



The UK's future in Spain: what role do culture and education and Research play?

Summary note of Madrid delegation

8-11 April 2019, Madrid

Key findings

Context

- UK education and culture are still well-respected in Spain and the referendum and subsequent negotiations has not changed this.
- Collaboration in culture and education effective in improving the UK's relationship with Spain, and the arts and education sectors in Spain are still keen to engage with the UK.
- Engagement with the arts and cultural sectors will be important in ensuring the UK is well-regarded in Spain and recovers from any reputational damage caused by the Brexit negotiations.

Risks

- The biggest risks post-Brexit for UK-Spanish collaboration in arts and culture post-Brexit are mobility, trade and IP, and in terms of multilateral engagement, the loss of the UK's membership of EUNIC.
- The biggest risks for education are added bureaucracy in terms of the mutual recognition of qualifications, and the effect of uncertainty around fees and visas for Spaniards considering studying in the UK.

Opportunities

- Bilingual education is an effective way of engaging young people and the regional and national Governments with the UK and providing much-needed language skills for young people. There is high demand, and this could be expanded.
- Technical skills, audience development, and opportunities for international networking are not well-developed in the arts and creative industries in Spain and are an area of strength for the UK. Partnerships in these areas could be expanded to ensure ongoing collaboration with the UK.
- Given the continued demand for bilingual education, there is an opportunity for the UK to supply more native English language assistants and advise on future programmes

Please find a full summary of the delegation below. Note that comments have not been attributed to specific individuals.

Background

The visit formed part of the British Council APPG's inquiry into the role of culture and education in the UK's future relationship with European countries.

The inquiry is exploring the role that various aspects of UK education, research, and arts and culture can play in the UK's relationship with European countries, and in UK soft power. Evidence has been gathered by convening a series of roundtables with policymakers and sector experts from the UK and Europe, through a call for written evidence, and through fact-finding visits to France and Spain.



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During the visit, the delegates visited a state school running English bilingual projects, a bilingual and bicultural British Council school, and met regional and national government representatives, FCO representatives based in Spain with representatives from the creative industries, looked at English language instruction and exams, and met with the Instituto Cervantes, the British Council's equivalent in Spain.

This visit took place just before the Article 50 deadline was extended for a second time. The UK was due to leave the EU without a deal if no deal was reached before 12 April, one day after the visit was due to be completed. Spain was in the throes of a national election campaign, with the national election due to take place 28 April. The discussions on the elections focussed on the perceived rise of populist and far-right parties in Spain, and the impact this would have on the country.

How is the UK perceived in Spain?

Those that we spoke to said the UK was generally seen as an open and tolerant society, but that Spaniards held two conflicting impressions of the UK and its citizens. The first was of a UK with a world-class higher education system and an excellent cultural offer, and the second was of burnt UK tourists binge-drinking in various Spanish coastal holiday destinations and at Spanish festivals.

The 'Brexit effect'

We discussed how the referendum result and the subsequent negotiations had affected Spaniard's impression of the UK. We heard that the general reaction after the referendum was that of confusion, and one individual commented that "we thought the UK would reconsider their decision when they realised the conditions they could get outside of the EU were going to be worse than the conditions they had inside the EU... but we were wrong".

We heard that the referendum result was widely interpreted as an anti-immigrant and anti-EU result, and that this had damaged the UK's reputation as a welcoming, open and tolerant society. Widely reported incidents of racist attacks on Spaniards in the UK, including an attack on a reporter for the newspaper with the highest distribution in Spain, has added to this impression. The question of Gibraltar has also been brought to the fore through Brexit.

It was argued that the negotiations had been detrimental to Spain's impression of the UK. The UK was once seen as the "mother of all Parliaments" but with the ongoing negotiations, there was a feeling of exasperation with the continued uncertainty over Brexit. One individual commented that Spaniards "just do not know what the UK needs in order to make a decision".

We heard that the UK is important to Spain for several reasons, namely trade, investment, tourism and migration. In 2017, bilateral trade amounted to over £47 billion. The UK is a primary EU investor in Spain, with 13.1% of direct foreign investment, and 700 UK companies currently invest in Spain. Spain is the sixth largest inward investor in the UK (in terms of FDI stock), and some 400 Spanish companies are registered in the UK. Spain was the fifth biggest tourism market for the UK in 2017. For the UK, Spain is the tenth largest export market. In 2017, exports (goods and services) from the UK to Spain were worth £16 billion (an increase of ten per cent on the previous year).

