



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

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**'Horizons for Social Sciences and Humanities'**

Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Lithuanian Presidency Conference / Vilnius  
**24 September 2013**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the organisers of this conference, in particular the Conference Steering Committee and its chair, Professor Nowotny, for preparing this event and for inviting me to speak this morning.

The European Commission is delighted to support this event.

I would also like to thank Prime Minister Butkevičius and Minister Pavalkis for their constructive role in making Horizon 2020 the biggest and most ambitious EU research programme ever. And I'd also like to thank them for engaging so enthusiastically in the future of the Social Sciences and Humanities.

This is a significant conference. It shows that SSH is firmly on the map as we gear up for the launch of Horizon 2020, whose first work programmes will be published in less than three months.

In advance of the next session that will look at SSH in the Challenges Pillar of Horizon 2020, I would like to talk about what you can expect from Horizon 2020 and the European Commission, and what, in turn we might expect from you.

I am very happy with the agreement on Horizon 2020. The programme will be an important catalyst for growth and jobs and it is part of the only area in the new EU budget to see an increase.

This is a very good result, not least because Europe is still facing many long term and complex challenges.

It takes profound knowledge and insight to really understand these challenges and how they affect us, and to guide us to solutions.

That is why the Social Sciences and Humanities are more essential than ever, and why we, as policymakers, are keen to have their contribution.

We need them to understand ourselves, our society and the challenges we face. We need them to guide politicians and policy makers and to inform public opinion.

Research and technology provide many answers to the challenges we face, but technological fixes alone aren't enough to solve our major, complex problems. A knowledge society needs to know itself, and the social sciences and humanities are the keys to this.

The EU has supported the Social Sciences and Humanities for two decades, since the Fourth Framework Programme in 1994 and our commitment to SSH is only strengthened under Horizon 2020.

We will, however, do things differently now.

The increasing importance, indeed the necessity of the Social Sciences and Humanities, has spurred us on to create a bold, new vision for them at European level.

It is a vision shared by the European Parliament and the Member States and by many stakeholder organisations. It will require commitment, effort and openness from everyone involved.

Researchers, businesses, innovators and entrepreneurs are of course the primary customers of Horizon 2020.

But Horizon 2020 sets them in the wider context of how R&D and innovation shape our economy and can change our society for the better.

The programme focuses on challenges to tackle rather than disciplines to be financed.

We need this approach because problems like our competitiveness, climate change, energy security or public health are so complex and multi-faceted that we need to think and act across disciplines, outside of our usual silos.

I know that this new approach might demand new ways of working, and new, interdisciplinary research methods that put a strain on old habits and old structures. And we, as policymakers are also facing a steep learning curve!

However, I think that this new approach is excellent news for the Social Sciences and Humanities.

We can't properly tackle the challenges we identify in Horizon 2020 without a solid understanding of them, without economic, social and cultural analysis, and without discussing how the issues might develop in the future.

This is why the Social Sciences and Humanities are anchored at the heart of Horizon 2020.

I like to think that this approach presents a twin opportunity for the Social Sciences and Humanities.

First, new areas of research throughout the whole programme thanks to embedding; and second, greater scope for riskier, top class research through the European Research Council.

The first opportunity is the embedding of the Social Sciences and Humanities across all of the Societal Challenges of Horizon 2020, as well as the first two pillars of the programme.

Instead of programmes dedicated to particular research disciplines, Horizon 2020 seeks to solve, through research and innovation, our biggest challenges, such as climate change, an ageing population, and/or energy security.

Horizon 2020 defines six major societal challenges - soon to be seven, at the request of the European Parliament. The Social Sciences and Humanities, in all their various disciplinary guises, will be firmly embedded in all the challenges.

"Embedding" means that the Social Sciences and Humanities can make their contribution where they are most needed. It means that they can provide the necessary knowledge and understanding to tackle the challenges. It means that the social, political and human aspects are not forgotten alongside the technological aspects.

For example, under the Health challenge, SSH research could provide the economic and social analysis necessary for reforming public health systems.

In the field of public health, SSH research can study lifestyle factors, the empowerment of patients or stimulate citizen engagement, wellbeing and prevention.

SSH can also research the causes of health inequalities and their relationship to other economic and social inequalities, as well as the effectiveness of policies to reduce them.

Under the Challenge of "Smart, green and integrated transport", SSH research is needed to analyse the socio-economic aspects of transport, to carry out prospective studies and provide technology foresight. But we also need SSH to help us understand user behaviour, social acceptance, and the impact of policy measures.

The contribution of SSH is particularly important in the area of urban mobility, where a host of complex factors, regulatory issues and behaviours come into play.

SSH research should also contribute to the Challenge of Climate Action and Resource Efficiency, for example by pursuing research on the cultural, behavioural, managerial and institutional changes needed to move to a more sustainable and resource efficient society.

Socio-economic research will also help us develop robust indicators to assess policies and monitor the transition towards a green economy.

This Challenge will also address issues concerning the preservation and use of cultural heritage and its socio-economic importance for contemporary societies.

