

EASSH Response to the European Commission Consultation on Horizon Europe (September 2019)

This document responds to the questions of the consultation as set up by the European Commission and refers to the orientation paper and the draft of the work programme for Horizon Europe as published and approved in March 2019. The views expressed in the comments below are shared among all EASSH members.

Where should Horizon Europe play its greatest role in terms of global challenges, Sustainable Development Goals, and EU policy priorities?

It is important that the science policy underpinning Horizon Europe (HEu) should be aligned with, and helps to achieve, the aims and objectives of the other policy areas that the EU has prioritised. However, scientific research is too often seen from this utilitarian or instrumental perspective with a view to solving societal problems now and in the immediate future. We contend that HEu should also provide more space for fundamental research that creates the knowledge needed to address the challenges faced by the next generation. Funding should be dedicated to exploring the roots of known and emerging problems. More attention needs to be devoted in HEu to the analysis of the human and social nature of the underlying global challenges in the SDGs, which requires more effective and qualitative disciplinary integration of research by the humanities and social sciences.

In your view, to what extent will the following elements contribute to increase the scientific, economic and societal impacts of Horizon Europe investments (as identified in the "Orientations" document)?

Science and research policy should be concerned with identifying how best to support and promote high-quality research. In EASSH view, HEu will have the greatest impact where science from all disciplines is strongly supported in its efforts to provide innovative and reliable knowledge from which to build solutions to socio-economic challenges. HEu should also be designed to make scientific, economic and societal impacts visible by taking account of both tangible and intangible impacts. Many of the horizontal issues discussed here will need to be carefully thought through with the aim of improving the inherent quality of research from all domains and make sure that they translate it into societal impact.

Protective Europe

The focus of the programme as currently conceived attaches too much weight to short-term goals, whereas the EC document on Monitoring the Impact of EU Framework Programmes includes short, medium and long-term indicators. For example, protecting public spaces and securing borders by using new technologies and processes can be seen not only as important immediate policy concerns but also as more fundamental policy questions: how to protect privacy, avoid restrictions on EU citizens' freedoms, and ensure the humane and efficient organisation of asylum procedures.

The imbalance in the programme is due to the low level of investment by HEu in research designed to predict, pre-empt and mitigate domestic and foreign threats to our peace and security. The root causes of many of these threats require a better understanding of their social, economic and cultural dynamics at play, both now and in the future. Understanding and predicting future challenges and how to mitigate them requires a longer-term perspective. The more borders are closed and civil liberties and even basic human rights are infringed upon, the more irregular practices emerge, the more people are driven into an illegal status and thus into precarity. European values foster openness and overcoming fears

of the unknown. A protective Europe is best achieved when alternative forms of “protection” are explored. The social sciences offer insights about pathways towards peaceful coexistence and alternative ways of exploring and understanding the unknown and the effects and risks they pose for society. For example, the search for inclusiveness, resilience and democratically deliberated preparation for all types of eventualities offers a positive approach for tackling extreme control and repression.

Competitive Europe

The goal of achieving a more competitive Europe brings with it the potential for a significant transformation of society. The changes in labour markets and industries envisaged in HEu and other EU policy documents present an image of opportunities and the threat of great disruption. HEu should therefore be striving to understand the implications of competitiveness for society, communities and individuals from both perspectives. Policies for a competitive Europe need to operate in conjunction with education and social policies, in line with the long tradition of European research based on social values. The EC document on Monitoring the Impact of EU research includes “Engaging EU citizens” as a key impact pathway indicator: the uptake by citizens of scientific findings and innovative solutions is rightly presented as a requirement for achieving economic and societal impacts. However, “engaging EU citizens” cannot be only interpreted as a communication tool to impose technological change to society, but rather focus on a more holistic approach to science, which includes individuals and societal needs in biological and technological changes.

All of the SDGs point emphasise that the next generation will be seeking human wellbeing rather than economic growth, which is known to lead to inequalities, exploitation of both the environment and vulnerable people, as well as engendering profound social and economic crises. In considering how to ensure sustainability and solidarity, HEu needs to provide insights that prioritise pro-social policies over the pro-growth policies of the post-war period, requiring research into alternative societal models that are not based on the idea of endless growth, but address the acute challenge of ensuring a future of sustainability and social cohesion.

Creativity, ethics and democratic deliberation are expected to become increasingly central and complementary to technological advancement. Europe has a rich cultural tradition in this respect and should play a lead role in shaping future global norms and values. Leadership in creativity and culture, and linguistic diversity will provide a significant competitive advantage in a world where many routine tasks will be performed by machines. This development offers a renewed basis for successful knowledge-intensive economies, dependent on well-educated citizens capable of playing a leading role in smart and responsible technological innovation. In a post-growth era, economic change therefore needs to be designed to benefit European societies and the world at large in all aspects of human wellbeing.

