

Policy News Round-up

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Brexit

With the Conservative Party leadership race taking place over June and July, there has been a slight pause on Brexit negotiations. However, across the broader science and research sector, businesses, charities and universities have come together in a call for the new prime minister to continue to boost science and innovation and keep its role in the wider UK economy on the agenda.

The CaSE for Research

The Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE)'s latest report *Building on Scientific Strength; The Next Decade of R & D Investment* gives ideas for how the Government can stimulate a rise in the UK's research intensity, towards its goal of investing 2.4% GDP into research and development by 2027. This would bring spending in line with the average for OECD countries (currently UK R&D spending is at 1.7 % GDP). Overall, CaSE calculates, reaching this target will require £20 billion public funding, which should then attract £28 billion private investment. CaSE's key recommendations on increasing public investment, incentivising private investment and investing in people and skills can be found at <http://www.sciencecampaign.org.uk/resource/nextdecade.html> or #CaSEforResearch on Twitter.

Immigration

In June, the then Home Secretary Sajid Javid announced a review of the proposed salary threshold of £30,000 p.a. as part of the ongoing consultation on the Government's Immigration White Paper. According to the Universities and Colleges Employees Association, the median salary of technicians in the UK is approximately £26,000. As the workforce has to expand to meet the Government's research spending targets, implementation of the proposed salary threshold could result in short-term skills shortages whilst the UK develops domestic talent to fill these roles. In further reviewing this threshold, the Migration Advisory Committee was also asked to assess whether there is a need for greater regional variation in the salary threshold. Hopefully this review will continue under the new Home Secretary, Priti Patel.



Global Attitudes to Science and Health

The findings of the first Wellcome Global Monitor Survey have shed light on people around the world's attitudes on science and major health challenges. A whole chapter of the report was devoted to attitudes to vaccination, which was picked up by the wider media. The survey found that those living in high-income countries have less certainty about the safety of vaccines, with only 59% strongly agreeing that vaccines are safe in Western Europe compared to a global average of 79%. Whilst Bangladesh, Rwanda and Ethiopia reported some of the highest confidence in the safety and efficacy of vaccines, France showed the lowest. The full survey report can be found at <https://wellcome.ac.uk/reports/wellcome-global-monitor/2018>.

An Antimicrobial Resistance Pilot

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) will be leading a trial of a 'subscription' style model to purchasing antibiotics within the NHS. The model aims to incentivize industry investment in the development of new antimicrobials by paying upfront for access to drugs rather than the current system of paying by volume sold. This follows the Government's 2040 AMR vision and five year National Action Plan. Health Minister Nicola Blackwood called this trial "an important step but it will only address global market failure if other countries do the same".