



The Food and Environment  
Research Agency

## **Fera response to the ‘Review of UK and EU balance of competences: call for evidence on research and development’**

**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?**

The research and innovation budget of the EU is second only to US and is critical for member States to boost economic growth. The UK were the second most successful of the EU27 countries in Framework 7 retained projects for the years 2007-2011.<sup>1</sup> Framework 7 is the main financial instrument which supports research, technological development and innovation with its program of both bottom up and top down research funding. The Cooperation program funds all these areas with policy directed topics that promote gathering excellence and experience scientist across Europe to address research problems, and seek directed impacts for stakeholders (Policy, Trade, learned societies, professional bodies and trade associations). Some of the research topics will have mandatory % participation for SMEs to ensure development of activities that stimulate economic growth. There are schemes targeting groups of SMEs across Europe to join together to develop products or services with the aid of European money to buy research development from providers. This is industry identifying a problem and buying research to allow it to commercialise a solution and is a top down scheme. Fera has a long history and well above average success rates bidding into the European topic areas that are complementary to our core science.

Eranets are set up as projects that receive EU finding to allow research funders from across Europe to gather and exchanging expertise in a single topic area. An example of this is the Fera coordinated EUPHRESO project a collection of individuals from European Plant Health Ministries that fund national research funding. Individual representatives from these ministries decide on which are their research priorities and research topics are selected. Each country representative can decide which topics to support in their national interest. This mechanism allows for transnational collaborative research projects that pool national resources and facilitate collaboration and

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<sup>1</sup> Fifth FP7 Monitoring Report, Research and Innovation EU

involvement of pan European researchers to address science topics. The duration of the projects are typically 1-2 years and target shorter term or more immediate priorities that would not be possible to introduce into the framework program in the timescales. Each countries researchers are funded by their national money.

**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?**

Not aware of any.

**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 research schemes detailed in 1 all promote European collaboration and allow for participation from counties outside Europe, both funded (eg ICPC countries) and largely unfunded (currently USA, AU, NZ, Japan etc) and emerging markets such as Brazil, Russia, India and China. This is particularly useful where for example in plant health problems the pest or disease has not yet established in Europe and field experience is only available in countries like China or USA. The ability to work with scientific teams that have studies the pest or disease and build on their knowledge and research means that the European project will better informed. For example the Palm Protect project addresses a palm weevil that devastates palm tree populations that first emerged in Egypt and moved to Israel and is now in the majority of EU Mediterranean countries. There are Political and language barriers that can be overcome through a collaborative project rather than individual member states trying to obtain information alone.

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

Sharing excellence and resources across Europe rather than individual countries funding duplicate research activities is cost effective and increases scientific progression.

**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?**

N/A

**Future opportunities and challenges**

**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?

Increase the number of communication networks and engagement of scientists. Better tools to access and identify SMEs across Europe. Transnational support of NCPs (national contact points).

- How might a greater or lesser degree of EU competence deliver more in your area?

We have built our EU competence and will continue to develop our knowledge and expertise. The complexity of rules and schemes are challenging. A greater degree of EU Competence would increase the amount of funds we could leverage from the EU.

- How could improvements to existing EU activities make them more effective and efficient?

Simplification of the rules,

Paying the full economic cost of research

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

If the EU adopts a model of low fixed overheads make it makes it difficult to participate.

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

N/A

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

Expansion of the UK participation in Eranets –these are currently voluntary and for us the UK partner is BBSRC or TSB (sometimes only fund SMEs for instance) who as a government agency we are ineligible to receive funds from so are prohibited from participating in the research activity. If the UK funder decides not to participate in the Eranet no UK researchers are eligible to receive funds from the action unless the UK policy area agrees to directly fund but they will not have had the advantage of participating in selecting the topics in the call.

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

If the number of member states increases as long as this is in proportion to the research funding and there were not national quotas there would not be an issue.

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

N/A

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