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

Brussels, 4 November 2021

Dear President von der Leyen,

We are writing as representatives of the European Union's research and innovation community representing over 1,000 universities and universities of applied sciences, 56 academies of science, 38 research performing and funding organisations, 33 rectors' conferences, as well as 120 regional organisations. We also represent many of Europe's leading researchers individually, including over 10,000 grantees of the European Research Council (ERC), and over 20,000 holders of a Marie-Sklodowska Curie Action award (MSCA), as well as doctoral candidates in almost every member state. Together, we jointly support the United Kingdom's association to Horizon Europe as soon as possible.

Horizon Europe's success will hinge on its commitment to excellence and global outlook. The only way to move forward from the Covid-19 pandemic is as a global community working together to drive research and innovation through collaboration.

We have a long history of close and trusted collaboration and shared success with the UK. The strength of those partnerships has provided enormous benefits to excellent research, resulting in countless collaborations to tackle some of the world's most pressing challenges, boosting competitiveness and growth.

A strong framework programme in research and innovation is essential for the EU to succeed in the twin green and digital transitions. Europe's strategic autonomy requires close collaboration with the EU's closest partner in research and innovation.

The EU knowledge community collectively welcomed the provision in Protocol I of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement for the UK to associate to Horizon Europe. The subsequent Q&A document from the European Commission provided us with the reassurance that UK entities could apply with EU partners for the first multi-beneficiary calls.

Based on the Protocol and those reassurances, for the past 10 months our universities, businesses and research institutions have been working with UK partners with a shared vision and in good faith that the UK would soon be a full associate member.

But the absence of a clear timeline for finalising UK association is now causing increasing concern. This lingering uncertainty risks endangering current and future plans for collaboration.

We are rapidly approaching a crunch point. With the first Horizon Europe grant agreements approaching and new calls soon to be launched, UK association must be finalised without further delay.

Now is the time for swift and decisive action. Further delays or even non-association would result in a missed opportunity and a major weakening of our collective research strength and competitiveness.

We urge the European Commission and UK Government to work towards a successful UK association to Horizon Europe, to safeguard this valuable and mutually beneficial R&I cooperation.

Yours,

Signatories:

Professor Axel Cleeremans, President of the Association of ERC Grantees (AERG)

Professor Antonio Loprieno, President of All European Academies (ALLEA)

Rector Jón Atli Benediktsson, President of Aurora Universities Network (AURORA)

Rector Rik Van de Walle, President of CESAER

Prof. Ludovic Thilly, Chair of the Coimbra Group

Evalina Brännvall, Chair of the European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA)

Dr Gabi Lombardo, Director of European Alliance for Social Sciences and Humanities (EASSH)

Prof. Màrius Martínez, President of The European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU)

Pirita Lindholm, Director of the European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN)

Professor Michael Murphy, President of the European Universities Association (EUA)

Professor René Medema, Chair of EU-LIFE

Agnieszka Żyra, President of the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Eurodoc)

Tatiana Panteli, Head of Brussels Office EuroTech Universities Alliance (EuroTech)

President Georg Krausch, Chair of German U15

Rector Vincent Blondel, Chair of The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities (The Guild)

Dr J. Leslie Zachariah-Wolff, Secretary General of IDEA League

Prof. Marin Andler, President of Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE)

Rector Magnificus Karen Maex, Chair of the League of European Research Universities (LERU)

Dr. Mostafa Moonir Shawrav, Chair of Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA)

Dr Marc Schiltz, President of Science Europe

Otto Bruun, Chairman of Universities of Applied Sciences for Europe (UAS4EUROPE)

Presidente Christine Clerici, President of UDICE French Research Universities (UDICE)

Prof. Luciano Saso, President of the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA)

Dr. Alexandru Marchis Vasile, Chair of the Universities Informal Liaison Offices Network (UnILiON)

Rector Snježana Prijić-Samaržija, President of the Young European Research Universities (YERUN)

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Cc: Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President Inter-Institutional Relations and Foresight
Clara Martinez Alberola, Deputy Head of the Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom
Margrethe Vestager, Executive Vice-President A Europe Fit for a Digital Age
Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth
Jean-Eric Paquet, Director General, Directorate-General Research and Innovation
Signe Ratso, Chief Negotiator for Horizon Europe Association, Directorate-General Research and Innovation
Maria Leptin, President of the European Research Council