



## Social Sciences and Humanities in European Research

1. In the last six months, the British Academy, as the UK national academy for the humanities and social sciences, has consulted widely with academies across Europe about the role of social sciences and humanities in a European research programme to replace FP7. We outline below our main conclusions, which include the need for an SSH led Grand Challenge on 'Understanding Europe'.
2. We have worked closely with ALLEA (ALL European Academies) in inviting European academies to participate in two meetings, one in Rome on 1 and 2 December 2010, and the second in Brussels on 31 March 2011. The Rome meeting was attended by representatives of 16 academies/countries, and the Brussels meeting by representatives of 24 academies in 19 countries. Participants' disciplinary interests covered a wide range across the humanities and social sciences and included experience in a variety of roles in relation to Framework Programme policy, application and assessment as well as to national priority-setting exercises.
3. While this document is not formally endorsed by the academies represented at these meetings, there is general consensus from participants about the proposals which we put forward here.

### SSH AND GRAND CHALLENGES

4. We endorse the importance of addressing major societal challenges, thus contributing to the realisation of the vision outlined in *Europe 2020*. If a major portion of funding, however, is to be dedicated to Grand Challenges (GC), it will be important to ensure that, in all GCs, appropriate and due attention is paid to their social and human aspects. This, we believe, will require an increase in the level of funding dedicated to HSS research, in order to address the major human and social challenges which face society in the next decade. Given awareness of the difficulties experienced in earlier FPs in attempting to establish a truly interdisciplinary approach, it will be vital to ensure a fully integrated approach to GCs, and the provision of a funding format appropriate for SSH research. For example, if the Commission and national governments agree that climate change is a major GC which should be addressed in a structured manner, it will be necessary to ensure that appropriate attention is paid to the impacts on society of climate change, and to consider how these might be mitigated by suitable policy developments.
5. In addition, we are concerned that, even within the GC approach, the major questions of "Understanding Europe" have not yet been addressed. Outlined below is a basic structure for a future programme which would specifically address core issues about the changing nature of European culture and society.

### EUROPE 2020: A MAJOR GRAND CHALLENGE IS UNDERSTANDING EUROPE

6. We acknowledge the importance of the Grand Challenges identified so far, and look forward to participating in any debate on how best to mobilise SSH expertise for the resulting programmes within both the CSFRI and Joint Programming Initiatives. But effective policies for Europe's economic and social well-being require an understanding of the deep changes taking place in European society and culture. This can only be provided by a GC which draws primarily on the distinctive contributions that can be made from SSH researchers. It will, by definition, involve

not only all EU members, but also neighbourhood and non-European countries. It should be designed in a way that reinforces research integration across the entire ERA and perhaps beyond.

7. We propose that attention should be paid to a Grand Challenge which might be entitled **Understanding Europe**. A research programme addressing this Grand Challenge would focus upon social and cultural innovation and could be composed of three major sub-themes and a transversal theme.

The sub-themes are:

#### **Memory, identity and cultural change**

A central challenge facing Europe over the next decades is to create an environment in which European, national and ethnic identities can coexist and be mutually enriching. This requires an enhanced awareness of the historical context of current social and cultural changes, the critical role of language, communications and technologies, and an understanding of conflict, past policy failure and future policy needs as essential preconditions of more effective future policies.

#### **Employment, education and working lives**

With increased economic internationalisation and new technologies exploiting the potential of superfast broadband, the world of work is likely to be transformed in the coming decade. Policy-makers will need a close understanding of the rapidly changing structure of employment and work, and its implications for education, skills and training, and for people's experiences of their working lives and life-course patterns, including risks of precariousness, unemployment and social exclusion.

#### **Inequality, families and the quality of life**

As the constraints on ever-increasing material prosperity become more severe, social progress is likely to be increasingly assessed in terms of the quality of people's lives. Research needs to focus on the changing extent and distribution of inequality and its implications for intergenerational justice, personal well-being and quality of life. Enhancing social mobility will become an ever more urgent issue if Europe is to make full use of its talent. This requires a deeper understanding of the determinants of, among other questions, the intergenerational transmission of inequality, in particular the role of changing family structures and the potential for policy to offset early disadvantage.