More than 2.41 million Spanish visitors to the UK spent £1.1 billion in 2017, and UK residents and tourists spent €16.2 billion in Spain in 2016. Some 298,000 UK nationals are registered as residents in Spain. Accordingly, the Spanish government has made a 'transition period' for Britons living in Spain so that in the event of a no-deal, they have a set period after the UK leaves the EU to regularise their status. It is worth noting that a proportion of Britons living in Spain are retired, have sold their property in the UK and have no 'home' to go to in the UK.



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It was argued that the main issue in terms of Brexit for UK-Spain relations was the continued uncertainty. Spain was therefore hesitant about a further extension to Article 50. It was also argued that in terms of loyalties, the EU would always come before the UK. The education and cultural sectors are keen to engage with the UK post-referendum and post-Brexit, but the nature of this engagement may need to change.

Education, Spain and Brexit

Higher Education

Spain is an important market for UK higher education (HE). Since 2013, with the introduction of proactive promotion, the number of young Spaniards studying at UK higher education institutions has increased by 32 per cent to 12,089 in 2016–17.

In terms of how the referendum result and subsequent negotiations have affected Higher Education links with Spain, there was some good news. Spain was one of only two countries in the EU that had higher undergraduate application numbers to UK HEIs last year than the previous year. We heard that Spanish students find studying in the UK an attractive option because of the English Language, British culture, and the variety and reputation of degrees and the teaching methodology, which differs substantially from the degrees offered in Spain.

For the academic year 2019-2020 Spanish students are guaranteed home fees. However, the fee and immigration status of Spanish students wishing to study in the UK post-2020 is unclear. Anecdotally, we were told that there has been a drop-off in interest in the UK at study fairs. For several years the UK stall has had the biggest queue at these events but this year the USA and Germany stalls attracted the largest crowds.

Some individuals argued that the negative press on racist attacks against Spanish people in the UK could be a factor in pushing some to study elsewhere. It had raised concerns amongst parents and prospective students about the welcome that students may have in the UK. However, it is worth noting that this concern has not been reflected in student experience thus far, with very high satisfaction ratings amongst Spanish students that do study in the UK.

There was some discussion of transnational education. If students are less attracted to studying in the UK, there is the option of studying UK degrees in Spain. Twelve institutions currently offer British degrees in Spain. Popular courses include arts, tourism and hospitality. This is a potential growth area for the UK if visa restrictions make studying in the UK more difficult.

It was also suggested that if less students came to the UK to study, more courses would be offered in English in other countries, which could be an opportunity for the UK to provide strategic advice on the direction of these courses and training to the professors teaching in English.

English language learning and bilingual education

In terms of English language learning, the ministry of education saw no drop in demand for bilingual education and British qualifications such as iGCSEs post-referendum amongst students and parents. The British Council School, which offers bicultural education has seen an increase in applications. In terms of English language exams, there was a drop-off in terms of demand for the private exams offered by the British Council just after the referendum, but this has subsequently recovered.

The individuals we spoke to argued that the demand for English is partly due to the lack of employment opportunities at home (youth unemployment currently stands at just over 32%) and partly due to the reputation of British Education and a desire to study in the UK. English is something that could differentiate young people in an increasingly competitive market. This is a growth area in Spain and an opportunity for the UK to provide advice on pedagogies and become a trusted partner.



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Interestingly, several representatives preferred British English to US English and would like to continue to work with the UK. The main challenge was a lack of numbers of British English Language Assistants, who are native English speakers that help with pronunciation and speaking. The US could supply higher numbers which is which is why they maintained a partnership with them.

One individual suggested another opportunity for future collaboration. There are many newly qualified teachers in Spain that are yet to pass the 'oposiciones', which are tests to become a public servant in Spain. In the UK there is a lack of language teachers, and Spanish is in high demand. It was proposed that these newly qualified Spanish teachers could have some training in the UK, teach in the UK for a set period and then return to Spain to teach as part of the bilingual programme.

