

Russell Group and German U15 Joint Statement

Russell Group and German U15: A strong and evolving partnership

The close strategic partnership between German U15 and the Russell Group continues to exemplify the power of international collaboration in advancing research and addressing the pressing challenges of our time. Our two countries are each other's most important scientific partner in Europe, and our universities and researchers have worked closely and productively together for many years. Through our collaboration we have created regular exchange formats for representatives from the UK and Germany to share best practices and address issues ranging from freedom of expression on campus to research security and the future of academic careers. These meetings have not only helped to find innovative solutions to shared challenges but also contributed to the creation of both bilateral collaborations between individual researchers and partnerships between universities. United in the conviction that scientific cooperation between the UK and Germany carries great social and economic benefits for both sides we have not only safe-guarded but tried to intensify our cooperation despite the political uncertainty in the wake of the UK's exit from the European Union. German U15 and the Russell Group are committed to continue to act as catalysts of UK-German academic relations and see themselves as key players in strengthening them.

Why close collaboration is more important than ever

Research-intensive universities have a pivotal role to play in addressing the multifaceted challenges confronting our world. We believe that the cutting-edge research the universities of German U15 and the Russell Group are engaged in together is indispensable for managing the transformational processes required in the face of climate change, increasing geopolitical tensions and rising social division. The technological and social innovations we develop together are engines of mutual economic growth and help to secure our industrial, digital and social future viability. The cultural bridges that emerge from the exchange of students and academic staff are the bedrock for mutual understanding and form the nucleus of future research cooperation. Moreover, many of the world's most pressing challenges, including climate change, pandemics, the rise of disruptive technologies like AI and quantum computing, are inherently global in nature. Effective solutions necessitate the pooling of international expertise, resources, and data.

How to develop our partnership further

This is why the Russell Group and German U15 are committed to deepening their cooperation through the following measures:

1. **Enhancing Research Collaboration:** We will promote deeper research collaborations between our institutions, supporting joint research projects and interdisciplinary initiatives

2. **Fostering Student and Faculty Exchange:** We will expand opportunities for student and faculty exchanges, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, culture, and perspectives to enrich the academic experience for all.
3. **Pool Expertise in Areas of High Social Impact:** We will expand bilateral exchanges focused on addressing pressing global challenges. Whether it be sustainable energy, healthcare innovation, or social justice, our institutions will pool resources and expertise to effect meaningful change.
4. **Promoting Inclusivity and Diversity:** We will work together to ensure that our collaborations are inclusive and diverse, reflecting the global nature of the challenges we seek to address.
5. **Engagement with Stakeholders:** We will actively engage with governments, industry, civil society, and other stakeholders to amplify the impact of our research and to advocate for evidence-based policymaking.

Why the UK's association to Horizon Europe is crucial

However, the single most important thing we can do to maximise the potential of our relationship is to ensure the UK associates in full to Horizon Europe. Under Horizon 2020, there were more collaborations between Germany and the UK than between any other two countries. The UK was also a significant partner with most other countries in the programme. Despite the best efforts of universities to foster cooperation between the UK and Germany, the number of joint research projects has dropped significantly since the UK left Horizon. Although many bilateral agreements have emerged in recent years, these cannot supplant the institutional framework of a funding programme of Horizon's volume and scope. If the UK associates to Horizon, the European research community will spare no effort to make it a success. The Russell Group and German U15, who together represent 36 of the top 100 universities in Europe, will be at the forefront of these efforts. For this reason and many others, the UK's association to Horizon Europe will represent value for money for all concerned and constitute a 'win-win' for the EU and the UK, as well as excellent news for science, research and innovation across our continent.