

Science and Technology Committee

Oral evidence: [Leave the EU: implications and opportunities for science and research](#), HC 502

Wednesday 13 July 2016

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Members present: Nicola Blackwood (Chair); Victoria Borwick; Chris Green; Dr Tania Mathias; Carol Monaghan; Graham Stringer; Derek Thomas

Questions 84-157

Witnesses: **Kevin Baughan**, Chief Development Officer, Innovate UK, and **Professor Philip Nelson**, Chair, Research Councils UK, gave evidence.

Q84 Chair: I welcome the panel to our second session on leaving the EU and the implications for the science and innovation community. Thank you for coming at such short notice to give us evidence. We are aware that the referendum happened less than three weeks ago, so we are not expecting you to have complete answers to our questions, but we are trying to gather together some ideas about the risks, opportunities and key priorities for the negotiations as they go forward. Professor Nelson, has RCUK undertaken any risk analysis yet as to the impact of Brexit on science and innovation? What do you think are the high probability, high impact consequences of Brexit?

Professor Nelson: I think the biggest risks to the research base in the UK are around the people involved. It is very important that we remain an attractive destination for top-class scientists. Our situation in the European Union has allowed the free movement of people, and it is undeniably the case that we have found that to our advantage. We have attracted top-class people to work in our universities. We have something like 43,000 staff now in UK universities who are non-UK EU citizens, and they make a tremendous contribution to our scientific wellbeing. One of the key priorities is to ensure that we allow easy movement of such researchers in the future. That is one of the biggest risks to the current system, quite frankly.

Q85 Chair: Mr Baughan, what has Innovate UK been undertaking in terms of risk analysis and how would you answer the same question?

Kevin Baughan: We have been looking seriously at the post-referendum world, and working with BIS and our colleagues there to understand a way forward. Some of the most

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important areas do not include only the free movement of people; because businesses rely on having access to expertise as well, especially if they are involved in leading-edge technologies, we have also looked carefully at the impact that large programmes, such as Horizon 2020, have on UK businesses and innovation agencies. At the end of the day, innovation is a really important component that combines with science and business to turn our investment in those areas into jobs in the UK and into growth and activities. It relies on collaboration and on funding, and it is perhaps important to register that UK businesses and innovation centres are very large recipients of Horizon 2020 funding. In the programme so far, €680 million has gone to businesses and innovation centres. Industry, in drawing down, is second only to Germany in the level of funding that it wins from Horizon 2020. Our small and medium enterprises really excel. They achieve more funding in competitions than any other country in the European Union. But it is not just funding; it is also really important to have a plan so that we can have effective collaborations across Europe and across the globe, because those collaborations allow us to build partnerships to tackle the markets of the future, to improve productivity and to create growth in exports.

Q86 Chair: That is helpful. Previous witnesses highlighted particular aspects of EU membership that have helped to strengthen UK science and research, and you have mentioned some of them—free movement of people, access to markets, harmonised regulation and funding mechanisms. Which factors do you think the UK Government should be focusing on in exit negotiations to ensure that we get a good deal for UK science?

Professor Nelson: All those factors are important. Obviously, as I have already said, the biggest concern is about the people. The funding is also clearly very important and is just as Kevin has outlined. Our science base has been enormously successful in EU competitions, particularly so in the European Research Council, where we have been the leading nation in getting bids for excellent science approved by the EU. We have commanded something like 22% of all the funding that has come to the UK. That funding aspect is clearly very important, and in the future it is vital that we try to maintain a funding regime in the UK that at least echoes the funding arrangements we have now in terms of sheer volume. As I have said to this Committee before, we run extremely efficiently in the UK; we are really close to the wire in terms of the way the whole system runs. We turn taxpayers' money into scientific output in the most efficient way in the world. You have heard me say that before, and we have the data to prove it. It is very important that that is sustained. Clearly that is an issue.

An important point to make about the other factors, regulation and so forth, is that we have been part of making pan-European regulations, and having a seat at the table and having a voice, experience shows, is crucially important in making sure that common sense prevails, and that we get pan-European regulations that make sense when it comes to science.

Kevin Baughan: When we look at the challenges, as Phil outlined, all these aspects come into play for business. For the Committee, it is probably most appropriate to think about the ecosystem that is so important between science, innovation and business. We cannot

really look at each of those parts individually. We need a strategy and a plan that allows us to move the whole ecosystem forward, because together they take world-class science and turn it into jobs and growth; and together they allow businesses to export, to compete in wider markets and to build broader partnerships. One of the most important principles for me, in thinking about this, because it is so complex, is to try to bring out some of the clearer messages around that ecosystem so that we can have science, innovation and business continuing to work together. We see it working so well here in the UK, and we would like to be able to build and strengthen those partnerships going forward across Europe and across the world.

Q87 Chair: On that positive note, clearly there has been a lot of anxiety and uncertainty as a result of the EU referendum vote, but do you think that there are any opportunities that arise from the situation in which we find ourselves?

Professor Nelson: It is very important that we try to take opportunities where we can. At the moment the focus is a bit on managing the risks, and we have some very serious risks to manage. Let's not underestimate that. In terms of opportunities, I am in complete accord with Kevin about ensuring a healthy ecosystem. I have personal experience of having worked with industry in European-funded projects, and they can be enormously productive. The European Union has been a way of putting industry and business together with academia in very effectively, and I think we could learn from that and take the opportunity to do better in the UK in that regard. I am completely in accord with that notion. There is clearly an opportunity to rethink how we do that.

There are also opportunities for further global engagement in science. Science knows no borders. One of your previous witnesses was very clear about that, and again I am fully in accord. In the research councils we have certainly been very active in trying to build links; we have offices, as you know, in Beijing, Delhi and Washington, so that we are building links with those three jurisdictions, those three countries. It takes time. We have been doing it for something like a decade, but we are building trust with those communities and there are opportunities to exploit that foundation in the future. Building more global science is undoubtedly an opportunity, but the focus at the moment has to be on managing the risks and that is a very important message to get across.

