

Letters from the EU Party Leaders 2014

In the run-up to the 2014 European Elections, CaSE and Euroscience published the responses of the Conservatives, Labour, the Liberal Democrats, UKIP, the Green Party, Plaid Cymru and the SNP, to our questions on their EU science and engineering policies covering research, skills, innovation and evidence-based policymaking.

Plaid Cymru response from Jill Evans MEP

The EU provides its Member States with many opportunities to share best practices and to pool knowledge; this is true in the area of research and innovation. The EU's Science in Society Programme encourages dialogue between scientists and other members of the public. The Programme also encourages and supports young people in science as well as promoting greater equality. There needs to be more programmes such as this one.

The EU encourages innovation in research and science and one way it does this is through funding. Funding for developing science and engineering skills is available through programmes such as Horizon 2020. The Horizon 2020 programme aims to create growth and employment through research, development and innovation. It puts emphasis on science, industrial leadership and tackling societal challenges. The funding is open to businesses, universities, public bodies, charities and healthcare providers.

This programme will be the main source of funding for research and development in Wales. It will be an especially valuable source as figures show that Wales is underperforming when compared to other areas of the UK and EU. Wales received €84 million from EU research funding from 2009-2013, this needs to be higher. I supported an increase in the EU budget; this would have ensured that funding programmes such as Horizon 2020 were given the funding they need. Unfortunately a budget cut was agreed on and this has cut funding to Horizon 2020.

The European Research Council provides funding for individuals who wish to carry out research. It funds research in the areas of physical, engineering, social, biological and environmental science. About £2 billion will be allocated to SMEs over 7 years. It is essential as well that a minimum allocation is guaranteed to SMEs, as these are often the most innovative in our society and have a direct relationship with their community.

I have met with key officials from the European Commission to discuss how Welsh universities and businesses can benefit more from EU funding. There is plenty of help available and the European Commission needs to better communicate guidelines and funding opportunities to different universities, businesses and charities. I would invite anyone