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Editorial note

This second edition of the bi-annual Newsletter "ISSUES - The voice of SSH in Europe" takes a closer look at the preparations for Horizon 2020, the upcoming European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. It puts a specific focus on the role foreseen for Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH) and activities to ensure a significant contribution of SSH within Horizon 2020.

Further topics within this edition are reports from conferences on "Active Ageing" and interdisciplinary research to support the EU 2020 strategy, the presentation of a best practice example of an FP7 project with high political impact and an article highlighting the contribution of SSH to EU policy targets.

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FULL ARTICLES

Horizon 2020: A larger role for Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities?

During the preparation process for the upcoming EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, "Horizon 2020", the research community proactively requested a substantial inclusion of SSH research in Horizon 2020.

The formal starting point for the preparation of the new framework programme was the launching by the European Commission's [Green Paper on a Common Strategic Framework for EU research and Innovation funding](#) in February 2011. In the Green Paper the Commission emphasised the need for an overall restructuring of the framework programme. It was not very specific on the thematic areas that would be prioritized in the next framework programme, but there were few signs that SSH would be high on the agenda. The main role of SSH seemed to be as a cross-cutting perspective that should be included where appropriate, particularly in the sub-

part of the programme covering societal challenges.

Joining forces: Forming an SSH task force

At an early stage in the preparation process there were rumours that there would be no continuation of the SSH programme in the new framework programme. The apparently low prioritisation of SSH from the European Commission triggered an active response from the SSH community. NET4SOCIETY established together with ALL European Academies (ALLEA), The Standing Committees for the Humanities (SCH) and for the Social Sciences (SCSS) of the European Science Foundation (ESF) and The European Consortium of Humanities Institutes and Centres (ECHIC), an "SSH task force". The task force arranged several seminars and meetings in late 2010 and during 2011.

The major outcome of the discussions within the task force was the publication of a draft proposal of a new SSH-centered "societal challenge" within the next framework programme: "[Understanding Europe in a global context: transitions towards innovation societies](#)". This proposal was published a few weeks after the European Commission published its Green Paper. The SSH task force supported the idea formulated in the Green Paper of mainstreaming SSH throughout the new framework programme, but was convinced that this could not be the only role for SSH. To better support the visions and priorities stated in the EU's "Europe 2020" strategy the SSH task force therefore suggested the challenge on "Understanding Europe".

The SSH task force went on to draft an open letter to the European Commissioner for Research and Innovation, Maire Geoghegan-Quinn in the form of an online petition (<http://www.eash.eu/openletter2011/>). In this open letter the task force requested the Commissioner to include:

a substantial and independent SSH-centered research programme (Challenge "Understanding Europe ...") into the new Framework Programme Horizon 2020;

SSH-research into the programme development and implementation of all other Grand Societal Challenges, such as climate change, energy, food, health, security, or transport;

The open letter was signed by more than 25 000 persons, of which a majority come from the SSH research performing sector in Europe. The work of the SSH task force made a great impact on the public debate on the future EU research.

The Commission's formal proposal for Horizon 2020

When the Commission published its [formal proposal for Horizon 2020](#) in November 2011, a societal challenge of "Inclusive, Innovative and Secure Societies" was included in the proposal. This new challenge comprised thematic elements that presently are covered in a range of FP7 programmes. Most notably it implied a merge of the present Security and SSH programmes, but it also included major elements from Science in Society, INCO, Research Potential, Regions of Knowledge, and support for the coherent development of research policies and digital inclusion (ICT).

Compared to the indications given in the Green Paper the proposal for Horizon 2020 implied a more visible role for SSH. The challenge of Inclusive, Innovative and Secure Societies was however extremely broad, and the mainly technology driven security research appeared as the dominating component within the *challenge*.

Public debate and opinions of the Council and European Parliament

A majority of the stakeholders both at European and national level did argue for a split up of the suggested challenge into two different challenges. In its first discussion on Horizon 2020 on 30-31 May 2012, the Competitiveness Council followed this suggestion in the so-called "Council's partial general approach". In the result of the Council's debate (the so called "[Council's partial general approach](#)") the societal challenge on Inclusive, Innovative and Secure Societies was split into two new challenges: Challenge 6 "Europe in a Changing World: Inclusive, Innovative and Reflective Societies" and Challenge 7 "Secure Societies: Protecting Freedom of Europe and its Citizens". In addition to the split-up of the challenge the most notable change was the inclusion of an activity line on reflective societies to the new 6th challenge. This implies an emphasis on issues related to cultural heritage and identity which requires major contribution from the humanities.

In mid-June 2012, the Horizon 2020 rapporteurs of the European Parliament (EP) presented their [draft reports](#) which recommended amendments to the proposals put forward by the Commission in November 2011. It seems that the responsible EP committee will support the suggestions from the Council on the overall structure of the Horizon 2020. This implies that a new 6th challenge also has the support from EP. The European Commission does formally still stick to their proposal from November 2011, but informed observers do think the Commission at the end will accept a split-up.

Another crucial issue is of course the budget of Horizon 2020. Within the Council substantial cuts of the 80 bn. € budget brought forward by the Commission have been proposed. On the other hand the EP will probably suggest increasing the budget for Horizon 2020 to 100 bn. €. In a time of deep economic crisis it is tempting to cut the research budget, but this would certainly hinder the aim of increasing the growth potential of the economy.

Promising perspectives?

The perspectives for the role of SSH in the next framework programme now seem to be much more promising than at the time when the Commission published its Green Paper on a Common Strategic Framework. Still there are policy areas that are not well enough covered in the redrafted 6th challenge. Fields that need to be elaborated further include among others education and the knowledge society, behavioural sciences, welfare systems and services, poverty and democracy, political participation and citizenship. The SSH community therefore still needs to keep up the pressure on decision makers in the European institutions and at national level.

Initiatives to express support for SSH research in Horizon 2020 such as the open letter to Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn are still on-going:

Sign the open letter under <http://www.eash.eu/openletter2011/>

Official documents with regard to Horizon 2020 can be found here: http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index_en.cfm?pg=home&video=none

Conference on "Active Ageing - the Potential for Society" identifies future research needs

NET4SOCIETY organised a transnational research and brokerage event in July 2012 in Dublin in connection with the EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF). The event, entitled Active Ageing – the Potential for Society, was linked to the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations and focused on the human and social aspects and implications of active ageing.

The conference, attracting around 150 researchers, policymakers and stakeholders from the international SSH community, emphasised a positive approach to ageing and its potential for society. The event presented international SSH research in the field and aimed at identifying future research needs as a result. Key note speakers included Anne-Sophie Parent, Secretary General of the AGE Platform Europe, Lenia Samuel from the European Commission's Year for Active Ageing initiative and Martina Brandt of the SHARE project. Thematic sessions were based on the following four topics: employment, social participation, intergenerational solidarity and ageing, economy and innovation.

The employment session focused on the notion of employment in older age, general employability and age management of companies in Europe, placing importance on adopting a holistic life course perspective. Mentoring and coaching were considered to be important when it comes to interaction between generations in the workplace. Second career opportunities as well as flexible working conditions were seen as decisive factors. Social participation was explored through various ways of engaging the elderly through activities such as volunteering and lifelong learning, both of which offer possibilities for future research. The session on intergenerational solidarity included talks on generational interdependence and the demographic context across welfare states. Age segregation was regarded as an important area for research, and it is also considered important to revise the social policy context in Europe. Finally, the session on economy and innovation explored the means in which to exploit an ageing society for driving economic and social innovation, e.g. through creativity and sensible use of technology. Main enablers and obstacles to social innovation in the field of gerontology were seen as feasible research topics as well as the importance of turning research into strategy.

The most relevant future "Active Ageing" research topics will be soon handed over to Research Commissioner Maire Geoghegan-Quinn.

The event concluded with a brokerage event where researchers and stakeholders had the opportunity to engage with the FP7 SSH research programme with special focus on the topics of the conference, with a view to finding potential partners for research projects in the FP7 call SSH-2013.

More information on the event can be found here:

Conference website: <http://www.net4society2012.com/>

2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations: <http://europa.eu/ey2012/ey2012main.jsp?catId=971>

AGE Platform Europe: <http://www.age-platform.eu/en>

SHARE project- Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe: <http://www.share-project.org/>

Notes from the conference "Europe 2020 - Designing research for European societies in a changing world"

How can European research contribute to the implementation of the objectives listed in the Europe 2020 strategy? How to design future research funding in order to support policies in tackling challenges such as the Euro crisis, demographic change, cultural diversity or social exclusion? These were the pivotal questions discussed at a conference in Brussels on 18 September 2012.

The conference was initiated by the European Parliament and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The discussion focused on innovative approaches to bring forward interdisciplinary research in general and research from socio-economic sciences and humanities (SSH) in particular. As Robert-Jan Smits, Director-General for DG Research and Innovation, emphasised, the upcoming Framework Programme for Research and Innovation "Horizon 2020" will follow a more interdisciplinary approach than FP7. Within Horizon 2020 and the context of the grand societal challenges, Smits stressed the importance of SSH research. In his welcome address, MEP Christian Ehler underlined that Horizon 2020 would need increased investment to adequately address the challenges laying ahead.

Various renowned speakers presented their vision on the future design of European research. In order to support true interdisciplinarity, Horizon 2020 should provide clear and transparent mechanisms to embed SSH research in all Societal Challenges. The funding instruments of Horizon 2020 should allow for projects to better incorporate necessary interdisciplinary approaches, as well as foresight aspects, and the involvement of different stakeholder groups. This would need to be accompanied by instruments of career development and scientific training in interdisciplinary research. Investment in research infrastructures for Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities was regarded as a further necessary precondition for successfully harnessing SSH research for EU policy goals. Milena Zic-Fuchs, Chair of the Standing Committee for the Humanities of the European Science Foundation emphasised, that – once truly integrated in interdisciplinary projects– SSH research significantly contributes to the excellency of the research results. Sean Ryder, Chair of the HERA network board, particularly stressed the potential of the humanities to contribute to the goals of Horizon 2020.

The full conclusions of the event can be downloaded here: <http://www.net4society.eu/public/384.php>

Success Story on Impact of Social Sciences and Humanities Research: The MERCURY project

Social Sciences and Humanities research (SSH) has real political or societal impact. To increase the visibility of this impact, NET4SOCIETY produces success stories on SSH projects with a considerable and clearly visible impact – such as the MERCURY project.

MERCURY started in 2009 and ran until April 2012. The project focused on multilateral cooperation between countries. The researchers of MERCURY investigated concrete cases to show where the EU was successful in its multilateral efforts, where it failed, and why. The work of MERCURY resulted in recommendations to the European Union on how to become better at finding multilateral solutions. The results and the recommendations of MERCURY have attracted the attention of high-ranking policy-makers, including the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso.

The whole success story can be downloaded here: <http://www.net4society.eu/public/382.php>

SSH research supporting EU policy making

Policy makers in Europe have to respond to a number of societal challenges such as the economic crisis, investing in future jobs and growth, people's concerns about their livelihoods, safety and environment, or strengthening the EU's global position in research, innovation and technology.

Contemporary SSH research is addressing these challenges to the societal development, and defining new ones. In this respect they elaborate and create new theoretical paradigms and instruments to monitor and measure the state of the art and predict future scenarios. Along with this, they suggest scientifically argued alternatives for strategies and policies. For example economists, sociologists or psychologists are working on problems of inclusive growth - how to define it and how to identify the priorities on social investment for the coming years, to suggest alternatives for the way forward: how to make social investment and social protection effective, how to structure the social investment package, or how to improve the participation of stakeholders in at European and national levels. Thus, SSH research contributes to the achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy:

- smart growth – a societal need and a political need – as it appears as a goal in the Europe 2020 flagship initiatives "Innovation Union", "Digital agenda for Europe" and "Youth on the move" as well as in Horizon 2020,
- sustainable growth – as it appears as a goal in the Europe 2020 flagship initiatives „Resource efficient Europe“ & „An industrial policy for the globalisation era“, and

- inclusive growth – as it appears as a goal in the Europe 2020 flagship initiatives “An agenda for new skills and jobs”, and in the “European platform against poverty”.

SSH current issues

Upcoming NET4SOCIETY conference “Learning by doing – Making interdisciplinarity work”, 15 January 2013, Brussels

NET4SOCIETY organises a conference on interdisciplinarity and cooperation between Social Sciences and Humanities and natural and/or technical sciences. The conference will seek to overcome the challenges in properly integrating contributions from the Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH) into different research fields through hearing experiences on interdisciplinary integration from current FP7 projects and drawing lessons for future interdisciplinary research.

The event is organised in partnership with the European Alliance for the Social Sciences and Humanities (EASSH).

More information and the registration form can be found here: <http://www.net4society.eu/public/conference.php>

No-cuts-on-research petition calls for adequate research funding

The online petition “No cuts on research” calls on EU heads of state or government to secure an adequate budget for European research as a top priority in the context of the EU budget negotiations. The petition was initiated by the “Initiative for Science in Europe” and the “Young Academy of Europe” and has collected already more than 150.000 signatures. The initiative strongly supports an open letter by 42 nobel prize winners, that warns EU head of states not to cut the EU research budget and in particular the budget foreseen for the European Research Council.

The petition can be signed here:

<http://www.no-cuts-on-research.eu/index.php?file=home.htm>



NET4SOCIETY (www.net4society.eu) is the international network of National Contact Points (NCPs) for Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH) in the EU 7th Framework Programme (FP 7). ISSUES is NET4SOCIETY's bi-annually published newsletter to inform policy makers, researchers and other stakeholders on developments in European socio-economic sciences and humanities. To unsubscribe, please send a mail with the subject matter "unsubscribe" to sshpolicyinfo@net4society.eu
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