Universities > Borders
Russell Group UK-Europe Knowledge Diplomacy Reception
British Embassy Berlin
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About this event

For centuries, universities and researchers have collaborated, communicated and convened across national borders. When relationships between nations are strained, universities provide a source of ‘Knowledge Diplomacy’ between, and sometimes beyond, national governments.

As relationships between Britain and Europe face their greatest challenge in over half a century, Russell Group universities are redoubling their commitment to this mission.

Through scientific collaboration, student and researcher mobility and our alumni, we are working to strengthen connections with our European partners in order to secure the future flow of people, ideas and research between us all.

We are pleased to welcome our partners in academia, government and industry across Europe to this reception for an evening of discussion and networking to help us shape a shared future beyond Brexit.

Programme for the evening

19:30 Registration opens, welcome refreshments and networking
19:45 Welcome address from Chris Skidmore MP, UK Minister of State for Universities and Science
20:05 Opening remarks from Frances Wood, Regional Director, UK Science and Innovation Network
Panel discussion chaired by Dr Julie Maxton CBE, Executive Director of the Royal Society, in conversation with:
  • Honey Deihimi, Head of Division of Social Integration, German Chancellery
  • Courtney Peltzer-Hönicke, Head of International Affairs, Hamburg University
  • Professor Dr Hiltraud Casper-Hehne, Vice-President for International Affairs, University of Göttingen
20:40 Networking and refreshments
22:00 Event close
Speaker biographies

Chris Skidmore, UK Minister of State for Universities and Science
Chris was appointed as a Minister of State jointly at the Department for Education and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in December 2018. He was Parliamentary Secretary at the Cabinet Office from 2016 to 2018 and was elected Conservative MP for Kingswood in May 2010. Chris studied history at Oxford, where he continued with postgraduate research. He has written several history books and is a fellow of the Royal Historical Society and a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.

Frances Wood, Regional Director for the UK Government Science and Innovation Network
Based in the British Embassy in Berlin, Frances has responsibility for the UK Science and Innovation Network covering Europe, Russia and Turkey with a team of 32 covering 30 countries. Frances was previously Head of the Economics Unit in the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), providing economic advice and analysis to inform UK foreign policy. Prior to this, Frances was Economic Counsellor in South Korea and she has held previous posts at the FCO leading for the UK on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, climate and resource security and green growth. Frances has a Masters in International Security from the University of Bristol.

Dr Julie Maxton CBE, Executive Director of the Royal Society
Before taking up her position at the Royal Society in 2011 Julie was Registrar at the University of Oxford. She is an Honorary Fellow of University College Oxford, a Bencher of the Middle Temple, a Freeman of the Goldsmith’s Company and a Board member of Engineering UK. Originally trained as a barrister at the Middle Temple, Julie combined a career as a practising lawyer with that of an academic, holding a number of senior academic positions, including those of Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Honey Deihimi, Head of Division, Cabinet of the Minister of State to the Federal Chancellor and Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration
In addition to her role at the Federal Chancellery, Honey is also a guest lecturer at the University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt. Before starting her current position in 2011, she was State Commissioner for Integration, Refugees and Migration for the State of Lower Saxony. Honey studied Law at the University of Hannover, Université du Havre and Durham University. She first worked as a lawyer in Brussels and from 2005 she worked as an advisor for the EPP Group in the European Parliament.
**Speaker biographies**

**Courtney Peltzer-Hönicke, Head of International Affairs at Universität Hamburg**

Originally hailing from Kansas, Courtney studied Germanic languages and literatures at the universities of Kansas, Bonn and Hamburg. She has a background in ESL and DaF instruction as well as translation work for the film and marketing industries. Her career in higher education administration began in 2003; her experience encompasses international marketing, study abroad advising, and partnership management. In her current position at Universität Hamburg, her work focuses on institutional internationalisation, in particular the implementation of international and intercultural elements throughout the university landscape.

**Professor Dr Hiltraud Casper-Hehne, Vice President for International Affairs of the University of Göttingen**

As well as her role as Vice-President, Hiltraud is Professor in the Department of Intercultural German Studies at the University of Göttingen. She serves on the Board of the European University Network U4Society and the German Academic Exchange Service and also sits on the British Council’s “Global Education” Steering Committee. Amongst other positions, Hiltraud is a member of the Ad-hoc Expert Group “European Universities” of the EU Commission, member of the Executive Board of the European University Network COIMBRA and Chair of the Advisory Board of the German Ministry of Science and Education on developing a China Strategy.
About the Russell Group

The Russell Group represents 24 leading UK universities which are committed to maintaining the very best research, an outstanding teaching and learning experience and unrivalled links with business and the public sector.