Case studies, Education

Bilingual education in Spain

We visited a 'colegio' or primary school which was part of the British Council English-Spanish bilingual project in Spain. In 1996, working in partnership with the Ministry of Education, a joint project was launched to introduce an integrated, bilingual curriculum into public schools across Spain, with a focus on schools in socially deprived areas. The project drew on the development of the bilingual curriculum at the British Council School. From its launch in 43 schools, today there are 87 primary schools and 53 secondary schools in the programme, with a total of 40,000 students each year.

English is used as a medium of instruction for various subjects at the school which means the level of English and understanding of British culture is higher than pupils studying the English language only. Many children leave the secondary school with a C1 level of English according to The Common European Framework for languages, which is the level expected at the end of a languages degree in the UK. English speaking 'Asesores' provided advice and support to teachers and pupils. Many pupils in these schools are from lower socio-economic backgrounds and have no access to English at home.

From the feedback we received from the teachers, pupils, and representatives from the regional and national Government, it was evident that the programme not only improved pupils and parents perceptions of the UK, but also forged a deep and lasting relationship with both the regional and national administrations. Testament to this ongoing positive relationship, not one school had asked to leave since the project began.

The British Council School

The British Council School first opened in 1940 in the heart of Madrid, aiming to provide a British-style education based on liberal and democratic values. The school offers what they call 'bicultural and bilingual education'. It is authorised by the Spanish Ministry of Education to offer a British education based on Early Years Foundation Stage and National Curriculum of England. This is taught in English by UK qualified teachers for approximately 80% of the 35 hour week. The remaining time is dedicated to the statutory requirement of teaching Spanish Language and Culture.

The school is widely recognised as one of the leading schools in Spain, with a strong reputation for excellence and boasts almost 2000 pupils. School families are typically Spanish (over 90%) with a high socio-demographic profile. Many alumni go on to have careers at the highest levels in politics, business, professions and the arts. From discussions with alumni we saw that they had a lifelong affinity with the UK, which brings returns in terms of UK soft power. Although a fee-paying school, it does a variety of outreach work and acts as a 'hub' for bilingual state-run schools in Madrid.



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UK Qualifications

There has been some success with the mutual recognition of qualifications, and A levels are fully recognised in Spain. However, there is still some work to be done on professional qualifications. In terms of the Bologna process and mutual recognition of degrees, it was argued that once the UK has left the EU there will be a new set of standards to meet in order to qualify to exercise a profession in EU, and different bureaucratic processes to learn as a non-member which may affect mutual recognition achieved thus far.

Arts, Culture, the Creative Industries, Spain and Brexit

Context

We learnt that Spain is culturally well-disposed towards the UK and that British culture, education, arts and science are highly regarded, and that the UK is a partner of choice in the performing arts and creative industries. We were told that the arts sector in Spain is predominantly state-funded and devolved, and that there was no equivalent of the Arts Council in Spain. As arts institutions are public institutions, many of the high-level arts stakeholders are appointed by the regional governments and are public servants.

Bilateral co-operation

When asked about the effect of Brexit on UK-Spain collaboration in the arts and creative industries, a prominent individual in theatre production argued that the creative industries were in the business of bridge-building, and that if barriers were put in place post-Brexit, they would just need to build higher bridges. For theatre, the UK remained as attractive as ever, as they enjoy such an excellent reputation. Representatives we met from festivals and from music agreed with this.

There had been some positive changes since the referendum. Most of those we spoke to agreed that the UK arts and culture sectors had been 'too arrogant for too long', depending too heavily on their excellent international reputation, and not expending enough time or energy on forging and maintaining partnerships. The referendum seemed to have changed this. According to those we spoke to, since the referendum the UK arts and culture sectors had made much more effort to visit Spain and to proactively seek out partnerships with Spanish arts and culture organisations.

It was suggested that arts institutions were more used to adapting to rapid change and faced multiple barriers in terms of financing, and so were more willing to adapt around Brexit than other sectors may be. However, when we spoke with the director of a major museum in Madrid, they had a slightly different view. They said that if they were to have travelling exhibitions, and the UK became more expensive to exhibit in, they would look towards more profitable markets such as China to exhibit the work. In their eyes, increased costs would make it much less attractive for Spanish arts institutions to exhibit or perform there.

