



PEOPLE

NOT NUMBERS

TERRY REINTKE MEP ON ERASMUS

Terry Reintke is an MEP from the German Green Party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen), who has been fighting for young people's voices to be heard in the Brexit Debate. During the EU referendum Terry visited the UK to help explain what the EU does and why other Europeans cared about our decision. Since the decision to back Brexit Terry has returned to the UK to meet Young People and represent their views in the Brexit Committees in the European Parliament on which she sits. Terry has been passionate about the UK's involvement in the EU since participating in an Erasmus exchange to Edinburgh and this is her take on why Erasmus is important.

“ This year Erasmus is turning 30. Most likely, nobody expected in 1987 that this would become one of the biggest success stories of the European integration project. During the last 30 years, almost 10 million people went abroad and study in another Member State, finding friends from all over Europe and getting to know another country within the European Union. I had the chance to spend my Erasmus year in Edinburgh. Not only did this allow me to fall in love with beautiful Scotland, it also reassured me that the political questions of our generation can only be addressed at the European level. This principle is still driving my political engagement today. I strongly believe that we need European solutions for the most pressing issues such as climate change, social injustice or fair and humanitarian refugee policies.

Erasmus has been a life-changing experience for many. I hope that in the future even more young people will get the chance to have this experience. This is why we as Greens in the European Parliament fight for an increase in the budget of Erasmus+. The future of Erasmus should be more inclusive: We need a special focus on underrepresented groups and less privileged young people. I am convinced that Erasmus has become one of the most vital tools in our hands when building the European House together. I hope many more young people will be equipped with this tool. There is a lot of construction work ahead of us”



Young Greens

CAMPAIGN 1:

GET YOUR UNIVERSITY TO PLEDGE TO

PROTECT EU STUDENT TUITION FEES

Universities in the UK are enriched by European students. Meeting people with different experiences broadens our perspectives and enhances our education. We benefit by learning from one another, sharing ideas. It's important that we protect this privilege.

The UK's decision to leave the EU in June 2016 has thrown the higher education sector into chaos, with funding cuts set to hit universities hard. But the crisis goes much deeper than just university bodies – it threatens to hit students too. EU students will no longer receive preferential fees dictated by their EU status and should universities choose to hike prices up to match the extortionate levels paid by current international students, we can expect a sharp decline in the number of EU students coming here to study.

As Young Greens, we believe that we must resist the creeping isolationism infiltrating the UK post-Brexit, and promote an internationalist vision, one in which truly accessible education plays a key role. That's why we are calling on universities to guarantee that they will not rise fees for EU students in the aftermath of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. As Young Greens, we believe that education should be free for all and this commitment from the Higher Education sector, though not a complete answer to the woes facing UK Higher Education, would demonstrate intent from those at the top of our universities to turn back the clock on regressive policy. Committing to not rising fees for EU students post-Brexit would set a precedent for further moves to open university up for students from all backgrounds and parts of the world.

Lobby your University by:

1. **Creating a petition** asking the university to guarantee against fee rises for EU students post-Brexit
2. **Publicising your petition** on campus and garnering support from fellow students, your local councillors and MPs
3. Submitting your petition to be **endorsed by your SU**
4. **Presenting it to the university** and lobbying them to commit with persistent campaigning, events and publicity stunts

EU STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT JOURNEY

I'm Alice, a 22-year-old British citizen. For me, freedom of movement has played and continues to play an important part in my life. In this section I am going to talk a bit about my experience living and studying in The Netherlands.

I first moved abroad when I finished my A-levels, shortly after the coalition government decided to triple university tuition fees. For me, the thought of leaving university with an average of £40–50,000 of debt was incredibly overwhelming. When I started to look further afield, I discovered endless opportunities available to me within Europe, including a multitude of courses at good universities, all taught in English. I found a course that incorporated a number of my interests – International Studies at Leiden University. It included a language programme and six months abroad in a country of your region specialisation (I specialised in Latin America, learnt Spanish and went to Mexico). It was also very internationally orientated, with 40% of the student body coming from a foreign country. I came to realise that this was perhaps the most valuable aspect of my course, as I found myself learning a lot from spending time with my classmates outside of the classroom, as well as inside the classroom. I paid 1800€ a year to study, about £1500 at the time, and graduated with a fraction of the debt that I would have had if I were to have attended university in the UK.

When I look back, making the decision to move countries at the age of 18 was quite a leap. I was not eligible for student loans from the British government, I had no family, friends, or relatives in

The Netherlands, and I chose to enter an entirely different education system. However, I was surprised at the ease at which I adjusted to moving countries and the support that was available to me. I was able to access a loan from the Dutch government to cover my tuition fees and I worked throughout my studies babysitting and teaching English to support myself. Some of my other friends who worked formally were even able to access student benefits, including a reduction in rent and free public transport. Many of us who had moved countries to study were in the same boat, and I felt very much at home in a welcoming and culturally diverse international family.

