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IT skills shortage after Brexit could affect UK security and economy

A massive shortage of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills and knowledge could be on the way post-Brexit putting the UK's economy and security at risk.

Research by academics at Northumbria University and UCL has identified a number of risks to the UK if the Government does not put measures in place to support the development of ICT infrastructure, education and policy.

Without a clear list of priorities in place, researchers fear that the UK could

see a huge shortage of ICT skills and knowledge in education, business and wider society which will compromise the UK's economy, security and competitiveness in global markets.

Academics have outlined a number of actions to tackle the risks including growing ICT education in schools, making it easier for overseas computing students to study in the UK and supporting the development and funding of ICT research, development and innovation.

The research included a global survey of more than 250 professionals and academics working within the ICT sector and was undertaken by Dr Elizabeth Lomas of UCL and [Professor Julie McLeod](#) of Northumbria University.

Speaking about the findings, Professor McLeod said: "Information and Communication Technology has been responsible for some of the biggest changes during the 21st century. Given its role and importance in society, we wanted to explore how people working within this sector felt about the challenges presented by Brexit.

"Our research began the day after the referendum and the results of this latest stage identify some key actions which need to be taken to support the future of ICT in the UK post-Brexit. These include more targeted policies and funding strategies to support and grow ICT, and the importance of international cooperation to meet environmental and ethical challenges.

"Critically there was a desire from participants to have a clear Brexit roadmap from the UK Government and the EU in order to plan. Whilst those working in ICT are used to engaging with change, the current uncertainty is far harder to navigate.

"ICT solutions will be key to helping the public and private sectors adapt to the changes Brexit triggers, both within the UK and the EU. However, the ICT domain needs to be connected to Government agendas in order that a range of ICT solutions can be put in place to support Brexit change."

More information about the research is available [here](#) and the first stage results have been published in the journal [PLOS One](#).

The 15 key themes or actions identified by ICT professionals and academics

during the research are:

- A UK/EU Brexit plan and an ICT Brexit roadmap to reduce uncertainty and enable planning across both the UK and the EU
- Active and evidenced Government engagement with the ICT domain
- UK infrastructure to support ICT delivery
- Pushing new knowledge and ICT development
- UK workforce frameworks to attract the best ICT talent
- Growing ICT skills in schools
- Planning for future societal needs and linked ICT requirements/skills
- Supporting international study in the UK
- R&D and innovation frameworks and funding
- New international business models and tax frameworks
- Optimising legislation and regulatory frameworks for an ICT driven world
- UK leading on international standards
- Smart living underpinned by ICT driven global environmental solutions
- Ethical data storage, management and deletion
- Ethical ICT delivered from across ICT practice and into society

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