Our research-intensive, world-class universities play an important part in the intellectual life of the UK and have huge social, economic and cultural impacts locally, across the UK and around the globe.

While our member universities have histories varying in length from 50 years to nearly 1,000, the Russell Group itself is a newer body, whose board members – the heads of the Russell Group universities – first began to meet in 1994. Set up as a professional, incorporated organisation in 2007, our aim is to help ensure that our universities have the optimum conditions in which to flourish and continue to make social, economic and cultural impacts through their world-leading research and teaching. We provide strategy, policy development, intelligence, communications and advocacy for our member institutions.

Academic links between the UK and Germany

German nationals represent the second largest international academic community at Russell Group universities.

German students represent the largest community of students at postgraduate level from the EU at Russell Group universities.

More than 70,000 scientific publications were co-authored between academics in the UK and Germany between 2013 and 2017.

The UK and Germany work together more than they work with any other country in Horizon 2020.

There are 5,670 students from Germany studying at Russell Group universities.

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Case studies of collaboration between Russell Group universities and German institutions

University of Birmingham
The Birmingham Energy Institute and Fraunhofer UMSICHT have combined academic expertise with industrial technology translation capability to develop a Joint Research Platform that will deliver new approaches to energy and waste management. This collaboration addresses the practical challenges that sit at the heart of the energy waste nexus, applying academic insight to accelerate innovation to the market place.

University of Bristol
Minimal biology is a new emerging field at the interface between the physical and life sciences. The Max Planck-Bristol Centre for Minimal Biology, a partnership between the University of Bristol and the Max Planck Society for the Advancement of Science in Germany, aims to advance the future of health and medicine by understanding the fundamental nature of life.

Cardiff University
An alliance between University of Bremen and Cardiff University was launched in March 2019 to facilitate the development of joint research activities and new forms of academic cooperation. As part of this alliance, the affiliation of academic staff to each university enables them to engage in long-term collaborative research activities, supervise PhD students and apply for external funding through the respective national systems.
Durham University

Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen and Durham University formed a strategic partnership in 2016 to build upon their existing relationship as twin cities and as members of the Matariki Network of Universities. Both universities fund an annual seedcorn competition to support research projects that will lead to large externally funded collaborative programmes to further the strategic partnership.

University of Edinburgh

Professor Susan McVie at the University of Edinburgh is leading a multidisciplinary research project which involves universities in Glasgow, Sheffield, Manchester and Cologne as institutional partners. The project is exploring the causes and consequences of inequalities in Scottish society. Using big data, it aims to provide robust evidence to inform and develop policy solutions to tackle multiple forms of inequality in Scotland and beyond.

University of Glasgow

The European Centre for Advanced Studies (ECAS) was founded in 2018 by the University of Glasgow and the Leuphana University of Lüneburg (Lower Saxony). While ECAS is a joint undertaking of both universities, it is established as an independent research institution with the freedom to choose its research topics. The overall purpose of ECAS is the advancement of education and research.

University of Exeter

Academics from the University of Exeter’s College of Humanities and the Research Centre for the Cultural History of Sexuality at Humboldt University, Berlin, are exploring how humanities’ research around sex, gender, and sexuality has a positive impact on society. Together with museums, charities, and schools, their research has impacted the education of young people on issues including consent, body image, pornography, and gender identity.
Imperial College London

Imperial College London and the Technical University of Munich are developing ever-closer ties and forging new research links in computer science, mathematics, medicine, bioengineering, molecular sciences, life sciences, physics, energy and new materials, and mechanical and aerospace engineering. They are developing new student exchanges, research programmes and placements and summer schools, and building links with industry.

University of Liverpool

Volcanologists at University of Liverpool (UoL) and Ludwig Maximilian University (LMU) are leading development in this discipline. UoL with the British Geological Survey are two leaders in developing the first magma observatory, at Iceland’s Krafla Magma Testbed. Partners include LMU, GFZ Potsdam and Mainz University. This will monitor magma flows beneath the earth’s surface, transition of solid rock to magma, extraction of heat and conversion to renewable electricity.

University of Leeds

The University of Leeds and leading global science and technology company Merck, are working together to take optical innovations to the next level. The partnership brings together world-leading research expertise in liquid crystals to develop new ways of restoring vision using high-tech applications. Prototypes of future devices such as smart contact lenses and virtual reality glasses are being jointly developed at Leeds.

