

the UK and drawing up a national 10-15 year rolling science strategy of future priorities.

Finally, the future is also likely to see increasing responsibility for regional aspects of the science and technology base, with increased funding being allocated to Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) to use science more effectively to underpin the economic strengths of the regions. In turn, this should increase the rate of innovation within the regions and hence help avoid an 'innovations divide' in the UK. To help the regions in this regard, the February 2001, enterprise, skills and innovation White Paper introduced a number of policies to help: Increase the rate of new company formation; raise the education and skills level of people in the regions; encourage business clusters; increase the supply of venture capital; and form better links between universities and local businesses. A number of funds – such as the £50 million Regional Innovation Fund and the £75m incubator fund have also been established to help the RDAs achieve their goals.

5. The United Kingdom: International S&T Activities

The British Government realises that science, engineering and technology is becoming an increasingly international activity, with many issues needing to be tackled on a global scale. It also appreciates that by carrying out only 5% of the world's science, it cannot hope to maintain a world-class science base or perform the S&T required to improve its competitive position and provide solutions for policy problems in isolation. The Government is therefore keen for the UK to develop and strengthen links with major scientific partners across the world, on a bilateral and multilateral basis, if they offer promise of a scientific, political, cultural or economic benefit to the UK. The OST's International Directorate works closely with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the British Council, the Department for International Development and UK missions overseas to help achieve this. In addition, the Chief Scientific Adviser has established a specific S&T committee to establish international priorities, and the new Research Council UK Strategy Group has a remit to promote further international collaboration. The British government has also recently expanded its network of Science Attachés in embassies abroad (including in Canada) to help universities and businesses make new partnerships, and doubled the number of International Technology Promoters to keep SMEs aware of new technological developments and best practice from across the world - the International Technology Service will launch its Global Watch website, which brings together information from British embassies on technology developments from around the world, in the very near future.

In general, the Government believes that international collaborations are best generated from the bottom-up, with researchers identifying those partnerships which are likely to yield the greatest mutual benefit. It does not direct these links, but instead helps to set the framework within which such links can flourish e.g. by signing S&T Agreements with other governments and by buying into international facilities. Most Government support for international research collaborations is routed through organisations such as the Research Councils, the Royal Society and the British Council, and while some grants are directed to particular countries or regions, others focus upon particular areas of S&T or support specific types of activity, e.g. post-doctoral fellowships, visiting fellowships, travel grants, funds for collaborative workshops, joint project grants etc.

The UK has always played a leading role in European research programmes. Indeed, under the current Fifth Framework programme, over 26% of all funded projects and nearly 20% of projects within the four thematic programmes (accounting for €1,250m, approx. 20% of the available budget) are UK co-ordinated and there are UK participants in 55% of all thematic projects. They