

## Opportunity to submit evidence - The UK's future in Europe: what role can Higher Education and Research play?

### 1. Is collaboration in HE and Research effective in improving the UK's relationship with European countries? If so, why?

- What are the most effective programmes and why?
- What hasn't worked and what can we learn from it?
- Are multilateral or bilateral programmes more effective in this respect?

#### Response:

- Yes, collaboration on Research does improve the UK's relationship with European countries across the range of schemes. Countries face many similar challenges, which require new knowledge, evidence, inquiry, testing and evaluation. Working together on research is often the first step toward co-developing solutions. The soft power of research collaboration is a critical element of diplomacy. The UK has an outstanding reputation for being 'outward looking' on research and innovation - a reputation which permeates beyond international higher education institutions, especially to public and private sector bodies, and most likely reaching many publics.
- Many universities have greater success with EU funding than UK funding schemes, which in turn brings greater benefits for those UK universities and their ability to create jobs and drive local/regional growth.
- Horizon 2020 is an effective scheme which is working well.
- The requirement for three partners from EU member states stimulates more collaboration and cross-fertilisation of research, which benefits the advances in research and also builds capacity more widely, therefore extending the benefits which research can bring.
- In regard to student and staff mobility and Erasmus+ programme KA1, the programme is crucial to initiate, improve and sustain partnerships with European countries. The Erasmus programmes encourage, facilitate and finance the mobility of students, academics and support staff between the members of the European Union and beyond, without which this would be much more difficult. In the last few years outgoing international mobility has increased rapidly and has become a crucial factor in the success of our global graduates. Without these opportunities, we wouldn't be able to prepare our graduates for employment in a globalised world. Additionally, the Erasmus programmes allow for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access programmes that otherwise would be unattainable for them. The rate of success for these students is higher than other, for example, a student from WP background who studied abroad is 15% more likely to be in employment within 6 months of graduation, according to the UUKi report on outward mobility 2016.

### 2. What are the potential barriers to collaboration for HE and Research in Europe?

- What impact will this have on how Europeans view the UK?
- How can these gaps be mitigated?
  - Is the loss of multilateral programmes a risk?
  - Will changes in the post-Brexit visa regime have an impact on the UK's relationships in Europe?

#### Response:

Increased administration from needing to participate in a different scheme could be off-putting, at least initially while it beds in and the majority watch and wait, until convinced it is 'worth the effort'

- If the UK is perceived as wanting to be 'different', it may no longer be a collaborator of choice for European partners
- Attracting and retaining research talent could be hampered significantly if there are extra hurdles or uncertainties in working in UK, compared to the EU
- Mitigation of these impacts requires clear messaging that we are open for business, reduced red tape, and ideally funding schemes which are streamlined with EU schemes and therefore easy to understand and administer, and reassurance for European researchers who choose to work in the UK and vice versa
- Yes, loss of multi-lateral programmes is a significant risk. From the university's point of view, the risk of being squeezed out of European collaborative research is enormous. We are already seeing a drop off in interest due to uncertainty, and this could take time to grow again, unless action is taken very quickly.
- Post-Brexit visa regime changes are likely to have an effect, though this is difficult to predict. Accompanying messaging will be especially important.
- Most partners for Erasmus mobility have expressed a concern around the costs of traveling to the UK. If we add visa processes and costs associated to that, it will be quite difficult to encourage students to study abroad in the UK> This will have great impact in the number of places/partners we can send our students out to. Their perception of the UK as being a friendly place to study will be damaged by strict visa policies and the costs associate to this, especially if students and staff are not able to access financial support from Erasmus programmes. Also, the UK has played an important role in leading some multilateral projects with European and non-European partners. The funding needed to continue this is higher than what the UK underwrite is prepared to cover. Most UK-led projects manage funding for non-EU partners as well, which will be lost if we don't participate in Erasmus. This will have a detrimental effect on our non-EU partnerships as well.

3. **In the future, what role (if any) should HE and Research play in the UK's future relationships with European countries?**

- If you had unlimited funding to improve the relationship with Europe through HE and Research, what would you do?
- What would success look like in this area? How would we know we'd got there?

**Response:**

- It is vital that UK and Europe continue to collaborate on research. These countries face many similar challenges which research can respond to, more effectively when working together. The geographical location of the EU will always make them an attractive partner for many UK researchers who want to spend more time on the research and less time on an aeroplane. That said, the UK will always be open to global collaboration, and indeed increasing funding mechanisms for research outside of Europe is very welcome.

- With unlimited funds: Increase funds in EU (and UK) collaborative research programmes. Increase funding schemes significantly for addressing fundamental sustainability challenges, where Europe could lead the way (climate change, clean energy, sustainable food and water, anti-microbial resistance). Increased funding schemes for industry and academia to work together on societal challenges.
- Success would be measured by responding to these big societal challenges, not only for Europe, but permeating worldwide.
- The UK government need to negotiate participation in future Erasmus programmes, not just underwrite the UK funding. This is crucial for European partners to be able to continue to send students to the UK as well as our students to study abroad at European partners. Many European students who study abroad in the UK come back for Postgraduate study or research. The links with these students and institutions cannot be lost, and a strong relationship with these mobility programmes must be kept and encouraged. If we had unlimited funding, we would recommend encouraging UK HEIs to manage funding for bilateral and multilateral programmes with EU and Non-EU partners. The increase in numbers of mobilities per year would be clear evidence for success. At the moment, on average the UK only has a participation rate of 6% in international mobility which needs to be doubled by 2020, but without the necessary funding and relationship this will be unattainable.