



Faculty of Public Health

Of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom

Working to improve the public's health

Second Reading of the European Union (Withdrawal Bill) 2017-19

A second reading of the EU (Withdrawal) Bill takes place on 30-31 January. On behalf of the Faculty of Public Health (FPH), I would be very grateful if you might consider speaking to the importance of ensuring that a high level of public health is protected in the Bill.

About the Faculty of Public Health

FPH is a membership organisation for 4,000 public health professionals across the UK and world, and registered charity. Our role is to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities and national populations. We support the training of public health professionals, new research, and campaign to improve health policy, working in partnership with local and national governments.

Brexit and Public Health – A watershed moment

Brexit is a watershed moment for public health. We're looking for the healthiest and safest Brexit programme, to protect public health in the short term and enable health improvement in the long-term in the UK and internationally. We aim to mitigate the risk of exacerbating inequalities and to support a levelling up of outcomes. Prevention and public health are a key part of enabling our workforce to be 'match fit' for Brexit – and of our future economic prosperity and ability to compete on a global stage.

Infectious diseases know no border

The Prime Minister has made clear we are leaving the EU, but not Europe¹. Infectious diseases know no border. Our members are concerned that the UK's ability to tackle serious cross-border threats to health security is maintained – and for our mutually beneficial relationship with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) to be assured.

The UK benefits from, and has an influential role in, the interchange of data through our access to key EU surveillance networks, for example epidemiological and virological surveillance of influenza and haemorrhagic fevers, e.g. Ebola. This data provides decision makers and public health experts with vital information required to take appropriate action to protect the public. We are keen for the Government to make a commitment to preserving our access to these key networks.

The ECDC also has a mandate to strengthen the EU's capacity for the prevention and control of infectious disease. Working with the European Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training, it supports, through training, harmonised approaches to take coordinated interventions against EU public health threats. Trained epidemiologists are an essential component of the EU-ECDC threat response, in Europe and internationally – and we are keen to preserve access to this programme.

'Healthy' trade and investment agreements

The trade and investment deals we make with our key trading partners when we leave the EU will have a huge impact on the health and wellbeing of our populations. If we get it right, they could help to create healthier, happier, more productive communities. We want to secure an economic strategy and free trade and investment agreements with a core commitment to promoting sustainable, efficient and equitable growth.

'Do No Harm'

The Secretary of State for Health has outlined his commitment that: "[the Government] aims to maintain UK participation in European cooperation on areas such as disease prevention, combating

¹ Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, 'We have voted to leave the EU, but not Europe: Article by Theresa May', 17 February 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-have-voted-to-leave-the-eu-but-not-europe-article-by-theresa-may>



Faculty of Public Health

Of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom

Working to improve the public's health

antimicrobial resistance [and] public health".² In particular, we would like to brief you on an amendment the public health sector is concerned to see included in the Bill – and which would provide the Government an opportunity to offer clear reassurance to the public that Brexit will 'do no harm' to population health.

Our proposed 'Do No Harm' clause would have the effect that that the Bill's powers are not used to reverse or amend regulations vital to public health, in such a way that would worsen population health and wellbeing.

Next steps

We would be very interested in meeting you in person. FPH can offer a scientific evidence-base to support policy proposals, the expertise of over 4,000 public health professionals and the wider voice of public health stakeholders, including their public support. Specifically, we are very keen to identify members of the House of Lords who would be interested to:

- Raise these issues in public, social or print media
- Participate in events, workshops and other meetings

For further information, please contact:

Mark Weiss, Senior Policy Officer

T: 020 3696 1479 | E markweiss@fph.org.uk

² Jeremy Hunt MP, Secretary of State for Health. House of Commons Health Committee Brexit and Health and Social Care Evidence Session, 24 January 2017, <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/Health/overview-of-Hunt-Brexit-evidence-01-2017.pdf>