Fair Europe

HEu policies in particular and EU policy in general should seek better integration of technological, industrial and social policymaking. Currently, a tension exists between policies to improve Europe’s competitiveness, the social disruption that such policies can cause, and the strategies for mitigating their effects on health and wellbeing (pre-distribution and redistribution). The health and wellbeing of citizens deserve the highest priority in developing public policies. If Europe wants to become more competitive, these are areas that demand a strong focused engagement at European level. The challenges identified in HEu



policy documents rightly draw attention to the importance of improving the knowledge base about the structure, dynamics and demographics of Member States and the EU as a whole.

Health has a number of implications, not solely for clinical practice. The value of providing affordable and high-quality healthcare for all citizens is central to European social values. Everywhere health systems are overstretched, and questions of affordability and timely assistance are becoming increasingly challenging. Pharmaceutical monopolies render treatments inaccessible to those who need them most. HEu should be funding research into ways of achieving a healthy society for all, and research is needed to explore how to balance medical advancements with the development of affordable medicines and treatments.

It is critical to understand and support strategies for dealing with ageing populations, the rise in mental health issues and the impact that these trends are having on our societies in terms of assistance and care. These challenges spill over into issues involving the fabric of society and gender equality. Recent population studies have shown, for example, that women's workforce participation continues to be adversely affected by the time they spend as carers for ageing parents and young children. Member states and the EU as a whole have recognised the importance of coordinating the collection and use of research data, personal and digital data. The "datafication" process is affecting markets, business models, public administration, education and civil society actors, as well as having an impact on security measures and privacy. We know far too little about the consequences of this fast-paced process, and how it will affect different spheres of society in the future: for example, how AI and machine deep learning will change the ways in which we act as citizens, consumers, employees or students. This is a challenge that cuts across most, if not all the policy priorities mentioned ("Protective Europe", "Fair Europe", "Sustainable Europe"), and deserves to be studied in its own right. HEu should therefore commit to continue supporting the current set of large-scale longitudinal studies.

Sustainable Europe

The production of cleaner and more efficient technologies is expected to meet the growing challenges to sustainable energy and living, but more attention needs to be paid to the human, social and political dimensions: incentives, behaviours, inequalities, achievements and failures. Attaining environmental sustainability goals implies significant changes to the way we live as individuals and in communities. HEu should be investing in research that will help us to understand better how to bring about sustainable behaviours at individual and societal levels.

We need to be better informed about how to reorganise and reshape institutions and governance at local and global levels with the aim of developing appropriate policies and monitoring their effects. Behavioural laboratories across Europe would be a crucial investment to this end.

Societal change towards a more sustainable Europe is contingent not just on political decisions but also on people's beliefs and cultural values, which have an undeniable impact on how they act. Since beliefs and attitudes are deeply affected by cultural factors that may either hinder sustainability awareness, or contribute to promoting sustainable development, more research is needed into the cultural dimensions of sustainability.

Influential Europe

Influential Europe must be based on European values embodied in a credible model extending far beyond the usual discourses. It is widely recognised that Europe stands for fundamental rights, the rule of law, accountable and transparent democracies, dignity,



respect and non-alienation, fairness, openness (no hard borders), cultural and linguistic diversity and high social standards. However, the rhetoric has yet to become a reality in the everyday lives of European citizens. European solutions need to be underpinned by a strong and free academic community and an educated society, both of which are critical for democratic exchanges between the many stakeholders. If HEu is inspired by SDG goals, then it must invest in high-quality scientific research that develops knowledge and understanding, not simply consumer products. Collaborations between business and academia are interesting, exciting and promising, but they are determined primarily by a demand economy and regulated by markets. HEu must also encourage societal partnerships and cultural institutions. Arguably, independent, high-quality research is required to find sustainable solutions to the societal challenges contained in the SDGs, and to ensure that future generations of world citizens are suitably educated and equipped to meet these challenges.

Today's challenges are of a global scale, and researchers across all continents are working to address them and confronting political decisions, which are not perceived to be informed by reliable evidence. Public research in Europe is highly competitive across disciplinary, sectoral and national boundaries. Furthermore, Europe has a real competitive advantage in the quality of SSH research. HEu can help to ensure that opportunities for contributions across all areas of the programme are not missed. Only if HEu significantly improves the mechanisms for cross-disciplinary collaborations trialled in Horizon 2020 can humanities and social sciences research effectively complement and supplement work done on technical advancements for a sustainable future.

Being influential also means being able to offer access to European innovations to a wider audience. Governed by principles of ethics and integrity in all scientific disciplines, European scientific communities provide organised and validated forms of scientific outputs that can be communicated through international learned societies. Open Science as the backdrop of HEu provides an important instrument for promoting and disseminating of European scientific knowledge, especially if it affords easy access to all good quality publications, not confined to those who can afford access.

European institutions must provide infrastructures designed to enable all disciplines to implement open access to knowledge and to exert pressure on the big commercial players in research publishing to facilitate such access. Managing Open Science remains a critical issue for European research today and its capacity to make Europe truly influential.

Orientations

The narrative surrounding the SDGs has pervaded discussion about the orientation document. The need to ensure complementarity between technical and social solutions underlines the importance of safeguarding the freedom of the scientific community to continue carrying out high-quality research into the European values promoting societal advancement.