The transversal theme is:

#### **Europe and the World**

A focus on the inter-relationship between Europe and other regions of the world should be an essential aspect of all three sub-themes. The way in which Europe interacts with other parts of the world has long been recognised as of vital importance, and programmes should address how Europe can learn and benefit from experiences elsewhere in the world, and how the various connections, in terms, for example, of identity and migration, can strengthen society in Europe and contribute towards the development of robust and sustainable policies.

8. **Funding Grand Challenges**

Drawing on the experience of both FP6 and FP7, the British Academy's view is that the most appropriate funding model for a GC with SSH disciplines in the lead would need to take into account the specific scientific production paradigms in those fields. Research in SSH typically benefits from a smaller, more participative, project scale, allowing for a clearly-focused research activity. Further, smaller scale projects are more likely to secure the involvement and leadership

of researchers from the EU12<sup>1</sup>, given the low levels of administrative support available to researchers in those countries, which acts as a severe deterrent to engagement with larger projects. In addition, they provide greater opportunities for younger researchers to gain experience of project leadership, thus enhancing research capacity within the ERA. We therefore propose, for any Grand Challenge/Joint Programming Initiative, the adoption of the two-tier funding model successfully applied in FP7, allowing for budgets for both larger and smaller scale projects.

## **INFRASTRUCTURES, MOBILITY AND THE ERC**

9. The Academy considers that, irrespective of the degree to which the Cooperation pillar of FP7 is to be replaced by a GC approach, the other three pillars of FP7 (Ideas, People, Infrastructure) are equally crucial in developing research capacity and strength in Europe, and enhancing Europe as a knowledge-driven economy.

### **Capacities: Research Infrastructures**

10. Access to digital and digitised resources enables the development of a new paradigm of e-science research in SSH which will transform the ability to undertake research and integrate resources and facilities across the European Research Area and beyond. Among the essential infrastructures for research in SSH are digitised libraries, repositories, collections, GIS datasets and databases across Europe. In addition the tools for analysis and access to the products of research (publications and the underlying data) are essential; such tools are increasingly sophisticated and many have been co-developed by researchers from across Europe and beyond, some in actions already supported by the European Commission. Further, there should be comprehensive mapping of research expertise, for example through decentralised but compatible comprehensive research information systems.
11. An unresolved challenge in the assessment of research results in the European humanities and many areas of the social sciences relates to the multitude of national languages used, and to the different formats employed. Existing bibliometric databases are dominated by journals in English and a handful of other languages, and do not cover scholarly monographs and collections of essays, which represent much of the most innovative and accomplished work in these fields of study. FP8 should make available funding not only for better access to scientific production in SSH across all linguistic communities but should also make it possible to explore the development of quality-based bibliometric tools. There is an obvious need to develop more appropriate indicators.
12. Building on what has already been achieved in ESFRI, and taking into account the many medium- and small-scale national research infrastructures that need to be networked at a European level, a strategy for providing the SSH fields with comprehensive European research infrastructure would include the following elements, and would need to be developed across at least three directorates (RTD, INFSO, EAC):
  - Cataloguing of journals, monographs and other SSH publications: searchable database of contents, with multilingual input and output
  - Ensuring standards and meta-data for digitised records and tools for analysing objects within texts, pictures, tones and multi-modal media.
  - Open and, as far as possible, free access to published outputs and controlled access to primary data

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<sup>1</sup> Countries which acceded to the EU in 2004 and 2007; the term EU 12 should, for the purposes of this document, also be taken to include current candidate countries such as Croatia and Turkey.

