

happen is far from certain. This is why the flagship, coordinated by Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, Sweden, set up a working group on what might happen post-Brexit not long after the UK's vote to leave the EU.

"We have had a Brexit committee running for some 1½ years by now, with representatives from partners in the UK and in the rest of the EU," says Jari Kinaret, director of the Graphene Flagship. "UK organizations are valued partners in the Graphene Flagship, representing some 15–20% of the flagship's budget, perhaps a little more than that in the fundamental topics and a little less in the more applied fields."

The flagship's working party has, says Kinaret, "identified roughly one dozen

possible scenarios that might happen and outlined the actions that we would need to take in those cases." The challenge has been to prepare for those scenarios in time. Just weeks before the date initially planned for the UK to leave the EU, there was no guidance on the likely course of events. As Kinaret says, "Some of the actions we would need to take in the case of a hard Brexit require quite some time to implement." For example, there would have to be new agreements, involving 150 partners, on intellectual property rights.

While Kinaret is unwilling to go into details on the scenarios and possible actions, he says that "our goal is to continue working closely with them [UK organizations] after the Brexit. How this

collaboration will be shaped depends on the political arrangements between the UK and the EU, and it is too early to speculate on the specifics."

There are precedents for researchers outside the EU to participate in the work of the Graphene Flagship. It already has partners in so-called associated countries, Norway and Switzerland, along with Belarus, which has an agreement that allows it to participate in some EU research projects. However, as Kinaret points out, developed third countries, which the UK would become if it left the EU with no agreement on links after Brexit, "are usually not eligible to be funded through EU research projects unless there are specific agreements."

**Michael Kenward**

### US and Israel issue call for proposals for energy center [birdf.com/energycenter](http://birdf.com/energycenter)

The US Department of Energy (DOE), Israel's Ministry of Energy, and the Israel Innovation Authority have announced a call for proposals for a U.S.-Israel Center of Excellence in Energy, Engineering and Water Technology (Energy Center). The Center, which resides under the Israel-U.S. Binational Industrial Research and Development Foundation (BIRD), will initially fund up to USD\$16 million for research in the areas of the energy-water nexus, fossil energy, energy storage, and cybersecurity.

The US and Israeli governments will provide USD\$8 million each for the initial two-year launch of the Center.

The goal of the Center is to promote energy security and economic development through the R&D of innovative energy technologies, while facilitating cooperation among consortia of US and Israeli companies, research institutes, and universities.

**The submission deadline for full proposals is August 15, 2019.** More information on the call for proposals

and how to apply can be found on the BIRD Foundation website.

The establishment of a joint US-Israel energy center was first authorized by the US Congress in the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014. In February of this year, DOE announced the BIRD Foundation as the operating agent of the Center. The BIRD Foundation was established by the US and Israeli governments in 1977 to generate mutually beneficial cooperation between US and Israeli companies, including startups and established organizations. DOE manages the BIRD Foundation's BIRD Energy program for the US side.

### South Africa and China begin student exchange program [dst.gov.za](http://dst.gov.za)

The South Africa-China Young Scientists Exchange Programme is based on a five-year agreement signed by the South African Department of Science and Technology and the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology in 2017, to give young researchers from both countries an opportunity to share knowledge and develop skills. The first group of students have begun the exchange this spring. The

program will promote the development of scientists, scholars, and researchers, focusing on various scientific fields including biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, ICT systems, green technologies, the exploitation of mineral resources, and space science and astronomy.

The Young Scientists Exchange Programme is jointly funded with the aim of cultivating future scientist

leaders, by promoting the exchange of researchers between research institutes, universities, and enterprises in an effort to advance R&D, and produce academic papers, new patents, and innovative products.

The majority of the successful students, selected through a call issued by the South African National Research Foundation earlier this year, come from historically disadvantaged institutions. The students who have been selected in the spring will spend up to 12 months at universities across China. □