

## The Impact of Brexit on Scottish Public Policy and the Independence Debate

*Speech by Vanessa Glynn, Chair of EMiS, at the discussion hosted by the Centre for Scottish Public Policy and the Young European Movement Edinburgh on May 4<sup>th</sup> 2017.*

We are a cross-party, volunteer group which is part of the Europe wide European Movement set up after WW2 by people, including Churchill, who wanted the countries of Europe to stop fighting and work together. It is as relevant now as it was 60 years ago.

We campaign for the EU as a force for good on our continent and we want the Scotland and UK to be in the EU. Without apology we say there is no good Brexit for Scotland or UK.

Leaving the EU will damage Scotland's economy with barriers to trade, an end to freedom of movement- depriving us of much needed workers and citizens, fewer jobs and opportunities for our young people as students, researchers and workers across EU.

Lower tax take as immigration to Scotland falls, is bound to hit the social fabric. You cannot maintain health and public services with less money.

The UK's Office for Budget Responsibility's estimates a **£59bn Brexit dent in the public finances over five years**. That's money that could have been spent on hospitals, schools and social care. Either you increase taxes or reduce services and it is the poor and vulnerable who tend to be hit hardest.

Brexit, whatever the majority in the UK thought they voted for, is a right-wing coup by an oligarchy, and the populist media - Daily Mail, Daily Express - who support and control them. They do not like any constraint on their vision of a low-tax, small-state Britain. They have close affinity to American ideologues such as Paul Ryan, who have influence on Trump. They regard the EU as a socialist cabal holding back full-throttle free marketeering. This is the thinking that is forcing the UK into a hard Brexit - out of the Single Market, with its consensus approach to rule-making, and out of the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice which stops business doing what it likes to make more profit.

If that is the Brexit vision, likely to be pursued when May wins the election, the outlook for social policy in the UK is not hopeful. We can look forward to deregulation. The rights and protections that we have as European citizens are likely to be under threat and certainly won't be protected by any supranational court. Our environmental and product safety standards will decline as the UK chases trade deals with the US and China on any terms we can get. Our entitlements in terms of working conditions, so fiercely fought for by trade unions and socially-liberal governments, will be chipped away justified by the need to be globally competitive. That's what Global Britain means.

How might this affect Scottish Independence? The bounce in support of Independence that was forecast if the UK voted out of the EU but Scotland voted to Remain - which it did by 62% - has not materialised. Support for Independence hovers somewhere between 45-48% generally in polls. The Scottish Parliament has voted for a second IndyRef but needs London's agreement. May says not yet. Any loss of seats by SNP in June election will be interpreted by some as loss of interest in independence.

We will see. Most people in Scotland are not particularly attracted to the sort of model of society that hard Brexiteers favour. Margaret Thatcher was pretty unpopular here with many. A recent Google -Daily Record survey showed that 57% of respondents would prefer to be independent and in the EU than out of the EU and in the UK under a hard right-wing Conservative Government.

So, it may not be Brexit per se that ushers in Independence but the social model which is the consequence of the UK Government's choice of a hard Brexit.