

# European & External Affairs Committee

## EUR2 04-05 (p4)

Date: 12 May 2005

Time: 9.00 - 12.30

Venue: National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay

Title: European Research Funding: Research and Commercial Division Cardiff University

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### Research and Commercial Division

### Cardiff University

### Background

Cardiff University is one of Britain's major centres of higher education. On 1<sup>st</sup> August 2004 it merged with University of Wales College of Medicine retaining the name Cardiff University, which is now both its public and legal name. It has a history of service and achievement dating from 1883, and continues to build on its reputation as an international centre for research and teaching. It has an annual turnover of £300mn. In the most recent independent assessment of the quality of research in UK universities (the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise), Cardiff was ranked 7th out of more than 100 universities.

The Research and Commercial Division's (RACDV) functions involve both responsive and proactive support for all academic Schools in three principal activities *ie* Research Support and Research Policy; Technology Transfer; and Commercial Services. A significant component of the University's Strategic Development Directorate, RACDV delivers a number of services ranging from assistance with research grant applications, to technology licensing, to business development and other commercial opportunities.

At Cardiff University European research funding, either directly from the European Union (EU) via the European Commission (EC) in Brussels, or from the Structural Funds programme in Wales (mainly Objectives 1 and 2), or other sources (*eg* the European Science Foundation, NATO etc...) currently accounts for some 20% of the University's research income, *ca* £30mn at today's exchange rates. The majority of the funding secured competitively from Brussels, but in collaboration with partners in other Member States and elsewhere, is derived from the pan-European Framework Programme 6, which is run by the EC's Directorate-General for Research, under the new EU Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik. The first Framework Programme was launched in the 1980s, and the budget for each successive four-year programme has been increased over that time. The funding comes from the general

budget of the EU and at present represents some 4% of total expenditure.

## **Framework Programme 6 (2002 to 2006)**

Generally known as FP6, this is the EU's main programme for research with an approximate budget of €20bn (*ca* £14bn). Cardiff University is a partner in some 30 projects to date (co-ordinating 4), worth *ca* €10mn (*ca* £7mn), with a further 22 projects to be funded but awaiting contracts. New proposals are being submitted all the time. FP6 has marked an important departure from the way in which previous EU Programmes had been conceived and implemented. It was designed to further the implementation of a specific political initiative: the European Research Area (ERA). The concept of an ERA, which was supported by the Member States at the Lisbon European Council in May 2000, and the Research Council in June 2000, stemmed from a belief that the EU's ability to compete effectively in the global economy (*cf* the USA, Japan and the fast-growing Asian economies) was hindered by the high degree of fragmentation of the European research and development effort. In order to increase the impact of EU research a more coherent European research policy was required, including greater openness, collaboration and competition in national research programmes.

Pre-enlargement of the EU on 1st May 2004, public and private sector expenditure on Research and Technological Development (RTD), stood at 1.9% of the EU's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The political objective set in Lisbon in 2000, to make the EU the most competitive knowledge economy in the world by 2010, was strengthened by the decision in 2002 at the Barcelona European Council to increase the expenditure on RTD across Europe to nearly 3% of GDP.

## **What research does FP6 support?**

Over the years since the first Framework Programme, the balance of investment has shifted from the rather high priority given to energy research (though this is still supported) to the current emphasis (agreed by all Member States and the European Parliament) on life sciences, genomics and biotechnology for health; information society technologies; industrial research; and the mobility and training of researchers. Other thematic priorities include aeronautics and space; food safety and health risks; sustainable development and global change; citizens and governance in the European knowledge-based society; and anticipating the EU's scientific and technological needs. FP6 also finances direct research at its Joint Research Centre, where the activities are focussed on three core areas namely: i) food; ii) chemical products and health; and iii) environment and sustainability, and nuclear safety and security.

