

Commissioner Mariya Gabriel
European Commission
Directorate General Innovation and Youth
B - 1049 Brussels
Belgium

31st October 2019

Dear Commissioner Gabriel,

Brexit's impact on medical research and innovation in Europe

On behalf of the British medical profession, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as the new European Commissioner for Innovation and Youth.

As a former Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society, you will be all too aware that Brexit will have profound repercussions on the medical profession in Europe and its ongoing ability to provide high quality healthcare to patients. Likewise, it will severely impact the medical profession's ability to train the next generations of doctors and their subsequent development of future drugs, devices and techniques through collaborative research and clinical trials. Taken together, such repercussions would inhibit the EU from achieving the goal set out in your mission letter from President Elect Von Der Leyen – “to harness the potential of education, research and innovation to help deliver on the EU's ambitions and wider objectives.”

According to Universities UK 17% (33,735)¹ of academic staff at UK universities are from other EU countries. Their work in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects plays a vital role in the fostering and development of medical research in the UK, across Europe, and, indeed globally, as well as in the teaching and training of future doctors and researchers.

However, the ability of doctors to work between the UK and other member states is due to the mutual recognition of professional medical qualifications (MRPQ) and the principle of free movement – both of which are under threat by the consequences of Brexit. With over 1/3² of EEA qualified doctors in the UK considering moving abroad as a result of Brexit, and 18% per cent of that number thinking about leaving Europe entirely, we are extremely concerned that the UK's decision to leave the EU could not only imperil high quality medical research and medical education in our own country but across the EU as a whole.

¹ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/news/Pages/Top-European-researchers-need-certainty-about-their-futures-in-the-UK.aspx>

² <https://www.bma.org.uk/collective-voice/influence/europe/brexit/eu-survey-2018>

Thankfully, your institution has sought to mitigate Brexit's impact upon the European medical profession. Nonetheless, I am aware of the risk that the UK may depart from the EU without a withdrawal agreement. Much more must be done, therefore, to limit the damage Brexit is likely to have on European medical research and the intrinsic pan-European nature of this work.

Echoing the points that we have already made to the EU's Chief Negotiator, I would like to reaffirm our view, which is shared both the European Council and the UK government, that "the future partnership should include ambitious provisions on movement of natural persons...in areas such as (the) recognition of professional qualifications."³

Likewise, and given the vital role that EU research programmes like Horizon 2020 have played in the fostering and development of European medical research, we believe that any future partnership must facilitate an innovation agreement between the EU and UK. Such an agreement would include:

- A commitment by the UK and the members of the European Union to work together to make the European Research Area a world leader in science;
- Full researcher mobility between the UK and the rest of Europe for all levels and career stages;
- Continued participation in Erasmus and similar schemes giving students and staff opportunities to study in other EU countries and the UK;
- A commitment to collaboration, including UK associate membership of Horizon Europe;
- Continued participation in the European Investment Bank (which has played a vital role in the development of the academic estate across the EU) so that the rest of the EU retains ongoing access to the intellectual property and service, business and trade opportunities generated by the investments;
- Co-operation on and mutual recognition of regulations that support science

Accordingly, as your DG will play a lead role in how the European institutions consider such matters, we would urge you to build on the revised political declaration's commitment⁴ to "establish general principles, terms and conditions for the United Kingdom's participation in Union programmes" thereby delivering pragmatic solutions that facilitate ongoing high-quality medical research across Europe.

I hope that this information is helpful and would be delighted, via our EU Public Affairs Manager – [Paul Laffin](#), to discuss these issues further with you and/or your team.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Chaand Nagpaul CBE, Chair of BMA UK Council

³ <https://www.bma.org.uk/collective-voice/influence/europe/brexit/european-lobbying>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/revised_political_declaration.pdf