

[National Assembly for Wales](#)

[Enterprise and Business Committee](#)

[Inquiry into EU funding opportunities 2014–2020](#)

Evidence from Swansea University – EUO 05

Swansea University response to the Enterprise and Business Committee inquiry into EU funding opportunities (2014-20)

This response refers to experience, plans and projects that relate to the list of programmes below. Horizon2020 and Structural Funds are excluded.

- **Erasmus+:** specifically the funding for mobility/innovative actions in the fields of education, training and youth.
- **Inter-regional Co-operation (INTERREG) Programmes:**
 - Ireland-Wales Cross Border Co-operation Programme
 - Atlantic Area Transnational Co-operation Programme
 - North West Europe Transnational Co-operation Programme
 - INTERREG V Programme
- **Creative Europe** (for media/creative industries/culture)
- **Competitiveness of SMEs (COSME) Programme**

1. How long have you been actively engaged in EU work related to the above programmes and their predecessors?

Swansea University (SU) has a track record of success in participating in EU projects/programmes/initiatives and has been actively engaged in the following EU programmes:-

- *Erasmus funding, on an annual basis since 1998*
- *Interreg Funding - Ireland Wales Programme since 2008, North West Europe Programme 2011, & Atlantic Area Programme in 2013*
- *We have delivered the Enterprise Europe Network project under CIP and COSME for 15 months since September 2012.*
- *We have been actively involved in making bids to Eurostars since 2010 .*
- *Due to subject discipline mix within the University we have not been active in Media & Creative industries programmes.*

2. How would you describe the value gained from engagement in these EU initiatives?

EEN has provided a huge opportunity to link and develop relationships with companies and research institutions across Europe and beyond. It is helping to solidify and improve our links with the Welsh Government, TSB, and other local business support providers to provide a more co-ordinated and beneficial service to SMEs and to university staff wanting to link with like minded businesses.

In addition SU has also experienced the following benefits from engaging in these programmes including:-

- *Mobility, training and learning experiences for students and staff via Erasmus in various EU countries.*
- *Employability and career development benefits and enhancements from these activities and opportunities.*
- *Funding which has supported SU's research strategy – including Blue Biotechnology, Health Informatics, and Low Carbon research initiatives.*
- *Public engagement benefits – particularly through the Erasmus and Interreg programmes, which has assisted the University in growing the SU brand and influencing international student recruitment.*
- *Engagement in these programmes have also enabled the development of extensive networks of international collaborations, for student recruitment and mobility exchange – enabling wider European networking, and access to European Experts leading to future collaborative opportunities and potential grant capture.*

3. Of the above programmes, which have you identified as priorities for your institution in the 2014-2020 period? What is your strategy for engagement with these opportunities?

As the focus of the different programmes will enable the achievement of multiple and various strategic priorities, with the exception of the Creative Europe, SU will be actively engaging in all programmes areas over the next 7 years. It is anticipated engagement in the programmes will change in response to specific College research, international and central strategic demands during the programme period.

- *College Research Strategies will focus on capturing Interreg and Erasmus + funding*
- *Advancement of the International Strategy and reaching wider and employability targets will be possible through the Erasmus+ programme and COSME*
- *Successful realisation of the University Strategic Plan to 'Enhance student experience and employability; Increase the pool of talented staff from around the globe drawn to Swansea', will be possible through a combination of the programmes.*

In addition SU will actively seek:-

- *To continue to deliver the EEN network in Wales under the COSME programme. The next EEN delivery period will see a UK wide partnership with the TSB who are looking to use the network to facilitate local regions accessing the Innovation funding and support from the TSB.*
- *To continue to pursue Eurostars Funding through the TSB.*

4. To what extent do you work with the same partner organisations within and outside Wales? Also, have you established long-term contacts with others parts of the EU in these areas?

Through these programmes SU has developed a long term (over more than 25 years) network of mobility, employability and research partners across Europe, which have been extremely valuable to students, staff and research teams enabling the development of successive projects and funding applications . These links have also led to the establishment of strong links to industry

both within Wales – Tata, AirBus etc and in Europe, which have been highly beneficial in enhancing the competitiveness of funding applications .

The EEN project has also provided the opportunity to develop long term relationships with innovation and business support organisations across 54 countries in the network along with Universities and Research Organisations.

