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Managing regulatory divergence in the UK's future trade arrangements with the EU

Kathryn Wright York Law School
kathryn.wright@york.ac.uk

Parliamentary Academic Fellowship with the BEIS Select Committee

Dr Kathryn Wright undertook a seven month ESRC IAA supported fellowship to advise the House of Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Select Committee in the context of their 'Brexit and the implications for UK business' inquiries. The work centred on managing regulatory divergence in the UK's future trade arrangements with the EU, with Dr Wright spending three days a week with the Committee team in London during early 2018, working to influence and assist the scrutiny process attached to the UK-EU negotiations.

The fellowship

The fellowship centred on clear needs, expressed by the Select Committee. In particular:

- To examine provisions of, and the literature on existing trade agreements between the EU and third countries, chiefly to investigate whether future UK regulation could diverge from the EU while still allowing access to the EU Single Market, and how this might occur.
- To investigate mechanisms and models to mitigate the effects of regulatory divergence in the UK-EU future relationship, such as mutual recognition and equivalence, agencies and networks between regulators, and dispute resolution mechanisms.
- To assist with the committee's more general Brexit queries, including: advising on lines of inquiry and questions to ask witnesses; producing briefings for MPs for oral evidence sessions; contributing to the Committee's sectoral reports on the automotive industry, aerospace, processed food and drink, and pharmaceuticals; and reviewing draft reports and overall viability of recommendations, with reference to EU law.

The fellowship encountered some distinct challenges, arising from the inherent uncertainty of political developments around Brexit, alongside the changing priorities of the Committee. These challenges were mitigated via a flexible approach to working practices and deliverables.

The outcome

A detailed paper on different understandings of mutual recognition was produced. This raised awareness of the implications of the Government's strategy on the future trade relationship with the EU. The paper was subsequently published by the House of Commons library as 'Future Trade with the EU: Mutual Recognition' (Briefing Paper, 8384). Dr Wright also contributed to the Committee's public reports on the impact of Brexit on particular sectors of the economy, and produced a range of internal briefings for MPs and Parliament staff. From a developmental perspective, the fellowship provided an invaluable insight into UK parliamentary procedure, and the working processes and requirements of Parliamentary Select Committees.



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Contact us:

Research Centre for Social Sciences
University of York, York, YO10 5DD, United Kingdom.
Tel: +44 (0)1904 321458