

Science Europe Press Release: *for immediate release*

Improvements are needed to properly integrate the ‘human factor’ in Horizon 2020 Work Programmes

(Brussels, 4 September 2014). The Science Europe Scientific Committee for the Humanities has just published an Opinion Paper, denouncing a systematic failure to integrate humanities disciplines in the 2014–2015 Work Programme of Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges.

The Paper investigates and analyses the extent to which the Work Programmes for the Challenges, published earlier this year, have facilitated such integration so far; it shows that over 90% of the Topics are actually *not* open to the humanities and the range of humanities expertise being called upon in the remaining 10% of the Topics is rather narrow. Also, the humanities are mostly seen in a ‘translational role’ as the final step from research to market, rather than being an integral part of the research process.

“The Committee strongly supports Horizon 2020’s Societal Challenges”, said Professor Kirsten Drotner, Chair of the Committee and co-author of the Opinion Paper. *“This is why we have continually been pointing to an important pre-condition that is essential to the ultimate success of the Challenges: the full and systematic integration of the ‘human factor’ at all stages of the research process”.* The reason why the Committee insists on the importance of such integration is that it has already proved to make a significant impact on a broad range of Societal Challenges. The Paper gives some examples: *“[...] methodologies derived from linguistics have helped to create a cost-effective instrument to improve the diagnosis of patients with epileptic seizures. [...] research on historical and environmental archives has helped to predict future ocean resilience, prompting fisheries agencies around the world to use historical evidence for management advice.”*

The Committee’s Paper proposes a coherent portfolio of actions that would enable collaborations of this kind to be included in subsequent Work Programmes and consequently improve the quality of the responses to the Challenges. *“If our proposed actions are adopted, there will be a real possibility for breakthroughs and discoveries that will help us to understand and bring about change”,* is said in the Paper. *“Above all, this will lead to a better understanding of how to bring about the fundamental changes in our behaviour that are needed to make progress towards the Societal Challenges”.*

Science Europe comprises 52 Research Funding and Research Performing Organisations from 27 countries, representing around €30 billion per annum. It was founded in October 2011 with the aim of promoting the collective interests of members and providing them with a platform to collaborate at both policy and activity level.

The full text of the Opinion Paper ‘The Human Factor in the 2014-2015 Work Programme of the Societal Challenges’ is available at: www.scienceeurope.org/downloads

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