

## **Securing a strong outcome for research in the EU-UK future relationship:**

### **Reaching an agreement on UK participation in Horizon Europe**

The EU and UK have been discussing UK participation in Union Programmes, including Horizon Europe, as part of the negotiations on a future EU-UK relationship. It is encouraging that both sides have committed to the principle of UK participation in their mandates, recognising that collaboration between the UK and the EU in the framework programmes strengthens our ability to tackle shared challenges, such as cancer and climate change.

It is vital that this commitment now translates quickly into an agreement on the terms of participation. Horizon Europe association should be a core part of the future relationship between the EU and the UK for research, underpinning valuable scientific partnerships that have been built up over many years.

We have all reaped the health benefits of these collaborations. Clinical trials, particularly on diseases with limited patient populations, are reliant on EU-UK collaboration, while close research partnerships continue to accelerate life-changing medical research. Our ability to respond to the threat of climate change and outbreaks of new diseases like Covid-19 has also been greatly improved by close scientific and clinical partnerships across Europe.

Knowledge and discovery do not stop at borders, and the shared global challenges we face require joint solutions. Collaboration through the research framework programmes is a springboard to productive partnerships across the world. We owe it to future generations in the UK, the EU and beyond to ensure that the new EU-UK relationship best serves them through research.

**We call on both sides to continue these negotiations with fresh energy, a spirit of compromise, and a focus on what is needed for the success of the programme. To that end, we have identified a number of solutions to some of the sticking points in Horizon Europe discussions, which are set out in more detail below.** These issues are:

- Demonstrating commitment to the programme
- Ensuring a fair financial contribution through a 'two-way' correction mechanism
- Accepting EU oversight of the use of programme funds
- Agreeing to introduce reciprocal mobility arrangements to support the programme
- Clarifying that the results of research can be exploited beyond the EU

Whatever solutions the negotiators choose to settle on, they should seek to come to an agreement quickly. Rapid progress is needed in the coming weeks if productive research collaborations are to continue smoothly into 2021, when the Horizon Europe programme begins.

Horizon Europe presents a key opportunity for EU and UK research communities, and agreement on association can be reached through strategic, sensible and pragmatic compromise. With enough will on both sides it should be possible to reach an agreement in the time available—but time is running out. The UK and EU research community is counting on negotiators to find a way forward in the coming weeks, for the benefit that research brings to citizens across the world.

#### **1. Demonstrating commitment to the programme**

It is reasonable for the EU to expect the UK to commit to the programme, and to work together to find an appropriate basis for participation. Conversely, it is reasonable for the UK to explore in parallel the alternative steps it would take if full association cannot be agreed,

much as that outcome should be avoided. This should not be interpreted as a lack of commitment to the programme.

- To build trust, the UK should explicitly set aside additional funding for full association for Horizon Europe in its science budget, in the same way that other countries are doing as they begin their association discussions. Discussion of exit clauses for the agreement should proceed on the basis of Horizon 2020 precedents.

## **2. Financial contributions**

The UK government should accept that it can no longer be a net beneficiary of the programme, and that it should pay a reasonable fee to cover administrative costs. This is a necessary and reasonable consequence of no longer being a Member State. The benefits of association are not purely financial and a significant value should be placed on the intangible benefits of association, which include access to networks and infrastructure, and operating at a scale, ambition, and associated risk level beyond what could be achieved bilaterally. Many other third countries recognise this and make overall net financial contributions to Horizon 2020 so that they can also play in the 'Champions League' of research funding schemes.

However, the current proposals are likely to create a financial imbalance that would be too much for the UK to reasonably pay, with no limit to how large this imbalance could become.

The current EU text includes a 'one-way' correction mechanism to ensure the UK cannot be a net *beneficiary* of programme funding, but does not protect the UK from inappropriate imbalance in the opposite direction, which is more likely. The UK's success rate in Horizon 2020 has decreased significantly in recent years, creating considerable uncertainty about what financial return could be expected. A multi-billion Euro contribution over the lifetime of the programme would make participation very difficult for the UK to justify. There needs to be a way of limiting the contribution from the UK, or any other country associating to the programme to ensure this is reasonable.

The original vision for Horizon Europe was that the programme should be 'open to the world'. This reflects the globally collaborative nature of research and has been a key strength of Horizon 2020. For this to continue to grow under Horizon Europe, a model for association that can attract a range of third countries is necessary. Finding an appropriate solution to this is therefore essential for the benefit of the programme itself and international cooperation.

- The UK and EU should build on the original spirit of the Horizon Europe programme by introducing a *two-way* correction mechanism for balancing substantial disparities between initial contributions and eventual receipts from the programme. This could be capped if necessary, or only apply if the disparity is greater than a certain amount, after administrative costs are accounted for. It should apply to all third countries seeking to associate to Horizon Europe.

## **3. Overseeing the correct use of programme funds**

The UK should not consider oversight of the Horizon Europe programme from EU institutions to be a red line for the negotiations. These bodies play only a narrow role in ensuring grant conditions are met and money is spent correctly. This oversight only applies to those in receipt of EU funding, and has no impact on national laws, or citizens that are not involved with receiving grants. Those who are uncomfortable with this arrangement need not participate—there is no imposition on them. Moreover, Wellcome's internal analysis has

found no examples of the European Court of Justice arbitrating pre-competitive research disputes. Other countries such as the USA accept this EU oversight of research funding, and there is no reason for the UK not to follow suit.

- The UK should accept the need for EU institutions to oversee the correct use of programme funds. Existing Horizon 2020 agreements recognise this, and it is part of the EU's research collaboration with countries such as the USA.

#### **4. Mobility**

Collaboration and the sharing of ideas continues to be vital in accelerating high quality research and is crucial for the success of the programme. It is therefore in the EU and the UK's interest that research workers can easily travel and work to share their expertise. It is fundamental to the smooth functioning of the programme that reciprocal arrangements to support the mobility of people participating in Horizon Europe are introduced by both sides, and reasonable that references to incorporating suitable reciprocal mobility arrangements are made as part of an agreement.

The UK's Global Talent Visa provides one good route for putting such arrangements into practice, as it links eligibility for the visa to recognised sources of funding, such as Horizon 2020, and has scope for including skilled technicians that are vital to supporting research work. The importance of researcher mobility is already recognised in the UK's R&D roadmap.

- Both sides should accept that an agreement should refer to reciprocal mobility arrangements being in place to support the functioning of the programme, recognising the need for mobility of research workers in different roles and sectors.

#### **5. Exploitation of results**

It is reasonable to expect that as a third country the UK would no longer have the exact same rights as it did as a Member State. This is reflected in the Commission's proposal by for example the limiting of voting rights. However, researchers in associated countries should be able to exploit research results wherever they see fit. The draft regulation establishing Horizon Europe is currently unclear on whether exploitation would be permissible outside Member States.

- The EU should clarify that results of research conducted in and/or with partners in associated countries are exploitable in those jurisdictions, as well as in Member States.

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