Executive Summary

- International mobility of researchers to and from the UK is crucial for the UK to be able to maintain its world leading position in the science and research sector.

- An important contributing factor to the success of UK science and research has been the ability to attract, recruit and keep international talent. The current uncertainty concerning the future status of EU citizens in the UK poses a considerable risk to the sector.

- Barriers to international mobility of researchers include uncertainty concerning social security benefits and pensions.

- *The Bratislava Declaration of Young Researchers* is an encouraging step for the European science and research sector and the government should make sure that the UK does not fall behind in the developments proposed in the declaration.

About the Postdocs of Cambridge Society (PdOC)

- The PdOC Society is an association for postdoctoral research staff at the University of Cambridge, its Colleges and University Partner Institutions.

- The PdOC Society represents about 4,000 unestablished research staff on fixed term-contracts across the natural and physical sciences, medicine, engineering, arts, humanities and social sciences.

- According to the University of Cambridge, 23% of all academic and research staff at the University are non-UK EU nationals (October 2015). However, this figure includes permanent research staff and the proportion of non-UK EU nationals is higher among postdocs, and higher still among postdocs in the sciences, engineering and medicine.

Evidence and Recommendations

1. We support the previous response to this inquiry signed by 1,640 UK-based Early Career Researchers and the response by the University of Cambridge. This submission aims to complement the evidence presented in the responses mentioned above.

2. Point 6 of the terms of reference for this inquiry asks for evidence on “What other measures the Government should undertake to keep UK science and research on a sound footing, with sufficient funding, after an EU exit.” Currently, UK science and research is world leading as supported by several independent world university rankings.1-3

3. **We urge the government to not only strive to keep UK science and research on a sound footing, but to maintain its proven world leading position.**

4. International mobility is of benefit to the UK research and science sector as a whole as well as to individual UK scientists as it facilitates collaboration and training. Researchers are encouraged to be mobile and move institutions during their career; a history of working at more than one institution and having spent time abroad doing research is generally considered as an attractive merit along with *e.g.* publications when applying for research funding and academic posts. Thus,
Written evidence submitted by The Postdocs of Cambridge Society (PdOC)  
(LEA0185)

UK researchers benefit from international mobility by enhancing their professional development. Similarly, UK universities and research institutions benefit from international mobility because it facilitates recruitment of international talent.

5. The current freedom of movement within the EU greatly facilitates the international mobility of European researchers, and any future barriers that may be introduced to limit this freedom, such as visa requirements and costs, would pose a considerable risk to the UK science and research sector.

6. International mobility for researchers from outside the EU is currently hampered by often complicated and costly visa requirements. An opportunity arising from the UK leaving the EU is that the visa requirements for all international researchers may be reviewed and perhaps eased.

7. Currently employees at some EU-funded research institutions in the UK, such as the European Bioinformatics Institute/European Molecular Biology Laboratory\(^4\) in Hinxton, Cambridgeshire (EBI/EMBL, a University of Cambridge Partner Institute) qualify for exempt entry clearances for individuals from outside the EU.\(^5\) It is important for UK science and research that these institutions continue to be able to easily employ talent from outside the EU.

8. **We urge the government to ensure that freedom of movement within the EU is maintained to foster international mobility for UK scientists and so that UK universities and research institutions will continue to be able to successfully attract, recruit and keep talent from the EU.**

9. **We urge the government to review visa requirements and costs for researchers from outside the EU to further facilitate international mobility.**

10. **We urge the government to maintain current exempt entry clearances for UK research institutions, and consider extending these to more UK universities and research institutions.**

11. Postdoctoral research staff early in their careers face a lot of uncertainty concerning career development, stability and progression by the nature of their fixed-term position and the current prevailing funding models for research.

12. Early career researchers are typically more mobile than researchers at more advanced stages of their career because they are generally younger and may not have yet invested in a house or started a family, *etc.* Thus, they are more likely to move to a new country for a professional opportunity. At the same time, they may be less likely to take up such opportunities if these are coupled with considerable uncertainties beyond those inherent to the profession.

13. Since the UK’s decision to leave the EU was made, many non-UK research staff attest that there is a feeling of being unwelcome in the UK. Continuing uncertainty concerning the status of EU citizens in the UK\(^6\) poses a real risk to early career researchers’ capacity and willingness to plan, initiate and continue research activity in the UK. We believe that not only is this a risk to the future of UK science and research after the exit from the EU, but it may be affecting the quality of research conducted in the UK already.

14. **We urge the government to provide greater clarity concerning the future status of EU citizens in the UK, and ideally an assurance that their current right to reside and work in the UK will be protected.**

15. One already existing barrier to international mobility for researchers is the potentially negative impact on social security such as our parental and unemployment benefits, and future pensions
from moving between different national pension systems during our careers. While there exists an established system for transferring state pensions between EU countries including the principle of aggregation of periods,\(^7\) no such system exists for private pension schemes such as the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) in the UK.

16. The recently launched EU-sponsored initiative RESAVER, a pan-European pension fund for researchers,\(^8,9\) has potential to limit this barrier to European mobility of researchers in the future. At present only a limited number of institutions are contributing to the scheme, but if this scheme becomes popular in other EU countries and the UK does not join in, it may become an additional barrier to mobility of researchers to and from the UK.

17. In some EU countries, e.g. Sweden and the Netherlands, PhD students are considered employees of their Universities as well as students. Researchers in these countries are paid salaries, pay taxes, and accrue pension already at that stage of their career.

18. **We urge the government to consider in negotiations the impact of leaving the EU on social security and pensions of researchers who work in the UK now and in the future.**

19. The recently published *Bratislava Declaration of Young Researchers*\(^10,11\) will be officially adopted at the EU Competitiveness Council, Research Section in November this year. This declaration is an encouraging step in recognizing the difficulties faced by early career researchers and it sets out a number of recommendations for how early career researchers may be better supported.

20. The recommendations in the declaration concern young researchers’ engagement and support to realise ideas, sustainable career trajectories, diverse, collaborative and open research environments, and work-life balance.

21. The Declaration mentions the UK’s *Athena Swan* as a positive example of an equality and diversity charter. This shows that the UK plays an important role in the EU and that the whole European science and research sector may be impacted by a limited future contribution from the UK.

22. **We urge the government to not let the UK science and research sector fall behind in the developments proposed by the *Bratislava Declaration of Young Researchers*.**

**References and Links**


4. http://www.ebi.ac.uk/


Written evidence submitted by The Postdocs of Cambridge Society (PdOC) (LEA0185)

8 http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/resaver
9 http://www.resaver.eu/

August 2016