Kevin Baughan: I agree with Phil on the importance of the near-term uncertainties and addressing those, but let us spend a moment on the opportunities because there are substantial directions of travel that we are pursuing anyway. Innovate UK is heavily involved in helping businesses get access to new markets, particularly through the Newton Fund and other overseas development assistance programmes. That is giving us some real insights and opportunities to build momentum with China, India and other developing countries around the world and that is the positive angle that perhaps will get a little more attention in this context, but we have to come back to making sure that we have a strong partnership with European countries, because it is so important for our trade and collaboration.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Q88 Carol Monaghan: The Higher Education and Research Bill is currently making its way through Parliament—Second Reading, I believe, being due on Tuesday. Is pressing ahead with it sensible in the context of the uncertainty that we are now in the midst of, following the referendum result, and do you think there is scope to separate the teaching and the research elements and deal with them separately at the moment?

Professor Nelson: Perhaps I can answer for the research element. It is very important that we press ahead, quite frankly. In the research councils, we have been acutely aware of the direction of travel for some time. We have been working towards that goal, the goal of UK Research and Innovation—a stronger voice for science. Paul Nurse’s report was absolutely clear that that is what we need. We would be very supportive of pressing ahead with the Bill. I appreciate that the education part of the Bill is perhaps the more contentious bit, but I probably cannot comment further on that. In terms of the research angle, we could be very comfortable about pressing ahead. We have our interim chair, Sir John Kingman, appointed already, and that is a step absolutely in the right direction. With his great experience of working with Government, having him in that position is enormously helpful. I would be absolutely for pressing ahead.

Q89 Carol Monaghan: You are fine with the research and you are not going to comment on the teaching.

Professor Nelson: I prefer not to pass comment on the teaching side. I really am not sufficiently on top of those aspects of the Bill and there are other colleagues in the higher education system who are far better qualified to comment, if I could say that.

Q90 Carol Monaghan: Thank you. Mr Baughan, do you have anything to add?

Kevin Baughan: I emphasise that we have established some real momentum in bringing together Innovate UK and the research councils, and that has a lot of positive benefits in new things that we can do together. We would like to see that momentum continue and we are working closely on that. The guidance that we received is that we are expecting the legislation to progress, so our commitment is to making it as successful as we can.

Q91 Carol Monaghan: Mr Baughan, could I ask you about the creation of UKRI? Is it likely to help the science community’s voice as Brexit negotiations go on, and will it be able to influence a debate on the new relationship that we are now going to have with the EU?

Kevin Baughan: It is an important body because it brings together key components of the ecosystem I talked about earlier—science, innovation and business—and Innovate UK’s business-facing role makes sure that we have a good opportunity to bring those together in one place. I think UKRI can find its voice in a very clear way in helping the next Government understand the opportunities and challenges that we need to address. It is a very positive move in being able to bring together a single voice. We can, of course, also contribute directly ourselves.

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Q92 Carol Monaghan: One concern of the scientific community is that they do not have a voice in these negotiations, and at this stage they are keen for some reassurance that their voice is going to be not just heard but integral to the process.

Professor Nelson: Absolutely. It is really important that we have a seat at the table, so to speak, because, if you look at the sums of money coming back to the UK from the European Union, something like 18.3%, if my memory serves me correctly, of that money is coming back to research and innovation. There is a huge vested interest for our community, in terms of protecting the health of that community, that we are intimately involved in those sorts of negotiations. I make a plea for that; it is very important that our voice is heard and that it is substantially transmitted in that negotiation.

Carol Monaghan: Let's hope that message is getting out. Thank you.

Q93 Graham Stringer: Are there any parts of the country—geographical areas—or any disciplines that will be affected more than others, and can you tell us what they are?

Professor Nelson: That is a very good question. Across the sector there are huge benefits to the higher education institutions. Different institutions benefit in different ways. Some of our leading universities probably do better at the European Research Council end of things, whereas some of our universities that are not at the very top end of the league table, so to speak, do extremely well from other aspects of European funding. That is quite a complex question to answer. We will be glad to try to provide you with details in writing later. We can probably do some analysis of that, although it is immensely complex and it is a huge undertaking. Again, in reviewing what is going on at the moment, as we have been doing in recent days, there is an awful lot to understand.

Q94 Graham Stringer: In terms of what is going on at the moment, do you have evidence of any contracts that have been cancelled, or any research programmes that have been cancelled, since the decision on the referendum to leave the EU?

Professor Nelson: We have not had evidence of cancellations, but I have heard multiple stories of some quite unpleasant things happening, with UK researchers being asked to leave consortia. They are all anecdotal at this stage, but they are multiple. Probably six different vice-chancellors have told me different stories about different consortia that are taking negative attitudes to the inclusion of UK researchers. We are hoping to gather all that evidence together, but it is a serious thing to be aware of. It may be just a knee-jerk reaction to the referendum vote and things may well settle down. Technically, we have not left the European Union. There have been some helpful strong statements from the Government, the Prime Minister and our Science Minister, to reaffirm that business as usual should continue, but, in the minds of many, things clearly have changed. We are seriously worried about that and, as I said, we are trying to collect the evidence.

Q95 Graham Stringer: Anecdotes, of course, are not evidence so can you be very specific about any changes that have happened?

Professor Nelson: I had an email yesterday from a university in Scotland, if I can be as specific as that.

Q96 Graham Stringer: That is not very specific, if you don't mind my saying so.

Professor Nelson: It was in Glasgow. They were trying to attract a top-class physicist who decided not to come because he felt that the funding for the particular field in which he was involved was no longer going to be there because of withdrawal from the European Union. I have heard of a number of such incidents. They are anecdotal. It is difficult to assess on a rational basis how widespread it is—remember, we have something over 1,300 European Research Council grants, just to give you an idea of the scale of this activity—so whether it is just a small fraction of activity that is knee-jerk or emotional reaction to the referendum is hard to say at this stage. We will monitor the rate of applications to Horizon 2020 over the forthcoming months. That is the important statistic to be aware of, I think.

Q97 Graham Stringer: I have been to meetings of the Russell Group universities where they have complained about the treatment of PhD students and postdoctoral students from outside the EU and the difficulty of getting visas. Do you think having a more even playing field between European countries and the rest of the world will be of any benefit to universities and research?

Professor Nelson: I guess it is an opportunity, again, to get some of those issues resolved, and I know the Russell Group has had serious concerns about that, so I would definitely look at it as an opportunity, but it is about the very fine detail of how these things are constructed, and if there was an opportunity to change the way that happens it would be welcome.

Q98 Graham Stringer: I have a final question. If we become an associated country in the Horizon 2020 programme, it will require more funding. Have you made direct representations to Government about getting more funding if that happens?

