

Seeing in re-ascension to Horizon Europe with a bang

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As I suspect all of you and your pets will know, when the UK formally left the European Union on 1 January 2021, the UK's association with the Horizon Europe programme also came to an end. Fast-forward a couple of prime ministers and we're back in – as of 1 January 2024. To celebrate, our friends at Imperial College London hosted a reception, bringing together over 200 members of the UK and European science communities. As a member of the Biochemical Society's Early Career Advisory Panel and as someone whose own research journey has been supported by generous funding from EU programmes, I was more than happy to be asked to represent the Biochemical Society at the event.

Following a warm welcome from the president of Imperial College London, Professor Hugh Brady, we heard from His Excellency Mr Lindsay Croisdale-Appleby, ambassador and head of the UK Mission to the European Union, and Ruta Zarnauskaite, head of the Horizon Europe Association Unit at the European Commission, both of whom not just reflected on the positive impact re-association to the Horizon Europe programme would bring to UK-based research teams but also highlighted the benefit UK researchers can bring to the research and development programme. We also heard from Dr Teresa Thurston, an ERC Starting Grant awardee, who introduced her work on exploring the mechanisms that enable invasive bacteria to infect human cells. Dr Thurston also reflected on the importance of having access to EU funding in particular, as it allows UK-based teams to retain talent while strengthening collaborations with European partners.

After closing remarks by Imperial's Professor Mary Ryan, vice-provost (Research and Enterprise), the focus of the evening switched to the myriad stalls dotted around the event space showcasing research supported by Horizon Europe funding. The projects on show, most of which were presented by

PhD students and postdocs, really demonstrated the power of collaborative science and research. And, it was a pleasure to hear early-career researchers talk so passionately about the work they were doing: whether it was working on the CoDIET project, which aims to use artificial intelligence to tackle obesity and non-communicable diseases; the BionicS initiative, a project seeking to develop fully integrated, symbiotic replacements for human limbs with robotic parts; or the EuPRAXIA project, a huge collaboration working on plans to develop the world's first high-energy plasma-based accelerator – world-leading research, presented by engaging and excited researchers, what more could you want on a Wednesday evening?

Tonight's event was marketed as a celebration of the UK re-joining the Horizon Europe programme and, in this, I think it was successful. In my view, science and research benefit greatly from a collaborative approach that is inclusive and outwardly looking. It was a real pleasure to meet PhD students, postdocs, group leaders and other attendees at the reception who felt this too. Wrapping up, all that's left to say is a happy new year to everyone and, of course, if you are applying for funding in 2024, good luck. ■