

Dr Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Cc: Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

July 2022

Dear President von der Leyen

We are writing as representatives of the European neuroscience research community, representing over 21,000 neuroscientists from 44 neuroscience societies across 33 countries. We represent many of the leading neuroscience researchers across Europe, many of whom have benefited from close collaboration across borders through Horizon 2020. We write together to urge that the UK's association to Horizon Europe be rapidly agreed.

Keeping European neuroscience collaboration open

Our greatest collective challenges cut across national borders. Neuroscience research is essential to learn fundamental understanding of our humanity, to prevent and treat disorders of the brain and nervous system. Neurological disorders are one of the leading causes of disability globally, while over 1 billion people live with mental health disorders. The complexity of the brain makes tackling these diseases very difficult, which is why continued global collaboration on neuroscience is absolutely critical.

Horizon Europe is a vital lever for global collaboration, forging alliances and partnerships that keep European research at the cutting-edge of discovery – and globally competitive. This is particularly true for neuroscience research, which benefited from at least €530m funding over 280 neuroscience projects under Horizon 2020.¹ The UK has been a key partner in many of these collaborative projects, receiving funding for 44 projects (second only to Germany), and European neuroscience research has benefited from sharing expertise across borders.

A truly open and inclusive European Research Area

On July 9th, the European neuroscience community will come together for the FENS 2022 Forum in Paris – highlighting the strong ties that exist between neuroscience societies across Europe and the enthusiasm of neuroscientists to remain connected with their colleagues across borders.

There has been considerable anxiety within the neuroscience community on how the UK's departure from the EU could harm future research and collaborations. We are aware of seven UK-based

¹ Source: <https://erc.easme-web.eu> – data from 2014-2020 of funding from ERC panel LS5 (Neuroscience & Disorders of the Nervous Systems), and does not include neuroscience projects from other ERC panels.

neuroscientists successfully awarded ERC grants who have been affected by the delay to UK association to Horizon Europe being confirmed.

Keeping Horizon Europe open is in all our best interests. Shutting out long-standing partners such as the UK from Horizon Europe would compromise the advances that we hope to achieve from cross-border cooperation over the next decade in fields such as neuroscience.

There is still time for UK association to be resolved, but this is rapidly running out. We strongly urge you to support an open and inclusive European Research Area, and rapidly confirm UK association to Horizon Europe – an outcome that would be welcomed in neuroscience labs across Europe.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Henson, President of the British Neuroscience Association

Jean-Antoine Girault, President of the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies

[List of Society Presidents]

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