

## Response to the Triggering of Article 50

29 March 2017

Today, the UK Government triggered Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, beginning the process of our withdrawal from the European Union. As negotiations with the other 27 EU countries begin, we recognise the pressures the Government faces in obtaining the best possible deal for the UK. With this in mind, the Academy of Social Sciences and its Campaign for Social Science stress that any deal must consider the impact of its decisions on the health of the UK science, research, and higher education sector, which is vital to the UK's future [prosperity](#) and well-being.

As we have [previously outlined](#), the UK science and research community has benefitted greatly from international collaborations, EU research funding, and the ease of movement of staff and students – all of which will be affected during the process of the negotiations triggered today, as well as by their final outcome. International academic and research staff provide an important source of talent to our universities and fill a skills gap [difficult to overcome](#) without significant long-term future investment, funding and recruitment. Foreign students contribute intellectually and financially to the health of UK universities and science, adding almost [£11bn](#) to the UK economy and supporting growth at local, regional and national levels. The UK has also [gained enormously from participation](#) in EU research programmes, infrastructures and cross-national research collaborations that amplify UK research impact.

The Government has taken many [welcome steps](#) to address some of the uncertainty for UK science and research following the referendum. This includes commitments to [‘attract the brightest and the best to work or study’](#) in the UK; confirming the eligibility of EU students for student loans, grants and home fee status through 2018; confirming that research councils will continue to fund EU postgraduate students whose courses start in 2017/18; increased expenditure on research and development by [£4.75bn over the next four years](#); and pledging to underwrite certain research awards made under the EU's Horizon 2020 programme. The Government has also specified it would [‘welcome agreement to continue to collaborate with our European partners on major science, research and technology initiatives.’](#)

Yet, concerns remain over what Brexit will mean in terms of the potential loss of income from international students, recruitment and skills gaps from loss of international staff, higher barriers to international research collaborations, and lower levels of research funding in the longer-term. In recognition of the sector's importance as a driver of UK prosperity, we believe that as the Government undertakes its negotiations with the rest of the EU, it should seek to ensure that:

- ***If necessary, it develops [appropriate](#) visa policies and processes for EU and other international staff of UK universities and the wider research community, enabling straightforward and flexible recruitment across all disciplines, from STEM to the Social Sciences and Humanities.***
- ***Its policy on international students bears in mind both their financial contributions to UK universities and the extent to which such students can,***

*with appropriate development of post-study visas, be a source of skills and knowledge for universities and the wider economy.*

- *It prioritises, promotes, and encourages international research collaboration; ideally through the negotiation of full UK participation in the upcoming 9th Framework Programme as an associated country.*

Given the analytical capacity and knowledge the Government will need to have the best chance of achieving these goals, the AcSS / CfSS further recommend that **the Government ensure participation in the Brexit negotiations of a representative of the UK higher education and science community**. We continue to believe it is essential that a member of the UK negotiating team is knowledgeable about research and higher education. This could include a Deputy Director (or Directors) for Research, Innovation, and Higher Education within DExEU, just as there are for other [economic sectors](#). It is also essential that [the high-level stakeholder working group on EU exit, universities, research and innovation](#) should be representative of the UK higher education and research community as a whole, and include members who formally represent the contributions of social science and the humanities in addition to members representing the STEM subjects.

To read our Brexit analysis, see [‘The EU Referendum – Leave: What next for UK Social Science?’](#), our briefing [‘Making the best of Brexit: Supporting UK Science, Higher Education and Research for the Future’](#), and [‘Navigating Brexit: Supporting and Safeguarding UK Higher Education’](#).