

President Ursula von der Leyen
European Commission
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 200 1049 Bruxelles/Brussel
Belgium/Belgique/België

Dear President von der Leyen,

In an era of global uncertainty and rapid technological change, international research collaboration has never been more vital. As leading research universities from three countries associated with Horizon Europe, we believe that openness, excellence, and shared ambition must remain central to the EU's vision for research and innovation. Collectively, our countries' higher education systems carry out over €38 billion in R&D annually, working across borders to deliver societal benefits and help build a better future for all.

As the world's largest multinational R&D programme, Horizon Europe capitalises on the fact that research and innovation are inherently collaborative endeavours. No single country can tackle today's challenges alone. Whether addressing climate change, advancing energy security, or driving technological breakthroughs, working together allows us to go further and achieve more than we ever could in isolation. Horizon's openness to both EU member states and associated countries allows us all to draw on a wider range of skills, ideas and talent to tackle shared challenges and realise emerging opportunities.

Our universities value Horizon Europe association for its focus on research and innovation, the opportunity to build networks across like-minded countries and its reputation for excellence. We therefore warmly welcomed your commitment in May to a standalone Framework Programme 10 to succeed the current programme, in line with the Warsaw Declaration by EU science ministers. We also appreciate the steps the Commission has taken to ensure like-minded countries can take part in more Horizon calls, such as quantum.

The EU is therefore on the cusp of delivering a stable, long-term, accessible framework that enables us to pool ideas and talent. At a time when our countries are tackling so many of the same issues, we should seize this opportunity, backing curiosity-driven research and open international collaboration.

Associated countries bring valuable talent and resources to Horizon collaborations and support joint problem-solving. They provide EU partners with access to new ideas and facilities to help tackle shared challenges and boost competitiveness. Long-term R&D relationships between teams in the EU and associated countries built up over many years have had sustained benefits for everyone across the full range of disciplines supported by successive framework programmes.

We therefore hope the Commission will come forward with proposals which reflect the key strengths of previous framework programmes, including the targeted support for excellent fundamental research in Horizon Europe. This has helped harness many of the strengths of associated countries for mutual benefit. We believe a clear FP10 focus on curiosity-driven

research complements plans for a European Competitiveness Fund, driving the discoveries and developing the technologies that will power tomorrow's economy and not just today's.

Maintaining the EU's longstanding and far-sighted commitment to collaboration between scientists and researchers in our countries is also critical to maximising FP10's impact on economic growth and competitiveness. Supporting association on mutually beneficial terms, with equal access where countries are associated, would help make this a reality. In addition, a process to make clear the terms of joining FP10 ahead of time would enable countries such as the UK, Canada and Switzerland to make an informed, early decision about associating. This would help ensure our universities are ready to contribute to the new R&D work programmes from day one.

As geopolitical tensions grow, deepening multilateral links between trusted partners is all the more important. Close R&D links can also play a crucial role as the EU and associated countries consider how to co-ordinate across areas such as defence, climate, health, cyber, and energy security.

When they work together, EU and associated countries' science bases benefit all of us. We hope you will deliver an open FP10, so we can deliver for the societies and economies of the future.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Tim Bradshaw
Chief Executive, Russell Group

Robert Asselin
CEO, U15 Canada

Dr Luciana Vaccaro
President, swissuniversities