Newcastle University

Newcastle University is coordinating a €34 million Liver Investigation: Testing Marker Utility in Steatohepatitis (LITMUS) consortium, bringing together clinicians, scientists and pharmaceutical companies from across Europe to develop better biomarkers for testing Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease. Affecting 20-30% of people worldwide it is linked to obesity and type 2 diabetes. Partners include the universities of Mainz, Wurzburg, Aachen, Oxford, Cambridge, Nottingham, and Birmingham.
Queen’s University Belfast

Queen’s University Belfast is a key member of EYE RISK, a Horizon 2020 funded research consortium, led by Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen in Germany along with other European partners. Using a systems medicine approach, the consortium explores risk factors and ways to improve outcomes for patients suffering from age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the leading cause of blindness in European countries.

University of Nottingham

Researchers at the University of Nottingham and Ulm University are delivering new insights into genetics through the study of Archaea, a domain of single-celled microorganisms. They have published several joint research papers and are developing new genetic tools for the model archaeal species Haloferax volcanii. Further joint plans include investigating the interplay of CRISPR genome editing systems and DNA repair and promoting the exchange of research students.

University of Oxford

Oxford has been developing a research partnership with four research-intensive institutions in Berlin to maintain academic movement and research collaboration. Activities have included a series of workshops and seed funding initiatives. Plans are in progress for both an Oxford centre in Berlin and a Berliner Haus in Oxford. The initiative enjoys the full support of Berlin’s Mayor and Senate.

University of Sheffield

Through a long-standing partnership with Siemens, the University of Sheffield became the first university in the world to join its MindSphere Innovation Network through the launch of the MindSphere Lounge. Designed to accelerate digital innovation, boost digital skills and promote knowledge exchange, this physical learning, e-resource and demonstrator space is providing a wealth of opportunities for industry-university partnerships.
University of Southampton
The European Masters in Embedded Systems is a two year Erasmus Mundus programme run by the University of Southampton in collaboration with Technical University of Kaiserlautern and Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Since it was established in 2010, Southampton has received over 60 students, sharing their expertise in hardware security, digital design and system-on-chip. The programme’s graduates have a 100% employability rate.

University of Warwick
Researchers at Warwick are collaborating with Varta Microbattery GMBH to develop a low-cost, energy efficient and effectively maintenance-free lithium-ion based energy storage system offering in-service time of 20 to 25 years. The project, which is funded through Horizon 2020, started in March 2016 and ends in 2020. The consortium has now submitted an application for further Horizon 2020 funding.

University of York
The University of York has a range of strategic partnerships with more than 140 German institutions, governmental bodies and businesses. Partnerships include the Max Planck Institutes spanning joint expertise in Plasma Physics, Evolutionary Anthropology, Neuroscience, Chemistry and Plant Breeding. York has also established twenty multi-layered collaborative agreements encompassing joint research, mobility and training programmes.
German U15 and Russell Group Joint Statement

The 24 Russell Group universities in the UK and the 15 universities comprising the German U15 group have a long history of cooperation and collaboration on world-class research, cutting-edge innovation and excellent teaching.

The UK is due to leave the EU and in this context it is more important than ever that our respective universities can continue to work together in the most frictionless manner possible. We believe this will deliver mutual benefits for the economies and societies not only of our two countries, but for Europe more widely.

We are calling on our respective governments to ensure that the fruitful links between our institutions can be maintained and strengthened going forwards by:

1. Promoting and facilitating research and innovation partnerships and collaboration: state and regional governments should seek to support cooperation, such as joint research programmes and projects, joint university courses, workshops, training and exchange of scientific information, by ensuring appropriate funding is available and minimising regulatory barriers where they exist.

2. Ensuring as easy mobility as possible of students, academics and other research workers between the UK and Germany: world-class higher education and research depend on a dynamic flow and exchange of ideas and talent. Whilst there may be new immigration arrangements in place between the UK and Germany in the future, both governments should seek to ensure mobility can be promoted and facilitated. Continued UK engagement in the EU’s Erasmus programme, subject to negotiation between the UK Government and the European Commission, would be beneficial to Russell Group and U15 universities and their students.
3.

Working together to ensure Horizon Europe, the next EU framework programme for research and innovation, is as effective as possible and supports fair and appropriate participation of UK organisations: to this end, the programme regulations need to be agreed in a timely way and should create the possibility for the UK to associate fully to the programme, subject to negotiation between the UK Government and the European Commission.

The Russell Group and the German U15 remain committed to sustaining the successful ties they have already established and will seek new ways to work more closely together in future.
RUSSELL
University of Birmingham
University of Bristol
University of Cambridge
Cardiff University
Durham University
University of Edinburgh
University of Exeter
University of Glasgow
Imperial College London
King’s College London
University of Leeds
University of Liverpool
London School of Economics
and Political Science
University of Manchester
Newcastle University
University of Nottingham
University of Oxford
Queen Mary University of London
Queen’s University Belfast
University of Sheffield
University of Southampton
University College London
University of Warwick
University of York

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