

Speech

Nicky Morgan: leaving the EU risks a lost generation

From: [Department for Education](#) and [The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP](#)
Delivered on: 29 March 2016 (Original script, may differ from delivered version)
Location: The Fashion Retail Academy, London
First published: 29 March 2016
Part of: [EU referendum](#) and [Young people](#)

The Education Secretary warns of the devastating impact a vote to leave the EU will have on young people's life chances.



Thank you, June [Sarpong, Britain Stronger in Europe Board Member] and Amber [Atherton, founder of My Flash Trash], for that kind introduction.

It's a pleasure to be here today and thank you to the Fashion Retail Academy for hosting us.

Earlier this year I had the pleasure of visiting the academy with Sir Philip Green. Founded and led by giants of fashion and retail, the college is a great example of our vision for employers to play a key role in designing courses that give young people the skills

they really need, and those that will help them succeed in the workplace.

Two weeks ago, I published an education white paper - [‘Educational excellence everywhere’](#) - setting out our plans for how we would continue the work to reform and improve our schools over the course of this Parliament.

From improving how teachers are trained, to tackling educational cold spots, to giving all schools the freedoms that come with academy status, our white paper was about making sure that the next generation are receiving the sort of high-quality education they need to succeed in adult life. To make sure they leave school able to compete, not just against their peers in the UK, but from across the world, in what is an increasingly globalised labour market.

And to do that we have to make sure that young people are able to engage with the world as global citizens, that they know about the world beyond our country’s borders. It’s also about ensuring that we give young people the opportunities that allow them to make the most of their education and the chance to realise their talents.

I passionately believe that our membership of the European Union supports all of those things.

It does so by not only making our country more prosperous, but also by offering young people opportunities, right across the continent, opportunities which leaving the EU would certainly put at risk.

It’s those opportunities and risks for young people that I want to talk about today.

In doing so, I also want to send out the message to young people, loud and clear, that this is a decision which, whatever way it is ultimately decided, will shape the rest of their lives.

My message to them is to make sure that they make their voice heard in that debate, and not to have the decision made for them by other people.

After all, the whole reason that this referendum is taking place is because David Cameron made a commitment to the British people to let them decide.

So it won't be a decision taken by politicians in Westminster, it will be a decision taken by every single adult British citizen who chooses to take part, and that must include young adults.

Because it is young people who arguably have the most at stake.

Brexit risks a lost generation

One of the reasons that the Great Recession was so damaging was that it hit young people the hardest. Youth unemployment soared, entry level jobs were cut and graduate opportunities were closed off.

I don't think it's hyperbole to say that we risked seeing a lost generation in this country.

In fact you only have to look at Greece, Spain or Portugal, to see how easily that could have been the case, with scores of young people unable to fulfil their potential and display their talents because of economic turmoil.

That's the simple reason why tackling youth employment and making sure young people have the education and skills to get a job has been at the heart of our long term economic plan.

It's why we made the difficult decisions which were necessary to rebuild a strong economy, so we could offer the promise of a better future to the next generation.

Undeniably, there is still work to be done, but the outlook for young people entering adulthood in 2016 is a far cry from where it was in 2010.

There are now a third of a million fewer 16- to 24-year-olds unemployed with a 25% drop in the rate of young people who are not in education, training or employment and the lowest

number of 16-to-18 NEETs on record.

This year graduate recruiters are expecting 8% more vacancies - a 10-year high.

It's thanks to the growing economy that we are making good progress on delivering our pledge of 3 million apprenticeships, with a significant recent rise in the number of 16-to-19 apprentices.

That doesn't leave us any room for complacency, but things are significantly brighter for a young person leaving school today than they were 5 years ago.

A vote to leave the European Union would put all of that progress, and young people's future prospects at risk.

CBI analysis has shown that a vote to leave could cost 950,000 jobs, leaving the unemployment rate between 2 and 3% higher; a report from the LSE last week showed that the average household is likely to see a fall in income of between £850 and £1,700 and new research out today from Adzuna shows that firms are already cutting back on advertising jobs because of their fear of a Brexit.

And we know it's young people who will face the brunt of the damage a vote to leave would bring.

Because the Great Recession demonstrated the stark reality that when we experience economic shocks, the likes of which we could suffer if we leave the EU, it's young people who suffer. As we saw in that recession, the largest increases in the rate of unemployment were among these young people.

That shouldn't be a surprise - when the economy struggles and firms stop hiring, it's those at entry level who they stop recruiting for first.

Even those jobs that are advertised receive many more applicants from higher skilled, older workers and second earners, meaning young people, looking for their first big break, are crowded out.

