

Meeting Note: Policy Forum 9th February 2023

Attendees:

Robert Massey RAS (Co-Chair)

Sarah Beacock (NI)
Lorenzo Casarosa IMarEST
Elizabeth Chamberlain IoP
Sean Edmunds IPEM
Stephen French IFST
Sarah Garry BSSS
Sebastian Hargreaves ORS
Catriona Inverarity IPEM
Joseph Lewis IES
Henry Lovett RSC

Laura Marshall RSB
Arthur Nicholas IST
Lynda Rigby IBMS
Rachel Stonehouse IOM3

Isabelle Brown UKRI (Guest)
Gabrielle Newson UKRI (Guest)

Jane Banks SC (Staff)
Helen Gordon SC (Staff)
Ryan Mercer SC (Staff)

Apologies:

Tanya Sheridan RSC (Co-Chair)
Andy Smith BASES (Co-Chair)

Jane Pritchard ACB
David Wells IBMS

Lawrence Ambrose RCPod
Nicky King SNS
Orla Lapin BioChem

1) Welcome

- **Robert Massey** opened the meeting, and explained that the three members of the Policy Forum who sit on the Policy Advisory Committee will be co-chairing the forum from now on.
- **Gabrielle Newson** (Global Mobility Engagement Manager) and **Isabelle Brown** (Senior Strategy Adviser) from UKRI were invited to present at the forum today and join the discussion on Horizon Europe.

2) Presentation and Q&A – UKRI Global Mobility Team

- **Gabrielle Newson and Isabelle Brown** gave a presentation on UKRI's Global Mobility Evidence Report and the wider work of their team.
- In their presentation they outlined the following:
 - UKRI is currently body of BEIS but will be moving to newly formed Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.
 - One of UKRI's strategic objectives is: Making the UK the most attractive destination for talented people and teams from the UK and around the world.
 - The Global mobility of research and innovation personnel evidence report was published in September 2022.
 - <https://www.ukri.org/publications/global-mobility-of-research-and-innovation-personnel-evidence-report/>
 - The report explores how attractive the UK is for researchers, considering what are the barriers, the benefits and explored how other countries approach researcher mobility.

- The report synthesises existing evidence, with more than 40 organisations approached to provide evidence.
 - The global mobility team is currently testing out the report with different stakeholder and particularly seeking thoughts about and contributions towards evidence gaps.
 - The report will be refreshed annually going forwards.
 - The current covers data up to 2021 so evidence on the impact of the UK's exit from the EU will be really important for the upcoming editions.
- The key findings of the Global Mobility Report were as follows:
 - The benefits of mobility for:
 - Researchers
 - International network increased.
 - Advanced research skills increased.
 - Collaboration with other subfields of research.
 - Countries
 - Brain circulation (rather than brain drain), even researchers leaving retain links to home nation.
 - Increased availability of highly skilled workers.
 - Enhanced soft power.
 - Institutions
 - Reputational and performance benefits
 - Diversification of funding streams
 - Able to hire good quality researchers with desired/rare skills
 - Improved performance in university rankings
 - What makes the UK attractive:
 - Career opportunities
 - Research infrastructure
 - High quality peers
 - Opportunity to build networks and collaborate
 - British lifestyle
 - Barriers to international mobility in the UK:
 - Immigration system
 - Difficulty and length of forms.
 - Most expensive place in the world for researchers to move to in terms of getting visas and other administrative barriers.
 - Availability of funding
 - Personal or family reasons
 - Evidence gaps:
 - The effects of immigration rules.
 - Researchers in industry (currently commissioning)
 - Equality, diversity and inclusion (currently commissioning)
 - Social implications of global mobility
 - The impact of funding research schemes
 - Global mobility patterns
- In the following discussion policy forum members made the following points:
 - The **RAS** is currently doing work on this which can be shared soon.
 - There remains ongoing concern about the impact of the Home Office's current and past 'hostile environment' policies.
 - If you google "work in the UK" the first things you come up with are the barriers, whereas for other countries it comes up with how you do it and encourages talent to come, which will add to a negative psychological perception.

- It would be helpful to understand how these policies impact on visas for families of researchers, and whether this deters talented researchers coming to the UK if they feel they cannot bring family with them.
- The report does not currently include economic modelling of the costs/benefits to the UK of mobility, which would be important additional evidence for policymaking.
- UKRI noted that there is currently an effort for more joining up between government departments including home office how one government priority impacts on others (eg: visa rules vs the 'Great' campaign to attract talent).

3) Horizon Europe Updates

- Policy Forum members noted that there continues to be little information as to progress on Britain's association with Horizon Europe.
- BEIS are expected to publish their plan B prospectus in the next couple of weeks developed with little to no engagement with any parts of the science policy community.
- It was noted that the frustration with BEIS on to the lack of engagement in developing Plan B is widespread, but that BEIS is aware of this and internally acknowledges this was an error.
- Given the timeline it is likely there will be more to discuss in the next policy forum meeting in April.

4) Social media use of charities

- The Charity Commission is currently consulting on revised guidance as to how Charities use social media.
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-guidance-charities-use-of-social-media>
 - Some member organisations are concerned about what impact these revised guidelines may have on the ability of charities to undertake evidence-based advocacy.
 - From the discussion it is apparent that these changes are principally focused on Governance processes than content of social media.
 - The Charity Commission has wanted to publish guidance on social media since the Oxfam 'perfect storm' tweet: <https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/oxfam-should-done-avoid-misperception-political-bias-poverty-tweet/governance/article/1327322>
 - New new guidance seeks to ensure governance processes in place, rather than determine what tweets can or cannot say – sign off process, oversight from trustees etc.
 - Nevertheless there are a number of points that it is important to ensure are considered by the consultation.
 - Treating social media the same as press statements may cause difficulties given the volume of social media content, sign off cannot be extensive.
 - There needs to be clarity as to how this impacts on the accounts of individuals associated with a given charity.
 - The approach needs to be proportional, reflecting on different circumstances for different sized charities.
 - A particular concern is the emphasis on the role of trustees in social media, with a need for greater clarity on this, particularly that trustees should be able to express independent views and cannot reasonably have sight of day to day communications.
 - Even though the consultation isn't focused on content, it important to reemphasise the role of science organisations in communicating science to the public and advocating for policy based on scientific evidence.
- The Science Council will put together a response reflecting on these points.
 - Member organisations will be given a chance to feed in content into this response over the coming weeks.

- The Science Council will also consult its marketing forum for views.
- **Elizabeth Chamberlain** and **Robert Massey** will work with the Science Council to ensure the response reflects the concerns raised by members.

5) Other consultations

- The BSSS responded to an inquiry on undertaken by the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, which was due to close the day of this policy forum meeting.
- The RAS is responding to the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee on noise and light pollution, specifically highlighting the impact of light pollution on astronomy.

6) AOB

Since the agenda for the Policy Forum was circulated, the Government has announced a reshuffle including splitting BEIS into different departments including a Department of Science, Innovation and Technology and a Department for Energy and Net Zero.

Details of these changes can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-government-deliver-for-the-british-people/making-government-deliver-for-the-british-people-html>

Policy Forum members expressed cautious optimism that these changes could strengthen the voice of science within Government.

The Science Council will write to the newly appointed Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Michelle Donelan, asking her to meet with the Science Council's CEO forum.