SCIENCE EUROPE
Shaping the future of research

Brussels, 22 April 2014

Re: Work Programme Horizon 2020 Challenges

Dear Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn,

Since their inauguration in early 2013, the Science Europe Scientific Committees for the Humanities and the Social Sciences have strongly supported Horizon 2020's third pillar, Societal Challenges. The Committees realise the importance of the issues addressed, and the urgent need to find solutions to these pressing questions. The Committees are therefore committed to making the Challenges approach successful.

It is for this reason that the Committees have not ceased to point out an important pre-condition for the ultimate success of the Societal Challenges: the integration of the human and social dimension at all stages of research and research policy development. This was, for example, the message of our paper '*Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) in Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges: Implementation and Monitoring*' of November 2013, and of the Science Europe Position Statement '*Embedding SSH in the Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges*' of January 2013.

It is therefore with deep regret that we have noted that the first Work Programme for the Challenges, launched earlier this year, fails to systematically facilitate this integration. Humanities and social sciences are mainly drawn upon as translational means, not scientific resources. There is, unfortunately, a clear discrepancy between the high-level objectives of the Challenges and their programme design and implementation.

In a forthcoming communication '*The Human Factor in the Societal Challenges'* we will spell this out in detail. For now, when urgency is required, we let the figures speak for themselves. The budgets of the SSH topics as flagged by the EC funded network Net4Society, indicate that less than 25% of the Work Programme content under the Challenges has truly been opened up to SSH. In other words, **SSH has <u>not</u> been embedded in more than 75% of the Challenges. We cannot but conclude that the attempt to mainstream SSH throughout the Challenges in the 2014-2015 Work Programme has been unsuccessful so far.**

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However, it may not be too late yet. You have referred to the Challenges as a 'learning process' and we hope that the Commission will indeed learn from these first experiences. What makes us optimistic in this regard is the fact that by now the Advisory Groups have been established; we trust that they will provide proper guidance and take into account the experiences and expertise of those directly concerned – including the earlier recommendations from our Committees in the aforementioned papers which are still very relevant.

In concrete terms, there is still time to rectify some of the most obvious *lacunae* in the Work Programme, as those parts of the text that relate to 2015 are at this stage on an indicative basis only. While we understand that significant and substantive revisions for 2015 are no longer possible, it is possible to make small changes that will open-up the 2015 Work Programme to allow for at least a certain integration of the human and social dimension. In the attached, we propose some such minor changes with potentially major impact. However, it is very important that these are more than cosmetic re-phrasings; evaluators should be instructed to take this component seriously. In addition, this should only be regarded as a temporary, emergency measure. In the 2016-2017 Work Programme, the cultural and social dimensions should be thoroughly integrated as scientific resources throughout the texts.

At this crucial stage in the implementation of the Horizon 2020 Challenges, it is essential that our concerns are seriously addressed by all Advisory Groups concerned. **We call upon you to urge the relevant staff in your Directorate-General to treat this matter with the utmost priority**. In particular, we hereby ask you to ensure that our earlier recommendations, as well as the concrete suggestions attached to this letter, are being duly taken into consideration.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor Kirsten Drotner, Chair of the Science Europe Scientific Committee for the Humanities

Professor Thomas Risse, Chair of the Science Europe Scientific Committee for the Social Sciences

Cc:

- Dr Robert-Jan Smits, Director-General of the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation

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