

**FAB – LAB – APP:  
The perspective of the European Alliance for SSH on the HLG Report**

On Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> July, the High Level Group appointed by the European Commission and chaired by Pascal Lamy published their report – “Lab-Fab-App”. The report’s authors have drawn on their findings from examining the implementation of Horizon 2020 and added perspectives from a wide consultation on the future challenges to be faced by Europe. The result is a set of recommendations for the preparation for the 9<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme.

The HLG’s work on the next Framework Programme emerges in a very fragile political environment, where humanitarian crisis, political fragility, populism and deep societal changes are among the most pressing issues for Europe’s future. The role of the EU itself is under discussion and the ideological basis on which the original argument for a united Europe was founded is now being widely questioned. The backdrop of trans-continental conflict has become a part of our shared history but contemporary challenges of how to respond to new challenges concerning our place in the world are what confront us.

While there is much to support in the work of the HLG, **EASSH is concerned that the report fails to remain consistent with its own call to listen to the concerns of EU citizens.** In successive surveys by Eurobarometer, the top challenges identified by citizens are: 1) **unemployment** (45%); 2) **social inequalities** (36%); 3) **migration** (31%); 4) **terrorism and security** (31%); 5) **the public debt of EU member states** (26%). Europe is building a single digital market and a strong economic presence in the global landscape and the consequences of this will affect the lives of EU citizens. Half of the priorities in Juncker’s agenda focus on **democratic change, justice and fundamental rights, migration and human development.** Whether identified by citizens or by political leaders the major issues we face all have strong social and human dimensions.

Addressing these issues requires a step change in the depth and quality of insights provided by social and humanistic research and Europe has a world class research base in these fields. EASSH believes that the HLG report needs to be bolder in its recommendations around Europe’s social challenges. **It is disappointing that the report dedicates only a few lines on these key issues in just one of the 11 recommendations.** We are concerned that this provides a license to repeat the mistakes of H2020 and fail again to connect sufficiently the concerns of citizens with the new Framework programme. **FP9 must provide appropriate attention and resources to focus on what matters most to Europeans.**

On a more positive note, EASSH welcomes the partial adoption of **our key recommendations** made in our written and oral evidence to the HLG; **to recognise the role of EU citizens in helping to identify social missions**

(Recommendation 8). We fully support the HLG's explicit recommendation that where those **missions have a fundamental social dimension** (e.g. living and working in culturally diverse cities, equal opportunities to all, strengthening democratic societies) **these must be led by SSH research teams** (Recommendation 5). **SSH research must be fully integrated** across all missions where it has a contribution to make. This requires careful attention to identifying and drafting the missions and the evaluation processes (see EASSH position papers <http://www.eassh.eu/position-papers>); and deliver opportunities for long term collaboration of researchers supported by appropriate financial instruments.

EASSH encourages a more **radical reform of instruments that support research** in the 9<sup>th</sup> framework programme. The following two paragraphs provide two illustrative examples of this reform from an SSH perspective

First, we need to look beyond the short-termism of the current 3-year 'project' cycle. Many of the problems to be tackled by the missions will require contributions from across research fields and involve a wide variety of stakeholders. EASSH believes that such missions could be considered as being appropriate for longer-term investment in the form of 'integrative platforms', which brings together researchers and stakeholders in sustained collaborations. **EASSH supports the introduction of 'integrative research platforms', which would be sustained over 6-8 years** and can be given the time for partners to develop, to learn from early research outcomes and to respond to changing social dynamics in a context which encourages both research and innovation.

At the same time, EASSH reiterates its previous position that research endeavours should be guided by the nature of the challenges being addressed and not by a limited number of pre-determined instruments. EU level collaborative research is not always best implemented by large-scale projects with many partners. EASSH believes that **supporting more and smaller social missions** can provide more targeted research insights for both local and European policy makers. More focused social missions and integrative platforms are complementary approaches to address major research challenges. EASSH hopes that this is the meaning behind the HLG's recommendations calling for **adaptability in choice and the design of funding instruments**. In fact, defining instruments and appropriate responses to the social missions should be primarily determined by those engaged with such missions rather than decided in a rigid, top-down way.

EASSH supports the HLG recommendation for the EU to reaffirm its commitment to **invest in high quality research**, which both emphasises the importance of a bottom up approach to tackling the 'missions' and encourages collaborations across different fields of research. We support the call to double the funding to **focus on research** to retain the European competitive advantage in science and in particular continuing to invest in the European Research Council and

maintaining the current demand driven approach to funding across the research domains.

We support the HLG's call to ensure that the next framework programme is open **to collaboration with the best researchers from around the world** (Recommendation 10). We believe this recommendation will place European lead research at the heart of global science. This is critical not only for ensuring the strength of research in Europe but also for extending its global networks which are critical to innovation. EASSH believes such collaboration will also be crucial to maintaining **Europe's leading place in social science and humanities scholarship**.

The HLG points out the importance of **educational reforms** for stimulating creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in Europe. EASSH believes that research on education on a European level is needed to support reform efforts in this area (Recommendation 3). **EASSH also believes that a discussion to better align research and higher education policies supports the development of a stronger European Research Area.**

**EASSH is disappointed that the HLG report retreated from bolder recommendations, which would ensure that the next research programme is connected to the priorities of Europe and its citizens today.** We hope that this can be addressed by Pascal Lamy and his colleagues through their promise to follow-up on the implementation of their recommendations and we believe that the HLG report contains some recommendations, which will help to ensure that Europe has the research base able to address the challenges we face. EASSH will be happy to work with the HLG and the Commission to ensure that the next Framework Programme is **far more ambitious in addressing the social dimension of the challenges for the future of European democracies and societies.**