## **Looking forward - Framework Programme 7 (2007 to 2013)**

The European Commission has recently unveiled (on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2005) its plans for the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), which propose a duration of seven years (2007 to 2013), a budget of €72.73 bn and a structure based on four specific programmes: Co-operation, Ideas, People and Capacities.

Within these four programmes, 'Co-operation' refers to collaborative transnational research activities;

'Ideas' covers basic research implemented through a new European Research Council (ERC); 'People' includes Marie Curie actions (*ie* the mobility of researchers) and other initiatives; while 'Capacities' encompasses support to research infrastructures, regions of knowledge and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The proposals stress that collaborative research, under the Co-operation heading, 'will constitute the bulk and core of EU research funding'. Indeed, nearly €45bn of the total €72.73 bn budget would be channelled towards this priority under the Commission's plans. As well as collaborative research, the Co-operation programme will cover Joint Technology Initiatives, co-ordination of national research programmes and international co-operation.

Co-operation: nine thematic areas for collaborative research are specified: health; food, agriculture and biotechnology; information and communication technologies (ICT); nanosciences, nanotechnologies, materials and new production technologies; energy; environment (including climate change); transport (including aeronautics); socio-economic sciences and the humanities; and security and space research. As with FP6, the largest of these thematic areas in budgetary terms is ICT (IST in FP6), with a proposed allocation of €12.7 bn over seven years. Next comes health with nearly €8.3 bn, followed by nanosciences with just under €5 bn. The newly created security and space research priority is set to be the fifth largest, with a budget of €4 bn, while the other new thematic area, socio-economic sciences and the humanities, will be the smallest with a budget of €792 mn.

As expected, under the Ideas programme, the Commission foresees the funding of individual projects suggested by researchers on subjects of their choice. The programme will be implemented by an ERC independently of the rest of the Framework Programme, with a proposed budget over seven years of €11.8 bn.

It is proposed that the People programme will cover the initial training of researchers (through the Marie Curie networks), life-long training and career development, industry-academia pathways and partnerships, and international activities including incoming and outgoing fellowships and the exchange of researchers. The proposed budget allocation is the lowest of the four specific programmes at €7.1 bn.

The Capacities programme, meanwhile, will target the optimal use and development of research infrastructures, strengthening the innovative capacities of SMEs, the development of regional research clusters, improving the research potential in EU convergence regions, and improving the integration of science and society. To achieve these aims, the Commission proposes a budget of €7.5 bn.

It is important to note that these plans, though brought forward in consultation with Member States and the European Parliament, will be subjected to close scrutiny and probable amendment before being ratified by the Council of Ministers and the Parliament in due course.

## **Suggested issues for consideration/discussion**

Can Wales plc take better advantage of the large number of links with European and third country (outside the EU) universities and companies (large and small), which have come about through involvement in research projects funded through FP6 and other European research programmes?

Would the NAFW/WAG consider hosting a conference in Wales, for universities and companies, to promote FP7, and in the process invite EU Commissioner Janez Potocnik to speak?

Can more be done to promote Welsh experience/research expertise to the new Member States? (Reference: the visit to Wales on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2005 of Dr Lubomír Zaorálek, Chairman, Chamber of Deputies, Czech Republic)

Cardiff University (inter-disciplinary research on Sustainability), along with University of Wales, Aberystwyth, Bangor and Swansea, and University of Glamorgan (Environmental research), held events in Brussels, co-ordinated by the Wales European Centre, during Wales Week 2005 *ie* at the beginning of March, with financial assistance from the Higher Education Council for Wales. These events were well attended by Brussels-based delegates with many useful contacts being made, justifying the universities' decision to take part. We look forward to Wales Week 2006!!!

With the forthcoming closure of the Wales European Centre in Brussels (to which the five universities listed above subscribe), Higher Education Wales (HEW) representing all the Welsh universities, has taken the decision to set up its own office in Brussels, to be based at the new Wales House. The grouping of Welsh HE European Officers (WELO) recognising the importance of having representation in Brussels welcomes this decision.

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**3<sup>rd</sup> May 2005**