

European Parliamentary Elections 2009

The Campaign for Science & Engineering wrote to all political parties in the UK with at least one MEP asking them to set out their EU science and engineering policies covering research, skills, innovation and evidence-based policymaking.

Conservatives

The EU has a crucial role to play:

- Enabling science and engineering professionals to move and work freely across the EU
- Encouraging more mobility of research talent in Universities and Research Institutions
- Supporting best practice in promotion of STEM engagement for young people, and facilitating pan-European exchanges.
- Raising the take up of the Erasmus programme and promoting it in Science and Technology.

We have supported increased EU Research expenditure, particularly the European Research Council and its focus on cutting-edge research projects.

- We will make sure that Europe does everything it can to harness the power of information technology. We will continue to support ICT Research, promote competition and encourage investment in high capacity broadband networks.

Framework Programmes

- Improvements must be made to Framework Programmes to ensure that they make a key contribution to improving Europe's science and Technology Research base, in both skills and infrastructure.
- We want to ensure that Framework Programme 8 avoids over-centralisation but encourages more joint projects directly between Member States.

Enterprise policy at European level is increasingly affecting sector based industries.

- Flowing from these, we need to step up existing engagements between industries and research organisations.
- The Joint Technological Platform and Initiatives have been an important innovator and need to be strengthened. They are helping to shape the research agenda and help set priorities for European competitiveness, by investing in research to bolster areas where Europe has a global lead.

The engagement of science and technology experts in policy making needs to be strengthened, both at the strategic level and its impact into specific projects.

- In the next Commission, we would like to see a stronger lead in Science and Technology policy.
- The new Commissioner for research should be given more responsibility for ensuring that science and technology assessments are better integrated into Commission policy proposals and impact assessments.
- If the EU is to take the lead in global innovation, then we must realise that innovation needs to lie at the heart of all European policies.

Provided by Malcolm Harbour MEP

Labour

The European Research Policy has made a big step forward thanks to the support of the European Parliament and the socialist parties in Europe over the past few decades. When the Lisbon strategy was launched in 2000, research and innovation were one of the main pillars of the knowledge society and the idea of building a European Research Area.

The Labour party in Europe supports the idea of the creation of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, based in Budapest; more funding for research and technology at European level; better coordination of national Research Framework Programmes; and the encouragement and promotion of European researcher's mobility around Europe to ensure a strong and competitive European economy.

The Party of European Socialists believe that the best way for Europe to compete in the global market is to invest more in education, research and innovation. We recognise that this knowledge triangle lies at the heart of the Lisbon strategy and needs a major boost.

For European social democrats, only strong and sustainable growth will safeguard an updated European social model. Research policy is crucial to competitiveness and better jobs.

In our manifesto for this year we have pledged to that we will encourage and support women entrepreneurs, scientists and researchers to broaden their opportunities.

We also pledged that energy is now a fundamental issue of security for us in Europe and that we will work together to increase our energy independence by developing environmentally friendly energy sources produced in Europe. We are committed to transforming Europe into the leading global force against climate change.

In addition, we pledged to do more than just talk about climate change. We want concrete and realistic action to protect the environment, and to transform our economy through new smart green growth and jobs.

Provided by Mary Honeyball MEP

Liberal Democrats

In broad terms the EU should promote development in science and engineering skills to the optimum. There are some programmes that already do this both from the educational perspective and from the research and development perspective. Liberal Democrats in the European Parliament successfully negotiated significant increases in the budgetary provisions for research and development during the last mandate and we will continue to press for further increases. There is to some extent an open door at the moment both as a consequence of the push to address climate change and also to boost the

economy, but there should be more generalised mainstream intention to support all R&D.

With regard to access to European funding, we will continue to press to make this simpler because we are aware that it can be consuming at times. We also promote a one stop shop concept to applications for grants, as far as possible taking into account project differences, and loosening of the constraints on the number of participating countries that are necessary. We are aware that some projects end up having 'inactive' partners simply to fulfil the country involvement criteria.

