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147.143.79.42Response Started:
Friday, August 2, 2013 2:00:30 PMResponse Modified:
Friday, August 2, 2013 2:07:02 PM

1. Name:

2. Organisation (if applicable):

Bangor University

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?

Trans-national multi-sectoral collaboration can - • Increase the scope of research activity through - bringing researchers with different ideas, knowledge, expertise, and skills together - providing access to research facilities and/or research data not available within one institution, one sector, one region, or one country - addressing issues of international as well as regional concern • Increase the scale of the activity through sharing the cost, and cost reductions through economies of scale • Build enduring relationships between research actors • Promote trans-national and inter-sectoral knowledge exchange and knowledge transfer. • Increase international academic impact - there is evidence that international collaboration brings significant gains in citation impact. Addressing and assessing exact impacts on UK research is, however, difficult as EU funding has become such an important, integral, long-term part of the support for UK research. It becomes difficult, therefore, to disassociate back to a position where EU funding would not be playing a role in the support framework. Undoubtedly, it has enabled major projects, which would not otherwise have been possible on a UK basis alone, to proceed. It has also undoubtedly enabled large scale, shared infrastructure which would never have been affordable for a single nation state (CERN, EMMA, GEANT etc.), to be funded and developed to further understanding for the benefit of the Community as a whole. Furthermore, the EU's more pragmatic, policy based approach has ensured that science which is important to society as a whole (such as plant science, for example), which may otherwise be neglected or overlooked in a 'fashion / demand' led prioritisation system, is still actually supported

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?

In general, the balance of impact must be regarded as being a very positive one. There may, however, be a potential danger that by overly focusing upon, and targeting capture of EU funding by a nation state, that there could be a 'distraction' or 'deviation' from other 'locally' significant issues which need to be addressed within a nation state. Clearly, if national funds can potentially be used to 'lever' funding from Europe, activities and their corresponding budget lines with the ability to deliver such leverage may be protected and safeguarded, to a greater degree than would otherwise be the case, to the cost of other national interests where such leverage does not come in to play.

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?

Even though an institution may have, or may be developing world class expertise, breaking into the 'networks, or 'clubs' who regularly secure funding can initially be very very difficult. This, in itself, can be a significant 'hindrance' to development and growth within an organisation or a nation state. Conversely, however, once engaged as part of relevant and influential groupings and networks, involvement with other partners, countries or international bodies can be a positive accelerant to the development of relevant scientific and technological expertise.

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

As per Question 1 and the response set out therein, the benefits of ERA objectives for the UK cannot be undervalued. Defragmented and coalescence of the European research effort through, for example, the Marie Curie Actions, have undoubtedly brought significant benefits to the UK.

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?

Whilst efforts are clearly being made to co-ordinate policy objectives, strategies and instruments which underpin funding programmes (as evidenced by the increasing complementarity therein), the reality is that, at the operational level, there remains a massive amount of opacity and complexity in the system. Clearly, the recognition and encouragement of closer linkages between cohesion policy (and the Structural Funding instruments relating thereto), will help in delivering co-ordinated approaches in areas which benefit from its implementation and this is to be welcomed.

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?

One of the most potentially helpful actions to promote scientific and technological progress would be the simplification and clarification of Joint Programming Actions. With an important role to play in the co-ordination of national research agendas and the coalescence / defragmentation of research, the current approach does, however, remain confusing and confused.

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

No Response

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

This may well need to be the case when national priorities are deemed to outweigh those of the Community as a whole.

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

As highlighted in Question 6 above, Joint Action Programmes delivered in a more transparent and consistent manner would greatly assist in the co-ordination and linkage between national policy frameworks and EU policy directions. Within nation states also, a number of differing 'national rules' and approaches lead to further inconsistency and differentiation. In the UK, for example, substantial elements of funding and support are delivered through the Technology Strategy Board. Its 'rules of engagement' mean that projects have to be industry led with industry being the principal beneficiary of support. This will differ in other nation states. Perhaps a greater degree of consistency of approach, across the community, would lead more effective and more clearly understood links between EU funding streams and the national policy context.

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

Without detailed information regarding resource commitments that new nation states may make when joining an enlarged EU relative to the level of funding support that they may subsequently require / 'withdraw' from the system, it is very difficult to take a view on the impact of enlargement on the UK. Potential research, development and innovation benefits may, however, arise and accrue as a result of new centres and areas of expertise not previously available to the community being brought into the system to work in partnership, for the benefit of all. As a secondary benefit, new member states are likely to be 'hungry' to interact. This may lead to new consortia involving individuals and groups in existing states who have not previously succeeded in securing funding or engaging with the system in their particular fields of research thus increasing overall diversity in participation.

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

No Response

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