

BRUSSELS AND EUROPE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS SUBMISSION
Balance of Competences Review

Research and Development

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/review-of-uk-and-eu-balance-of-competences-call-for-evidence-on-research-and-development>

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Impact on the national interest

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?

This question cannot be answered succinctly. There are already comprehensive reports available to UK Government. However a few highlights illustrate the breadth and depth of the UK benefit.

Depth: The fusion programme of the UK has benefited enormously from EU action (not least through the JET programme). The UK has benefited from EU life science research across the board from brain research (FP7) to food safety research. Access to the Joint Research Centre (JRC)'s programmes offers great potential for UK benefits - from materials research to nuclear safety (and the generation IV nuclear generation systems).

Breadth: All major UK universities have benefited from EU R&D programmes (UKRO analyses). The requirement for EU teams has promoted UK research cooperation across the EU with considerable benefit in terms of progress and cost reduction. The expansion of participating third country states (such as Japan) has opened up further opportunities.

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 funding should amplify UK R&D but all too often it is seen as an alternative to UK funding. Since obtaining EU funding requires considerable effort by the applicant organisation, it is clear that if this results in negative decisions by UK funding organisations then research organisations will not apply for EU funding. The same argument applies to regional grants.

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?

Anecdotal evidence is that EU involvement has been universally beneficial to the UK but we know of no research in this field.

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

It is probably too early to judge. However, the ERA and its associated European Institute of Innovation should boost excellence in EU research and development and help to reduce the EU brain drain.

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?

This process has been central for many years (originating in the Euratom treaty). Highlights in recent years have been the White Paper “Growth, Competitiveness, Employment” (issued in 1994) which looked at trans-European networks, research and technological development and new technologies. It continues with the JRC’s efforts in foresight in the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies. The European Commission President’s Bureau for European Policy Advisers with its Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser plays an important role in such coordination and foresight work.

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?

Ensure that the work carried out in the JRC is brought more effectively to the attention of the policy departments of the Commission and also, particularly, to the attention of the European Parliament which needs better sources of scientific information.

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

The EU institutions need to be less worried about the scientific expertise in the industrial sector. In regulating most sectors, information concerning advanced technology is only available from industry. If this information is excluded, the regulatory initiatives will often be flawed. A greater degree of EU competence would pay dividends if the European Institutions improved their interface with industry.

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

Expand the short-to-medium term exchange-of-staff programmes between the UK institutions and the Commission Directorates-General (DGs) – particularly the JRC but also other relevant DGs. This must not become a one-way ticket as so often happens with exchange programmes.

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

We do not anticipate that future EU level action would be detrimental in our area of expertise on this matter at least (risk governance, food additives, etc.)

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

Subsidiarity should be the guiding principle. It is a question of scale – in some cases the EU level is clearly more appropriate, in others it is less interesting. However, research aimed at obtaining competitive advantage is clearly a Member State interest.

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

Set up a small unit in the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills specifically tasked with improving the interface with EU Research and Development (rather like the

old OTIU in the previous DoI). This unit would promote the uptake of EU research output and facilitate the participation of UK research teams in EU projects.

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

There would be greater competition for funds but from the many EU projects of which we have knowledge, we do not think there would be a major impact.

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

No.