

The UK's association to Horizon Europe must be implemented now

European Union's research and innovation community representing over 1,000 universities, 56 academies of science and 33 rectors' associations, as well as thousands of Europe's most distinguished researchers, call for the European Commission and President Ursula von der Leyen to finalise the United Kingdom's association to Horizon Europe immediately.

The success of Horizon Europe hinges on its commitment to excellence and global outlook. The European Union and the UK share a long history of close and trusted collaboration in research and innovation. This has provided enormous benefits to excellent research, resulting in countless collaborations to tackle some of the world's most pressing challenges, boosting competitiveness and growth.

Based on the provision in Protocol I of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement for the UK to associate to Horizon Europe and the subsequent Q&A document from the Commission, for the past 10 months universities, European researchers and research institutions have been working with UK partners with a shared vision and in good faith that the UK would soon be a full associate member to Horizon Europe.

However, the absence of a clear timeline for finalising UK association is now causing increasing concern and uncertainty which risks endangering current and future plans for collaboration. It also sends unhelpful signals to other third countries wishing to associate.

The signatories of the joint statement urge the Commission and UK Government for swift and decisive action to avoid further delays or even non-association which would result in a major weakening of our collective research strength and competitiveness.

LERU Secretary-General, Prof. Kurt Deketelaere, says: the UK is a major research and innovation powerhouse with some of the most prominent research-intensive universities in the world. Over the past decades, UK and EU universities have been tackling shared challenges and building close partnerships through the EU research framework programmes. A quick association of the UK to Horizon Europe is vital to continue these close collaborations and to tackle the many societal challenges that lay in front of us. A further delay simply for political reasons is unacceptable. Just like this is the case for Switzerland.

UDICE Secretary-General, Dr. H  l  ne Jacquet, says: As French leading research-intensive universities, UDICE members are all deeply involved in long-lasting and fruitful scientific partnerships with universities in the UK. These partnerships are crucial to address major challenges such as climate change, digital transformation of our economies or global health. Strong collaborations between universities in the EU and in the UK lead to more knowledge, more discoveries, more innovation to the benefit of European citizens wellbeing and prosperity.

The Guild's Secretary-General, Prof. Jan Palmowski, notes: Notwithstanding current arguments in other areas of UK-EU relations, the question of science collaboration is not a zero-sum game. If UK

association to Horizon Europe is not realised, the capacity of science and innovation in the UK and in the EU are both weakened. If Horizon Europe association is achieved for the EU's closest and strongest science partners, the UK (and also Switzerland), we enhance the capacity of researchers to address our complex societal challenges together – and we make Horizon Europe even more attractive to other third countries to associate.

German U15's Secretary-General, Dr. Jan Wöpking, notes: Associating the UK to Horizon Europe is an obvious win-win for both parties. The UK is a world leader in science. So is the EU. British universities are among the closest, most trusted and strongest partners that our universities have. We will only solve the crucial challenges the world is facing by combining our strengths in research and innovation. We have no time to lose. The UK's association process should be finalised as soon as possible. The same holds for Switzerland.

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