Multilateral co-operation

We learnt that an important vehicle for UK-Spain and European cultural exchange was EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture), a European Union cultural network which includes cultural institutes of the major EU countries such as the Instituto Cervantes, the Institut Français, the Goethe Institut and the British Council. We heard that Spain was keen for the UK to remain part of EUNIC, and that they couldn't envisage the promotion of European culture without the UK. We heard that the UK is perceived as essentially European even if it is not a member of the EU because it operates within what they view as 'European values'. The promotion of culture was seen to go hand in hand with the promotion of values. The multilateral element of this collaboration was something that



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would be particularly missed, and the example was given of the attractiveness of a Spanish film festival versus an international film festival.

We were told the major concerns in terms of Brexit for the Spanish arts and creative industries sectors were mobility, trade and IP. In order to mitigate and possible issues caused by Brexit, we were told that the UK had to ensure that its value-added was so significant that it was still worth engaging with us. This could be done through adding UK expertise in areas that need development. In Spain the main areas for that would benefit from UK expertise are development of technical skills, audience development, and creating opportunities for international networking.

Case studies Arts and Creative Industries

Teatro Real

The Teatro Real and its artistic director, Joan Matabosh have proved to be strong enthusiasts of UK opera, as illustrated by the range of productions presented at this prestigious performance venue from British opera houses or directly co-produced with them (ENO, Royal opera House). The public and critical acclaim of the recent adaptations of two of Benjamin Britten's operas (*Billy Budd* directed by Deborah Warner and *Gloriana* by David MacVicar) are a clear demonstration of this commitment.

The strategic partnership between the British Council and the Teatro Real revolves around an audience development programme capable of reaching new audiences through innovative and inclusive activities. One of these projects was "Dance in the City – flashmob" in partnership with the Royal Ballet (Covent Garden) involving dance associations and artists with functional diversity. Audiovisual productions are also great tools to reach a younger audience. Coinciding with the visit of the English National Ballet in October 2019, the British Council has secured the screening of the virtual reality piece "Giselle VR", produced by Sky and ENB, providing the audience attending the performances with the opportunity to complement their experience by watching this adaptation of Akram Khan's choreography through Samsung's headsets.

La Joven Compañía

Modelled on the UK National Youth Theatre, this youth theatre company looks to the UK for expertise and has carried out a number of collaborations with UK playwrights and producers. Among others, the successful staging of the Spanish version of the *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* in Spain and various performances in the UK.

La Joven Compañía is an innovative privately-run organisation in which young professionals undertake all the roles that make up a regular theatre company (from lighting technician to press officer, or from actors to stage designers). The British Council brokered a professional residency between the Lyric Hammersmith and La Joven Compañía with the exchange of young workers over a short period of time. Beyond its commitment to train the sector's future professionals, La Joven Compañía is also a leading institution in producing and presenting contemporary plays in Spain relating to issues that affect young people across western countries. The British Council has supported the work and visits of British playwrights such as Simon Stephens or Bryony Lavery. Over the last 5 years, more than 200.000 people have enjoyed the performances of this unique Spanish company.



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Collaboration with Instituto Cervantes

The Cervantes Institute is the British Council's equivalent in Spain. We heard that the institute aims to promote both Spanish and all other official languages and cultures of Spain (including for example, the languages and cultures of Catalonia and the Basque region). They are currently present in 44 countries and have 87 centres.

They argued that Spanish, like English, is a global language. It is the official language in 23 countries and has over 400 million native speakers worldwide. The institute is based in non-Spanish speaking countries in order to teach Spanish as a foreign language. However, they work with all the academies in Spanish speaking countries, including a conference last held in Argentina, in order to represent the Spanish language in all its diversity. All the official languages of Spain are offered at every Cervantes centre if there is enough demand. One of their recent successes was ensuring that Spanish is now an optional language in Chinese schools.

In terms of their engagement with the UK, they have centres in Leeds, Manchester and London, which offer language courses and cultural events including talks, performances, and concerts. In Spain they work closely with the British Council to facilitate bilateral cultural exchange. They are also a leading member of the European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC), and work with the British Council through this to facilitate multilateral cultural events and exchange including the UK.