

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London, SW1A 2AA

24 July 2019

Dear Prime Minister,

UK National Academies

We write as the Presidents of the four UK National Academies to congratulate you on your appointment as Prime Minister and to offer our support to you and your Government.

As you rightly highlighted in your opening speech as Prime Minister, research and innovation is one of the UK's great strengths. Our researchers, scientists, engineers and innovators have time and again generated the new knowledge, new products and new approaches that have defined and fuelled our nation's progress and prosperity. Undoubtedly, our ability to respond to the challenges of today and tomorrow, from climate change to antimicrobial resistance, will continue to depend on our nation's diverse expertise.

The UK's National Academies and our Fellowships represent over 5,000 of the world's most distinguished researchers across a broad range of disciplines in academia, industry, charities, and the public sector. We are working together to support researchers, industry and policy makers to make the UK the location of choice for world-class research, development and innovation. We stand ready to provide your Government with independent expert advice across a range of areas, including securing the future competitiveness of the UK in research and innovation.

During the leadership campaign, we joined a coalition representing some of the UK's leading businesses, universities and charities calling for the next Prime Minister to make the commitments necessary for the UK to remain globally competitive in R&D. As you formulate policies for your Government, we once again urge you to give your full support to the Conservative Party manifesto commitment to increase investment in R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027, with a longer-term aim of 3%.

Achieving this target will require a bold vision and real financial commitment. Many of our comparator nations already achieve this level of investment and the UK will fall behind unless we are able to match their commitments. The time to act is now and we sincerely hope that your Government will seize the opportunity to do so without delay.

Of course, we must also recognise that in order to excel and deliver the transformative benefits of research and innovation, the UK must be open to the best ideas and minds. Research and innovation is inherently international and is becoming ever more so. In 1980, just 10% of the UK's research output was the product of international collaboration, last year over half (55%) of UK research papers had international authors. Today, almost a third of academic staff in UK universities are overseas nationals, with one in six coming from elsewhere in the EU.

The UK has a proud history of international openness, collaboration and leadership in research and innovation. Only by working together will we be able to address shared global challenges. That is why we look forward to working with your Government to build on a strong base to ensure that the UK continues to welcome talented individuals to the UK, wherever they come from, and that we are able to collaborate on a truly global scale. In doing so, we must seek to build new relationships as well as sustain our existing productive collaborations that have built up over many years.

In this context, we must remember that colleagues from the EU account for the highest number of our international collaborations. These are relationships which have been nurtured over several decades. Moreover, the rate of our collaboration with other EU member states and countries associated to Horizon 2020 continues to increase at a faster rate than with many other parts of the world, including the USA. Therefore, as a starting point, we must seek the closest achievable association to Horizon Europe, the successor to the EU's current research and innovation programme - Horizon 2020. Leaving the EU without a deal would severely jeopardise our ability to achieve this and risks considerable damage to the UK's world-leading research and innovation base.

The UK is one of the best places in the world to explore, discover and innovate. We look forward to working with your Government to build upon this and also to help ensure that the benefits of research and innovation are widely shared by all communities throughout the country.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Sir David Cannadine FBA
President, British Academy



Professor Dame Ann Dowling OM DBE FEng
FRS
President, Royal Academy of Engineering



Professor Sir Robert Lechler PMedSci
President, Academy of Medical Sciences



Professor Sir Venki Ramakrishnan PRS
President, Royal Society