Professor Nelson: Not yet, but it is sort of obvious, as it were, that it is going to be an issue and I am sure our Minister will have recognised that in any event. Frankly, as I said at the start, our main concern is about the people. Science is about bright minds, bright ideas and a really skilled workforce, and making sure we can make progress on that has been absolutely our priority. In terms of the funding, it is going to be very important that, as I said earlier, the amount of funding that goes into our research base, from both our national resource and other resources such as the European Union, is sustained. It is going to be critically important. Of course, that is absolutely up there on the risk register—a really important factor.

Graham Stringer: Thank you.

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Q99 Chair: It is probably worth stating the obvious as well as the less obvious risks as we go through this process, given the amount of change that is happening at Government level at the moment. If you come across more concrete examples of challenges facing researchers in consortia or in EU funding streams, I wonder whether you could pass them on to the Committee, as we are trying to understand the direct and indirect impacts that UK research is experiencing at the moment.

Professor Nelson: Yes.

Q100 Chris Green: Mr Baughan, there has been a lot of discussion about the impact of Brexit on research but less on the innovate side of things. What impact do you think Brexit will have on Innovate UK?

Kevin Baughan: It is a very important point. We need to be talking as much about industry and innovation centres, such as our public Catapults and private organisations like TWI, because they are seriously involved in endeavours across Europe. It is important to understand the way forward. It is very clear that we should have an ambition to go out and build the partnerships across Europe and across the globe that allow businesses to collaborate. They need that opportunity. It is not just about funding because, at the end of the day, the projects themselves invest a lot in a large number of collaborators. Through those mechanisms, companies can gain access to a large amount of information disproportionate to their own funding. Also, they set the agenda and direction of technology at European level, which is very powerful. We have heard from many companies that have concerns; they want to make sure that the way forward can give them the same level of collaboration, the same voice and the same opportunities to direct technology.

To go back briefly to Mr Stringer's point, if we look at some of the topic areas where industry is achieving funding, it is very widespread. We are the top one or two in health and life sciences, in security, in ICT, in nanotechnologies, in agri-food and in the bioeconomy. It is a large list. We are in the top five when we go down further and we look at transport, climate action, advanced materials, advanced manufacturing and space. It really has an impact across a wide sector of the economy, and regionally there is a decent distribution across the UK of where the investment lands. It is extremely important. If you think about our small and medium enterprises, which Innovate UK champions strongly because they often provide agility, they need routes into supply chains in Europe; they need partners; they need access to research across Europe and across the globe. This is a really important topic for Innovate UK and for the industries and innovation centres we represent.

Q101 Chris Green: With those concerns, and with the uncertainty that the Brexit decision entails, how much more needs to be done to reassure people? We got a sense sometimes in the run-up to Brexit and in the national conversation afterwards that things had come to a halt. It is a difficult process as we move forward. Do you think we need a stronger message going out that it is quite a straightforward process? We will build relationships with countries

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across the EU and with the EU in Brussels itself. There is an opportunity over the coming two years during the Lisbon treaty process, and in the very short term as well, to restore confidence and say that this is not going to damage our relationships across the EU, and there still will be a place for those SMEs to locate in the UK and work across the EU.

Kevin Baughan: We are grateful for the assurances that have been given already by David Cameron, the Commission and the Minister for science and technology, making it clear that business should be carrying on as normal, but, as Phil expressed, we are aware of companies and innovation centres that have had discrimination against them. We are passing those examples on to BIS so that they are fully aware of what is happening. At the end of the day, it is the softer factors, isn't it? It is having confidence that our businesses will be able to engage in programmes that go beyond the two-year horizon; it is the confidence of our collaborators to come and partner with us. Therefore, the more detail that the new Government can provide about the arrangements, because businesses like to get down to the detail, the more confident we can be. We need to maintain that momentum. We cannot afford, in a competitive world, to have a two-year pause. In addition, we recognise that the negotiations will be complex, but a clear statement of ambition that we intend to be partnering across Europe and across the globe in building the environment that allows science, innovation and businesses together to excel would be really helpful.

Q102 Chris Green: Does Innovate UK receive EU funding at all?

Kevin Baughan: We work together with the European Commission in a number of ways. We jointly fund some activities. For example, there is an Enterprise Europe network that spans the UK that helps businesses to gain access to European and wider programmes, and we fund that together with the European Union. There are other projects that come within the European Union area where we provide some of the funding and they provide some of the funding. We work closely together with them, but the vast majority of the funding that arrives in the United Kingdom for businesses and innovation centres comes from programmes such as Horizon 2020.

Q103 Chris Green: The UK is currently a member of EUREKA, which supports market-oriented R and D and innovation projects by industry and universities across the EU. What impact has EUREKA had on advancing UK R and D?

Kevin Baughan: EUREKA spans a large number of countries. At the end of the day, it has a powerful framework that can be used. We use it specifically in one area. We have a programme called Eurostars, which allows high-performing, high-growth companies to get extra support, mentoring and development to allow them to push their businesses on. So we have had good examples of working with EUREKA, but, again, it is on a relatively modest scale in comparison with programmes like Horizon 2020.

Q104 Dr Mathias: Mr Baughan, do you know when the Government's national innovation plan will be published?

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Kevin Baughan: I do not know when the plan will be published, but we are working very closely with BIS in order to put some exciting ideas into that plan. It is probably also closely linked to the publication of our own strategy, so we are keen to see them progress.

Q105 Dr Mathias: Will it include information about Brexit, do you think?

Kevin Baughan: It is for the Government to decide, at the end of the day, what goes into the national innovation plan, but we have been putting forward some very powerful ideas about how to grow the economy, not just nationally but globally.

Q106 Dr Mathias: Thank you. The science and innovation strategy was published in December 2014. Why is a separate strategy on innovation needed now, especially as Innovate UK is going to be part of UK Research and Innovation?

Kevin Baughan: The new Government want to lay out a clear direction and put a clearer focus on areas like the next round of disruptive technologies. When we look back at the science and innovation strategy, last issue, there were some important points that changed things there. For example, the importance of place was raised for the first time very clearly in the strategy and that led to Innovate UK focusing on delivering regional presences and regional activity as well as the UK levels that we pursue. A clear focus for the innovation plan was the next industrial revolutions, the disruptive technologies and the big step forward that innovation can deliver for UK businesses and economies. Rather than a broader sweeping establishment of the context, this was going to be, I think, a lot more focused on things we can do together to accelerate growth and make sure the UK stays at the forefront.

