

Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President of the European Commission
Inter-institutional Relations and Foresight

30 May 2022

Dear Vice-President Šefčovič,

I am writing to you on behalf of Universities UK, the representative body of 140 UK universities, to seek your support in resolving the urgent issue of UK's association to Horizon Europe and the other EU science programmes, as agreed in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).

Researchers across the continent have now been waiting for 17 months for this arrangement to be confirmed, and the impact of this delay is being keenly felt by UK institutions and their EU counterparts. Many of our members have reported that their researchers have been forced to leave research consortia that are working on projects that would have a tangible positive impact on European and global prosperity, like improving climate data and addressing food security in sub-Saharan Africa. The situation is deteriorating every day that the uncertainty drags on.

Failure to secure UK association to Horizon Europe would be a lose-lose for health, wealth and wellbeing and would do a disservice to future generations in Europe and beyond. We appreciate that there are fundamental differences between the EU and UK with respect to the implementation of the TCA, but it's vital that both sides work together to ensure that our ability to collaborate in science is not compromised by unrelated political disputes. Our colleagues across the EU university community, including the European University Association, strongly support this view through the Stick to Science campaign.

We believe we are close to the precipice, based on the information we have recently received from the UK Government. Their view is that the value-for-money case for UK association is weakened every day that the UK is left waiting for the arrangement to be confirmed. As evidence they would point to emerging data from the early calls in Horizon Europe which show that the UK has dropped from the second most frequent participant in Horizon 2020 to the seventh in the current programme.

In response to the ongoing uncertainty, the UK Government is now at an advanced stage of planning large-scale, comprehensive domestic alternatives to Horizon

Chief Executive
Alistair Jarvis

Universities UK
Woburn House
20 Tavistock Square
London
WC1H 9HQ

Telephone
+44 (0)20 7419 4111

twitter
@universitiesuk

email
info@universitiesuk.ac.uk

website
www.universitiesuk.ac.uk

Company limited by
guarantee and registered
In England and Wales
Number 2517018

Registered charity number
1001127

Europe, making use of the billions of pounds of funding that have been set aside for association. We believe that a decision to abandon association could come as early as June. Once the decision to shift away from participation in Horizon Europe is taken, we anticipate that it will not be possible to revert to association.

As a valued European ally, we would like to draw your attention to the gravity of the situation and to request a meeting with UK vice-chancellors to explain in greater detail just how immediate and serious this threat is.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration of my request. I am looking forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P Boyle', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Paul Boyle

Vice-Chancellor, Swansea University

Policy lead for Research and Innovation on the Universities UK Board

Vice-President and Council member of the European University Association