May 6th, 2013

Dear colleagues,

As you may know, the European Commission proposals for the multi-annual framework for research and innovation (“Horizon 2020” - http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020), discussed and modified by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, have structured research funding into interdisciplinary blocks defined as “societal challenges”. In this new structure, a new role for Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH) is being envisaged. SSH are seen as core building block for realizing the Vision “Europe 2020” (http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/): an “integrated approach” will replace previously existing dedicated funding streams.

With a view to this unprecedented role that has been assigned to SSH research in Europe, the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU has decided to dedicate a specific conference to this discussion. The conference will take place in Vilnius on 23-24 September 2013 (http://horizons.mruni.eu/).

The conference's steering committee chaired by Helga Nowotny, President of the ERC, has decided to launch an online consultation on how to shape the roles of SSH in “Horizon 2020”. The objective of this process is to learn more about the current situation and the ambitions of the research community, but also to identify the needs and structural problems of specific fields, with an emphasis on their potential to contribute to the success of the Vision Europe 2020. The results of the consultation will help to prepare the conference topics and to draft the Presidency Conference Declaration.

We are circulating this specific request for consultation to European funding bodies active in SSH.

Results of the consultation will be made publicly accessible online (in an anonymised format, unless you explicitly state otherwise). They will also provide valuable input for the planned Vilnius declaration on “Horizons for Social Sciences and Humanities”.

Please find attached the questions we would like you to answer until June 15th 2013, including specific examples whenever possible. Your views will be very valuable to us.

We would like to thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,
Katja Mayer

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For any questions, please contact consultation@mruni.eu
Consultation on the state of the Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH) in Europe April 15th to June 15th, 2013

Please send your answers/statements via email to consultation@mruni.eu until June 15th, 2013

Your statements will be archived in anonymised format (unless explicitly stated otherwise) in a database at the Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius. A report will be published on the conference website (http://horizons.mruni.eu) and made widely available to the conference participants.

Please indicate your position/standpoint: e.g. representative of funding organisation, department, etc. and your fields of expertise, as well as the country your institution is based!

1. What are the broad research questions, new methodological or theoretical developments, or generally new approaches that are high on research agendas? Where do you see potential contributions to societal relevance?

2. What are the potential contributions that SSH may provide to the “societal challenges”, broadly defined by “Horizon 2020”? Please specify the “societal challenge/s” to which SSH contributions are most likely, and suggest successful steps in this direction, if possible.

3. Do you foresee (or have you experienced) obstacles that may prevent the SSH community from making contributions to the “societal challenges” approach? Please provide specific indications.

4. In order to foster a more integrative approach that would benefit all research communities, what would you consider the most important incentives for successful contribution of SSH that “Horizon 2020” could provide?

5. Can you give examples from your agency’s experience of how SSH research areas can be involved in (a) opening up to each other, (b) opening up to the sciences, (c) translating findings and/or methods to or from the sciences, (d) contributing to the emergence of new, cross-disciplinary fields, and/or (e) transcending, with its results and insights, the fields of academic research?

6. Given your experience, which funding mechanisms have proven to be particularly successful in strengthening SSH? (on a national/European/international level)

7. Who would be key players from outside Europe to be involved in order to identify best practice in research funding and foster research cooperation? (individuals and/or institutions)

8. What would be the single most important measure that should be implemented at an EU level to foster SSH research?

9. What would be your suggestion how best to support the further integration of the new Member States into EU-funded SSH research?
Should you have any additional comments, please feel free to share them with us.

Many thanks for your support!

The steering committee,
Helga Nowotny (chair), Rūta Petrauskaitė (Vice Chair), Giedrius Viliūnas (Vice Chair), Jutta Almendinger, Paul Boyle, Craig Calhoun, Gustavo Cardoso, Rivka Feldhay, Poul Holm, Pavel Kabat, Alain Peyraube, Aura Reggiani, Peter Strohschneider, Peter Tindemans, Wim van den Doel, Michel Wieviorka, Björn Wittrock

If you want to receive updates on the consultation and conference, please indicate if we may include your email address in the conference mailing list.