

Specialised Committee on Participation in Union Programmes 4 December 2023 – 13:30-14:00 CET in Brussels (and video conference)

1. Introduction and Welcome

The EU co-chair, as host, welcomed the UK and EU attendees in Brussels and online to the third meeting of the Specialised Committee on Participation in Union Programmes (SCPUP), under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).

The EU co-chair noted that this meeting marks a step forward in EU-UK relations and it is of significant importance: protocols for UK participation to Horizon Europe and Copernicus component of the EU Space Programme, as well as access to space surveillance and tracking services, will be adopted. As of 1 January 2024, UK researchers will be able to fully participate in Horizon Europe on same terms and conditions as other participating countries. UK association to Copernicus will enable UK contribution to help state of the art capacity to monitor the Earth and its marine environment, as well as climate change and atmosphere monitoring, and emergency management.

On this occasion the EU co-chair expressed EU's regret on the UK's decision not to participate in Euratom and the Euratom Joint Undertaking Fusion for Energy (F4E) for ITER. The EU wanted to use this opportunity to record that in line with the joint statement of the Council and the Commission, the decision adopted today will be without prejudice to UK's participation in future Union Programmes under a subsequent EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), should the applicable EU rules allow for such a participation. In line with the said statement, the Council and the Commission will consider the UK's participation in future programmes in the light of its willingness to participate in the programmes foreseen in the 2020 Joint EU-UK Declaration.

The signature of the protocols is not the end of the journey but the deepening of a relationship in areas of shared interest, and the EU is committed to this journey of shared partnership and collaboration.

The UK co-chair noted that the UK looks forward to strengthening and deepening links between scientific communities and enabling researchers and innovators to work together on shared challenges from climate change to global health, as well as areas of mutual interest such as new and emerging technologies. The UK acknowledged that participating in the Copernicus programme is important to boost efforts to tackle environmental and climate change related challenges. The UK's earth observation sector is eager to collaborate once more on the development, operations and services that make up Copernicus.

The UK co-chair noted the EU's disappointment that the UK will not be associating to Euratom and the Euratom Joint Undertaking Fusion for Energy (F4E) as originally foreseen in the Joint Declaration of December 2020. He stressed that that declaration also envisaged the UK's participation from the beginning of all the programmes. For the UK, that was an important part of the overall balance of the original arrangement. The UK co-chair further noted that the UK's participation had been delayed by three years with no transitional measures in place, unlike for Horizon Europe. Therefore, by 2023, the case for UK association to these programmes had significantly eroded. While the UK and the Commission had explored whether association could be viable, a solution was not found. The decision not to associate was consistent with the views of the UK's sector. The UK does however remain keen to collaborate with the EU and its member states on these important topics.

The UK co-chair stressed that UK participation in EU programmes in subsequent MFFs will be a matter for future discussion between the UK and the EU. He highlighted the UK's understanding that any future decision would be taken on the basis of the mutual benefit of both parties at that time. The focus now is on making today's association a success, and the UK accordingly saw this meeting as a significant moment for our scientific cooperation.

Both co-chairs thanked their respective counterparts' teams for the work leading to this meeting.

The Specialised Committee adopted the agenda as previously agreed between the co-chairs.

2. UK Association to Union Programmes *Adoption of a decision of the SCPUP adopting Protocol I Programmes and activities in which the United Kingdom participates (Protocol I) and Protocol II on access of the United Kingdom to services established under certain Union programmes and activities in which the United Kingdom does not participate ('Protocol II') and amending Annex 47 to the Trade and Cooperation Agreement*

The EU co-chair clarified that only the English versions of the decision would be signed in duplicate during the meeting, adding that all other 23 language versions would be signed in duplicate on the same day (4 December 2023).

The decision would be published on 5 December – for the EU in the Official Journal and for the UK on GOV.UK.

Signing ceremony takes place.

3. Closing remarks

The UK co-chair made references to ongoing joint work, to facilitate re-engagement of UK entities into the programmes, including through outreach and engagement activities; to enable UK presence in governance committees; and to clarify the implementation of financial modalities. He added that the positive collaborative spirit built in recent months should continue as we move towards making the association effective.

The EU co-chair echoed the remarks on good collaboration, expressing optimism on seeing UK entities reintegrate and foster more effective collaboration between research and space communities, adding that this agreement could also be an initial step towards collaboration in other policy areas in the future.

Annex 1 – Participants of the Third Meeting of the SCPUP

EU Delegation (32)

- EU co-chair of the SCPUP
- European Commission Officials (BUDG, SG, LS, RTD, DEFIS)
- European External Action Service Officials
- Delegation of the European Union to the UK Officials
- Representatives of EU Member States

UK Delegation (22)

- UK co-chair of the SCPUP
- UK Government Officials (HMT, DSIT and FCDO)
- UK Mission to the European Union Officials
- Scottish Government Officials
- Northern Ireland Executive Officials
- Welsh Government Officials