And it is in the Challenge on 'Inclusive, Innovative and Reflective Societies' that SSH researchers can address a wide range of issues around smart, sustainable and inclusive growth; inclusive societies; and Europe's role as a global actor, as well as research on 'Reflective Societies' and Europe's cultural heritage and identity.

These are just some of the possibilities. I am sure you will identify many more in the sessions that follow.

Horizon 2020 will take two approaches to 'embedding' Social Sciences and Humanities.

Some Societal Challenges are broadly open to SSH contributions across all their areas of activity. They are genuinely interdisciplinary in the way they embed SSH.

Other Societal Challenges, by contrast, have defined specific SSH lines of activity.

How will SSH embedding work in practice, in the design of the work programmes and calls?

At a very practical level, officials from the Social Sciences and Humanities Unit in DG Research and Innovation will work with their colleagues in charge of the different challenges to identify suitable areas for SSH research in the work programmes. This means a real embedding and not an add-on to the work programmes.

The work programmes will flag up those topics that are dedicated to social sciences and humanities and where they could take the lead. We are very aware that language and framing of the call text is crucial to the success of this process and to encourage real interdisciplinarity.

And in setting our medium term Strategic Programme for Horizon 2020, we have identified a number of "Focus Areas" based on the Horizon 2020 grand challenges.

Socio-economic aspects are already taken into account across the challenges, for example in the areas of ocean research, on disaster-resilience and research on overcoming the economic and financial crisis.

For the new approach to work, both humanities and social sciences researchers will have to be closely involved in developing and implementing the challenges.

They should participate in the relevant advisory groups and programme committees so that they are involved in the early stages of preparing the work programmes.

And at the other end of the process, they must also be present in the teams that evaluate project proposals. I will ensure that this happens.

I have focused so far on the third pillar of Horizon 2020, the "challenges" pillar. There will also be opportunities under the second pillar on Industrial Leadership, which supports business research and innovation. SSH can certainly help us better understand the social and cultural aspects of innovation.

But I want to focus now on pillar one, the Excellent Science pillar. It represents Horizon 2020's second major new opportunity for SSH research.

One of the biggest changes to the EU research landscape since the launch of FP7 in 2007 is the creation of the European Research Council. In just six years it has earned a world-class reputation, and deservedly so.

The ERC provides long-term funding so that the best researchers can carry out their work in Europe. The sole criterion for an award is scientific excellence and applications can be made in any field, including SSH.

Right from the start, the ERC Scientific Council has applied a broad definition of science, to include SSH, in the tradition of the 19th century German term "Wissenschaft".

By the end of FP7, we estimate that the ERC will have provided funding for SSH projects of around 1.2 billion Euro, or 16% of the ERC's overall budget.

The individual awards are generous – on average 1.2 million Euro for a Starting Grant and 2 million Euro for an Advanced Grant in the SSH domain – while the long-term funding, for an average of five years, is unprecedented for social sciences and humanities in Europe.

SSH research funded by the ERC ranges from archaeology to urban studies, and from the performing arts to management and law.

They are often multi- and interdisciplinary with strong links to other domains from genetics and neurosciences to mathematics, computer sciences and engineering.

For example, the Nobel Prize winners Christopher Pissarides at the University of Cyprus and James Heckman at University College Dublin are respectively leading major new studies on employment and unemployment patterns across Europe, and on the evolution of health inequalities.

Other notable ERC grantees include Vittoria Collizza, the winner of the 2013 DPG Young Scientist Award for Socio and Econophysics for her work on the new field of computational epidemiology.

Or Helene Rey, winner of the 2013 EEA - Yrjö Jahnsson Award for her original contributions to international finance; and sociologist Bruno Latour, who won this year's Holberg Prize for his ambitious analysis and reinterpretation of modernity in relation to the sociology of science.

These are inspiring achievements indeed.

The ERC estimates that there will be a big leap to around 2.2 billion Euro of funding for the Social Sciences and Humanities over the lifetime of Horizon 2020.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The twin opportunities offered by Horizon 2020 - embedding SSH throughout the rest of the programme, and the committed support of the ERC – is proof of the importance that the EU gives to the Social Sciences and Humanities.

I think that embedding, in particular, represents a major opportunity. It demands a major commitment from both sides. It is also a learning process, to create links and to benefit from each other's expertise right from the start of Horizon 2020.

And that is why we are here today.

Horizon 2020 is built on a new approach and will make the necessary funds available. The Commission will make sure that a substantial amount will be dedicated to embedding SSH across the programme. My services will closely monitor this.

It might take time to perfect our approach. At the beginning, we might not get everything right. We rely on the continued engagement of the SSH community, something you already demonstrated in the run-up to Horizon 2020, being among the most active and engaged stakeholder groups.

And today's conference reassures me that your engagement will only become even stronger.

I ask, again, for the strong support of all individual researchers, universities, academies, research centres and other stakeholders, to enable us to pursue truly innovative research and to ensure that Horizon 2020 is culturally and ethically sensitive, as well as politically and socially relevant.

I'm looking forward to the ideas you will propose in the 'Vilnius Declaration'. I understand that this will address issues such as effective collaboration and interdisciplinarity, and this is most welcome.

And I convey my full support to the Lithuanian Presidency during the final steps of adopting the Horizon 2020 Package!

Thank you.