I know of one student who was told his graduate offer was at risk if the UK didn't stay in Europe, as that firm was considering moving jobs elsewhere. He certainly isn't alone.

It's clear, that if Britain leaves Europe it will be young people who suffer the most, left in limbo while we struggle to find and then negotiate an alternative mode. In doing so we risk that lost generation becoming a reality. And everyone who casts their vote must understand that.

If parents and grandparents vote to leave, they'll be voting to gamble with their children and grandchildren's future.

At a time when people are rightly concerned about inter-generational fairness, the most unfair decision that the older generation could make would be to take Britain out of Europe and damage the ability of young people to get on in life.

The opportunities for young people

But it's not just the risks of leaving that mean young people should vote for us to remain.

The opportunities afforded by the ability to work, study and travel in Europe are particularly important and exciting to young people as they plan their adult lives.

Taking them in turn:

The EU offers young people the opportunity to work anywhere within its borders.

So they can start a career as an engineer for Volkswagen in Wolfsburg in Germany, or spend a year as an English language teacher in Nice or as we're here at the British Fashion Retail Academy, take the opportunity to work in the fashion capitals of Paris, Milan and Barcelona.

And young people can do this all without the hassle and risk of employment visas and time limits - free to stay for as long as

they want and travel back to Britain when they want.

In fact, estimates suggest that there are more than 1.2 million British citizens taking advantage of freedom of movement and living in Europe - over 180,000 in France, over 250,000 in Ireland and almost 310,000 in Spain. I myself spent time working in Amsterdam and that experience of working abroad was invaluable, giving me new experiences and broadening my horizons.

Young people also benefit from the fact that people come from the EU to work in the UK as well.

To take just one example, relevant to my own department, we currently have over 1,000 language assistants from the EU teaching in British schools. That means hundreds of thousands of pupils are having the opportunities to have their study of French, German and Spanish supported by native speakers.

Which leads me on to the opportunities that the EU offers young people to study in Europe.

Being in the EU means young people have the chance to study at any of the thousands of European Universities. They have the flexibility to do so for either part of their studies, for a summer language course or for their entire degree.

In fact in 2013 there were over 20,000 British students studying in the European Union.

That is no surprise given that language skills and international experience is regularly cited by employers as a key competency they look for in job applications.

And students from other EU countries who choose to study here generate around £2.27 billion for the UK economy, supporting around 19,000 jobs.

Then there are the opportunities to travel.

For many young people travelling around the continent is a rite of passage before they settle down into adult life.

Whether it's inter-railing, backpacking or city hopping.

Being in the EU makes it easier and safer to travel around the countries of Europe.

Young people traveling in Europe don't have to worry about a myriad of visas and entry requirements and they don't have to worry about the cost of falling ill because the European Health Insurance Card means they'll be treated for free or at a reduced cost no matter which country they are in, with students covered for the duration of their course or foreign assignment.

And perhaps most importantly for young people traveling on tight budgets, our EU membership makes it much cheaper to travel as well.

The cost of flights is down by 40% thanks to EU action and the cost of using a mobile phone in Europe down by almost three-quarters, with roaming charges due to be scrapped completely in the next year. Meaning there's no excuse not to make that call home!

Britain as a nation

But I know for many young people, the main reason that they want Britain to remain in a reformed Europe, is about more than simply weighing up the risks of leaving and the benefits of staying.

The fundamental reason why many young people think it's important that we stay in the EU is because of what our membership of that block of 28 nations, says about our country and our place in the world.

They want Britain to be an outward looking country that engages with the world, they want us to choose internationalism over isolation.

This is the generation of Instagram, Easy Jet and Ebay.

They don't want to see a Britain cut off from the world, where not only their opportunities, but our influence as a country, ends at our shores.

These young people have grown up in a world where international cooperation, economic growth, technological advancements and social media, have seen barriers being torn down across the world.

They want that to continue, for their lives to become ever more open, not for us to put up walls and go the other way.

They've grown up in a Europe which hasn't seen war or conflict within its borders in over 70 years, which they know is in no small part a product of multinational cooperation. And they've seen first-hand how the EU is able to face down emerging threats, like Russian aggression.

Young people want to see the UK working internationally to tackle the big problems and issues that they care about because they want to make their world a better place.

Whether it's sexual and gender equality, tackling poverty or protecting the environment and tackling climate change, the young people like those I often speak to at Loughborough University in my constituency, want to see the UK leading the fight against these global ills, and they know that our voice and impact are magnified by playing a leading role through the EU as part of a group of 28 nations.

The EU provides development assistance to 150 countries and is the largest aid donor in the world. We exercise considerable influence to ensure that aid is maximised, and it's thanks to our lobbying that the vast majority of that aid goes directly to low-income countries.

