



House of Commons
Science and Technology
Committee

Brexit, science and innovation: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report

**Fifth Special Report of Session
2017–19**

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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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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); Yohanna Sallberg (Second Clerk); Dr Harry Beeson (Committee Specialist); Martin Smith (Committee Specialist); Seb Motala (Committee Specialist); Sonia Draper (Senior Committee Assistant); Julie Storey (Committee Assistant); and Sean Kinsey (Media Officer).

Contacts

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Fifth Special Report

On 21 March 2018 the Committee published its Second Report of Session 2017–19, [Brexit, science and innovation](#) [HC 705]. On 26 April 2018 we received the Government's response to the Report, which is appended below.

Appendix: Government response

The Government welcomes the Science and Technology Select Committee's report 'Brexit, Science and Innovation', and is grateful for the Committee's positive view on the Government's input to the EU's consultation on the shape of Framework Programme 9 (FP9). The Committee's report highlights key issues that will need to be considered as we leave the European Union and continuing to build the broadest and deepest possible partnership with the EU on Science and Innovations remains a top priority.

The UK seeks to secure the best possible outcome for the UK research base as we exit the European Union, enabling the UK to continue collaborating with our European partners through an ambitious science and innovation pact.

As made clear in the UK's position paper on Framework Programme 9, a continued focus on excellence is essential, and the EU and its Member States should facilitate and strengthen collaborative working with other countries on shared priorities for mutual benefit. The principles of excellence and competitiveness that underpin European collaboration drive up the quality of research outputs and contribute to higher skills levels.

The Government's commitment to underwrite Horizon 2020 funding has provided clarity and assurance to UK businesses and universities. This has ensured that researchers can confidently bid for funding and continue to participate in, collaborate with partners and lead consortia for at least the rest of the programme.

The Government has been consistently clear that the UK is, and will continue to be, a place that welcomes talented scientists and researchers from across the globe to work or study here. The UK is also committed to continuing to align as closely as possible to the EU on clinical trials regulations whilst it remains a member state, as well as ensuring streamlined application processes for clinical trials in the UK.

We value the strong collaborative partnerships that we have across the EU in the areas of science, research and innovation and recognise the important contribution they make to the UK.

Recommendation 1

While the details of the Programme have not yet been agreed, the Government should state clearly that it intends to participate unless there is a material unfavourable difference between the new Programme and its predecessor, and that the UK is ready to pay a fair 'entry fee' to secure this. If the price is too high, or the focus on excellence is diluted, a change in approach might be warranted, but the Government's explicitly stated assumption must be to participate fully. Specifically, the Government should state clearly in its response to this Report that it intends to secure Associated Country status for Framework Programme 9.

Response:

We want to assure the EU and the scientific community of our commitment to ongoing collaboration in Science and Innovation.

The UK highly values its participation in EU framework programmes and intends to engage fully and constructively in the design of FP9. To that end, we would like to ensure Framework Programme 9 remains open to our association. We recognise that such an association would necessarily involve an appropriate financial contribution in line with other associates and would like to discuss the details.

Overall, our priorities for the programme lie in three primary areas. The first being that the programme remains focussed on excellence, EU- added value and openness to the world (as outlined in our position paper). Secondly, we want to ensure appropriate financial contributions for associated countries. Finally, confirmation that the programme allows associated countries a suitable degree of influence, in recognition of the benefits they bring to the programme, and in line with their financial contributions.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the Government ask the Migration Advisory Committee to bring forward its conclusions in relation to the immigration arrangements needed to support science and innovation and build these into a science and innovation agreement with the EU by October 2018 or earlier if possible. We are concerned that if a people-centred science and innovation pact is negotiated later it risks being less comprehensive due to other negotiation priorities of the wider post-Brexit trade deal. Furthermore, if a pact is not agreed in late 2018 this will increase risks to retaining and attracting the essential talent that our science and innovation sectors need.

Response:

We recognise that science, research and innovation are all vital to the UK's prosperity, security and wellbeing, and are at the heart of our Industrial Strategy – and that access to talent after we leave the EU remains a key issue for business and individual migrants.

That is why, in January of this year, we implemented a number of measures that demonstrate our commitment to continuing to make the UK a country that welcomes the best worldwide talent in the science and research sectors. For example, we have doubled the number of Tier 1 Exceptional Talent visas from 1000 to 2000 annually, for top global scientists - exceptional researchers - as well as those qualifying in the wider tech, creative and arts sectors, and have streamlined the endorsement process to the Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa system, greatly reducing time and paperwork for applicants.

