

To: Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission,
Mrs. Theresa May, UK Prime Minister; cc: Mr. Michael Gove, Secretary of State Defra

Re: Global challenges, Science & Research, Brexit

25 January 2019

Dear Mr. Juncker and Mrs. May,

I write on behalf of the Public Research and Regulation Initiative (PRRI), a world-wide organisation of public sector scientists active in modern biotechnology for the common good.

While PRRI does not participate in political debates, the outcome of the Brexit negotiations will have such significant impacts on the potential for science and research that the European members of PRRI feel it important to emphasize the following:

1. The world community is confronted with derailing developments such as malnutrition, environmental degradation and climate change, which in turn will have very severe economic and social effects, such as mass migration.
2. To mitigate these global challenges, we need massive efforts in research and innovation in areas such as life sciences. As no single country can do this by itself, we need to intensify research collaboration at every possible level to get the best out of science. This requires participation in collective research programmes, cross border research and exchange of experts.
3. However, instead of intensifying collaboration, Europe seems to be heading for division in many areas, currently most prominently with the Brexit discussions. Brexit will seriously affect the ability of the UK to face the extreme global challenges ahead. Conversely, the departure of the UK - with its very strong scientific and research orientation – will seriously reduce the EU's innovation potential.

With this perspective, I add the personal observation that I very much hope that the UK leadership will reflect again on the impact of Brexit on the UK's ability to address global challenges. In addition, I hope that the EU leadership will take very seriously the message of many UK citizens and organisations that some aspects of the EU fabric have gone beyond the original idea. One notable example of that is regulation. The way in which some regulations in the EU have been devised, interpreted and implemented is inhibitive to the very innovation that we so desperately need.

Very sincerely



Em. Prof. Marc baron Van Montagu,

Chairman of the Public Research and Regulation Initiative (PRRI)
World Food Prize Laureate 2013