Creating stable conditions for investment is important. Therefore when it comes to grants and projects the planning must be sufficiently long term and renewed or rolled over in a timescale that is practical.

Regarding policy making, in the interests of diversity we seek to increase the circle of consultancy because otherwise there is the problem that the advice comes mainly from those with time, which is not always the same as expertise! We also insist that there must be proper impact assessments for all legislation (which is meant to be the case) and promote more comprehensive follow up.

Within the Liberal Democrats we also have an Association of Scientists and Engineers which includes many erudite individuals who we can consult for information or contacts and which has a range of papers on individual science and engineering related policy areas through which we aim to widen political understanding of science and engineering.

The party is currently preparing a new detailed policy paper on science and technology that is coming out in the autumn.

As you may be aware I am myself a scientist and mathematician and have found my technical skills and contacts extremely useful over a range of policy making, even though I have not been serving on the most relevant committees for science and engineering. For example my maths has been useful with regard to analysis of the crisis in the financial markets and knowledge of the oil industry technology proved useful in reports regarding peak oil and oil price stability.

The following are some further thoughts on how, practically, to tackle the issues that you raise.

In terms of seeking funding, the UK tends to do this back to front. A project is devised and then we go looking whether there is any relevant funding. There are occasions when it would be better to look at the funding prospects at an earlier stage. In some countries it is the first thing that is looked at and then the project is designed to fit.

With regard to policy making, many MEPs have their favourite contacts and will always put their name forward when committees are seeking evidence. Therefore it would be useful for the formal science and engineering bodies in the UK to become better known to relevant MEPs. The 'twinning' that the Royal Society does between MPs and now MEPs and their members is a very useful programme and I have supported its publicity in other countries for equivalent arrangements to be started.

It is also necessary for the science and engineering bodies to be able to follow legislation at all stages. What I have discovered is that some very good initial information is often produced, for example the briefing by the Royal Society of Chemists on REACH. However when it came to the amendments that were drafted or submitted by MEPs, most of the lobbying came either from environmental

organisations or specific industries. Within that 'competition' for attention, environmental NGOs and charities are regarded by most MEPs as neutral, and industry to be biased. Therefore I would strongly encourage relevant learned societies to hold meetings early in the new parliament with MEPs and discuss how better to engage with the process all the way through the Parliamentary amendment process as they can more easily be seen as not tied to a specific industry. Similar engagement should be made with the government with regard to their amendments in council. Keeping in touch, separately, with both sides is necessary. It is not sufficient just to brief government.

Provided by Sharon Bowles MEP

UK Independence Party

The UK Independence Party believes that such matters should be dealt with by our national parliament, which could fund research far more efficiently and effectively than the European Union. The UK has a long tradition of supporting research in science and engineering that should be encouraged, rather than brought down to the lowest common denominator through the European Union.

Provided by Jonathan Arnott, UKIP General Secretary

Green Party

CaSE did not receive a response from the Green Party. The following is taken from their European Manifesto.

We need a revolution in skills to build the new green economy: new skills need to be developed in green building techniques, renewables engineering, organic agriculture and horticulture, and existing traditional skills, from driving buses to gardening organically, need to be more widely disseminated. The EU's Sustainable Development Strategy now recognises the importance of education and training in such skills, thanks to the Greens.

We would shift EU subsidies and support for research and development from nuclear and fossil fuels to the renewable energy sector.

Greens have supported medical cooperation, for example in improving the quality of research through the sharing of research results, in the establishment of centres of excellence, in developing best practice for preventing infections such as MRSA or for the treatment of conditions such as Alzheimer's, or on the need to reduce the stigma associated with mental ill-health.

We will also work in the EU for an immediate halt to xenotransplantation, genetic manipulation and cloning of animals; an immediate ban on the harmful use of animals (including but not only primates) in research, testing and education; and greater investment in the development of alternatives to animal experiments.

