

Pre-Budget representation to HM Treasury

Thursday 14 January 2021

The British Academy is the UK's national academy for the humanities and social sciences, providing strategic national and global engagement. The British Academy has a unique and established position in the research landscape, inspiring, promoting and supporting outstanding achievement and global advances in humanities and social sciences. We invest in the best researchers and research and build skills and capacities for current and future generations. We use insights from the past and the present to help shape the future, synthesising knowledge to strengthen economies, societies, policies and cultures across all regions of the UK and internationally. Our research addresses all topics covered in this stakeholder consultation.

The British Academy welcomes the news that the UK plans to associate with Horizon Europe. It is important that the funding for this is additional to the settlement for research at BEIS. The funds required for Horizon Europe association should be additional to the existing budget for research and innovation, in order that we support and build the UK's reputation as a global research and innovation leader in this period of uncertainty and upheaval.

We also wish to emphasise the importance and value of funding for global research and innovation activities through the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget. Any reduction in the levels of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget for research and innovation activity will directly harm the UK's ability to maintain its global position in terms of science and research. We are extremely concerned that even a temporary reduction in funding for scientific research will compromise the ability of the UK to act as a leader in addressing global challenges and building capacity in research talent, particularly at a time when COVID-19 has demonstrated the critical need for global collaboration.

UK-funded research and innovation has contributed to significant global advances, including a dramatic reduction of child deaths from malaria, eradication of the devastating livestock disease rinderpest, reduction of gender-based violence and building the case for climate action. These contributions demonstrate the critical role of research and innovation in supporting the global challenges that the Government has set out for ODA funding and the need to ensure these activities continue to be funded.

We are concerned that any reduction in investment in ODA R&D will force us to break hard-won partnerships and the UK's credibility and trustworthiness will be threatened – especially where our international partners are also contributing financially and will be unable to proceed without the UK as a partner. These damaging consequences would threaten the UK's reputation as a partner of choice and could prove particularly disruptive in the year that the UK acts as President of the G7 and COP26.

We strongly encourage you to reflect on the important role of R&D in achieving your objectives for ODA and urge you to ensure this builds and strengthens the UK's reputation as a global research and innovation leader, through mechanisms such as the Global Challenges Research Fund and the Newton Fund.