

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister's Office  
10 Downing Street  
London  
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Cc: Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer  
Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

16 March 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to you to urge you to intervene in the discussions between the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and HM Treasury on the question of the funding of the UK's association to Horizon Europe.

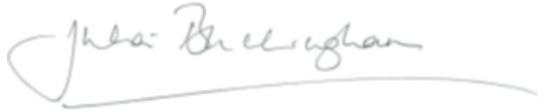
The science community has been delighted by your support, including through commitments in today's Integrated Review of Defence and Foreign Policy. We strongly welcome your stated commitment for the UK to be a science superpower, and believe this is genuinely within our grasp.

However, we are increasingly alarmed by reports that the Treasury has not made funding available to support the UK's association to Horizon Europe. If this position is maintained, and if BEIS is required to fund the costs of participation out of the existing science budget, it will amount to an effective cut of something in excess of £1bn. This would be roughly equivalent to the cost of funding the entire Medical Research Council and Science and Technology Facilities Council combined, which is deeply concerning. This would come in the immediate wake of this week's announcement that there will be a £120m shortfall between the commitments UKRI has made to projects funded by the Global Challenges Research and Newton Funds, and the funding available, meaning that current projects are being abandoned.

In my view these cuts would represent a grave strategic error, undermining the capacity of UK science and research in a manner which could fundamentally weaken the system in the long term. Reduced domestic funding would damage our ability to compete for Horizon Europe funding, risking a double loss. A £1 billion reduction in funding would be equivalent to cutting more than 18,000 full-time academic research posts – distributed across all parts and all four nations of the UK, and lead to a further reduction of up to £1.6bn in private R&D investment which would have been stimulated by public investment. The decision would also weaken the UK's attractiveness as a destination for foreign direct investment in research, and will undermine the credibility of the government's expressed ambitions to provide global scientific leadership, set out in today's Integrated Review.

As our competitors – including both the US and China – ramp up their investment in science, the UK cannot deliberately choose the opposite direction of travel. Such a decision would diminish us, now and in the long term, and run counter to our shared ambition for the UK to be a science superpower. I urge you in the strongest possible terms to intervene to prevent this outcome.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Julia Buckingham CBE**  
President, Universities UK

## The voice of universities

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