

# UK government gives Brexit science funding guarantee

Researchers will not lose out on existing EU grants.

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Philip Hammond, the UK's chancellor of the exchequer, has promised to underwrite EU research projects after Brexit.

British scientists say they're relieved by a government promise to guarantee them funding for existing EU research projects, even after the country leaves the European Union. But the reassurance only partly allays concerns about Brexit's effect on UK science.

The United Kingdom receives billions of euros for research from the European Union, mostly from its €74.8-billion (US\$83.6-billion) Horizon 2020 (H2020) programme. June's [referendum vote for the nation to leave the EU](#) left British scientists worried that funding for existing multi-year projects could be yanked away. And the uncertainty led to reports of [EU collaborators deciding to drop UK scientists from future grant applications](#) — even though the United Kingdom is still a full member of the EU.

But on 13 August, [the government announced](#) that it will step in to pay UK contributions to EU H2020 projects after Brexit, provided that the projects were bid for before the day that the UK leaves the EU (a date which has not yet been fixed). “By underwriting Horizon 2020 funding in this way today, we are again demonstrating the importance we place on maintaining the world leading research that takes place in the UK,” said UK science minister, [Jo Johnson](#).



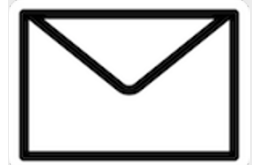
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## Project disparities

Other types of EU project were given lesser guarantees. UK recipients of EU 'structural funds' (some of which are spent on research infrastructure) are to be assured funding only if they bid for them before an annual address on the nation's finances known as the 'Autumn Statement' — an event that typically takes place in November or December. Still, the promise ensures that, for example, the UK's University of Manchester can expect to receive £5 million (US\$6.4 million) from EU funds for a planned Graphene Engineering Innovation Centre.

“Since the referendum vote, the research community has been struggling with the uncertainty. This provides huge reassurance,” says Sarah Main, director of the Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) in London. The move will also reassure European collaborators, she says.

"This is encouraging news that provides much-needed stability for British universities during the transition period as the UK exits the EU, and provides an important signal to European researchers that they can continue to collaborate with their UK colleagues as they have before," said Alistair Jarvis, deputy chief executive of the higher-education umbrella group Universities UK in London.



**E-mails show how UK physicists were dumped over Brexit**

### **The bare essentials**

But the campaign group Scientists for EU issued a statement calling the announcement "decidedly underwhelming" and "a confirmation of the bare essentials, but nothing more". After Brexit, UK scientists may lose the ability to apply for H2020 funding, depending on the terms of the split. And the government has not committed to shoring up those potential lost funds with domestic grants, Scientists for EU pointed out.

"This guarantee alleviates some of the uncertainties about existing and imminent H2020 grants, but does nothing to dispel fears about mobility between the UK and the rest of the EU following Brexit, which is integral to many H2020 schemes, nor does it address longer-term funding issues," says Paul Crowther, who heads the physics and astronomy department at the University of Sheffield, UK.

Main says that she is still encouraged by the government's continued support for science. She cites another example of political positive intentions: a [letter from UK Prime Minister Theresa May](#) in July to the director of London's Francis Crick Institute, Paul Nurse, saying that the government was committed to ensuring a positive outcome for UK science. "To be honest, I'm feeling positive," she says.

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