Q107 Dr Mathias: Why would you separate innovation from science in the strategy?

Kevin Baughan: I would not. At the end of the day, I relish an ecosystem that has science, innovation and business together, and I think, collectively, as we move closer together, you will see more integrated strategies appear.

Q108 Dr Mathias: Okay. What impact do you think the UK leaving will have on a company's intellectual property rights in the EU? Do you think transitional arrangements are needed for those rights?

Kevin Baughan: I am not an expert in the area of intellectual property, but I am reasonably assured that the kind of structures we have in place today are going to work well. It is probably for somebody else to answer a more specific question if there are any exposures on intellectual property, but my assessment is that the structures and operations we have in place at the moment are working well.

Q109 Dr Mathias: Innovate UK published its delivery plan in April.

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Kevin Baughan: Yes.

Q110 Dr Mathias: It was just before the Government's consultation on the national innovation plan. Was that co-ordinated?

Kevin Baughan: It was important for us to lay out the delivery plan, because we were starting a new financial year, and each financial year we lay out the plan so that UK businesses and innovation centres can assess how things are going to move forward. What is closely linked to the national innovation plan is the next issue of our strategy. Innovate UK publishes a strategy every four to five years, and the previous one finished in 2015, so we are due to relaunch our strategy and make clear our plans for the next five years and beyond. That is the one that should be closely tied with the national innovation plan.

Q111 Dr Mathias: It will be co-ordinated.

Kevin Baughan: Yes.

Q112 Chair: I have one final question. Obviously, hosting major European research facilities has been a major part of the UK's ability to influence the direction of science and innovation funding in Europe, so are the research councils aiming to secure a continuation of existing EU research facilities in the UK in the post-Brexit environment, or do you think that some of those facilities will inevitably move back to the EU, Professor Nelson?

Professor Nelson: We make a tremendous contribution to hosting some of those facilities. We have about five of the research infrastructures that are EU-wide hosts in the UK. They are important activities. Several of them are around biology. We have the European Social Survey, for example, at City University in London. That is a very important enterprise, which has over 90,000 registered users worldwide using social survey data. It is critically important that we stay involved in that. There will be an awful lot of technical detail to be worked through and unravelled in the negotiation process, and in the way these things are structured—again emphasising the complexity—it will be important that we have a strong voice at the table to try to ensure that we can stay very much part of these things. Science crosses boundaries, and among a lot of the great things that the European Union has achieved is putting together IT infrastructures, networking structures across Europe, and we have to be absolutely involved in that in the future. It is critically important that we stay part of that.

Q113 Chair: Do you want to make any points on that, Mr Baughan?

Kevin Baughan: No, that is fine.

Q114 Chair: The converse question is not just about the hosting of the facilities but ensuring continued access for UK scientists and researchers to pan-European facilities. How do you think we should go about negotiating that?

Professor Nelson: I guess it gets tied up with the bigger negotiation. One of the challenges we face is that so many of the issues are tied in with the bigger politics of it all, and it is quite an intimidating thought that this could easily get lost. Our real concern is that we do not lose some of the important features of our current landscape, just to reinforce that message. As to how it is achieved, we will have to work with Government over the forthcoming months to ensure that we understand the true complexity of this and that Government appreciate an awful lot of those factors. It is very important that they do so.

Q115 Chair: Thank you very much. We are now going to question the Minister. Do you have any final key burning points that you would like to make before we move on?

Professor Nelson: Perhaps I could reiterate the importance of people to our research base and reinforce that message. Funding is absolutely critical too, of course, but the tremendous value that I see as I go round universities—I have visited Edinburgh, Birmingham and Bristol in the last three weeks—is that they are truly international institutions, with the brightest minds from across the globe attracted there, and in large number from the European Union. It is absolutely critical that that is sustained by some means or other.

Kevin Baughan: To sum up, business, like science, is a global endeavour. We must have an ambition to continue to build partnerships beyond the UK at the European level and at the global level, and to really think about the entire ecosystem, because putting science, innovation and business together is what creates an economy. It is what lands jobs and growth here in the United Kingdom. Having a consistent strategy across those components would be powerful.

Chair: Thank you very much for coming.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Jo Johnson MP**, Minister of State for Universities and Science, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and **David Wilson**, Head of European Knowledge and Innovation, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, gave evidence.

Q116 Chair: Minister, welcome and thank you for coming at such short notice. We are very aware that it is less than three weeks since the referendum, so we do not expect you to have complete answers on every aspect of exit negotiations for science and innovation yet, but given the seriousness for the community we are very grateful that you have come before us to talk about some of the major risks and opportunities. You are well aware that we have just heard from Research Councils UK and Innovate UK. I was very struck by a comment from

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Innovate UK that we cannot afford to have a two-year pause in our pursuit of excellence. That is a very good phrase to get us started. Have the Government undertaken any risk analysis of the impact of Brexit on science and innovation yet? What do you think are the high probability, high impact consequences for science and innovation?

Jo Johnson: Thank you very much for inviting me to come before your Committee today. I am of course aware that there are a lot of questions and there is a lot of uncertainty in the sector and the science community, and I will do what I can today to add to the reassurances that I have offered over the last two and a half weeks. I am delighted to be here to try to put some minds at rest.

First of all, the Government are fully committed to science and to keeping us, as you have put it, Madam Chairman, as a science powerhouse, a science superpower. That is how we see ourselves as a country, and we want to do everything we can to make the most of the opportunities that are going to arise over the years ahead and to limit some of the risks that the sector has identified. Yes, in answer to your question, we are of course undertaking a very considerable amount of planning and risk analysis at the moment across the whole gamut of our relations with the European Union, and science, because it is such an important feature of our relations with the European Union, is a big part of that.

Q117 Chair: To turn the question on its head, and perhaps to offer a ray of sunlight in what has been quite a significant amount of anxiety, do you see any opportunities in the midst of these stresses on the sector?

Jo Johnson: It is incumbent on all of us to scour the horizon for opportunities and to see where we can make the most of the new regime that we will be moving towards. I can certainly see a strong demand from Government to work with the sector and with the Committee—your work is really important—to help us identify where the new flexibilities that we might enjoy in a new relationship to the European Union might lie and how we can best exploit them.

