



House of Commons
Science and Technology
Committee

**Leaving the EU:
implications and
opportunities for
science and research:
Government Response
to the Committee's
Seventh Report**

Sixth Special Report of Session 2016–17

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Science and Technology Committee

The Science and Technology Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Government Office for Science and associated public bodies.

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The following were also members of the committee during the parliament:

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Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/science and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the relevant [inquiry page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are: Simon Fiander (Clerk); Marsha David (Second Clerk); Sean Kinsey (Second Clerk); Dr Elizabeth Rough (Committee Specialist); Martin Smith (Committee Specialist); Amy Vistuer (Senior Committee Assistant); Julie Storey (Committee Assistant); and Shagufta Hailes (Media Officer).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Science and Technology Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 2793; the Committee's email address is scitechcom@parliament.uk.

Sixth Special Report

On 18 November 2016 we published our Seventh Report of Session 2016–17, [*Leaving the EU: implications and opportunities for science and research*](#) [HC 502]. On 1 February 2017 we received the Government's response to the Report, which is appended below.

Appendix: Government Response

Introduction

The Government welcomes the Science and Technology Select Committee's report 'Leaving the EU: implications and opportunities for science and research', and is grateful for the Committee's positive view on the recently established BEIS Stakeholder Working Group on EU Exit, Universities, Research and Innovation.

The UK's status as a global centre for science and research is fundamental to our wider economic competitiveness. This Government will continue to engage with our international partners and keep our focus on research excellence. We will maintain an environment in the UK that attracts the best minds. We value the contributions made by international staff, both from the European Union and elsewhere. Our Government is committed to building on the UK's world-leading science base and making the UK the global go-to nation for scientists, innovators and investors in technology.

As the Prime Minister said recently in her Lancaster House speech, a global Britain must also be a country that looks to the future. That means being one of the best places in the world for science and innovation. The Prime Minister noted that we would welcome an agreement to continue to collaborate with our European partners on major science, research, and technology initiatives. The Committee's report highlights issues that we know we will have to consider as we negotiate to leave the European Union. Retaining and building on our science and research base will remain a top priority.

The Government made a series of announcements on EU research and innovation funding and collaboration to provide assurance and certainty to stakeholders. We have ensured that these have been communicated widely domestically and across the EU. Stakeholders have been reassured that they should continue to bid for competitive EU research funding such as Horizon 2020 while we remain a member of the EU because the government will work with the Commission to ensure payment when funds are awarded. The Treasury will underwrite the payment of such awards, even when specific projects continue beyond the UK's departure from the EU. This has given British participants and their EU partners the assurance and certainty needed to plan ahead for projects that can run over many years.

The guarantees that the Treasury has provided sent a clear message to UK businesses and universities that whilst we remain a member of the EU they should continue bidding for competitive EU funding. We have however also committed to go further to support a healthy science and technology ecosystem in this country than ever before. This Government has recently committed to substantial real terms increases in government investment in R&D, rising to an extra £2 billion a year by 2020–21, to help put Britain at the cutting edge of science and technology.

We have provided further assurance by confirming that existing EU students and those starting courses in 2016–17 and 2017–18 will continue to be eligible for student loans and home fee status for the duration of their courses.

We recently extended that assurance to postgraduate support through Research Council studentships, which will remain open on the current basis to EU students starting courses in the 2017–18 academic year. The funding support will cover the duration of their course, even if the course concludes after the UK has left the EU.

Last week we launched our Green Paper “Building our Industrial Strategy” setting out our approach to developing a modern industrial strategy. The strategy aims to improve living standards and the economy by increasing productivity and driving growth across the whole of the UK. We are putting the UK’s strengths in science, research and innovation at the heart of our industrial strategy. Research and innovation lead to new products, services and better ways of doing business that are key to economic growth and UK competitiveness. The UK is already a world-leader in science and research, but we must make sure that we do more to commercialise the ideas and discoveries made in Britain. The UK and British companies must be at the forefront of innovation, developing new products and services that address the challenges of the future.

Making the UK the best place for science and innovation is one of the 12 key objectives in the Prime Minister’s speech on a vision for a Global Britain. This reflects the high priority placed on our research base within the Government’s strategy for Britain’s departure from the European Union.

The Government’s response to the recommendations

Short term responses to uncertainty

Committee Recommendation

We recommend that the Government present to us a genuinely comprehensive strategy for communicating its messages of ongoing support for science and research in the context of its plans for leaving the EU and the negotiations to follow. The strategy should be much more than a collection of high-level meetings and speeches within the UK, and should include an analysis of key audiences in other countries, such as researchers who could be encouraged to work here.

Government Response

Timely and targeted communication will be important throughout the negotiations. We are engaged with domestic, European and wider international stakeholders, including through the following routes.