- Enduring support for the conservation of data and the migration of data to different platforms.
- Incentives for participation and maintaining comparability of information within longitudinal research
- Incentives for national data collection to ensure high levels of country participation in ESS and similar databases
- Mapping of research expertise across Europe and in other regions

### **People: Marie Curie Programme**

13. Marie Curie Actions offer a valuable tool encouraging the development of expertise, strong networks across countries and disciplines, and development of research capacity. There is a good case for enhancing funding. In line with the interim evaluation of FP7, the People programme is a tool to invest in strengthening the participation of EU12 researchers in the ERA. It would be preferable to develop mechanisms to compensate for risks such as brain drain from the EU12, for example by strengthening the returnee component of the scheme. Greater flexibility over the duration and timing of the research visits (by allowing shorter visits, or visits of an agreed total length of time within an extended timeframe) would encourage those who would find it difficult, for personal or professional reasons, to contemplate a one- or two-year Fellowship. Plans to change scheme formats and require a year in business as well as academia could have major impact on HSS take-up unless definitions of possible partners are widened. For HSS, organisations such as museums and voluntary associations could provide opportunities for research training and addressing questions of innovation in different sectors.
14. The implications of a move of Marie Curie Actions to DG Education need careful consideration. They are not just an education tool; they offer crucial opportunities for developing early career researchers, and strengthening research capacity across Europe. Mobility is vital for scientific integration.

### **Ideas: European Research Council**

15. The work of the European Research Council is a particularly valuable addition to the European funding landscape, because of its responsive funding mode, its support for bottom-up projects, including those with an interdisciplinary and transnational focus, and its push towards establishing pan-European excellence criteria. We strongly support the ERC programme and its achievements to date. We understand that the increase in applications this year has been particularly marked for SSH and we consider that the resources available to researchers from these disciplines should be increased to reflect better their true weight in the research community. The ERC should not be seen as a compensation for fewer opportunities for SSH under the “Cooperation” pillar; both “blue skies” and “mission-oriented” research need to benefit from SSH contributions.

## **PREVENTING DUALISM IN THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA**

16. We have stressed the increasing importance of SSH for policy development, in the context of an increasing focus on the need to address major societal challenges. In addition to its role in promoting the economic and social development of the European Union, and in providing policy-relevant research to guide policy development, an important mission of the FP was to reinforce integration of research activities and researchers within the ERA. Against this background, we are very concerned at the continuing sharp divergence between the EU15<sup>2</sup> and

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<sup>2</sup> Countries which were members of the EU before 2004, together with related EEA member countries, for example Norway, Switzerland.

the EU12 as a result of the relatively low level of awards, across all parts of the Framework Programme, to researchers in countries in the EU12. We note that even fewer projects are coordinated by researchers from public research institutions within the EU12. We detect a significant risk of increasing dualism in the ERA. While we of course support excellence as the primary criterion for support, we think that the design of the CSFRI should take specific measures to enhance integration across the ERA, and develop and harness the research potential in the EU12 countries<sup>3</sup>.

17. Applicants from the EU12 are, for example, likely to face greater difficulties in presenting strong applications, in particular because of a lack of funding for preparatory work, including the development of research networks, and the problems faced by institutions in the region in hosting successful projects. Seed funding for less well-resourced countries would enable them to support small-scale network-building meetings, to facilitate the development of contacts and experience.

### **EU RESEARCH FUNDING: STRUCTURE AND PROCESS**

18. It is important to build sufficient flexibility into the programme to allow rapid response to newly-emerging problems and questions which require research attention. The Common Strategic Framework must allow Europe to respond to developments across the course of its lifetime.
19. Simplification of the structure and process of EU research and innovation funding is absolutely essential. The scale of administration must be proportionate to the budget needed to conduct high quality research.
20. There is a place for both larger and smaller projects, and it is very important to retain adequate facility to support both. Large-scale strategic projects require very significant management resource to operate; they may be overly bureaucratic and may even produce less innovative research because of the need for agreement across a wide range of diverse participants. The demands of large-scale projects may also lead to an increasing risk of dualism within the EU, as smaller countries or countries with limited research resources are often unable to provide the administrative support necessary to lead and manage the projects. Smaller-scale projects have the potential for greater flexibility and efficiency. It should also be noted that the scale of project required to address a research issue satisfactorily may vary by discipline – SSH may require lower funding per project than some natural science or technological project with a high infrastructure requirement.
21. We would recommend that, even within the agenda-driven parts of the programme, themes should be defined in a broad way, rather than as detailed specifications, to allow full scope to researchers to contribute ideas about the relevant key research issues.

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<sup>3</sup> This also reflects a key recommendation of the Expert Group which reported on the Interim Evaluation of the Seventh Framework Programme.