Q118 Chair: Previous witnesses have come in from various parts of the sector, from universities, research and foundations, and they have highlighted particular aspects of EU membership that they believe have helped our science and innovation sector to flourish—the free movement of people, access to markets, harmonised regulation, funding mechanisms and so on. Which factors do you think the UK Government should be focusing on in exit negotiations to make sure that we get a good deal for UK science?

Jo Johnson: There are many features of our current relations with the European Union that we will want to make sure are fully appreciated, first of all by Government and then by the negotiating team that will set about constructing our new relationship with the European Union. The work that the science and university community did in the run-up to the referendum, when there was by and large a solid block of opinion that saw the advantages of staying in the European Union outweigh the disadvantages, is not wasted in that respect. There is a solid body of evidence that the science community put together during the referendum campaign that will now be put to good use in ensuring that there is

a clear message to Government about the importance of ensuring that we continue to derive benefits from the new relationship that we end up constructing with the European Union, making sure that there is a system of funding for excellence in Europe, funding science on the basis of excellence, making sure that we can continue to be seen as a country that gives a warm welcome to the brightest and best scientists, researchers and academics from Europe and from around the world, and gives a clear signal that we are a country that understands the critical importance to science of international collaboration at a time when almost half of our most productive science research involves international collaboration with researchers outside this country.

Q119 Chair: On those particular points, one of the more disturbing pieces of evidence we have had—I am sure you will have had the same message—is that some scientists in the UK who are already part of consortia are being asked to leave consortia or being made to feel unwelcome because some in Europe have received the message that we either do not want to be part of Horizon 2020 or want to leave. What message would you send to those who are experiencing that at the moment?

Jo Johnson: The first thing is to underscore that we are a warm and welcoming country, and we want the brightest and best scientists and researchers to feel that they can do great science in the UK and will have a first-class experience when they come to live and work here. We want to put in place as a Government a comprehensive communications strategy to send out those kinds of messages around the world—that we are more open and outward-looking than ever before, and that we want to forge international collaborations with European partners and countries beyond the European Union, now more than ever. That is part of it, sending out all the right sorts of messages; Brexit does not mean that we are becoming insular and inward-looking in any way, but, on the contrary, we are going to be more outward-looking, more open and more globally minded than ever before.

Q120 Chair: And we will seek to be part of Horizon 2020.

Jo Johnson: I am sorry, I did not touch on your point about discrimination against UK institutions. We have been very clear that there should be no discrimination against UK institutions, soft or hard, and we have made representations to the European Commissioner for science and innovation, Carlos Moedas, and sought his reassurances, which he has provided in his own statements to that effect. At our request he put out a statement—at his own initiative, as well—reassuring UK researchers that their validity for Horizon 2020 applications remains unchanged. You mentioned some anecdotal examples of institutions who say other European institutions are unwilling to partner with them. We are extremely concerned at these anecdotal reports and have asked institutions to provide us with concrete evidence where this is happening, and we have set up in the Department a unit that is ready to receive such evidence. We have an email address to which any examples of that sort can be sent—research@bis.gsi.gov.uk. We welcome any hard evidence so that we can take appropriate steps. I will be speaking to Commissioner Moedas again tomorrow to update him on the mood in the UK science community and how it feels things are going. We understand the concern, but my message is that we must

realise that, as we stand today, our rights and obligations as full members of the European Union remain unchanged. We are fully able to bid, and to lead bids, for Horizon 2020 programmes, and we must feel confident in doing so.

Q121 Chair: That is reassuring and helpful. Can I ask a couple of process questions before coming to colleagues? Unlike your predecessors, David Willetts and Greg Clark, you are not a member of the Cabinet. How confident are you that in the midst of the scale of change that we are undergoing—trade negotiations, immigration and so on—the needs of science, research and innovation will figure high enough up the priority list of the Government’s exit negotiation strategies? Do you think that there needs to be a louder voice? Do you think that a figure such as yourself needs to be sitting at the Cabinet table, Minister?

Jo Johnson: There are lots of friends of science who sit around the Cabinet table, and foremost among them are the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Department in which I work as a Minister—Sajid Javid is a great friend of science and has contributed a huge amount to the successful protection of the science ring-fence—and, of course, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who over successive fiscal events has protected science at a time of significant savings across the rest of public expenditure. It is unfair to say that the voice of science is unrepresented at the Cabinet table. It fully is, and that is why we have had successful outcomes for science in successive spending rounds.

Q122 Chair: Can I also ask about cross-departmental working? Obviously, there are a number of different work streams going on to do with the exit negotiations. What interaction have you had so far with Oliver Letwin, and how is Sir Mark Walport fitting into that work stream?

Jo Johnson: I was discussing these issues with Oliver Letwin just yesterday afternoon. He is, as you would expect, fully across them. This is one of the most important aspects of our relationship with the European Union. It is the third biggest source of funds that the UK receives from the European Union after the common agricultural policy and some regional structural funds, so it is extremely significant, and Oliver Letwin is very focused on every aspect of the detail of it, as you would expect. Sir Mark Walport and I are also discussing this on a regular basis; he and I are in close touch.

Q123 Chair: What advice has he given you?

Jo Johnson: The advice we receive from the sector is much the same as the advice that Sir Mark is offering. We are aware of the need to move swiftly to provide additional clarification, and we are working closely with colleagues across Government to do that as soon as we can. As you know, we have a new Prime Minister starting in position later this afternoon. That is an important step towards our being in a position to provide additional reassurances on top of the ones we have already been able to give over the last two and a half weeks.

Q124 Chair: George Freeman has established the UK EU steering group on life sciences and Brexit. I am trying to understand how that fits in with the work you are doing at BIS. Could you explain the interactions—why life sciences are being treated separately and how you are interacting?

Jo Johnson: It is an extremely helpful initiative that is reporting, through DH, to Jeremy Hunt. The whole of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is focused on the broad gamut of ramifications of the referendum decision. The entire Department is effectively a taskforce right now, thinking through all aspects of the decision.

Q125 Graham Stringer: I have one follow-up question, if I may. Since you asked for evidence about the anecdotal discrimination, have you had any hard evidence, and, if you have, can you tell the Committee what it is?