1. The Government has established a High Level Stakeholder Working Group on EU Exit, Universities, Research and Innovation. Chaired by the Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, Jo Johnson MP, the group meets regularly. Membership consists of high level representatives of research and innovation funders, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), national

academies and learned societies, and business. This group will advise on how to best build on the excellence of UK research and innovation, maximising the opportunities from the UK's exit from the European Union.

2. The Government's global Science and Innovation Network (SIN) has attachés in Embassies across the globe, including many European capitals. SIN supports our Higher Education establishments and institutions as they build relationships around the world. SIN also engages directly on policy issues with their host country. This puts our SIN officers in the ideal position to build the networks and knowledge that ensure the Government's messages reach the right audience and that we are engaging with key partners in each country. Since the referendum SIN has communicated our core messages to their in-country contacts. Currently, our SIN teams are developing country level plans for engagement to communicate our strong commitment to international collaboration.
3. Since the referendum, we have worked closely with partner organisations such as Research Councils UK (RCUK), and Innovate UK to reach the UK research community, ensuring accurate messaging on EU research and innovation. In addition, RCUK and Innovate UK both have active offices in Brussels. RCUK also has a presence in the USA, China and India, and Innovate UK has a presence in China. These offices work closely with the SIN network, adding extra breadth and depth to our engagement.
4. Important stakeholder representative bodies such as the National Academies, Learned Societies, Universities UK and the Russell Group are helping us to reach individuals and institutions in their own networks.
5. The Government's network of National Contact Points (NCPs) advises UK researchers and businesses on access to European research and innovation funding. We work closely with our NCP network to keep their customers abreast of announcements on EU research and innovation support.
6. We are actively seeking opportunities at both Ministerial and working level to engage with the European Commission, international research and innovation Ministers, and their Ministries through intergovernmental meetings, such as Competitiveness Councils, G7–G20 meetings, and more specific bilateral conversations.

We will continue to listen to ensure that we understand the issues that concern our stakeholders. We realise that not every stakeholder is engaged with one of the organisations mentioned above. That is why, for those who are not sure who to turn to, research@beis.gov.uk remains open and gives anyone a direct and confidential line to BEIS officials.

Securing the best outcome for science and research from the Brexit process

Committee Recommendation

We understand that the Government is not yet able to offer firmer guarantees regarding future immigration rules for researchers but remind them that this is essential in order to

continue to attract top-quality researchers to the UK. We recognise that planning for exit negotiations is still underway, but there is clear agreement that researcher mobility is a crucial component of the UK's successful research and science sector. The issue should be treated separately from discussions about immigration control more broadly, with firm commitments provided as soon as possible. The Government should deliver on the Prime Minister's early reassurance to EU researchers currently working in the UK, that certainty for them will be a Government priority, by making an immediate commitment to exempt them from Brexit negotiations on any reciprocal immigration controls for workers already in post.

Government Response

The Government is committed to building on the UK's world-leading science base and making the UK the go-to nation for scientists, innovators and investors in technology. The Government recognises that being open and welcoming to international talent in science and research is vital to maintaining and improving the UK's world-class research base. Our research community is enriched by the best minds from Europe and around the world.

Providing reassurance to these individuals and to UK researchers working in Europe will be important for the Government going forwards. Securing the status and providing certainty to EU nationals already in the UK—and to UK nationals in the EU—is one of this Government's top priorities for the forthcoming negotiations.

Government's vision for science outside the European Union

Committee Recommendation

We welcome the Government's plans to establish a high level group to capture the views of the science and research community and look forward to receiving further details in the Government's response to this report. But the science perspective must be part of the Government's planning now. The Government states that UKRI can provide such a voice. It should formally involve the interim Chair of UKRI as a bridge between BEIS and DExEU. We recommend that he engage publicly with the community to describe the progress made with securing a good outcome for science and research.

Government Response

UKRI will provide a stronger voice for research and innovation, both domestically and abroad. This will include a strengthened voice across Whitehall. In the Autumn Statement the Government committed to spending an additional £2 billion per year by 2020–21, much of which will be delivered through UKRI. This is a clear testament to the value that UKRI's strategic presence will bring.

In terms of the Committee's recommendation regarding the interim chair of UKRI; a central part of Sir John Kingman's role is engaging with key stakeholders and communicating to the sector more broadly. This includes outlining the vision for UKRI and seeking views—including those regarding the UK's departure from the EU—to inform its detailed design.

In addition, Sir John Kingman sits on the Stakeholder Working Group on EU Exit, Universities, Research and Innovation, described earlier in this response document. Robin Walker, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Exiting the European Union is also a Member of the group and regularly has the chance to hear the views of a wide section of stakeholders including the interim chair of UKRI.

