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Response Type:  
Normal ResponseCollector:  
Web Link  
(Web Link)Custom Value:  
emptyIP Address:  
144.124.147.176Response Started:  
Friday, July 12, 2013 10:11:07 AMResponse Modified:  
Tuesday, July 23, 2013 3:59:38 PM

1. Name:

2. Organisation (if applicable):

Aberystwyth 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?

Summary: EU action, as a result of the focus on supporting excellence, has an overwhelmingly positive impact on research at Aberystwyth University (AU), and this greatly boosts the institution's other missions of teaching and commercialisation. Key points: 1. It's estimated that 22% of research related income (2012-2013) is sourced from the EU; this is probably amongst the highest in the UK. 2. Located within the Convergence Area of West Wales and the Valleys, Aberystwyth University is able to draw-down not just Framework Programme funds in support of research but also the highest level of support through cohesion funding for projects that have a focus on innovation and technology transfer supporting the development of locally based enterprises and thus boosting regional growth e.g. Beacon Project. 3. Twelve of AU's 42 ongoing (July 2013) FP7 funded projects are supported through FP7 People/Marie Curie Actions, which a) facilitates the development of contacts between researchers both in different sectors and countries, that are acknowledged as being useful when subsequently addressing collaborative research challenges e.g. former AU Marie Curie project fellows continue to collaborate with us after moving to other countries, and b) builds the intellectual capacity of the institution which has a positive impact on the University's position in research rankings e.g. fellows' outputs are submitted to the Research Excellence Framework. The latter point is also supported through the European Research Council/FP7 Ideas projects at AU. 4. Various EU actions support the development of networks and world-class locally based research facilities e.g. the EPPN project's Phenomics Centre at AU that lead to collaborative research activity with the best researchers and facilities in Europe, and beyond, while addressing mutual challenges. 5. Participation in international consortia is acknowledged at AU to provide high-level career development and leadership opportunities, and past participation has enhanced the career prospects of many academics.

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?

Summary: There are few negative impacts of EU actions perceived at AU, but all UK institutions need to be alert to possible unintended consequences. Key points: 1. A perceived reluctance at EU level to accept the Full Economic Cost (FEC) model, which is perfectly acceptable to UK funding organisations, is thought to lead to a slight disadvantage when comparisons are made between the costs associated with our research proposals and those of some other institutions in Europe. 2. The same issue with FEC is known to have resulted in comparatively high costs to be imposed on visiting researchers to those facilities at AU developed a result of FP7 Capacities 'Research Infrastructures' investment, so there is a greater risk of low take-up by the European research community and possibly lower chance of success when bidding for funding in future due to a poorer track record of usage. 3. Changes as a result of EU actions could lead to unintended negative consequences for UK based academics so AU is particularly keen to co-operate with others to provide the appropriate level of consideration to possible changes brought about by the EU in advance of their implementation e.g. matters relating to researchers' pensions that might come about as a result of a hurried completion of the European Research Area could pose a considerable threat.

**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?**

Summary: EU actions have greatly enhanced AU's engagement with EU based research institutions, and has been useful in supporting research with developing third countries, though there is scope to improve involvement with UK based SMEs, and partners based in developed 'third' countries. Key points: 1. AU considers that the EU's actions under FP7 Collaboration and FP7 People's 'Host Actions' have greatly enhanced collaborations with European research institutions, and have been useful in supporting research collaborations with developing countries outside Europe (developing 'third' countries) which fit with AU's strategic research interests. 2. FP7 Collaboration has largely encouraged the involvement of SMEs, however, in practice the long and complex application process, along with the need to illustrate an even spread of anticipated grant across different member states at application stage, discourages the involvement of SMEs in bidding consortia. Given that the SME involvement in FP is higher in certain other member states, it's clearly the case that other factors are also taking an effect e.g. levels of advisory support. 3. Because of linguistic, historic, and cultural reasons, many AU (and probably also other UK) based academics have links with researchers that are based in developed third countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. Due to EU FP7 funding rules, however, these links are not fully exploited as the involvement of institutions based in developed third countries, while encouraged, is not generally supported financially. The issue is exacerbated as a result of poor dissemination of information about reciprocal funding agreements between the Governments of the developed third countries and the EU is not easily accessible.

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

Benefits: AU considers that the EURAXESS network, funded by the EU and which works to support the creation of the ERA, is particularly beneficial in attracting and assisting internationally mobile and highly talented and skilled researchers to come to the UK at a very practical level. Excellent advisory support is provided by the EURAXESS bridgehead organisation in the UK, the British Council, to researchers both in advance of their move to AU and immediately after through the support given to the Local Contact Point at AU. Difficulties: The objective of a ERA have resulted in no difficulties at AU, however, there is some concern that proposals to complete the ERA should be considered appropriately in order to minimise the risk of introducing unintended negative consequences, such as the potential threat of erosion to the value of UK academics' pensions.

**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?**

AU welcomes the move under 'Europe2020' to create greater synergies between different policy instruments in future, particularly research and regional development actions (Horizon2020 and Cohesion Policy).

**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?**

AU has already provided evidence to both the Wales and UK Governments in support of its view that the most helpful thing that the EU could do is to: 1. Simplify the application process for research funding especially to make it easier for all parties but particularly SMEs to participate more readily. It is hoped that Horizon2020 will go some way to help this. 2. Retain an emphasis on the excellence of proposals in Horizon2020. 3. Delay increasing the funding for the European Institute for Innovation and Technology under Horizon2020 until such time as the three trial Knowledge and Innovation Communities are near completion and have been favourably evaluated.

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

There is some concern that proposals to complete the ERA should be considered appropriately in order to minimise the risk of introducing unintended negative consequences, such as the potential threat of erosion to the value of UK academics' pensions.

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

AU favours maintaining the balance of competencies as it is between UK and EU agencies.

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

There has been entirely appropriate interaction between Wales Government and the EU with regard to the development of the 'smart specialization strategies(S3)' to help prioritise investment of Wales Government and EU funding in innovation during 2014-2020 in Wales.

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

AU does not consider that enlargement of the EU would have an impact on this area of competence provided that the principle of excellence in selecting research proposals for funding is not abandoned.

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