Jo Johnson: We have had some emails with descriptions of behaviours that suggest we need to pay great attention to how this evolves over coming weeks. I cannot give you an exact number of communications at this time—I do not have those figures in front of me—but the channels of communication are open. The sector knows that I have been inviting evidence. We have an email inbox, which I have made public, and it is being monitored closely—I am receiving updates from the team—and I am in regular discussions with Commissioner Moedas to alert him to any hard evidence, any structural signs of discrimination, that we might become aware of.

Q126 Graham Stringer: But is that hard evidence there?

Jo Johnson: We have seen a lot of anecdotal evidence at the moment. I am still waiting for hard examples of institutions being concretely blocked, but I am not saying it is not happening. Far from it. I just want to see further examples.

Q127 Graham Stringer: Would you make it public if you found hard evidence?

Jo Johnson: It would depend on the terms on which any information was given to me.

Q128 Carol Monaghan: At the moment there is a lot of anxiety within the scientific community, and some of what you have said today is very reassuring, as was what you said in your Wellcome Trust speech, when you said, “We remain fully open to scientists and researchers from across the EU.” Although all these words are reassuring, you mentioned a strategy in response to the Chair’s questions. Is this strategy really in place? Is it a written strategy? How are we going to reassure the scientific community beyond simple rhetoric?

Jo Johnson: Yes, we are putting in place a comprehensive communications strategy to reassure the science community that, as I was saying in my response to the Chair, we remain confident, open and outward-looking, and committed to keeping Britain at the forefront of science around the world. We are reassuring our European partners that our rights and obligations to them and to EU nationals coming to the UK remain unchanged as

we stand today, as we are still full members of the European Union, and we want to make sure that people feel confident in welcoming EU students to their institutions and feel confident in bidding to Horizon 2020 programmes as institutions.

Q129 Carol Monaghan: In terms of students, maybe the institutions feel confident in welcoming them, but what signals are we giving to potential or current EU students just now? We had Professor Sir Ian Diamond here last week giving evidence to the Committee, and he said that Aberdeen University had made a commitment to current EU students that nothing would change as a result of Brexit and had actually extended that to students entering Aberdeen in the academic year 2016-17. As the UK, should we be making very bold statements like that to encourage European students still to come to our institutions?

Jo Johnson: Yes, and we have started that process with a statement that I put out almost immediately after the referendum, on Tuesday. In fact, the first statement I made was on the Monday after the referendum, which we then followed up with a second statement on the Tuesday after the referendum. We were out of the traps extremely early, providing initial reassurance to the sector. We know it is not job done and that this is work we must continue to focus on extremely carefully in the days and weeks ahead. That is what I mean by a comprehensive communications strategy. It is not enough just to put out a couple of initial statements. We realise we have to keep going and make sure that we continually reinforce the positive messages that we have started sending out, but we have put out initial statements about the continuing eligibility of EU nationals for our student loan system, for example, for the academic year 2016-17. We realise there are outstanding questions about 2017-18 and the years after. We are moving as rapidly as we can within Government to try to get further clarification on those questions. You will appreciate that we do not yet have the new Prime Minister in place and it would be inappropriate for me to make commitments before she has even crossed the threshold of No. 10.

Q130 Carol Monaghan: Potential EU students are already looking at the UK as a place to study, or are maybe not looking at the UK, because, although they know that in 2016-17 they should be all right, what happens in 2017-18? Could their status change during their course of study? There is a lot of anxiety within the sector about how we continue to attract EU students if their status may change.

Jo Johnson: I acknowledge that and I appreciate it, and that is why we are working as rapidly as we can across Government to provide the additional reassurance that is required. We acknowledge that it is required and we know what questions are in need of immediate answers. We have now made progress, as we will in the coming hours, in the sense that we have a new Prime Minister known. Theresa May will be in place shortly. We have more capacity to start getting decisions made than we had in the interregnum period, and that is helpful and productive, but I cannot give you assurances today before Theresa May has even taken office.

Q131 Carol Monaghan: Could I ask you about EU researchers working in universities? The First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, has been very clear. Her language left no room

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for doubt: “You are welcome; we need you; we want you; please stay; you are part of our community.” The language coming from the UK Government has not been as strong as that, and certainly when we see the new Prime Minister saying, “We still need to negotiate,” that leaves a lot of EU researchers in a very difficult situation. Is the strategy going to include EU nationals who are working in research in our universities?

Jo Johnson: Yes. As we stand today, nothing has changed in their status. That is the point that the Prime Minister has emphasised on a number of occasions. The circumstances of British citizens living in the EU and European citizens living here has not changed as we stand today, and that includes people working in and studying at our universities. We understand that there will be concerns about what the status of these people will be after any Brexit—

Q132 Carol Monaghan: But that is the concern, and although you say, “As we stand, nothing has changed,” for these researchers everything has changed and they do not know whether they should commit to remaining in a UK university or go elsewhere.

Jo Johnson: I understand that uncertainty, but I cannot make immigration policy before this Committee on the hoof. There is a cross-government process that will start once the new Prime Minister is in office and has formed a clear sense of what her negotiating priorities are going to be, taking into account the broad spectrum of interests that are at stake in our new relationship with the European Union.

Q133 Carol Monaghan: I suppose we are asking that you make the case for those EU researchers who are really valuable in the universities.

Jo Johnson: What is really important is that the Committee channels effectively the voice of the science and research community to Government, as it is doing very well. Your work is vitally important. It is also critical that the science and research community is at the heart of the negotiations that will start, but the first, prior, step is making sure that Government fully appreciate all the different interests and issues that affect the science and university sector so that we do not undersell ourselves, and that we understand what is at stake for universities and researchers.

Q134 Chris Green: In the run-up to the referendum, there were all kinds of discussions of the model the UK needs, post-Brexit, with the rest of the European Union. There were many different models, and it would offer some certainty if you could give an indication of which model you think would be best for the UK’s R and D. Would it be the Swiss model, the Norwegian model or perhaps—as I think was mentioned—the Albanian model? What do you think would be best, or should we negotiate our own bespoke relationship?

Jo Johnson: It would be premature for me to alight on a particular structure, because we are at an early stage today. We do not even have a new Prime Minister in place yet. All these issues will be considered in the round. Obviously, science is an extremely important national interest but there are many others that will be taken into account in determining

our answers to these questions. There is a spectrum of relationships in the Horizon 2020 programme, as you said. There are associated statuses, there are third-country statuses and there are some hybrids in between, such as Switzerland, which is a temporary partial associated member. Britain brings a lot that is very distinctive to the table. We are a very big science power, we are a very big economy, but it is not for me now to define before this Committee what our eventual negotiating position might be, because it is going to take us some time to get to that answer.

