Focus on ITRE Committee's
"The Assessment of Horizon 2020 Implementation in View of its Interim Evaluation and the Framework Programme 9 proposal" (2016/2147(INI)).

The ITRE Committee has recognised that Social Sciences and Humanities research is fundamental for addressing many of the most pressing societal challenges of today, and which should feature in the planning for the 9th Framework Programme. The Committee also recognised the value added of SSH research for an holistic approach to research across the current challenges, which draws on the widest set of expertise and reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring that research on society and the social impact of research are better integrated in FP9.

The European Alliance for SSH welcomes the publication of the latest report of the ITRE Committee on the assessment of Horizon 2020 and a proposal for Framework Programme 9. In the report, the ITRE encourages the forthcoming debate in the Parliament to pay attention to some key issues, which are relevant for both the current and the next framework programmes. Although it is much too early to draw conclusions on the impact of Horizon 2020, we welcome the following priorities and recommendations made by the ITRE committee:

- *"Whereas the economic and financial crisis was a determining factor in the design of H2020, new current challenges (such as populism, inequalities, migration and terrorism) and new political and economic paradigms are likely to shape the next research programme; The SSH research is fundamental to studying new challenges such as terrorism, populism, migration flows and inequality".*
  EASSH strongly supports the call made by the ITRE Committee tosupport such themes that are essential to European citizens and European democracies.

- *"Social and healthcare challenges require greater effort and a holistic vision; clear responses are needed to demographic changes, the rise in chronic diseases, precision medicine or access to technologies, making healthcare and social service systems sustainable. Public health, prevention, environmental health, technology, digitalisation and the relationship between health and society must all fit into an overall framework offering an effective, comprehensive and efficient response through the reforms needed in the EU's welfare system."*

In addressing societal challenges, EASSH supports the ITRE committee's call for SSH research contributions to be fully integrated with all other scientific disciplines in order to set a genuine and effective policy for interdisciplinarity.

- *"Recalls that SSH integration means SSH research in interdisciplinary projects and not an ex-post add-on to otherwise technological projects, and that the most pressing problems faced by the EU require methodological research that is more conceptually focused on SSH;* **EASSH welcomes the ITRE Committee's recognition that SSH must be an equal partner with other disciplines throughout the research cycle. EASSH proposes that this will be facilitated by the incorporation of a project evaluation sub-criterion in this regard.**

- *"European funding need to remain funding for both Research and Innovation and must avoid to create a deep divide between for example the European Research Council and the European Innovation Council".*
  EASSH supports this statement of the ITRE committee and stresses the importance of having different instruments available to the best minds in Europe to generate new ideas and new solutions and advocates the need for collaborative research, which represents a strong aspect of EU added value in research and innovation.

The ITRE Committee in the evaluation of H2020 and in the very first recommendations for Framework Programme 9 has clearly recognised the contribution required from social and humanistic researchers to addressing the challenges we face. Given the growing recognition within the policy community of the need to take the 'holistic' approach, this requires contributions from the full range of fields and disciplines, including the social sciences and the humanities.

EASSH strongly supports the continued emphasis on excellence as the basis of funding in framework programmes and urges that all necessary steps are taken to ensure that the highest scientific standards are maintained in holistic cross-disciplinary work programmes, on the basis of the participation of relevant experts from the range of scientific areas concerned.

In this discussion, we would encourage consideration of the conclusions of the report "*The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet*" (published by the UN in January 2016). In this paper we see the setting out of an agreed approach to identifying clear challenges, many of which are SSH driven and need to be addressed as such. The report recognises that the

challenge for society is not simply to undertake more measurement in the hope that simple solutions will be revealed, similarly it must be acknowledged that a technological fix cannot solve most problems. The challenges need to be understood in far greater depth, through which we can hope to generate disruptive innovation and creativity to address society's needs on a large scale.

Europe needs to meet immediate political, social, cultural and economic challenges such as weakening democracies, migration, terrorism, political extremism, youth unemployment, inequalities and war at its borders. These challenges require reconsideration of what Europe is and what it can or cannot do in a democratic future. Furthermore, the European policy for technological innovation needs to integrate from the outset political, social, cultural and economic dimensions in genuine interdisciplinary efforts. FP9 must include these aspects in order to meet the needs of Europe.

The European Alliance for SSH would like to thank the ITRE Committee to retain all those fundamental observations in their report and we remain available to support the Commission in designing the future steps to improve H2020 and to design the next Framework Programme with other stakeholders.