5. What challenges do you face both in applying and competing for these funds and what could be done to help - including issues around resourcing/match-funding availability?

Whilst resource limitations, in terms of sufficient time and staff to develop, run and support projects remains a major challenge, the complexity and differences between the programmes and individual funding schemes/ actions, can be highly problematic when applying for funding. These differences include:-

- *Eligibility & Programme guidance;*
- *Application process – responsive mode, open call, tenders, pilot calls and preparatory actions,*
- *Budgetary and funding methodology – different intervention rates, match funding requirements etc.,*

Further simplification of the guidelines and commonality between the European funding programmes would resolve many of these issues, streamlining the application process and easing the management and supervision of grants.

The Challenges around securing the EEN contract for the next 7 years have already been helped by the input of a percentage of Match funding by the TSB and also the collaboration with WHEB to provide a clear information stream to Welsh Universities.

6. How much support do you feel is available in Wales (and elsewhere) to raise awareness of opportunities and to facilitate successful participation? More specifically, how would you describe the support currently offered by the Welsh Government and other public organisations in Wales and what more could be done?

Historically Wales has provided only 'light touch' support for these programme, mainly in the form of sign posting and web links. The British Council in Wales has been notable in its provision of a practical and constructive support service for the Erasmus programme.

Ongoing it would be useful if the Welsh Government could develop a unit of :-

- *Experienced staff to provide a first stage competitive check on applications.*
- *Pool of Welsh experts with an in depth knowledge of specific programmes/ funding streams/sectors to provide detailed guidance and assistance in bid development.*

A good level of support for accessing EU funding is provided to Welsh project partners through the EEN network. We would benefit from greater interaction with the Welsh government to support the development of the future relationship with the TSB to further promote Eurostars and other SME support schemes.

The Welsh European Funding Office have a good support team being developed to support SMEs accessing Innovation support and funding through the SME Instrument (under COSME but part of H2020 programme), which is supported and in part administered by the EEN in Wales. The Score Cymru fund will be invaluable to SMEs to support travel and bid writers to support SMEs in developing these bids. We would hope to see the fund increased in size if demand is high to give SMEs in Wales the best chance to access EU funds. In addition if the remit of the Score Cymru fund could be extended to include a wider range of European programmes including Erasmus+ and Interreg, this would significantly increase the opportunity for grant capture .

7. How well do you feel the different sectors and organisations in Wales work together to target EU funds? Would further cooperation be welcomed? And if so, what more could be done to achieve a more strategic approach?

The different sectors in Wales where possible work together well; however due to the competitive nature of European funding, collaboration can be difficult and at times incompatible with the priorities of individual organisations.

- a. Further Co-operation would always be welcomed between the different sector related staff in the various business support organisations in Wales, who together can encourage SMEs to apply for EU Funding. It would be very useful for the Welsh Government to hold regular networking opportunities between these organisations to encourage and promote ideas for wider collaboration.*
- b. EEN certainly would like to develop better links with the Welsh Government Sector Teams and try to link these into the EEN network sector groups.*
- c. EEN are now working with the WHEB office to ensure that research partnership requests from EU universities are available to Welsh Universities and vice versa.*

8. Do you know of examples of other regions, institutions or Member States that have performed well with regard to the funding programmes above? If so, what do you believe to be key to their success?

Feedback from the regions suggests a strong link between European funding success and government investment through the development of funding support infrastructures.

Colleagues from Scotland, the Netherlands and Germany, which have been highly successful in grant capture have been assisted by these centralised support mechanisms, specifically designed to enhance their competitive edge and assist with grant capture –e.g. Supporting the set up of ‘Welcome Centres’ in selective German Universities.

A nationally funded programme of support in Wales would undoubtedly increase Welsh involvement in the funding programmes through not just increasing awareness of the

funding opportunities available but by providing expert advice and guidance in the bid development process.

- 9. Given the wider brief of the Enterprise and Business committee, what are your thoughts regarding the role of these funding programmes in encouraging collaboration with the private sector, and developments of skills, training, and entrepreneurship?**

EEN feel these programmes are key in providing support mechanisms to help Welsh SMEs understand and access these EC funding opportunities as well as providing significant funding for the high potential projects that might be exploited with the right level of support.