

## House of Commons: Science and Technology Committee

### Science and Technology Committee to hold a 'Brexit: Science and Innovation' summit on Thursday 22 February 2018

Written response to request for comments on current documentation and the issues raised.

1. The main paper to which response can be made, since it relates to AsSIST-UK's area of professional expertise, is the Government's Future Partnership Paper 'Collaboration on science and innovation'. The Committee asks for any challenges not fully acknowledged and opportunities not fully explored.

#### 1.1 *Challenges:*

The Future Partnership Paper provide a broadly helpful wish-list on ensuring current relations can be sustained where possible, though is short on detailed issues that need addressing. These include:

- How in the areas of innovation, risk governance and standardisation, will a mixed set of R&D partnerships (with the US and China for example outlined in related recent government papers) ensure that there is common currency across standards embedded in or presumed by multiple partner relations? The *Partnership* paper simply mentions 'bilateral and multilateral research relationships' without recognising this issue
- how to deal with the end of subsidiarity and legacy policies – such as on measures to restrict environmental pollutants agreed at an EU level – that will no longer apply in legally binding terms at the UK level
- how current partnerships – many of which are championed in the government paper – will be sustainable in their complete form where they depend on not only co-funding with the EU but also agreements relating to mobility of researchers, support for SME involvement and so on: consideration is need of the detailed changes that arise as the UK moves from a member to an associate or third country affiliate. Reference to STPs in the partnership is a key area where this needs to take place. This is especially the case in regard to large-scale centres of excellence across the EU
- The need to understand how *existing* policy instruments in specific sectors interact and how they may *work against* rather than align with each other in a post-Brexit context

## *2. Opportunities*

2.1 There is a more systemic need in regard to S&T policy to take time to build a meta-perspective on S&T policy-making over the next two to three years which takes account of diverse partnerships and initiatives. While diversity is apparent now, it would be important to ensure that the right hand (in a specific Department) knows what the 'left-hand' in another Department is doing, which has not always been the case. There are a number of strategic policy areas that can be explored that provide ways in which a meta-perspective might be enabled:

- to know more about how different R&D policy instruments interact before introducing yet another policy initiative and its associated policy instrument, lest policies in practice work in different directions..
- The need to undertake a number of 'backcasting' studies to understand how possible future policy changes – from a range of possibilities – could impact today as we realign after the impact of Brexit
- the need to understand in light of the above for different sectors, such as health, energy, environment etc, how policies interact both intentionally and in unintended ways, and across different partnership and with what socio-economic effects.
- The need to undertake complementary work which involves backcasting such that decisions taken on policy framing and implementation post-Brexit are made recognising uncertainties and risks ahead and what publicly-informed decisions should be taken.
- there is an important opportunity to ask what sort of institutional framework is enabling of a more responsive, critical and reflexive science and science policy: one that opens space for dialogue and publicly-chosen goals and recognises that social and technological structures are transient and always operating under some conditions of uncertainty and risk.

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### Declaration of interests

AsSIST-UK is a Learned Society established in 2015 comprising c350 members across 30 UK academic centres. There are no competing interests in regard to this submission.