The measures also provide for a reduction in the time required to apply for settlement (from five years to three) for those qualifying under the Tier 1 Exceptional Talent route. To benefit the sector further, we have waived the Resident Labour Market Test (RLMT) requirement under Tier 2, our main immigration work route for skilled non-EEA migrants, for supernumerary research posts supported by awards and fellowships, so these posts don't need to be first advertised for four weeks.

We further waived the RLMT for established research teams who are sponsored by UK higher education institutions and the Research Councils (now UKRI). We have also enabled faster switching between the Tier 4 student route into Tier 2, continuing our support of those in the earliest stages of their careers. The sector has been extremely positive about the impact of the changes made and these have been warmly received by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) amongst others.

We continue to work closely with the research sector to ensure that our visa arrangements for international researchers are closely aligned to the sector's needs, such as to deliver the commitment we made in the 2017 Autumn Budget to expand the number of institutions who can sponsor temporary workers under Tier 5, which will make it easier for Research Councils and similar organisations to bring researchers to the UK for up to two years.

This will help to underpin the UK's position as a hub for international collaboration and research excellence.

We are carefully considering a range of options for the future immigration system and are keen to ensure that decisions on our future immigration arrangements are based on evidence. That is why, on 27 July 2017, we commissioned the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to gather evidence on patterns of EU migration and the role of migration in the wider economy and how our immigration system should be aligned to the modern industrial strategy, ahead of our exit from the EU. We note the contents of the MAC's interim report, published on 27 March, and look forward to the publication of the final report in September of this year to allow us to consider fully the recommendations as to the future immigration system. We believe that the timescales set out for the MAC report are appropriate to meet the scale of the task set and have no plans to ask the MAC to expedite their review. The Government will have plenty of time to take account of the MAC's advice when making any final decisions about our future immigration system, which will not be implemented until after the end of the Brexit transition period.

Recommendation 3

The Science Minister's response to us on clinical trials regulation is unsatisfactory. His position that "the current regulatory approval legislation will stay in place until such time as any changes are needed" ignores the fact that work is needed now to ensure that the UK can participate in and lead clinical trials in the future. We recommend that the Government revisit this statement in its response to our report.

Response:

As the UK is committed to remain one of the best places in the world for science and innovation, it is important that the UK clinical trial's framework will continue to be competitive and effective.

Currently a clinical trial being conducted in multiple EU countries requires individual national approvals in each of the countries involved, according to their national laws transposed from the Clinical Trials Directive. This will remain the case following the implementation of the Clinical Trials Regulation (CTR) as Member States will still individually approve clinical trials, albeit through a harmonized application process and a single application point.

Indeed, the UK is already taking steps to implement a more joined up system between our national competent authorities on helping establish clinical trials, in advance of the EU systems that will be applied under the CTR. Our national system is being designed to accept the same application package and to function similarly to the future EU system under the CTR, so we will have an efficient and effective approvals system for trials, regardless of the Brexit outcome.

Regardless of the outcome of the negotiations, the Government will ensure that after the end of the Implementation Period, our national legislation will protect the rights, safety, dignity and well-being of research participants in the UK to the same degree as research participants in other EU Member States. Our national legislation will reflect globally acceptable standards of good clinical practice and will help us to collaborate with regulators across the world to share information about patient safety. The Government will also continue to support patients and stakeholders with their planning.

We will ensure that UK clinical trials will have the same high standards of transparency as trials based in other EU Member States. Whether through access to the EMA portal and database, or through an equivalent national database for the UK. The public, industry and regulators globally, will have access to the same level of information about UK clinical trials as trials registered in EU Member States.

The Government is working to ensure that we continue cooperation with the EU after we leave. The Prime Minister has been clear that this involves us wanting to make sure our regulators continue to work together, as they already do with regulators internationally. Both the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy could not have been clearer in their letter to the Financial Times in July 2017: "In regulation of medicines as we leave the EU, the UK is fully committed to continuing the close working relationship with our European partners".

Recommendation 4

Given the significance of science and innovation to the UK economy, reaching an agreement on this should now be as important to the Government as the question of security. It must be stripped out from the wider trade negotiations for focused attention, rather than become a knock-on consequence of other negotiations or traded against other aspects of a post-Brexit deal. We do not accept that 'nothing is agreed until everything is agreed' in this context. We recommend that the Government make drafting and negotiating a science and innovation agreement an urgent priority. Our report sets out the key issues that such an agreement should cover.

Response:

The UK has consistently expressed its desire for continued collaboration on S&I with the EU. This position was reinforced by the Prime Minister on 2 March 2018 who reiterated that the UK is committed to establishing a 'far-reaching science and innovation pact with the EU, facilitating the exchange of ideas and researchers.' We would like to discuss possible options as soon as possible.