Here are some of the eye-opening things I discovered during my time in The Netherlands:

The Netherlands is very open to international students, university courses are increasingly accessible and taught in English;

On the other hand, The Netherlands is not quite so liberal and open as one might think. The Dutch have (what I would call) a racist tradition of blacking up during Christmas time to impersonate “Zwarte Piet” (“Black Pete”), servants of the Dutch Sinterklaas (Santa Clause), originating from the 1800s and the arrival of black Moorish slaves to the country;

The Dutch really know how to cycle and to support cycling! Cycling was one of my favourite activities when I lived in The Netherlands, I always felt safe and there were cycling lanes in the almost every street (nothing like the incredibly thin lanes that we claim to be cycle lanes in the UK); >>

The few miles of sea separating the UK from the rest of the European continent make a huge difference. For instance, it is very easy to move between The Netherlands and Belgium. I remember many nights out in Belgium over the weekends and I didn't once have to show my passport; The Dutch have an incredible level of English;

The Netherlands is a pretty cool place to live and very innovative in the realm of green things – CYCLING, electric charging points for cars, recycling and reusing, wind turbines, I could go on.

It is true what they say about Dutch unis – easy to get in, hard to stay in. The Dutch believe that anyone who passes their final secondary school exams (that's three Es, in our case), has the right to give university a go. Once at uni, the workload is quite demanding, and many drop out or change courses (the Dutch don't see this as a bad thing though). I very much admire this aspect of making university as accessible as possible to all who have finished secondary school.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

The UK needs to recognise the value in welcoming international students to its universities, not only for them but for the British population also;

The UK should value and support the desire of British nationals to go to foreign countries to study (people who could potentially bring back knowledge and new perspectives);

Generally, accessibility to university needs to improve. This could involve:

- » **abolishing or lowering tuition fees;**
- » **stop making our schools into exam factories and requesting almost impossible entry grades;**
- » **respect everyone's right to try at university (whether they are British or not).**

FINAL MESSAGE

My experience of freedom of movement is a privileged one, but these kinds of opportunities should be open and accessible to everyone. We don't yet know what might happen with Brexit, but remember that these kinds of opportunities are out there!

Freedom of movement is a fundamental human right and we must fight for it.

ABOUT THE YOUNG GREENS

The Young Greens are the youth and student branch of the Green Party of England and Wales. We harness the energy and ideas of young people, working to change the direction of our society towards a sustainable and just future.

We believe that our political system must be changed from the inside, as well as by campaigns within wider society. We exist to combine the principled actions we see in our communities with electoral politics.

We aim to embody the values that have disappeared from 21st century politics and to engage and inspire those disillusioned with the current political landscape. We organise within and beyond the Green Party in the interests of young people and students.

If you want to find out more about Young Green activity in your area, visit younggreens.org.uk/groups to find your nearest local group.



Get in touch

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me if you are interested in studying abroad or have any comments or questions about my experience, my email is:

alice@globalyounggreens.org

Useful Links

Finding English–taught degree programmes abroad:

> www.eunicas.ie

> www.mastersportal.eu/articles/1717/non-english-european-countries-with-most-english-taught-degrees.html

Funding overseas study:

> www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/international/studying-overseas/funding-overseas-study

Feeling like there is a lack of EU news coverage in the UK? Try www.politico.eu



CAMPAIGN 2:

REMOVING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM NET MIGRATION STATISTICS

International students come from all over the world. From Asia to America the UK is enriched with students from all corners of the earth. However for many international students from outside of the EU the UK is not as receptive of their contributions. Below are just a few cases of international students who have faced difficulties due to the UK's treatment of international students. The students have wished to remain anonymous and have been in contact through Educating Beyond Borders.

STUDENT X

"I'm Canadian studying abroad. I've paid almost \$50k to the UK university, but I can't earn any of that money back by working here AND I'm forced to leave after my degree? It's ridiculous. If you won't allow us to work back some of this debt, then cut down on the international fees so that future students will still want/be able to afford to come study in the UK."

"It is very sad that I came to do Masters in Translational Neuroscience in the UK in 2013/2014 academic year and couldn't stay to enhance the laboratory skills I acquired during the masters. Now I'm back in Ghana and unfortunately, there's not even one laboratory available for me to apply and develop the knowledge I acquired, and this is making me feel I did the masters for nothing."

STUDENT A

Many other International students have had similar experiences, hence why the Young Greens are calling for International students to be removed from the net migration statistics. International students should not be subject to the same standards as other forms of migration. This has led to unnecessary deportations and international students facing difficulties within the UK.

TO HELP REMOVE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

FROM IMMIGRATION STATUS

SIGN THIS PETITION >

action.greenparty.org.uk/peoplenotnumbers