Q135 Chris Green: For associate countries such as Norway and Switzerland, there is not a formal role in deciding the EU's priorities for its framework programme funding. We have taken evidence that it is incredibly important for UK science that we have an enhanced role and that we ought to be able to have an input in determining the funding programme. Surely we should be seeking an enhanced relationship.

Jo Johnson: It is something that the science community can make a strong argument for, and Government will certainly listen very carefully to all the arguments as they shape their overall approach to the negotiation that will start in months to come. The science community has an important role to play in putting forward its view about the kind of relationship that it thinks would be most to the advantage of science in this country.

Q136 Chris Green: In terms of negotiating that relationship, the president of the Swiss national research council suggested that the Swiss did not go in with "the sin of arrogance", or being too proud in terms of the quality of Swiss science. Perhaps we should go in with a very humble attitude to the EU, or perhaps we should blow our trumpet a little more. We have some fantastic universities and institutes, and we should be looking to use that fact to get a really good deal for the UK.

Jo Johnson: Our science speaks for itself. It is world class by almost any measure and we are an attractive partner, but of course it is very important to enter all negotiations with a constructive approach.

Q137 Victoria Borwick: The Higher Education and Research Bill is working its way through Parliament. Is pressing ahead with that sensible in the context of the uncertainty caused by the referendum result? Is there a possibility of separating parts of the Bill so that the bits that are easier can be carried through, perhaps leaving the teaching element for later? Could you give us your views on that, please?

Jo Johnson: The Prime Minister was very clear in his speech on Friday 24 June that the Government have many manifesto commitments to deliver. The Higher Education and Research Bill delivers a number of them, and the legislative programme that was laid out in the Queen's Speech on 17 May carries on. The Higher Education and Research Bill was introduced in Parliament on 19 May. We await its Second Reading, but it will go forward through the Houses of Parliament. It is now more important than ever that we make rapid progress with the Bill. On the research side, it is becoming increasingly obvious across the community that we need a strong and coherent voice for science, both across Europe and

across the world, as we seek to forge greater international collaboration. We also need a stronger voice to Government so that all the interests and issues that affect the science community are well represented to Government. On the HE side, similarly, we see greater need to move towards a strengthened regulatory framework. At the moment, we have a very fragmented regulatory framework that leaves publicly funded institutions regulated by HEFCE, but a very large universe of private providers regulated by the Department. There is a need to strengthen the regulatory system to promote and drive up quality throughout our system.

Q138 Victoria Borwick: That is very helpful. How is the creation of UKRI going to help the science community's ability to influence the debate in our relationship with the EU?

Jo Johnson: UKRI, when it is fully in existence, will be a powerful voice for British science and will help us forge the kinds of international partnerships that we will be seeking all the more in a post-Brexit world. The arrival of John Kingman as the shadow chair of UKRI has been broadly welcomed around the science and research community. He is already active in that role and is meeting many stakeholders. He was in Swindon last week visiting the research councils and Innovate UK. He has been in Bristol meeting the research team at HEFCE. He is already playing a very powerful galvanising role, which illustrates the contribution that UKRI will make in years to come.

Q139 Victoria Borwick: What contingency planning has gone on in BIS? How are people planning and over what timescales? What contingency planning is going on for a post-Brexit world?

Jo Johnson: It is no longer a contingency; it has happened and we are moving rapidly, as you can see by the early statements that the Department and I were putting out within a very short period after the referendum result. We are moving at pace as a Department. We are fully focused on trying to provide as much reassurance as we can to the various communities with issues at stake. We are conscious of the need for speed and we are glad that we have now shortened the process by which we have a new Prime Minister so that we can start getting more decisions taken as rapidly as possible.

Q140 Victoria Borwick: If there was an early general election, would there be an impact on the status of UKRI and the Bill generally?

Jo Johnson: I note that all the candidates for the Conservative leadership ruled out an early election and that the new leader of the Conservative party has also committed to the next election taking place, as planned through the Fixed-term Parliaments Act, in 2020.

Q141 Dr Mathias: We have heard, and I think you concur, that the main concern is about people, following Brexit, but I am also interested in whether the Government have undertaken any research about the impact of EU research funds going and whether it affects different areas of the country at different universities.

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Jo Johnson: It is early days for us to have that sort of analysis yet. It has only been two weeks since the referendum decision came out. We have not seen any significant shifts of the kind you describe, but it is far too early for us to come to that form of judgment.

Q142 Dr Tania Mathias: BIS does not have that information or access to—

Jo Johnson: Do you mean about post-referendum shifts in funding?

Q143 Dr Mathias: With the European research funds they are most involved with now, which areas are most dependent?

Jo Johnson: We can certainly see that. We know who the recipients of EU research funding are, clearly, and our institutions do tremendously well from it. The top four recipients are UK universities—London, Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial—so we know where significant flows of money are going. We know where the risks of any shortfall might lie.

Q144 Dr Mathias: We know that information, but the risk analysis has not been done yet.

Jo Johnson: We know who receives EU research funding, where it goes and which institutions receive it. What I was saying has not been done is analysis of any post-referendum changes in funding flows, because we have not seen any post-referendum changes in funding flows.

Q145 Dr Mathias: What statements do you think the Government should be making in the short term to reassure scientists and investors?

Jo Johnson: The statements that the EU Commission has put out have been helpful. They need constant reiteration, and I would welcome further such statements from the Commission. As I said, I will be speaking to Commissioner Moedas tomorrow. I am looking forward to that and I will be with him again, all things being well, in Manchester later in the month. I have a very close dialogue with him on these matters. BIS, as a Department, will continue to put out the message that we remain full members of the European Union, that our right to participate fully in Horizon 2020 programmes remains unchanged and that we want EU institutions and universities around the EU to recognise that we are very committed to international collaborations with EU institutions and those from all around the world.

Q146 Chair: We have covered a bit about EU nationals and British nationals, and I understand that you are not able to make immigration policy before the Committee. I understand the limitations. Nevertheless, could I ask you a little about your preferences? Clearly, in whatever model is negotiated with the EU, if unrestricted free movement is off the agenda, what sort of system do you think would be optimal for EU scientists, researchers and students still coming here? What do you think we need to be fighting for?

