

EU Framework Programme for R&D—towards FP8 What is at stake for the South West of England?

This Paper introduces the **current EU Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7)** and **how the South West is performing**. It also presents why it is important that the **South West's stakeholders voices are heard in the process towards FP8**, starting in 2010. Practical actions to be taken forward by the South West UK Brussels Office (SWUKBO) are outlined below.

Although the first official documentation on FP8 from the European Commission is not expected until 2011, discussions and informal consultations at different levels have already started. If the South West was no longer to receive Structural Funds, should the future EU funding for R&D and innovation, which could triple in budget, focus as much on ensuring research capacities within regions as on driving forward excellence in the European Research Area?

Nothing is fixed at present and there are certainly no concrete proposals at the level of the European Commission, but **waiting until 2011 to react will already be too late to influence the process**. That is why South West stakeholders need to be proactive in making their views heard now.

Practical actions led by SWUKBO

- * **South West stakeholders mailing list:** SWUKBO will set up a mailing list to inform interested stakeholders on the direction of the future Framework Programme. This advanced information will **allow stakeholders to position themselves for the formal consultations**. The UK Government is expected to launch a consultation in summer 2010.
- * **Working with European stakeholders** SWUKBO is working with colleagues from over 30 European regions through the **European Regions' Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN)** to carry out a **mapping of** the regional, national, institutional and network **stakeholders** in the future of the Framework Programme. Engagement through a reputed European network will provide a stronger voice for the South West. A number of **events** will be organised by ERRIN in Brussels to engage in debate with the European Commission and active stakeholders in the South West will be invited to participate.
- * **South West event** If there is sufficient interest in contributing to the future Framework Programme debate in the South West, SWUKBO will also seek to organise a **stakeholder event** in the region **during 2010**.

Those interested in being informed and participating in the coming meetings and consultation, please **contact Emily Palmer**, European Officer responsible for Research at SWUKBO (epalmer@southwestuk.be or +32 2 737 70 91) to be added to the mailing list. Any suggestions for further future action are very welcome, particularly along the lines of creating synergies between R&D and innovation policy in the region and the EU reflections. For coordination purposes, SWUKBO would appreciate being informed of any EU lobbying activities carried out individually by Partners in this field.

What is the EU's Framework Programme?

The EU's Framework Programme for Research & Development is the **funding instrument for research actors across the EU**. A tool to maintain **leadership in the global knowledge economy**, the Framework Programme aims to strengthen the **scientific and technological base of European industry**. We are currently almost half way through the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), which has an overall budget of over **€50 billion for the period 2007-2013**. This funding is spent on: 1) high level collaborative applied research through European consortia of industry and academia in ten thematic areas; 2) frontier research through the newly established European Research Council; 3) the mobility and training of researchers; and 4) the strengthening of research capacities.

How is the South West UK performing?

Over the past three years, the South West has been involved in FP7 projects to a value of over €1.4 billion, with **nearly €110 million of funds going directly to organisations across the Region**. The South West has principally benefited from funds for research in **Environment, ICT, Transport, Nanotechnologies and Health**, as well as **Research infrastructures and the mobility and training of researchers**. In relation to other UK regions, **the South West currently comes fifth** in terms of uptake of funds and is outperformed by London, the South East, the East of England and Scotland. The South West universities have performed well, receiving over €46 million since 2007. However, the private profit-making sector in the South West has only received just over €14m, with **nearly half of this funding going to SMEs**. In the EU as a whole, even though more attention has been given to the participation of SMEs, currently only one sixth of FP7 funding for collaborative research projects is being allocated to small businesses.

Why do we need to actively look into post-2013?

Once the new European Commission comes into office in early 2010, shaping **the EU budget for programmes post-2013 will be at the top of the agenda**. Recent European Commission documents—including the consultation document on the EU strategy for growth and jobs in the horizon of 2020—seem to be proposing a **less territorial and a more sectoral approach to funding**, with great emphasis on excellence in research and innovation.

It is still too early to know which will be the final shape of the EU budget or the EU Strategy for Growth and Jobs, but **current discussions introduce controversial elements** to the discussion table. If the South West was no longer to receive Structural Funds, should the future EU funding for R&D and innovation, which could triple in budget, focus as much on ensuring research capacities within regions as on driving forward excellence in the European Research Area?

Although the first official documentation on FP8 is not expected from the European Commission until 2011, **current discussions** on the future Framework Programme **suggest** that it could go in **two directions**. First, it could focus purely on global challenges such as climate change, energy shortage, pandemics, ageing societies and security. This would lead to an increased importance of world-class universities networking in order to enhance the competitiveness of EU research, but may leave out less competitive universities. Second, some argue that the future Framework Programme should focus more on engagement of SMEs in the research agenda—given that they are key players in terms of growth and jobs in Europe—as well as promoting on their role in the commercialisation of research.

Everything is up for grabs over the coming months and that is why **it is important that South West stakeholders engage in the debate now**, via the different formal and informal consultations and meetings being carried out by the European Commission and other stakeholders.

Please contact European Officer Emily Palmer (epalmer@southwestuk.be or +32 2 737 70 91) for further information.