



Department for Science, Innovation & Technology

Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP
Secretary of State for Science, Innovation
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Darren Jones MP, Chair of the Business, Energy
and Industrial Strategy Committee &
Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Chair of the Science and
Technology Committee
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

17 April 2023

Dear Darren and Greg,

Thank you for your letter of 24 March regarding the UK's participation in EU programmes on science and space. I am pleased to be able to give you an update on this.

The Government is committed to science and research collaboration – that's why we agreed to participate in EU Programmes under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). Unfortunately, despite the UK making every effort to unlock progress, including launching formal consultations last summer, our association has been delayed for almost two years.

At the Partnership Council on 24 March, the UK and EU noted their openness to taking forward discussions on the UK's association in the coming weeks. As part of DSIT's recent engagement with the EU, I travelled to Brussels on 4th April for an introductory meeting with R&I Commissioner Mariya Gabriel to discuss research collaboration, including the UK's expectations around association to EU Programmes such as Horizon Europe.

We are now discussing this matter with the EU, and hope our negotiations will be successful. That is our preference. But association would need to be on the basis of a good deal for the UK's researchers, businesses and taxpayers.

In these discussions, the UK will engage constructively with the EU. I am sure the Committees will understand that it wouldn't be right to comment on the detail of the ongoing discussions.

However, as noted in your letter, Horizon Europe has been operating since 2021 and these discussions will need to reflect the lasting impact of the delays to the UK's association, as researchers and businesses across the UK have missed out on over two years of a seven-year programme. Therefore, association to Horizon Europe would have to be on fair and appropriate terms.

Likewise, with regards to Euratom and Copernicus, discussions must also reflect that UK organisations have had little to no access to these programmes over this period. UK



organisations have only been able to take part in Horizon projects because of the UK's Horizon Europe Guarantee Scheme.

If we are not able to secure association to Horizon Europe on fair and appropriate terms, we will implement Pioneer, our bold, ambitious alternative. The Committees will have seen that on 6 April the Government published its prospectus on Pioneer. Pioneer would receive the same amount of funding as the UK would have paid to associate to Horizon had we associated from 2021 to 2027. This means the UK would invest around £14.6bn in Pioneer to the end of 2027/28, including the support we are already providing to the sector, for example via the Horizon Guarantee.

By publishing the prospectus on Pioneer now, we are giving UK researchers and businesses the opportunity to provide feedback on these proposed plans, as well as to provide reassurance that the government is fully prepared for all future scenarios. Over the next few months, I and my officials will engage with and seek further input from researchers and businesses as we develop these proposals, and would welcome the Committees support in this.

Similarly, as an alternative to Euratom if we cannot reach fair and appropriate terms for association, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero has been working closely with the UK Atomic Energy Authority to design an ambitious expansion of activity to support the UK fusion strategy, including support for both public and private sector projects.

To support the UK's earth observation sector, we have invested in national and international activity through our November 2022 investment, including £300m in European Space Agency EO programmes. We are working closely with the sector on strategic direction and continuing investment in our world-class EO sector, building on our existing UK EO capabilities, to maintain stability in the event of the UK's non-participation in Copernicus.

Of course, regardless of whether we reach an agreement with the EU on association, or whether we launch our proposed alternative, the Government will ensure that UK researchers and businesses continue to benefit from world-leading collaboration opportunities with colleagues from Europe and beyond.

We will continue to keep the Committees updated and I look forward to engaging more with you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michelle Donelan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michelle" and the last name "Donelan" clearly distinguishable.

Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP
Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology