



Collaborative Computational Project No 4

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Ms Elspeth Attwooll MEP
European Parliament
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Dear Ms Attwooll

I am writing to ask for your help.

I am Professor of Chemical Biology at the University of St Andrews. I am the elected head of an Academic Software Consortium known as CCP4. CCP4 is funded by the one of the United Kingdom Research Councils and is regarded a flagship effort (judged by International scrutiny). CCP4 employs about 15 people over the UK working on developing computer software. CCP4 has been in operation for over 25 years and develops software for Structural Biology. It is built on cooperation between academic groups. This has been enormously successful for the UK and for Scotland. Structural Biology is helping us tackle foot and mouth, cancer, bacterial infection, diabetes, heart disease and many other significant diseases. The UK is leader in this field and this strength was highlighted as crown jewel (Whitesides Report). Without CCP4 the UK would long have fallen behind International competition. The Universities of Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St Andrews contain very active researchers in this area. These are highly skilled jobs and encourage immigration of talented individuals to Scotland.

I am utterly convinced that if the European Parliament passes the law which allows software to be patented then serious harm will be done to the UK and to Scotland. CCP4 will almost certainly fold as patents are filed. I cannot stress to you enough, it will just need one patent to be granted whether defensible or not (in a legal term) which allows a infringement suit to be filed (whether frivolous or not) to end our organisation. We have not the resources (we make no profit) nor the personnel (we are scientists) to defend an action. The act of serving it would end CCP4. Alternative commercial software is available, it is expensive and universally regarded as inferior in every aspect to CCP4. A conservative estimate is that it would cost £100K per year to Scotland if we forced to buy commercial software, that is three jobs. Over the UK this can be multiplied by 10, add the CCP4 staff who would be fired and you are looking at 50 individuals. The cost to Industrial Research would be even greater. In the wider picture, the UK would fall behind the USA in a crucial area of science and technology. I urge you to read the excellent

website giving very detailed accounts of arguments for and against patenting (<http://objcryst.sourceforge.net/>).

I know you are a busy person and will not have the time to read all the background to this issue. However, please trust those of us who actually work in this area, this will harm the UK and harm Scotland. If you would like to discuss this further I am very happy to help to meet you or talk to you.

Yours sincerely

Jim Naismith