Committee Recommendation

We recommend that DExEU make appointing a Chief Scientific Adviser a matter of priority.

Government Response

We are grateful to the Commons Select Committee for sharing their views on the issue of a Chief Scientific Adviser. DExEU are continuing to work closely with Sir Mark Walport, the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, to consider how to ensure that DExEU is accessing the very best scientific expertise both within and outside government. There are several models for achieving this, and we must be sure we are taking into account DExEU's role as a co-ordinating department. The department is currently exploring these options, including considering the appointment of a Chief Scientific Adviser.

In addition to internal expert advice, we have also consulted, and will continue to consult, with a very wide range of universities and research institutions on the implications of EU exit. We aim to ensure that the views of the sector are heard and that we build consensus around our negotiating position. The High Level Stakeholder Working Group on EU Exit, Universities, Research and Innovation, includes a number of senior representatives of UK research and innovation organisations and has been set up to discuss opportunities and issues arising from the UK's exit from the European Union. Robin Walker has regularly been attending its meetings in his capacity as Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Department for Exiting the European Union. The group will work with the Government to ensure the UK builds on its strong global position in research and innovation excellence.

Committee Recommendation

The Government must send a clear message now that it intends to protect the UK's strength in science. To help allay the uncertainty arising from the Referendum result, it should set out its objectives for addressing the priority areas of concern for the science community—funding, people, collaboration, regulation and facilities. It should use the opportunity of the Autumn Statement later this month to commit, as we have previously recommended, to raising the UK's expenditure on science R&D to 3% of GDP. This would demonstrate a determination not only to negotiating a post-Brexit relationship with the EU that is good for science but also to secure opportunities for science collaboration with markets beyond Europe.

Government Response

The Government was pleased to announce at Autumn Statement a substantial investment in research and innovation, underlining our continued commitment to ensure the UK remains a leading destination for the science and innovation. The Government committed to spending an extra £2 billion a year by 2020–21, the biggest increase in decades. The

new Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund that this money will support will back priority technologies—such as robotics and biotechnology—where the UK has the potential to turn strengths in research into a global industrial and commercial lead.

This came in addition to previous decisions to protect science funding with a total investment of £26 billion over the period FY 2016–17–FY 2020–21. This Government’s sustained and consistent investment in research and innovation is sending a clear message that the UK is committed to protecting the UK’s strength in science. In addition to this, as the Committee has already noted, we have made clear that UK businesses and universities should continue to bid for competitive EU funds while we remain a member of the EU and we will work with the Commission to ensure payment when funds are awarded. The Treasury will underwrite the payment of such awards, even when specific projects continue beyond the UK’s departure from the EU.

The Government’s Industrial Strategy will place science and innovation at its core. The UK is a world-leader in science and research, helping us to generate new knowledge and make breakthrough discoveries. We must ensure we can commercialise these world-leading ideas and put the UK and British companies at the forefront of innovation by developing the products and services that address the challenges of the future.

The Prime Minister’s speech on a Global Britain set out “A Global Britain must also be a country that looks to the future. That means being one of the best places in the world for science and innovation.

One of our great strengths as a nation is the breadth and depth of our academic and scientific communities, backed up by some of the world’s best universities. And we have a proud history of leading and supporting cutting-edge research and innovation.

So we will also welcome agreement to continue to collaborate with our European partners on major science, research, and technology initiatives. From space exploration to clean energy to medical technologies, Britain will remain at the forefront of collective endeavours to better understand, and make better, the world in which we live.”

Committee Recommendation

The Government must set out the metrics it will use to assess how well the UK avoids the risks of Brexit for science and research and secures the benefits. It should monitor these metrics during the course of the Brexit negotiations, and regularly publish the results. We intend to ask the Minister for science for updates periodically during the course of the Brexit process.

Government Response

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) regularly releases statistical data on the UK’s research and innovation performance across a range of indicators. The Government is continuing to analyse the levels of UK participation in the EU research and innovation funding programme, Horizon 2020, and published the most recent set of data in December 2016. As part of the normal course of business, the Government monitors a wide range of indicators to assess the overall health of the UK’s

research and innovation activity including such measures as the citation impact of UK publications; UK university rankings; and the levels of overseas investment in research and development.

Some of the most impactful research is done working in collaboration with international partners.¹ The UK's global approach to collaborative research and innovation is part of the basis for the UK's research and innovation success. We will continue to monitor a wide range of indicators, to ensure that we have robust evidence to inform policy decisions going forward. At a high level, as the Minister outlined in his evidence, success would include the UK continuing to outperform competitors relatively in terms of research outputs and impacts. This would include factors such as continuing high citation rates for UK publications.