

German students reveal exam answers to key Brexit questions

Pupils who sat Brexit test say decision to leave EU 'sounds naive' and Northern Ireland should vote again

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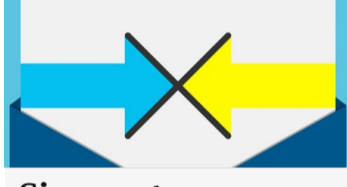
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Fri 6 Jul 2018 11.00 BST

How can the Brexit negotiations move on from the deadlock over the Irish border? According to a group of German students who have sat the first school exam on Britain's withdrawal from the European Union, the answer could be straightforward: give **Northern Ireland** a referendum on whether to stay in the UK or the EU.

In April, students of English in the southern German state of Baden-Württemberg were asked as part of their school-leaving exams to write about the differences between the hopes connected to Britain's EU referendum and the reality of **Brexit** so far.

Now that the *Abitur* - the certificate of general qualification for university entrance, equivalent to the UK's A-levels - papers have been marked, some students have revealed some of the creative solutions they came up with.

"If I understand it correctly, the conflict with the border is there because Northern **Ireland** voted to stay in the EU," said Daniel Boppert, 19, a student at the Lessing gymnasium in Karlsruhe, who scored 14 out of 15 points in the written English test.



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"Now they need a special solution. Perhaps they should have another referendum, but only for those in Northern Ireland, to see if they want to stay in the EU or in the UK under the new conditions after Brexit."

The dispute over the Irish border has proved one of the main sticking points of the Brexit negotiations. Any UK divergence from EU regulations - a key boon for many Brexit advocates - risks creating a hard border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and unravelling the peace process.

Boppert said that although he had some sympathy with the Brexit vote, "I don't really understand it. I can see how the sovereignty idea has some appeal, but surely you can't get around the fact that the economy will take a hit in the coming years. I don't know if perhaps Boris Johnson had a special appeal, but it all sounds very naive to me."

His classmate Ole Ermel, 18, said it would be dangerous to revoke the referendum result and hold another UK-wide vote. "It would be absurd to simply void such an important democratic decision. Where would that lead to?" said Ermel, who scored 15 out of 15. "But perhaps they could have a vote only in Northern Ireland?"



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The exam, sat by about 31,000 students, asked for comment on a drawing by an Indian cartoonist, Paresh Nath, contrasting "Project Fantasy" - represented by a man in a bowler hat soaring to the sky on a UFO - with the realities of economic uncertainty and "job confusion".

"What I got from the cartoon was that the British people had a lot of hopes for Brexit, such as an upturn in the economy, and that these hopes haven't really been fulfilled," said Rebecca Gartner, 18. "Instead there has only been uncertainty."

David Blinov, 18, said: "I put that Brexit was a backward step for Europe. We have had 60 years of peace in **Europe**, and the EU has played an important role in that. Now the danger is that the EU as a whole could collapse.

"I can see how people voted to leave because they felt patriotic, but I find patriotism pretty moronic," he added. "If you happen to have been born in another country then you would have felt patriotic about that country. It's so random."