

BREXIT: RCN PRIORITY

Collaboration for research and learning

What are the issues?

The health and social care challenges that society is facing, such as antimicrobial resistance, infectious diseases and ageing populations, are global. They are not unique to the UK and know no borders. International collaboration and exchange increases the speed and likelihood of finding the solutions to these challenges, as well as adopting insight and innovation at faster rates.

For example, through international collaborative research and academic exchange, it is well evidenced that international research collaboration increases research excellence and mobility increases researcher productivity¹.

This type of collaboration can positively impact on attracting staff in higher education but also in the NHS workforce, particularly at higher and specialist levels.

Whilst many of these activities take place internationally beyond Europe, the European Union (EU) has developed frameworks to ease collaboration and make it more effective, it also funds collaborative activities through its various programmes².

The RCN is very active, both bilaterally and through umbrella bodies in influencing, developing and implementing changes in policy and practice, as well as working in partnership with nursing organisations for mutual benefit. For example on care in community settings, addressing staffing levels and an ageing workforce.

What does this mean?

There is a risk of loss of access to the EU's research funding programme (Horizon 2020 and the subsequent 9th EU Research and Development Framework Programme) and student exchange programmes (Erasmus+) for nursing faculties in higher education³. The UK is currently not expected to be able to participate

in the wider policy exchange mechanisms that European Commission initiates and funds, in particular the Health Programme; an initiative which mandates the EU to protect public health. The UK is a global player in the fields of research, education and health – collaborating both within Europe and beyond – and there is now an opportunity to re-focus on this strength.

Brexit Scorecard

The RCN has rated progress on its five priorities by RED, AMBER and GREEN.

Red indicates that there has been no firm commitment made by the UK Government on this issue and how to resolve it.

Amber indicates some UK Government commitment or statement but no agreement on practical application with the EU.

Green indicates a firm commitment from the UK Government and the EU including on practical implementation.



RED WARNING

UK participation in EU research and exchange programmes has not been guaranteed by the UK Government after Brexit



AMBER WARNING

Whatever the Brexit settlement, the RCN will continue to collaborate with other nursing organisations in Europe to improve nursing and health.

¹ Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, *International Comparative Performance of the UK Research Base – 2013*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263729/bis-13-1297-international-comparative-performance-of-the-UK-research-base-2013.pdf

² For research, see for example, The Royal Society, *UK research and the European Union. The role of the EU in international research collaboration and researcher mobility*. Available at: <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/uk-research-and-european-union/>

³ For wider higher education priorities, see <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/brexit/Pages/short-term-priorities.aspx> and the separate Council of Deans of Health submission to this inquiry.

However, UK organisations' influence may be diminished within European alliances once the UK is no longer part of the EU's formal policy making arrangements.

What needs to happen?

The cross-border nature of health and social care challenges must be considered in the forthcoming negotiations and access to funding and networks must be preserved wherever possible. In this context, domestic and international funding arrangements also need to be reviewed to ensure sustainability.

To date the UK Government has said that it will make sure EU funded research projects awarded under Horizon 2020 continue to receive funding, even if they carry on after Brexit. It has also affirmed EU students' access to loans and postgraduate support through Research Council studentships for a limited period⁴.

The Government's recent position paper on the successor research programme to Horizon 2020, does not guarantee that the UK will continue to contribute to this future EU Research & Development framework programme, but that it will discuss "possible options for our future participation"⁵.

As the RCN we are:

Committed to continue working closely with other nursing organisations across Europe after Brexit, particularly through the European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN) to lobby on health policies across Europe that impact on nursing, and share and learn from each other on education, practice and workforce issues.

Actively supporting the development of the European Nursing Research Foundation linked to EFN, to promote better use of nursing evidence in health policy and utilise European research funds to address major nursing issues.

Highlighting with the wider health community the importance of the UK's future participation in research collaboration and exchange post-Brexit.

Working constructively with the UK Government and Parliament, the Welsh Government and National Assembly for Wales, the Scottish Government and Parliament and stakeholders in Northern Ireland to shape and influence these issues, so that our members working across the devolved countries are heard.

How can you help?

Lobby your local MP, for the UK's continued participation in EU research and higher education exchange programmes post Brexit.

This is the most effective way of holding the UK Government to account. You can contact the RCN to receive one of our 'How to lobby' toolkits, and you can speak to your country/regional office for support. You can find details of who your local MP is here: <http://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/contact-your-mp>

May 2018

Publication code: 006 986

⁴ Government response to the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmsctech/1015/101502.htm>. February 2017.

⁵ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: *UK position paper on 9th EU framework programme on research and innovation (FP9)* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685997/FP9_position_paper.pdf. March 2018.