



## Call for the next Prime Minister to back research and innovation

*Business, charities, researchers and universities unite to appeal to Conservative leadership hopefuls*

The next leader of the Conservative Party should commit to ensuring the UK remains a world leader in research, development and innovation (RDI).

The current administration has provided welcome support to RDI, including a commitment to increase public research and development (R&D) spending to £22bn a year by 2026/27 and drive economy-wide R&D investment to 2.4% of GDP in 2027.

We now ask the Conservative leadership contenders to continue that work and pledge to ensure the UK remains globally competitive in RDI, pushing to invest 3% of GDP in R&D and deliver a strong, prosperous and healthy future for our economy and society.

This must include a strategic, long-term approach to funding, immigration and the tax system, and continued close collaboration with the international research community. When it comes to collaboration, our first priority must be association to the EU's flagship research & innovation funding programme, Horizon Europe, and maintaining the fruitful networks with researchers across Europe built up over decades.

The evidence is clear: investment in RDI drives productivity and raises living standards, benefitting people and communities across the whole of the UK. From the great challenges of our time, including COVID-19, climate change, energy security and caring for an ageing society, to the creation of high-skilled jobs, new businesses, and the innovations that power our NHS – UK research and innovation has real-life impact.

It is vital that the next government sends a clear message to domestic and international researchers and innovators that the UK is open for business and ready to embrace the opportunities of a changing world. Globally, our competitors & partners such as Germany, Israel, South Korea and Japan already invest more than 3% of their GDP in R&D.

The next Prime Minister must set out a long-term plan for bolstering the UK's RDI excellence. This should build on the Government's existing funding targets, with the ultimate aim to boost overall R&D investment to 3% of GDP. But words and targets will not be enough. The UK needs a coherent long-term plan to build our position as the global hub for new world-leading technologies, to draw on our strengths across multiple disciplines, to attract talent from around the world and to ensure resilience in the face of future crises.

The UK already has considerable strengths in RDI, driven by the ambition and curiosity of talented people and world-class institutions across the nation. The next Prime Minister must not miss a beat in the effort to build on these strengths for the future success of UK research and innovation.

Researchers and innovators around the world are making decisions now about where they should work and invest to stay at the forefront of global RDI. Now is the time to reassert and deliver on plans to make the UK the place-to-be, maximising the benefits of RDI to the economy and to people's lives.