

Integrating different funding sources (ERDF and domestic) at project level in Wales

Bangor University's BioComposites Centre⁵³ provides an example of how synergies in the implementation of research and innovation funds from different sources are delivering the 'Stairway to Excellence' effect in Wales. The BioComposites Centre (established in 1989) undertakes collaborative research to develop sustainable biobased technologies that minimise the impact of materials on the environment. The BioComposites Centre is a key partner in the BEACON project⁵⁴ which was established with c. £8 million from the ERDF in 2007-13. The BioComposites Centre's participation in BEACON used ERDF funding to strengthen the Centre's research and innovation capacity, including infrastructure and equipment in pilot scale processing and increased R&I collaboration between academia and industry. In 2014 the BEACON project won the RegioStars Award in the "Sustainable growth: Green growth and jobs through Bio-economy" category.⁵⁵

Improvements in R&I capacities via BEACON have acted as a stepping stone to leverage further funding from a variety of sources comprising Welsh Government, InnovateUK, UK Research Councils, and other EU-funded schemes, including a series of investments from the ERDF-funded SMART Expertise programme⁵⁶ administered by the Welsh Government.

The BioComposite Centre's expertise has also led to their engagement in European networks and increased international cooperation, including: as part of COST (European Cooperation in Science & Technology); the Vanguard Initiative; as well as being registered on the list of EU Key Enabling Technology Centres⁵⁷ and a European database of pilot scale facilities through the EU funded project Pilots4U.⁵⁸ Part of the BioComposites Centre's progression has involved actively exploring opportunities to secure additional R&D funding through Horizon 2020 and the Centre collaborated on a number of applications to the Bio-Based Industries Joint Undertaking (BBI JU)⁵⁹ which were not funded. A series of awards from the Welsh Government's scheme SCoRE Cymru⁶⁰ helped further facilitate targeted engagement with BBI JU. In December 2017 the BioComposites Centre's secured BBI JU funding via participation in the PRO-ENRICH⁶¹ project.

A further £8 million of ERDF funding under the 2014-20 Programme has been awarded to support BEACON Plus. The Beacon Plus project builds on the success and clear smart specialisation of BEACON and will support further R&D collaboration with Welsh businesses to translate the academic excellence into commercial products. The strategic delivery of Beacon Plus will ensure that the BioComposite Centre's European engagement and BBI funded activity delivers maximum downstream benefits to the Welsh regional ecosystem.

53 <http://www.bc.bangor.ac.uk/>

54 <http://beaconwales.org/en/>

55 <http://beaconwales.org/en/what-is-beacon/regio-stars-2014/>

56 Welsh Government SMART Expertise
<https://businesswales.gov.wales/expertisewales/smartexpertise>

57 EU Key Enabling Technology Centres <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/ketstools/infrastructure/biocomposites-centre>

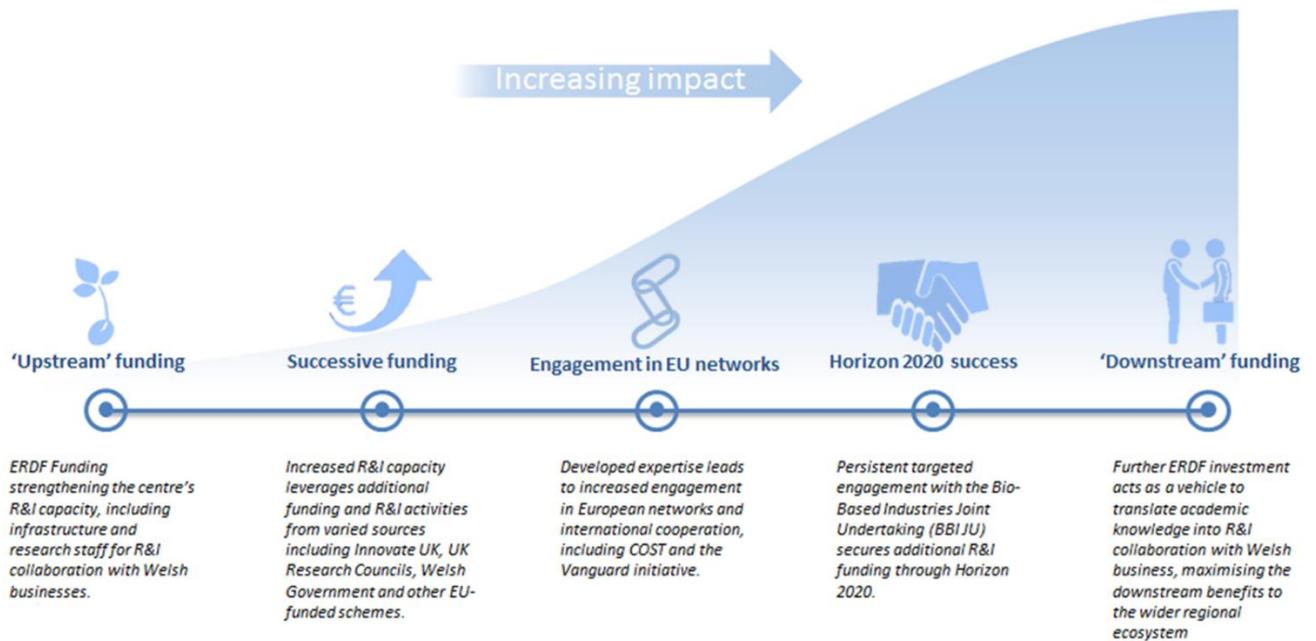
58 Pilots4U <https://www.biopilots4u.eu/node/400>

59 BBI JU <https://www.bbi-europe.eu/>

60 Welsh Government SCoRE Cymru programme <https://gov.wales/funding/eu-funds/horizon2020/scorecymru/?lang=en>

61 <https://www.bbi-europe.eu/news/bbi-ju-launches-17-new-projects-will-validate-potential-biomass-europe>

Figure 15: Stairway to Excellence: Bangor University's BioComposite Centre, Wales



Source: European Commission JRC case study: Synergies with Research and Innovation Funds, BioComposites Centre, Bangor University, Wales.