



Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology

George Freeman MP
Minister of State at the
Department for Science,
Innovation & Technology

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Innovation & Technology

Professor Mike Edmunds
President
The Royal Astronomical Society

www.gov.uk

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Dear Professor Edmunds,

Thank you for your letter dated 24 February to the Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP regarding Horizon Europe funding. I am responding as this falls under my ministerial portfolio. I apologise for the late reply.

I understand your concerns about the return of £1.6 billion to His Majesty's Treasury at Supplementary Estimates, allocated to fund the UK's association to EU Programmes, including Horizon Europe.

The funding put aside in the Spending Review for association to Horizon Europe was always based on the way that Horizon works; the UK pays a lot upfront, and money then pays out to researchers over a longer period of time. The return of £1.6 billion reflects the fact that we have been unable to associate in the financial year 2022/23. At this stage of the year, if we were to associate, any cash payment would take place next year. As is usual practice, departmental underspends are returned to the Exchequer at Supplementary Estimates to ensure spending plans are taut and realistic. Any funding required for association in future years will be made available once there is clarity on UK association to EU programmes.

Supporting the science & innovation community through this period of uncertainty has been a priority for the government, which is why, as well as keeping money for association, we've taken steps to keep funding flowing to UK researchers and businesses. To the end of February 2023, awards have been made totalling £882m through the Horizon Guarantee, which is delivered by UKRI. This guarantee was extended on 6 March 2023 until the end of June 2023, and will ensure that eligible, successful UK applicants will continue to be guaranteed funding. More information can be found online at: www.gov.uk/government/news/horizon-europe-guarantee-scheme-extension-to-support-uk-rd. This is in addition to a package of £684m of direct funding which the UK Government invested in UK science, fusion and Earth observation in November 2022. Further information on both of these can be found online at: www.gov.uk/government/news/government-commits-nearly-half-a-billion-pounds-for-uk-research-to-cover-eu-shortfall and www.gov.uk/government/publications/earth-observation-investment

The Government has committed to spending £20 billion per annum in R&D by 2024/25 and R&D spending is rising 30% in cash terms from 21/22 to 24/25- the largest-ever increase over a spending review period.

Rest assured I have taken on board your comments and will bear them in mind going forward.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'George Freeman', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

GEORGE FREEMAN MP
Minister of State
Department for Science, Innovation & Technology