Yet, most of the intervention areas in the detailed descriptions in HEu afford limited opportunities for social and human approaches, leaving unexploited the scientific potential of a very large community of scholars. Furthermore, fundamental programmes such as "Science with and for Society" in Horizon 2020, which gave the social and human sciences an excellent opportunity to demonstrate their capacity to respond to the societal challenges facing EU citizens, have disappeared from the HEu text.

The European Alliance for SSH is concerned that – as in the case of Horizon 2020 – the strong narrative encouraging interdisciplinarity and scientific collaboration with a strategic commitment to citizens' wellbeing and long-term sustainability policies will not be realised in



the calls text. The focus of the proposed programme, the architecture of processes, calls, and evaluations remains anchored in pro-growth and industrial policy, and in projects that support these ends. The wide gap between the intentions of the programme and the process of implementation has not been adequately addressed in the draft text and is not supported by a strong investment in research democracy. The Alliance will remain vigilant and is available to contribute to efforts to improve the design of the programme's architecture and to ensure that the SDG goals' narrative is mirrored in the process of strategic programming and in the implementation of HEu.

Conclusions

EASSH has actively engaged with the European Commission and other partners in learning from the implementation of Horizon 2020 with the aim of improving the design of HEu. We continue to support the focus on a strong and well-resourced Pillar 1, especially concerning funding for ERC, Marie Skłodowska-Curie and research infrastructures for all disciplines, including investment in large-scale longitudinal studies.

We would support a coherent set of equitably resourced clusters, which retain a central focus on addressing citizens' concerns. EASSH will continue to argue that more prominence needs to be given, especially in the discussion regarding missions, to these concerns and to the social dimension of the challenges we face. We believe that it is not correct the definition of SSH research in Horizon 2020 as a cross-cutting issue in the same way as international cooperation or open science. Social sciences and humanities are scholarly fields on a par with medicine or engineering, for example. The contributions made by researchers in SSH must be seen as an integral part of the scientific challenge in calls and must be assessed by suitably qualified experts. We will continue to exert pressure on the Commission to draw on relevant expertise in designing the clusters and drafting the resulting work programmes and calls, thereby facilitating the integration of all research contributions. Programmes like "Science with and for Society" need to be reinstated as the place to address interdisciplinarity and institutional change in fundamental issues such as ethics, equality and gender.

EASSH supports a third pillar that sees innovation not just as a technological exercise but rather one capable of recognising the role of the innovation process in a wider range of areas, such as labour relations, work-life balance and population studies, creative industries studies, cultural and linguistic diversity, education.

Responding to the consultation document has given us an opportunity to identify a number of threads in the on-going debate surrounding science policy in the EU over the past two years. In compiling this response, we have been able to draw on our library of position papers in which we provided a number of concrete recommendations included in this response. Our recommendations are summarised below:

EASSH recommendations on improving the impact assessment of projects and programmes

- Call proposals must allow researchers to **select the appropriate model of impact** and to have it assessed for internal plausibility in relation to its effect on society and the economy.
- **Reviewers must be informed by guidelines that highlight the diversity of data sources contributing to impact evidence.** Review panels should be familiar thanks to their own career profiles with different types of impact models.
- **Reporting on project impacts should take account of different models of impact,** and therefore incorporate information about targeted as well as diffuse delivery of



their work, findings and research outputs, resulting in both tangible and intangible impacts on society.

- **Reporting on projects impacts should include reliable data sources such as technical statements from user groups** demonstrating the value created by the project and all the partners involved; changes in behaviour, attitudes or actions, and patterns of consumption; and identifying individuals and communities who have been influenced by the project.
- **The different key impact pathway indicators** included in the EC Report on Monitoring the Impact of EU Framework Programmes **should also be taken into account**, including socio-cultural impacts linked to the SDGs and to EU citizens' uptake of research results.
- **An appropriate length of time should be allowed for impact** to build up recognising that this will vary depending on the field of research.
- HEu programme **evaluation criteria and processes should look beyond project-by-project impact assessment and consider whether the programme has met its overall aims.**

EASSH recommendations on SSH Integration in the clusters

- A solid and **strong focus in HEu on research into societies, democracy, culture and social transformation** as a self-standing cluster, which has comparable resources to those in other clusters.
- A **redefinition of the concept of integration** through the co-design of the clusters to ensure a relevant socio-economic, historical and legal framework, and **the inclusion of SSH-led intervention areas in all clusters in HEu.**
- **Full participation of SSH-researchers** in strategic programming committees, in calls and topic-drafting teams and evaluation panels to ensure that proposals are assessed in line with all call requirements and to embed crucial expertise to allow full assessment of research and innovation impact on societies and individuals.
- **A revised methodology for monitoring interdisciplinary integration combined with a higher degree of adaptiveness of the programme during its implementation based on a mid-term evaluation.**

EASSH stands ready to make available our expertise to colleagues in the Commission to carry out a more extensive analysis of data on the implementation of HEu with lessons learnt from Horizon2020.

All our position papers can be found here: <http://www.eassh.eu/position-papers>