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Response Type:
Normal ResponseCustom Value:
emptyResponse Started:
Tuesday, August 6, 2013 10:23:43 AMCollector:
Web Link
(Web Link)IP Address:
82.5.165.234Response Modified:
Tuesday, August 6, 2013 10:39:30 AM

1. Name:

2. Organisation (if applicable):

Queen's University, Belfast

3. Email address:

4. Address:

5. In responding, it would be helpful if you could indicate whether you are responding as

a research or educational body

6. Keeping in touch

Please keep me informed by email of the progress of this review, and other BIS Balance of Competence reviews.

1. 1. Where has EU action had a positive impact for the UK on research, technological development, innovation or space? What evidence is there for this? Has EU action encouraged national action in any areas?

Within the social sciences, EU actions have significantly promoted internationalization in terms of staff mobility and cross-border comparative research. The UK is the single largest 'winner' in fund procurement, and this provides an important additional funding stream for UK institutions. EU support for comparative data archives and comparative data collection (e.g., the European Social Survey) is important for providing data sources for secondary and primary research. EU funding applications need to be cross-disciplinary in order to be successful and this has had the spillover effect of making UK social science research more interdisciplinary.

2. 2. Where has EU action had a negative impact for the UK in these fields? What evidence is there for this? Has EU action prevented potentially useful national action in any areas?

EU research in the social sciences is focussed upon a certain set of specific topic areas within each framework programme. Given the growing focus within the UK's ESRC upon specific policy-driven initiatives, general research and basic theoretical work is losing out. The European Research Council, that could fill the gap, is under-funded and anyway has developed a culture of elitism that works against this by funding only large budget prestige projects.

3. 3. How and where has UK engagement with partner countries or international bodies, both within and outside the EU, been helped or hindered by EU involvement?

The requirement of international partners for funding applications (and the need to have a genuine spread of partners for a successful funding application) has meant that UK social science academics now have more European links. COST networks are significant in this. The downside of this has been that academic links outside of Europe and other UKRC priority areas (the USA, India and China) have been stunted (e.g., the African continent and especially Latin America).

4. 4. What benefits or difficulties has the objective of a European research area (ERA) delivered for the UK?

More staff mobility, both going out and coming in, through Marie Curie. A negative effect has been that developing regionally-centred research initiatives within the UK are sidelined.

5. 5. How has the EU sought to coordinate the policy instruments at its disposal across different policy areas to create an enabling environment for researchers and innovators? How successful has this been?

Within the social sciences, frankly there does not appear to be much coordinator across policy areas

1. 6. What could the EU most helpfully do to promote scientific and technological progress and innovation (including in the space sector)? - How could the EU use its existing competence differently to deliver more in your area? - How might a greater or lesser degree of EU competence deliver more in your area? - How could improvements to existing EU activities make them more effective and efficient?

Covered under other headings.

2. 7. Where might future EU level action be detrimental to your work in this area?

EU research in the social sciences is concentrated very much upon applied policy issues. Young academics need to land significant research grant funding in order to obtain career advancement. Hence, there is a danger that basic theoretical work will be stunted. Similarly, EU support for social science research work outside the ERA is sporadic at best. This could limit research in the developing world.

3. 8. Where might action at national rather than EU level be more appropriate / effective?

The UK would be a more effective venue for developing regional research infrastructures and coordinating research between regions. The majority of research training in the social sciences is better delivered at the UK level.

4. 9. How could EU and national policies and funding streams interact better?

My impression is that EU and UK research policies and streams do not interact. There is considerable duplication of policy priorities in research and steps could be taken to coordinate priorities in order to avoid this.

5. 10. What impact would any future enlargement of the EU have on this area of competence?

Future enlargement of the EU could result in more knowledge transfer activities from the UK to new Accession states with this taking the form of either direct training and/or indirect knowledge transfer through the involvement of Accession state academics in joint research. However, this will only take place if UK academic institutions see clear financial incentives coming from any knowledge transfer activities.

6. 11. Are there any other points you wish to make which are not captured above?

The EU needs evaluators to rate applications and to provide input for initiatives that are being developed. However, the mechanisms for recruiting evaluators remain obscure and very much institutionally-driven and 'top down'. The current register of experts is not working well. Calls for evaluators need to be publicized more widely with clear procedures.

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