Scottish Nationalist Party

The SNP believe that a world-class science and research base is absolutely essential for Scotland and Europe in the 21st Century, in a number of respects: to create the high-skilled, high-paying jobs of tomorrow; to gain a competitive edge in the globalised economy; to mitigate and adapt to climate change; and to expand the bounds of human knowledge, so we may find cures for the terrible diseases which afflict our people, and improve food production to help feed 9 billion people by 2050. We are proud that Scotland's universities, research centres and enterprises play a world-leading role in such vital fields as renewable energy, biotechnology and health sciences. Since 2007, the Scottish Government has had a determined focus on improving Scotland's technological potential, and has introduced a range of policies: the creation of the Scottish Science Baccalaureate; new money to train Scotland's science teachers and improve their skills; a £10m life sciences centre in Dundee; and over £3m in investment through the SEEKIT programme to promote innovation and encourage closer links between Scotland's public sector science base and SMEs. We have also launched "Science for Scotland", our national strategy for the development of science.

The EU must do more to cultivate Europe's science, research and innovative potential, especially in light of the economic downturn. While national and local governments must still take the lead in setting their own policies, the EU can provide a valuable framework for funding and collaboration. It can also help ensure coherence between national policies, so all levels of governance work together for common goals.

Europe as a whole must invest more money in research and development. The UK in particular has always lagged behind European countries, and Japan and the USA. For instance, the Seventh Framework Programme only allocated 2.3 billion EUR over seven years for energy, one of Europe's great potential growth areas. SNP MEP Alyn Smith wrote an Opinion for the Regional Development Committee when the FP7 was being negotiated urging for more investment in research. We will continue to press for this when FP7 is reviewed and when FP8 is negotiated. We raised concerns about the creation of the European Institute of Technology precisely because no clear funding structure was in place, risking the diversion of funds from other research programmes. To encourage industry to invest, access to research funds must also be made simpler. The Scottish Government have done precisely this through the creation of a general R and D grant, available through Scottish enterprise.

The SNP is supportive of the goal of creating a European Research Area. Europe must create an environment where researchers, technology and knowledge can circulate freely. We supported a common legal framework for research infrastructures of pan-European interest. One proposal which is worth studying is for research grants to be portable. We believe that Scotland would be able to attract the best talent through our existing competitive advantages and the provision of the right incentives. The SNP believe that Scotland should have control of its immigration, allowing us to set up a "Green Card" system that would attract researchers, scientists and engineers from across Europe and the world. We also need to promote applied research through the closer collaboration between universities, research centres and enterprises in the "knowledge triangle". The recent creation of new research laboratory for medical research involving four universities, Scottish Enterprise and Wyeth is a good example.

Education and training are two very important fields for creating the necessary sciences skills base. This is largely a matter for individual governments: The Scottish Government have set up new Modern

Apprenticeships in the Life Sciences, creating the Scottish Science Baccalaureate, and provided funds for science clubs in schools. However the EU also has a role to play: for example in encouraging the mutual recognition of qualifications, and creating European postdoctoral fellowships and training schemes.

The EU can create enormous “added value” by promoting specific sectors which Europe has great research potential in, such as renewable energy. The Strategic Energy Technology Plan, though unfortunately underfunded, will provide a framework for collaboration between stakeholders in a variety of technologies through the European Industrial Initiatives. The targets set through the Climate Change Package and the legal certainty provided by the Renewable Energy Directive should promote a boom in renewables. We are delighted that the EU is investing 165m EUR in the North Sea Marine Energy Supergrid, thus providing companies with great incentives to innovate in offshore technology. We believe that the £10m Saltire Prize, a competition for the most innovative marine energy technology, sets a good example for which the EU should take up.

The SNP believe that governments should take expert advice very seriously. The Scottish Government have set up a Council of Economic Advisers, and are advised by the Scottish Science Advisory Council. All impact assessments for European legislation in the science and research fields must extensively consult with the leading stakeholders in those sectors.

