

Correspondence

Brexit affects EU conservation too

Conservation scientists and practitioners in Europe should be more worried about Brexit, the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union. The UK may not be rich in biodiversity, but it makes an enormous contribution to European conservation in terms of people, philosophy, practice and public engagement.

Skilled UK researchers and practitioners working in highly respected institutions are at the heart of many cross-European networks of conservation research, implementation and training. The prospect of Brexit is already creating uncertainty about the funding, maintenance and expansion of those networks. Restricting free movement, collaboration and communication will make conservation poorer and less effective on both sides.

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Consult consumers on gene-edited meat

Relocating to countries with less-stringent regulatory systems to work on gene editing of farm animals might seem attractive (see *Nature* 566, 433–434; 2019), but could be short-sighted. The technology's potential for increasing food security — by improving animals' drought tolerance, say — can be realized only if the public agrees to it.

Legislation for livestock welfare is often sparse in such countries. In Brazil, for example, farmers and their advisers have stated that pain control when dehorning cattle is unnecessary. Creating hornless animals through gene editing would spare dairy cattle that pain, but the public still needs to approve

the technology's application to its food supply.

National legislators must recognize the public as a valued stakeholder in all such experiments, wherever they are conducted.

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Ukraine: institute kept the power on

I find your assessment of Ukraine's science revolution over the past five years too gloomy (*Nature* 566, 162–163; 2019). In my view, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in Kiev makes a great contribution to the development of the country.

For example, the Coal Energy Technologies Institute of the National Academy of Sciences maintained Ukraine's energy security throughout the period of armed confrontation in the east of the country, when supplies of anthracite from the region ceased. The institute developed technologies that enabled power stations to burn coal mixtures and bituminous coals instead.

As well as basic research, the institute collaborates on international energy projects with the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Commission and NATO. We have contracts with partners in Germany, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Japan, Denmark and Poland. The institute is currently a member of the European team implementing Horizon 2020 grants.

The National Emissions Reduction Plan for large combustion plants, developed by the institute, means that energy-production cuts can be postponed because emissions will still comply with European Union

standards. All power-generating companies and the Ministry of Energy and Coal Industry consider the projects carried out by the institute to be crucial for Ukraine's independent energy supply.

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Predatory journal accepts gibberish

Tired of being bombarded by requests for manuscripts from predatory journals, we wrote a spoof article — on the contents of our medicine cabinets — in response to one such request from a purportedly peer-reviewed pharmaceutical journal.

Real data would have taken a while to compile, so we made it all up. We included a scatterplot ($N=2$) with a nonsense caption, a map of the world showing the medicine cabinets' locations and a table of gibberish, never expecting the manuscript to see the light of day. We openly stated in the article that it was written in response to a predatory-journal request.

The manuscript was crowdsourced in a Google Doc, and we provided the link to it on Twitter (see go.nature.com/2vz8xc6). The paper was accepted — pending page charges — ten days later, without anyone having so much as read it, let alone peer reviewed it, as far as we could discern (for example, no revisions were requested and no comments were provided). As we had no intention of paying US\$1,080, that's where our stunt ended.

This frivolous exercise adds to the alarm over the number of articles that are being published without meaningful — or even any — peer review (see go.nature.com/2yupjzc, for example). It behoves us all to be wary when choosing journals

in which to publish our work (see also A. Cortegiani and S. L. Shafer *Crit. Care* 22, 300; 2018).

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Research minister queries evolution

Romania currently holds the presidency of the European Union. Alarmed that the minister responsible for research in our nation, Nicolae Hurduc, questions evolutionary theory (see, for example, go.nature.com/2ks6ckp; go.nature.com/2uqn7g2), we took action.

Our association, Ad Astra, promotes high-quality research in Romania and therefore we sought the advice of eight evolutionary biologists to help counter any resulting public misunderstanding (see go.nature.com/2wz96ph). We issued a press release explaining the compelling scientific evidence for the theory of evolution by natural selection and the clear scientific consensus that humans and chimpanzees share a common ancestor (see go.nature.com/2ugpirw).

With Romania's scientific community, and society in general, starting to recover three decades on from the collapse of communism, we find the research minister's views unacceptable.

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