

# **Brexit: the facts behind opportunities & challenges for both the UK & European Science Establishments**

*May 8, 2017, 13.30-18.00 at the Royal Institution, London*

## **1. A Brexit debate on science; its goals**

The President of EuroScience is inviting, in collaboration with the Royal Institution London and Academia Europaea and with support from Elsevier, distinguished panelists and participants to a debate at the Royal Institution on the potential impacts of Brexit for science and innovation in the UK and the remaining EU-27. It will be on May 8, 2017 on the occasion of Europe Day, May 9, the day of the "Schumann Declaration" in 1950.

The goals of this debate are as follows:

- To consider the impact of Brexit for UK science (and innovation) and for science (and innovation) in the remaining EU 27, based on data on the mutual collaborations and interactions in the area of science, innovation and higher education
- To identify strategies for sustaining science (and innovation) in both the UK and the remaining EU 27 following Brexit and identify the risks and negative impacts and possible opportunities involved in various strategies
- To establish a "Brexit Watch" Task Force to operate on an ongoing basis collecting data and individual stories from the UK and the EU-27 as they anticipate and react to unfolding events and publish findings in mainstream and social media

## **2. The debate in more detail**

### *Background*

The decision of the UK to leave the EU, Brexit in short, has rattled the science and innovation communities. The European Research Area (ERA) may not be a concept that is easy to operationalize, but it stands perfectly well for the many deep links that have been forged among scientists, innovators, universities, companies and all the other actors in the area of science and innovation across Europe. Horizon 2020 and the ERASMUS programme are at the heart of many of these collaborations but they extend to what is happening at national levels. The communities of science and innovation need to understand, debate and try to influence the potential impacts of a Brexit, especially a 'hard' Brexit, for science and innovation, as well as for e.g. student mobility. This holds for the UK community as well as for the science and innovation communities in the remaining EU-27. A common history of 45 years has seen ties being established that are vital for individuals and institutions alike. The successive Framework and ERASMUS programmes have contributed not only to more coordination between national programmes, but, more importantly, to a sense of being part of a common European endeavor in a global context. It has become natural for students to pursue education abroad, for teaching, research and support staff to seek positions across the EU, for universities, research institutes and companies to work together in joint projects, or for policymakers and science administrators to collaborate and learn from one another.

### *Focus of the debate*

EuroScience is organising, in collaboration with the Royal Institution London and Academia Europaea and with support from Elsevier, a debate at the Royal Institution on the potential impacts of Brexit for science and innovation in the UK and the remaining EU-27. Obviously, some of these impacts may arise from the way Brexit takes shape in wider domains such as immigration restrictions, or from general financial implications of Brexit. The debate will focus on strategies the various governments and EU

bodies may follow in the negotiations to cope with the consequences, and on how the science and innovation communities can influence those strategies in order to sustain now long-standing collaborations in the interest of science and society. Such strategies would include compensation via more UK funding and/or via more cooperation with US, Canada, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Latin America, Africa, or more particularly the Commonwealth. A comprehensive or selective association agreement with the EU for science and innovation, and student mobility, is, of course, another option.

### *Audience*

Key individuals and representatives of major European institutions in the area of science, innovation and higher education will be invited. In addition, policymakers and representatives of civil society organisations will receive invitations. Media representatives will be among the audience as well. A press conference is also foreseen. As the debate will be held in the major theatre at the Royal Institution, it will be open to the scientists and the general public on a first-come-first-serve basis.

### *Two panels and speakers from different perspectives*

Distinguished panelists will bring different perspectives to the debate. Some will be scientists with a policy and science administration background; some will occupy leadership roles in key science organisations. There will be business persons with a keen interest in science and innovation; younger active scientists from the remaining EU-27 countries working in UK and younger active scientists from the UK working in or having worked in the remaining EU-27 countries. One panel will focus on the impacts of the UK, next to the strategies that might be pursued. The other will concentrate on impacts for the remaining EU-27 countries as well as other countries closely linked to the EU science, innovation and student mobility efforts. A sample of some of these impacts is listed below.

### *Aspects of potential impact on UK science*

- Loss of EU funding, from the ERC, for collaborative projects (including the EIT) or research infrastructure projects;
- Less cooperation with researchers and companies from remaining EU-27;
- Fewer coordinator roles in remaining joint projects;
- Fewer EU-27 students, as well as from other countries, at UK universities, due to immigration constraints and increased fees;
- Less access to Research Infrastructures in remaining EU-27 (to the extent access is supported by EU);
- Less easy participation in discussions on new Research Infrastructures;
- Less networking opportunities with researchers from academia, research centres and companies as many of them are linked to EU-funded projects;
- More difficult and perhaps less prominent participation in major collaborative projects such as the FET Flagship projects.

But potential positive aspects are cited as well; Science | Business of February 23 points to the UK getting a competitive edge in text and data mining due to less stringent, more flexible rules; or the possibility to engage in collaborative projects without EU funding and the concomitant complex EU organizational, administrative and financial arrangements.

### *Aspects of potential impact on science in remaining EU-27*

- Loss of experienced collaborators, above average in quality;
- Loss of experienced coordinators;
- Less access to Research Infrastructures in UK (to the extent access is supported by EU);

- UK may become less attractive for researchers from remaining EU-27 countries;
- ERA becomes less convincing as a major (in size and quality) community is no longer involved, though in practice the impact on the not very ambitious priorities agreed by the EU Council in the ERA Roadmap 2015-2020 will not be large.

Here again there might also be positive impacts, such as the possibility to potentially attract high quality UK researchers as staff members, including ERC grant winners.

*Background booklet with key data on UK and EU-27 science links*

To ensure that there is a common background a small booklet will be prepared with some key figures on the links between science and innovation in the UK and the remaining EU-27, as well as student mobility.

EuroScience, Royal Institution, Academia Europaea  
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