

Statement of the German coordinators of SSH projects in FP7 concerning the discussion about the „Common Strategic Framework for Future Research and Innovation Funding“

We - the below mentioned **German coordinators of Theme 8 (Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities) funded collaboration projects** - would like to take this opportunity to **express our full support of the NET4SOCIETY Position Paper on the “Common Strategic Framework for Future Research and Innovation Funding” which was published in May 2011** as a written response to the consultation on the European Commission Green Paper “From Challenges to Opportunities: “Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding”.

We explicitly support the argumentation of the position paper in regard to the current usage of the term innovation. It is imperative, that **social and cultural innovation** is explicitly expressed when the term “innovation” is used in the context of research and policy. Moreover, we would like to stress the dialogic nature of technological innovations and society. Technological innovation is always accompanied by social impact, which may lead directly or indirectly to social change. Yet, in many cases, **social and cultural innovation is a precondition for recognising the need for a technological innovation as well as for the creation and the successful introduction of new technologies and processes.** This holistic approach to innovation is essential if Europe is to increase its global competitiveness – both as an economy and a society. The social sciences and humanities have an abundance of insights to offer in this context, insights which Europe can not afford to disregard.

However, our impression is that when planning the Common Strategic Framework, contrary to FP7, the EU is not genuinely interested in strengthening Europe’s unique and historic strength and wealth - namely the **diversity of its scientific traditions, research cultures (including different languages), as well as research institutions.** Instead, many of the instruments and procedures that are currently implemented seem to reduce diversity in favour of a homogenous approach, hence copying what might work in other areas of the world - namely the USA. This strategy may be appropriate for certain sciences and for technical developments. Nevertheless, it is not appropriate in the domain of social sciences and humanities, **where it should rather be our aim to increase the awareness of the non-European world that relevant and unique knowledge and experience is missed if the far-reaching knowledge, experience and innovative potential of diverse European research traditions is not duly taken into account.** An example for this is the demand for support of multilingualism in research and the integration of culturally different research traditions: the development of possibilities that balance the need to use common working languages with the advantages of multilingual approaches will strengthen the European research space. The EU has unique conditions for meeting these aims; **any progress in this respect would provide a “unique selling point” for European research.**

In the “Europe 2020 strategy” Europe’s wealth, derived from its diversity is emphasized e.g. diversity in socio-economic, cultural and ecological characteristics: “... we can also count on our strong values, democratic institutions, our consideration for economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity, our respect for the environment, our cultural diversity, respect for gender equality – just to name a few” (Europe2020, p 7). Therefore, the common EU targets for future development “must be (...) capable of reflecting the diversity of Member States situations and be based on sufficiently reliable data for purposes of comparison” (Europe2020, p8). **SSH research is predestined to provide knowledge and information on the above mentioned diversity, to produce new innovative concepts and guidelines**

of how to make use of them. Against the background of the “Europe 2020 strategy” itself, it is imperative that the crucial role of SSH will get explicitly addressed to in all discussions concerning the future research and innovation funding.

A crucial pre-requisite for enabling social innovation processes, is a supportive political framework. Therefore, **the science-policy-interface, translating scientific results into applicable policy recommendations, is of central importance.**

In order to address these and other research challenges, SSH, just like other research domains, depends on excellent research infrastructures. To date, these infrastructures are often not sufficiently accessible or compatible. Therefore, recognizing the necessity of new and enhanced infrastructure within the SSH domain, must be taken adequately into consideration.

Furthermore, in reflecting the current FP7 projects, we would like to make the following recommendations for the next research programme (CSF):

Research aspects:

- there should be a clear division between research excellence and cohesion objectives
- a separate instrument to support cohesion objectives should be introduced (e.g. CSAs)
- a greater support of high-risk research is necessary
- more flexibility within the project implementation (“description of work”) is necessary
- sustainability of research topics should be ensured
- on average, more than one project per research topic should be funded, to ensure comparability of research results, which is a key for increasing innovation

Financial aspects of projects:

- a flatrate of 60% for the indirect costs should be installed for all instruments (also CSAs)
- there should be a balanced relation between the project budget and the number of partners in each project (the more partners are involved the more budget has to be available)
- Additional budgets for research activities, allowing consortia to react to ad hoc situations, i.e. the financial crisis, should be made available
- Re-alignments within the projects should not turn into administrative burdens
- The timeframe for the initial allocation of budgets should be improved. In particular CSOs and NGOs do not have the financial cushion to bridge the gap of delayed payment.

Dissemination:

- the dissemination of the project results should be dealt with in a professionalised way (e.g. in involving journalists in each project).
- In general, dissemination activities focus on project results – these costs should be eligible at least one year after the project has finished.
- the Commission should increase its support of dissemination activities by promoting the project results e.g. towards political decision-makers or in helping the projects to get in contact with the responsible political committees. Numerous best-practice examples already exist
- the Commission should provide dissemination tools which could be used by all funded projects, e.g. a common platform

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