiating an acceptable future for Scotland and the UK. We now urge the UK Government to work closely with the Scottish Government and other devolved administrations to that end.

**Notes for Editors**

*Established by the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2011, the Young Academy of Scotland (YAS) is part of a network of Global Young Academies (GYA) and provides a platform for innovative entrepreneurs, professionals and academics to develop a coherent and influential voice, and to address the most challenging issues facing society in Scotland and beyond. Any views, positions or statements issued represent the views of YAS.*

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