As Minister for Women and Equalities, I've witnessed first-hand the important work that the EU does, driven by the UK's leadership, in tackling issues such as FGM, human trafficking and forced marriage, which blight the lives of women across the globe.

And I've seen the impact that EU funding has in supporting projects which make a real difference to women's lives.

Projects ranging from giving counselling and support to women accused of witchcraft and excluded from their communities in Burkina Faso, to providing training to 2,000 former female soldiers in Indonesia to help them find new employment.

And it's thanks to our influence that the EU development agency has become much more focused on the rights of women and girls, leading to the EU Council declaring in December that gender equality in development is now an EU priority.

At the same time as we seek to secure global equality for LGBT people, the fact that there is an EU wide commitment to eliminating discriminatory laws and policies against LGBT people makes a profound difference – and in particular the fact that the EU has made ending the death penalty for same-sex relationships a key priority in terms of its diplomatic efforts.

On these issues, issues which young people don't just care about, but expect us to be making a difference on, our role in Europe allows us to achieve real change and improve the lives of vulnerable people and groups around the world.

In short being in the EU allows us to exercise even more clout on the world stage, while at the same time allowing us to keep our distinct national identity.

That's what most young people want to see, they are rightly proud of our culture, heritage and everything that makes us British. But they want us to be a nation confident enough to realise that working through international organisations doesn't mean we have to compromise on any of that.

So my view is that our membership of the European Union not only offers young people significant opportunities, it also ensures we're the type of engaged and outward-facing nation that those young people want to live in.

And as I started this speech by saying, I want young people to

make sure their voices are heard in this debate - whichever side of the debate they might be on - otherwise they risk having the decision made by other people, their future decided for them, not by them.

As political scientist Larry Sabato rightly says: "Elections are decided by the people who turn up."

And the evidence from elections and referendums in the past is that young people are the least likely to do that - estimates suggest that 18- to 24-year-olds were almost half as likely to have voted in the 2015 election compared to over 65s.

So firstly I'd ask young people to make sure they're registered to vote, and to register by the 18th of April so that they can vote in the local, mayoral and police and crime commissioner elections that are taking place across the country as well, but at the very latest by the week of the 6th of June. It takes no more than 5 minutes and can be done online.

Secondly, on June 23rd I hope young people make sure they have their say on the future of their country, to make the decision about the type of country they want to spend their adult life living in, by casting their vote.

Thirdly, to those young people, I want say this - don't think you have to keep your opinion on the EU debate to yourself. Go out and make the case to others and in particular your older friends and relatives. Make sure they know what the vote means for you.

In the Irish gay marriage referendum, young people made a real difference to the outcome, not just through their own vote, but by calling their parents and grandparents to tell them why it was so important to vote in favour. And I'd encourage young people here in the UK to do the same - tell your grandparents why you want Britain to remain in the EU and why they should vote to do the same.

And finally to those of you like me, who even on a generous interpretation, no longer fall into the 'young person' category.

I'd simply ask this - when you cast your vote, remember that you're making a decision on the future of this country and shaping our country for generations to come.

I'd ask you to think about the impact of that vote, not just on your lives, but on that of your children and grandchildren.

I'd ask you to ask yourselves - what the impact of that leap into the dark will mean for them and others in the next generation.

I want to spend the next few years making sure that we build on the opportunities now available to young people, not trying to repair the damage that a vote to leave would do to them.

I want us to use our position in a reformed Europe, to demand more for the next generation and I want that generation to grow up in a nation comfortable enough with its own identity to work with others and lead on the international stage.

That's why I'll be voting to remain and why I'd urge all of you to do the same.

Thank you.

Share this page



Facebook



Twitter

Published:

29 March 2016

From:

Department for Education

The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP

Part of:

EU referendum

Young people

[Is there anything wrong with this page?](#)

Services and information

- [Benefits](#)
- [Births, deaths, marriages and care](#)
- [Business and self-employed](#)
- [Childcare and parenting](#)
- [Citizenship and living in the UK](#)
- [Crime, justice and the law](#)
- [Disabled people](#)
- [Driving and transport](#)
- [Education and learning](#)
- [Employing people](#)
- [Environment and countryside](#)
- [Housing and local services](#)
- [Money and tax](#)
- [Passports, travel and living abroad](#)
- [Visas and immigration](#)
- [Working, jobs and pensions](#)

Departments and policy

- [How government works](#)
- [Departments](#)
- [Worldwide](#)
- [Policies](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Announcements](#)

[Help](#) [Cookies](#) [Contact](#) [Terms and conditions](#)
[Rhestr o Wasanaethau Cymraeg](#) Built by the [Government Digital Service](#)

OG**L** All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated



© Crown copyright