Provided by the SNP.

Plaid Cymru

Plaid Cymru MEPs will always speak up for Wales in Europe. We will campaign for European funding to go towards building a modern public transport system for Wales, with cheaper and faster rail links between the south and the north, mid and west, as well as the removal of hidden subsidies for air travel and the introduction of tax on aviation fuel, dedicated bus lanes and trolley buses in cities and congestion charging where appropriate. We will support the improvement of commuter services from the valleys and major transport improvements throughout Wales.

This green transport strategy must be at the forefront of a general changing attitude across the European continent. Plaid Cymru believes that connecting a twenty first century Wales to the European continent must be a priority in the coming months and years, not only in the provision of improved, modern high speed and electric train services across all of Wales, but also in new measures to help Welsh hauliers survive the economic downturn.

Strong links must be forged between Wales and Europe, not only in transport, but also in technology. We support recent recommendations to make broadband access a universal service obligation and we want to see every community in Wales able to access high broadband speeds of at least 8Mbps. Connecting Wales to the world in this way will encourage productivity, innovation and job creation, and will revitalise our rural communities by giving people a real choice in where and how they work. In addition we want to see compulsory network sharing between mobile phone companies in Wales.

We will continue to support adult learning and workforce skills, a strategy which will increase the employability and earnings’ capacity of the Welsh workforce. In a changing economy, we must

encourage enterprise and innovation as well as high-level IT and technology skills. We support the digitisation of the National Library in Aberystwyth as a fantastic democratic and educational tool which benefits all the people of Wales.

The economy of Wales is largely based around small-medium sized enterprises, often family firms or small businesses in a close-knit community. These companies will face turbulent times in the coming months: Plaid Cymru is committed to working with Convergence Funding areas to increase GDP, provide additional support for small-medium sized companies and give incentives to open new businesses in these areas.

Plaid Cymru recognises that the changing world demands changing industries and will continue to support the emerging Welsh alternative energy industry. The One Wales government is committed to a sustainable economy and an All Wales Green Jobs Strategy. There is no better way to create new business opportunities and meet environmental targets. A huge programme of investment to fight climate change is part of the solution to the current financial crisis. We believe that European funding should be channelled into a substantial investment programme to fight climate change, which will create sustainable jobs and sustainable economic growth. This green new deal should invest in infrastructure, energy efficiency, micro-generation and the development of renewable energy to ensure that the environmental benefits will be felt for the rest of the century as a legacy of the current economic downturn.

A long-term plan to expand research and development, invest in new skills and training and provide government support for Welsh businesses would encourage a pioneering home-grown Welsh alternative energy industry. We believe that Wales could lead the world in the implementation of climate technology which will give all people in Wales a more fulfilling and secure lifestyle, within a lively and responsible society.

To take full advantage of these opportunities, we need powers for the Assembly over energy policies. And we need the political will to give priority to investment in renewable energy. While we are still dependent on coal and gas and have reserves in Wales, we will support the use of indigenous supplies rather than imports. We support research into technologies such as carbon capture and storage, but it is not a green light for continuing on our present course. To ensure that, we support emissions performance standards for all new power stations and we reaffirm our total opposition to the construction of any new nuclear power stations in Wales.

Plaid Cymru is committed to an energy strategy which will create jobs and take full advantage of our natural resources. The energy sector in Wales currently accounts for almost 40% of CO₂ emissions. European funding can be used to help restructure the Welsh energy sector to fully embrace microgeneration, tidal lagoons, small scale hydro electric schemes, sea bed turbines and other sustainable power generation schemes. It could support poorer regions in making the transition to a low carbon economy and society. We have abundant sources of renewable energy such as tidal, wave-power, wind, hydro and biomass which could bring significant business and employment opportunities. That is why Plaid Cymru calls for feed-in tariffs to encourage such small scale renewable energy sources.

Provided by the Research and Policy Office, Plaid Cymru