

Enterprise and Business Committee
H03

Inquiry into Horizon 2020

Evidence from Welsh Local Government Association



Our Ref/Ein Cyf:	LG
Your Ref/Eich Cyf:	
Date/Dyddiad:	Monday 23 April 2012
Please ask for/Gofynnwch am:	Lowri Gwilym
Direct line/Llinell uniongyrchol:	029 2046 8676
Email/Ebost:	lowri.gwilym@wlga.gov.uk

Siân Phipps
Clerk
Enterprise and Business Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Dear Siân

Response to the Committee Short Inquiry into the Horizon 2020 proposals

I write in response to the Committee's call for views on the European Commission's Horizon 2020 proposals.

The Welsh Local Government Association represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities, the three fire and rescue authorities, and four police authorities are associate members.

The Association seeks to provide representation to local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies the key priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh Local Government and the communities they serve.

Following consultation with all local authorities in Wales we wish to provide the following brief comments in response to your consultation:

General comments

- Although we welcome the European Commissions' Horizon 2020 proposals as they bring together all existing research and innovation funding into one integrated funding stream we believe that the Commission could have gone a step further by proposing a single

Steve Thomas
Chief Executive
Prif Weithredwr

Welsh Local Government
Association
Local Government House
Drake Walk
CARDIFF CF10 4LG
Tel: 029 2046 8600
Fax: 029 2046 8601

Cymdeithas Llywodraeth
Leol Cymru
Tŷ Llywodraeth Leol
Rhodfa Drake
CAERDYDD CF10 4LG
Ffôn: 029 2046 8600
Ffacs: 029 2046 8601

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Common Strategic Framework (CSF) for all EU territorial cohesion funding and research and innovation funding rather than two separate CSFs as this would have enabled a truly integrated approach to be developed across all funds.

- We sincerely believe that these proposals offer positive opportunities for Wales to raise its game in terms of maximising research and innovation funding from the European Commission during the 2014-2020 programming period.

Synergies between Horizon 2020 and EU Structural Funds

Although local authorities have not traditionally engaged directly in EU research and innovation funding programmes they have a key role in terms of raising awareness and highlighting the opportunities for other key partners within their areas, primarily higher and further education institutions and the private sector, to engage directly in such programmes.

Due to the increased emphasis on synergies between future EU research and innovation funding and the Structural Funds we believe that local authorities will have a greater role in the 2014-2020 programming period in terms of ensuring better linkages between these funding programmes, and other EU funding streams, to enable more integrated activity and interventions to be developed and delivered that maximises funding from a number of EU funding programmes. The Specialist European Teams (SETs) within local authorities, the Welsh Government and the WCVA are well placed to raise awareness of, and assist potential project applicants, in applying for funding from various EU funding streams going forward. Key to this will be ensuring that activities and interventions developed under the different EU funding streams complement each other in order to maximise the impact of funds from different sources.

Although we believe that there is a real opportunity for synergies between Horizon 2020 and future EU Structural Funds in order to improve future Welsh participation in EU research and innovation funding we need to be mindful of the differences between them. Whilst the Structural Funds have a strong territorial component that aims to equalise the economic development of different regions and is thus targeted at the most deprived regions, Horizon 2020 is a competitive programme that applies across the whole of the EU thus does not recognise any territorial issues. As a result care will need to be taken when developing activities and interventions for funding from Horizon 2020 to ensure that they complement activities and interventions to be funded by the Structural Fund Programmes in Wales in order to avoid duplication and maximise impact. For example, whilst funding from Horizon 2020 will be vital for higher education institutions in Wales to further their research activity, funding from the Structural Funds will be key to enable the commercialisation of the research so that it leads to the practical application of ideas and spin-offs that will make a real difference to sustainable economic renewal within Wales' most deprived areas. As a result there will need to be clear demarcation between the Horizon 2020 and Structural funding streams to ensure that only research and innovation related activities with a clear territorial dimension can be supported by the Structural Funds.

Local Authorities are ready, willing and able to play a key role in working with all key partners across Wales in realising the objectives of the Innovation Union flagship initiative of the EU 2020 Strategy for Jobs and Growth. We look forward to working with the new European Programmes Directorate within the Welsh Government in terms of developing the new EU Programmes for Wales for the 2014-2020 period and sincerely hope that we can achieve better synergy between various EU₂ funding streams so that Wales maximises the

opportunities from a number of different funding streams going forward, including Horizon 2020.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lowri Gwilym', written in a cursive style.

Lowri Gwilym
Team Manager – Europe and Regeneration
Rheolwr Tîm – Ewrop ac Adfywio