



Description

In June 2016, Britain voted in favor of leaving the European Union (EU) in what can be considered a historical referendum. For most of us, this news came as a surprise. Since then, there have been many discussions concerning the impact of this decision on research and science. However, six months later, academics, governments, and institutions are doing what they can to make the best of Brexit.

Uncertain Times

Currently, British universities employ around 32000 scientists from EU countries, but there is growing evidence that European researchers and lecturers are now [leaving or rejecting posts](#) from the United Kingdom (UK) because they fear that Brexit could have a negative impact on their academic future. British scientists working in European countries also have similar concerns. Leaders of academic organizations also fear that research funds from the EU could drop significantly during the next few years, affecting important collaborations between British and European scientists. UK is one of the [largest recipients of research funding in the EU](#). Between 2007 and 2013, Britain received 8.8 billion euros for research and development, having contributed 5.4 billion euros over the same period.

Post-Brexit Support

In view of all these problems, the British government is already looking for ways to minimize the negative impact of Brexit on UK science. The Treasury has guaranteed [support for research projects funded by the EU](#) and confirms that this support will continue even after Britain has left the EU. This would be the case for any collaborations taking part in [Horizon 2020](#), the EU's framework program for research and innovation.

Freedom of Movement

Since the referendum, many institutions—both in Europe and the UK—have emphasized their support to employees and their families. Universities and research centers are also providing advice and helping their staff apply for permanent residency if they wish. Most of these institutions depend on the ability to draw experts from a global pool of talent and know how important ease of movement can be. At the moment, researchers can travel without any problems between Britain and other European

countries, facilitating collaborations and promoting expertise transfer within the EU. However, restrictions on movement could make this more difficult in the future. Thus, experts say that the UK government may have to develop [appropriate visa policies](#) for UK universities and research centers should that be necessary. Two of this year's Nobel Prize winners, Duncan Haldane and Sir Fraser Stoddart, also call for [scientists to be given a protected status for visas](#).

Are British Projects at Risk?

Shortly after the referendum, the British Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, [Jo Johnson](#), raised concerns about possible discrimination against UK scientists. He said that British researchers are at risk of being [excluded from important European projects](#). While the Minister pointed out that he does not have any concrete evidence that this is actually happening, some academics believe that discrimination has already begun. They say that uncertainty has made some European researchers cautious about collaborating with UK teams.

Making the Best of Brexit

For many researchers, Brexit came unexpectedly. Others probably saw it coming, but for the scientific community as a whole, the outcome of the EU referendum represents a big challenge. During the next two years, the UK will be renegotiating its position outside the EU and researchers must play a key role in reminding politicians of what has to be done to make the best of Brexit.

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Date Created

2016/12/26

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