

Brussels, 27 May 2019

Dear Mr Director General for Research and Innovation,  
Dear representatives of Member States,

European Joint Programming instruments have been key elements of recent framework programmes. They have helped to structure and mobilise scientific communities with regard to new and emerging research questions and societal issues thanks to the pooling of funding by Member States and by the European Commission. For the research communities in the Social Sciences and in the Humanities (SSH), joint programming initiatives (JPIs) —such as “Cultural Heritage”, “More Years, Better Lives”, “Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life” and “Urban Europe”— and European Research Area networks (ERANETs) —such as “HERA – Uses of the Past” and “NORFACE – New Opportunities for Research Funding Agency Cooperation in Europe”— have played a crucial role in co-funding high-quality projects that have advanced knowledge and dissemination, responding to the European citizens’ needs in key areas.

EASSH and LERU understand the need to review the current partnerships in preparation of Horizon Europe. However, it is opposed to the dismantling of all SSH-intensive instruments as presented in the document on Horizon Europe by the European Commission in early May. The current proposal — 44 instruments linked with five future clusters but none to the SSH-intensive one! — is not acceptable to the high-level scientific communities we represent.

We call on the Commission and the Member States to engage in a collaborative effort to identify additional transversal instruments to address the pressing cultural and social issues across Europe. We propose to ground such a collaborative effort in four principles:

- (a) The preservation of the high value of well-functioning SSH-intensive partnerships. It takes years, and in some cases decades, to build mutual trust and efficient procedures across diverse institutions and countries. Consortia that have an outstanding track record should be preserved and when necessary transformed, but not dismantled. Precisely when we are addressing the Sustainable Development Goals, successful and fruitful work developed by collaborations between researchers across borders and national research funders must not be abandoned.
- (b) Complementarity between partnerships and clusters. Even when different instruments focus on similar themes, it should be ensured that complementary projects will be funded, strengthening the knowledge production and dissemination both quantitatively and qualitatively.
- (c) The evolution of research foci. SSH-intensive consortia have demonstrated their ability to change the focus of their programming in dynamic and productive ways. Such renewal should be encouraged in order to co-fund research on most relevant and pressing issues, such as helping societies achieve Sustainable Development Goals.
- (d) The integration of SSH in a wide spectrum of partnerships. Recent experiences in Horizon 2020 indicate that without specific provisions regarding the scientific framing of the calls and the informed evaluation of submitted projects SSH integration is minimal. If instruments are to be implemented effectively, it is vital to ensure cross-disciplinary engagement.

Based on these observations, we urgently press for the inclusion of SSH-intensive partnerships in the final list of partnerships that will be released by the European Commission. We ask the European Commission to include appropriate provisions for a strong mobilisation of SSH communities so as to deliver the research outcomes which are necessary to meet the urgency of societal challenges, to improve European scientific leadership in relation to them, and to match the high expectations by the investment of public funds on the part of both Member States and the European Commission.

We are confident that you will fully appreciate the very constructive nature of this letter and look forward to cooperating with you and your collaborators in the coming weeks in order to facilitate the design of the Framework Programme that our research communities are anticipating.