

Paris, le 4 novembre 2021, 10h

Les universités de recherche françaises s'engagent avec leurs homologues européennes pour l'association de la Grande Bretagne à Horizon Europe

Une lettre ouverte signée d'organisations de l'enseignement supérieur, de la recherche et de l'innovation de l'union européenne représentant plus de 1 000 universités a été envoyée ce jour à Madame Ursula von der Leyen, Présidente la Commission Européenne, afin de l'alerter sur la dérive du calendrier de signature de l'accord d'association de la Grande Bretagne au programme de recherche européen Horizon Europe. Alors que le principe semblait acté il y a plus de dix mois entre l'union européenne et le gouvernement britannique, l'absence de concrétisation alors que les premiers appels de ce programme Horizon Europe sont imminents fait craindre une mise en péril du principe même d'association.

A l'image de leurs homologues de l'Union Européenne, les universités de recherche françaises réunies au sein du groupe Udice avaient salué la perspective de pouvoir poursuivre leurs collaborations anciennes et fortes avec les universités britanniques dans ce cadre d'association annoncé. La Grande Bretagne est une grande nation scientifique, et la communauté universitaire britannique elle-même est très attachée à la relation de qualité installée avec les universités de l'union européenne, notamment les universités françaises et allemandes. Se priver de ces collaborations en recherche est un jeu à somme nulle, notamment au regard des grands défis environnementaux, de santé publique ou technologiques du 21^{ème} siècle.


Sans méconnaître les enjeux liés à la sortie de l'UE de la Grande Bretagne, la communauté scientifique réunie autour de cette action appelle autant la Commission Européenne que le gouvernement britannique à ce qu'un contexte propice à la collaboration de recherche soit préservé.

Documents :

- Communiqué de presse officiel
- Courrier à Madame Ursula von der Leyen, Présidente de la Commission Européenne

Contact presse :

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A propos. Udice réunit dix grandes universités de recherche pluridisciplinaires françaises

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Université Côte d'Azur – Université de Bordeaux – Université de Strasbourg
Université Grenoble Alpes – Université de Paris – Université Paris Saclay – Université PSL*

Embargoed until Thursday 4 November 2021, 10.00 CET

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. Hélène 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.

For further questions, please contact

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or any of the signatories of the joint statement.

Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Brussels, 4 November 2021

Dear President von der Leyen,

We are writing as representatives of the European Union's research and innovation community representing over 1,000 universities and universities of applied sciences, 56 academies of science, 38 research performing and funding organisations, 33 rectors' conferences, as well as 120 regional organisations. We also represent many of Europe's leading researchers individually, including over 10,000 grantees of the European Research Council (ERC), and over 20,000 holders of a Marie-Sklodowska Curie Action award (MSCA), as well as doctoral candidates in almost every member state. Together, we jointly support the United Kingdom's association to Horizon Europe as soon as possible.

Horizon Europe's success will hinge on its commitment to excellence and global outlook. The only way to move forward from the Covid-19 pandemic is as a global community working together to drive research and innovation through collaboration.

We have a long history of close and trusted collaboration and shared success with the UK. The strength of those partnerships 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.

A strong framework programme in research and innovation is essential for the EU to succeed in the twin green and digital transitions. Europe's strategic autonomy requires close collaboration with the EU's closest partner in research and innovation.

The EU knowledge community collectively welcomed the provision in Protocol I of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement for the UK to associate to Horizon Europe. The subsequent Q&A document from the European Commission provided us with the reassurance that UK entities could apply with EU partners for the first multi-beneficiary calls.

Based on the Protocol and those reassurances, for the past 10 months our universities, businesses 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.

But the absence of a clear timeline for finalising UK association is now causing increasing concern. This lingering uncertainty risks endangering current and future plans for collaboration.

We are rapidly approaching a crunch point. With the first Horizon Europe grant agreements approaching and new calls soon to be launched, UK association must be finalised without further delay.

Now is the time for swift and decisive action. Further delays or even non-association would result in a missed opportunity and a major weakening of our collective research strength and competitiveness.

We urge the European Commission and UK Government to work towards a successful UK association to Horizon Europe, to safeguard this valuable and mutually beneficial R&I cooperation.

Yours,

Signatories:

Professor Axel Cleeremans, President of the Association of ERC Grantees (AERG)

Professor Antonio Loprieno, President of All European Academies (ALLEA)

Rector Jón Atli Benediktsson, President of Aurora Universities Network (AURORA)

Rector Rik Van de Walle, President of CESAER

Prof. Ludovic Thilly, Chair of the Coimbra Group

Evalina Brännvall, Chair of the European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA)

Dr Gabi Lombardo, Director of European Alliance for Social Sciences and Humanities (EASSH)

Prof. Màrius Martínez, President of The European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU)

Pirita Lindholm, Director of the European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN)

Professor Michael Murphy, President of the European Universities Association (EUA)

Professor René Medema, Chair of EU-LIFE

Agnieszka Żyra, President of the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Eurodoc)

Tatiana Panteli, Head of Brussels Office EuroTech Universities Alliance (EuroTech)

President Georg Krausch, Chair of German U15

Rector Vincent Blondel, Chair of The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities (The Guild)

Dr J. Leslie Zachariah-Wolff, Secretary General of IDEA League

Prof. Marin Andler, President of Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE)

Rector Magnificus Karen Maex, Chair of the League of European Research Universities (LERU)

Dr. Mostafa Moonir Shawrav, Chair of Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA)

Dr Marc Schiltz, President of Science Europe

Otto Bruun, Chairman of Universities of Applied Sciences for Europe (UAS4EUROPE)

President Christine Clerici, President of UDICE French Research Universities (UDICE)

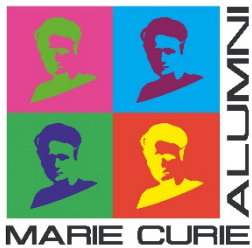
Prof. Luciano Saso, President of the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA)

Dr. Alexandru Marchis Vasile, Chair of the Universities Informal Liaison Offices Network (UnLIION)

Rector Snježana Prijić-Samaržija, President of the Young European Research Universities (YERUN)



The European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers



Cc: Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President Inter-Institutional Relations and Foresight
Clara Martinez Alberola, Deputy Head of the Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom
Margrethe Vestager, Executive Vice-President A Europe Fit for a Digital Age
Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth
Jean-Eric Paquet, Director General, Directorate-General Research and Innovation
Signe Ratso, Chief Negotiator for Horizon Europe Association, Directorate-General Research and Innovation
Maria Leptin, President of the European Research Council