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Jo Johnson: The science and research community needs to make a strong argument for the kind of mobility it wants to see and then that can be taken into account by the team at the centre that will be putting in place a comprehensive negotiating strategy. My personal preferences are neither here nor there really. I want to make sure that I understand fully the kind of needs that the science community sees, what kind of mobility is most beneficial and how we can best make sure that the negotiating team takes those interests into account when forging its position.

Q147 Chair: I suppose I am asking you what you see at this point as the priorities that have been put forward to you. What is your professional judgment on what the priorities would be? If we are going to end up with restrictions on free movement for unskilled workers, do you see scope for having a system that could explicitly favour scientists and researchers, for example?

Jo Johnson: You are tempting me to get involved in the detail of our future immigration policy, which would be very unwise. The Home Secretary has a tremendous amount of expertise in immigration policy, and I do not think she would appreciate me freelancing on the morning of her arrival in No. 10.

Q148 Chair: This is true; nevertheless, we are trying to understand how we can reassure some of our scientists and universities about what case they should be making. Do you think that the UK could meet its needs for access to leading researchers and scientists through the current visa schemes being applied to people from EU countries in the same way, or would existing visa schemes be sufficient to provide enough?

Jo Johnson: Again, I am sorry to disappoint you. I do not want to get involved in the detail because these are very complicated questions. The broad message that I want to send today is that we must and will remain confident, open, outward-looking and welcoming, and that we want to attract brilliant people to our institutions, as we always have done, and we have every intention as a Government of continuing to do that.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Q149 Derek Thomas: This may be an easier question for you, Minister. The UK currently hosts a number of European research facilities that have an ability to influence the direction of science and innovation funding in Europe. How confident can you be that we can secure the future of these sites in the UK? Is it inevitable that some may go back to European member states?

Jo Johnson: These are issues that will need to be thrashed out as part of the bigger package of discussions that look at how exactly our new relationship works in detail. I cannot pre-empt those discussions, but they are important facilities and they have done very good and productive science over a very considerable period of time. It has been a pleasure in this job to have visited a number of them. Recently, I was at the JET—Torus—facility at Culham, for example. It is part of the ITER programme and does useful work,

but its exact future status is something that is going to have to be considered as part of the bigger package of negotiations.

Q150 Derek Thomas: Can you feasibly see a place where these established and important institutions or sites would relocate? Surely we would be able to find a way to make it work so that they can stay.

Jo Johnson: They provide useful work, as they have done over a long period of time, and they are doing great science, but I cannot pre-empt the exact shape of our future relationship with respect to science and the European Union as we stand today, although we obviously recognise the importance of these facilities.

Derek Thomas: That is fine. Thank you very much.

Q151 Chris Green: Several universities have secured loans from the European Investment Bank. Are you aware of any loans to UK universities that are currently under consideration or under threat due to Brexit?

Jo Johnson: We are a big shareholder in the European Investment Bank; I think we have a 16% participation in it. We see no reason to imagine that is going to change. It certainly has not changed in the short term as a result of the referendum decision on 23 June, and we continue to expect to play a full role in the EIB.

Q152 Chris Green: What steps could be taken to ensure that the UK continues to have access to and benefit from EIB loans on favourable terms? Would we need to join the European Free Trade Association?

Jo Johnson: Again, that is a question that will be settled as part of the broader negotiation about our future relationship with the European Union.

Q153 Chris Green: Is there any scope for the British Business Bank perhaps to extend its remit to include universities? Do you have any view on that?

Jo Johnson: It is an interesting suggestion and one I am sure the team will take away and have a look at.

Q154 Chair: The last area, which we looked at a bit before the referendum, is regulation—the harmonisation of regulation and the benefit it has been to UK science previously, and how UK science will go forward and whether regulation will need to be mirrored. Do you have any idea which EU regulations will need to be reviewed first to ensure that UK science is well supported, and can you give us a sense of what will be the process for reviewing EU regulations, in terms of science and innovation—not generally?

Jo Johnson: As we stand today, we are full members of the European research area and we benefit from that. Our future relationship to the European research area is something that will be considered in the round as part of our broader relationship to the rest of the European Union.

Q155 Chair: In evidence last week, for example, the Wellcome Trust pointed with concern to the genomics institute in East Anglia saying that they are dependent on access to pan-European data and they are particularly concerned that having just got through negotiations for the GDPR we do not have a similar domestic regulation yet because we have not reached that far. Are we going to have a domestic regulation, are we going to mirror it, will it be substantially different, and will we still have access to that data, and so on? It will not only have significant impact on that institute, but a similar situation could be replicated in a number of different sectors. I am not asking you to answer on the genomics institute question, but more on the principle of what analysis is being done on the impact of the need to mirror regulation domestically in order to make sure that our institutes and our scientific sectors have the access and the regulatory back-up that they need.

Jo Johnson: Yes. These are the kinds of questions that we are analysing carefully in the Department at the moment. We are aware that these are the sorts of issues that we are going to have to have comprehensive answers to in the weeks ahead.

Q156 Chair: Do you think there is going to be potential opportunity for the sector to be released from burdensome regulation that we wish we were not involved in, and now all of a sudden we have the yoke lifted from our shoulders? Is that an unrealistic hope?

Jo Johnson: We need to look at what kind of relationship we are going to have to the rest of the European Union before we can give a clear picture about the regulatory systems we will continue and those that we might be able to change and adapt. They will all form part of a very detailed piece of work, which will be undertaken within the Department and across Government over the weeks and months to come.

Q157 Chair: Minister, we share your view that science is a central national interest, but we also think that you have been an outstanding Minister for Science, so we very much hope you are going to stick around and will be back giving us evidence if not on this issue then something very similar in the autumn. Can I plead with you to make the case within Government not only that issues such as continuing access to Horizon 2020 and collaboration are maintained, and that the right kind of immigration system, which benefits and favours our science and higher education sectors, is in place, but that the science and innovation community is at the heart of the exit negotiations, as you have been saying is important, because that will be make or break for our knowledge economy going forward? Thank you for the work you have already done in reassuring the community. We are very grateful to you for coming before us so quickly. Thank you very much, Minister.

Jo Johnson: Thank you very much.

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