

PRESS RELEASE
14 JULY 2016

Academic co-operation with the UK remains essential for Europe

The League of European Research Universities (LERU), one of the strongest collaborations of leading research universities in the world, regrets the outcome of the recent UK referendum. With 21 members across 10 countries, LERU nonetheless respects the result as the democratic will of the British people.

Academic and research cooperation in Europe predates the EU by centuries, and the community of European academic institutions has always been much wider than the EU. This will continue to be the case, and as the UK establishes its new position in the world, we in LERU fully believe that this cooperation will remain an essential, ever stronger part of the UK's global relationships.

Academic collaboration improves lives in Europe and around the world. In the wake of the referendum, we strongly affirm that UK universities are, and will continue to be, indispensable collaborative partners. Universities in the UK and on the continent are working together to keep children safe from infections, develop treatments for Alzheimer's disease and cancer, and produce next generation mobile phone networks. As a partnership, LERU will do everything it can to support this cooperation.

We do not believe that harming relationships between UK and EU academics, students and researchers was the intention of those who campaigned or voted for the UK to leave the EU, and while it is entirely understandable that many are deeply upset by the UK vote, and the harm it may inflict, we note that UK universities campaigned strongly against it.

LERU is therefore calling upon all its European partners, in particular universities, to continue to work with UK universities, respecting the ongoing full membership of the UK and the firm belief that the post-exit relationship must support academic cooperation. We call upon those who review funding applications to see the engagement of UK partners as a desirable feature of projects, rather than a risk or compromise. A pathway to stronger academic cooperation remains not only possible but very desirable. It is completely inappropriate to respond to the referendum by taking decisions that punish UK researchers, or disrupt partnerships.

In terms of eligibility for EU funding programmes, Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+, nothing has changed for the present. We welcome the strong commitments made by the European Commission, and Commissioner Carlos Moedas in particular, to respect the UK's ongoing status as a full member state. We also welcome the statement of Research Councils UK that they will work to ensure that the concerns and needs of UK researchers are considered in the negotiation of the future relationship. LERU institutions will continue to work together on Horizon 2020 programmes, in the UK and throughout Europe.

It is not yet clear when negotiations on the withdrawal of the UK will begin, or what the impact of those negotiations will be on research and academic cooperation. It is possible that the UK will remain a full member for the duration of Horizon 2020. Beyond that, we urge all parties to work to ensure that mutually beneficial cooperation persists. LERU will continue to press for the scale of support for such work to increase, as a clear expression of the intention of the UK, EU and other partners to continue to work together.

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In LERU we fully support our five UK members, will continue to support their ongoing engagement in Europe, and seek to ensure that the outcome of the renegotiated relationship between the UK and the EU enables cooperation to continue. We will draw on the experiences of LERU members to communicate the benefits of international collaboration and show how it is enhanced by the movement of talented staff and students between nations.

We are dismayed by reports of racist attacks in Britain and Europe. We will all fight racism and abuse on our campuses and in our communities. We know that UK universities are, and will remain, tolerant, diverse and international places, where it is a pleasure to learn, discover and innovate.

These are difficult and uncertain times for the UK and Europe. LERU believes that universities, as institutions committed to long-term public good through the sharing of knowledge, should be a reassuring and enlightening presence in difficult times. We will do all we can to ensure that the outcome of the present situation is a better future for all the peoples of Europe.

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About LERU

The League of European Research Universities (LERU) is an association of twenty-one leading research-intensive universities that share the values of high-quality teaching within an environment of internationally competitive research.

Founded in 2002, LERU advocates education through an awareness of the frontiers of human understanding; the creation of new knowledge through basic research, which is the ultimate source of innovation in society; and the promotion of research across a broad front in partnership with industry and society at large.

The purpose of the League is to advocate these values, to influence policy in Europe and to develop best practice through mutual exchange of experience. LERU regularly publishes a variety of papers and reports which make high-level policy statements, provide in-depth analyses and make concrete recommendations for policymakers, universities, researchers and other stakeholders.

The LERU universities are:

- University of Amsterdam
- Universitat de Barcelona
- University of Cambridge
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Freiburg
- Université de Genève
- Universität Heidelberg
- University of Helsinki
- Universiteit Leiden
- KU Leuven
- Imperial College London
- University College London
- Lund University
- University of Milan
- Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
- University of Oxford
- Pierre & Marie Curie University
- Université Paris-Sud
- University of Strasbourg
- Utrecht University
- University of Zurich

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