

Resources for clusters in Horizon Europe

“Innovation investment must rise to match global ambitions.”

President Ursula Von der Leyen

EASSH calls on Member states to maintain the ambition to transform European society by investing no less than 1.11% GDP in Europe. Such investment will support investment of a minimum of €98bn in Research, Innovation and Education, which can be transformative.

EASSH calls for greater equity across the clusters of Horizon Europe and for the intervention areas to be resourced according to the contribution made to addressing the issues affecting the lives of all EU citizens.

Europe’s future progress will not only depend on new technologies and new products, but also on securing a new ‘social contract’ that balances citizen’s wellbeing alongside economic development. The adoption of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework demonstrates a new commitment by the EU to placing social challenges at the top of the agenda. Horizon Europe provides the opportunity to better understand what drives the social dynamics that underpin the SDGs and provide evidence for more effective policies. If Europe is going to meet the needs of citizens by better understanding these social processes then these issues **ought to be of equal significance for research investment**; just as much as other technical, environmental and health challenges. These issues are of high importance to **our citizens and so deserve comparable resources in Horizon Europe.**

Social Challenges – *Europa novi te*

EASSH calls on the European Commission, Members of the European Parliament and the Member States to reaffirm that many of the challenges we face are socially driven with roots in the underlying social dynamics. To tackle these challenges, we need a deeper understanding of how European society is changing. We need to know how change affects different nations, communities and individuals across the EU. We are transitioning into a period where it is no longer good policy to allow rapid technology-driven change without understanding the social impact of technology – whether positive or negative. Furthermore, not all changes are linked to new technologies. We need a deeper understanding of all the forces that are reshaping society; it is therefore important that Horizon Europe gives weight to the examination and understanding of society, fundamental for building a sustainable future.

The current discussions around investment across different clusters do not reflect the equal importance of investment in understanding society and cultures. **The strong and diverse SSH communities we collectively represent call on the EU institutions to ensure equal weight is given to ‘social’ clusters and missions in Horizon Europe**

The costs of research

It is hard to ignore the case for continued investment in social and humanistic research, which can improve our understanding of how EU society is changing and help to meet the

sustainable development goals. Policy makers also acknowledge the contribution of SSH research but in the current proposal of Horizon Europe the level of investment remains considerably lower in those clusters with a focus on social issues, where social researchers will be most apparent. Other scientific fields working on technology and medicine in other Cluster will benefit from significantly higher investment. For too long the justification has been that there is hierarchy of costs in different fields of research. We believe this mantra repeated time and time again is an out-dated idea about the relative costs of the underlying research. In our paper [*All FP9 Global Challenges must be more equally resourced*](#) we demonstrated that this assumption is not true. The real driver of research costs is scientific methods, which are less specific to a given set of disciplines and scientific enquiries. **Therefore we advocate that the aims of the calls and the relevance of collaborative research for human and EU citizens' wellbeing ought to guide the consideration for clusters' budget.**

Investing in excellence – the ‘value for money’ argument

Numerous reports tell us that Horizon 2020 is a highly competitive programme, where only the very best projects are funded. This is indicated by the proposal success rates, which range from 20% to 5% across the different societal challenges. The very low success rates are all the more apparent for teams and consortia applying to the Societal Challenge “Inclusive, reflective and innovative societies” (SC6).

Challenges	Success rate (%)
SC 4	18.0
SC 2	13.0
SC 3	11.6
SC 5	10.0
SC 7	9.9
SC 1	9.1
SC 6	5.4

Data Source: Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020, p.87

What this table does not show is just how much excellent and potentially beneficial research is not being funded. Anyone familiar with Horizon 2020 knows that the chance of any one proposal being successful depends on a complex array of factors but is affected by two variables: the quality of the proposal obviously but also the overall budget for the programme. From the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020, we know that “the demand vastly outstrips supply... An additional €62.4bn would have been needed to fund all the proposals evaluated as high quality “ (Interim evaluation of Horizon 2020, p.85).

EASSH made an in-depth study to better understand what is not revealed by a simple success rate statistic. We examined the results of calls and the proposals submitted to Societal Challenge 6 since the start of Horizon 2020. We identified that to receive funding for a proposal in SC6 a score of over 14 out of 15 was required in most cases; in some specific calls the restricted funding allowed only a few projects scoring 15 to be supported. Across the different calls for Research and Innovation Activity projects, a score of 14 out of 15 represented only a 45% chance of a proposal being funded. Our analysis shows that a very large number of potentially world-class projects were not being funded in SC6.

Data from the Interim Evaluation and our analysis of the applications and projects funded under SC6 suggest that if the success rate had been lifted to 11% —*i.e.* the average success

rate across Horizon 2020— an additional €600m would have been needed, and extrapolated to the end of Horizon 2020, an amount closer to €1bn in additional funding.

All these clearly indicate that (a) **the high quality of SSH proposals to calls would have justified for a significant increase in funding without reducing the quality of the research being funded, (b) there was a significant underfunding of a substantial part of the programme, (c) there is a large reservoir of SSH research capacity in EU.**

Horizon Europe must therefore reflect three important dimensions: **(1) ensure that clusters have a more balanced allocation of funding, thus reflecting the true concerns of EU citizens; (2) ensure an adequate level of investment where world-class research is identified, (3) ensure equivalent success rates across clusters.**

Horizon Europe so far

We are concerned that the current design of Horizon Europe does not show a significant improvement with respect to Horizon 2020. In the most recent budget proposals for clusters, both the cluster for Health and the cluster for Societies have the lowest budgets of all clusters. Again, in Horizon Europe the clusters dealing with the issues of greatest concern to citizens appear to have the lowest allocation of resources. We are concerned that lessons have not been learned in the discussions for Horizon Europe.

Investing in the future of science

We question the willingness of the EU Member States to invest in the future of European science, not only in the human capital but also in the new technologies that are helping to reshape the way we do research. New technology, new scientific methods, big data and open science policies have impacted scientific investigations and research practices in all disciplinary areas. Perhaps the greatest change has been seen in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH). **Big data analysis, the use of MRI for behavioural studies, satellites used to map and measure economic growth, laser scanned data for archaeology, and in general digitalisations have changed not just the scale of the results, but profoundly transformed the methodologies and the training of all SSH scholars.** Just as any other fields, SSH are finding innovative tools to conduct research, and many of these are new and expensive. If funding ‘caps’ are applied to the SSH research based on historic norms, then Europe will not be able to access the research at the cutting edge, which could have a profound impact of the way we describe, understand and address social and human processes.

Moreover, **cross-challenge evidence suggests that funding in Horizon 2020 supported the costs of researchers, who are performing largely similar research tasks across the different challenges and using similar methods across the different research fields.** EASSH demonstrated that there is no inherent difference in the cost of researchers in SSH compared to other scientific fields (*see [All FP9 Global Challenges must be more equally resourced](#)*).

EASSH calls on Horizon Europe: (a) to reduce the imbalance of funding between clusters, and (b) to guarantee within each cluster a fair distribution based on number of proposals within the areas of intervention as, for example, is the allocation method by the ERC across the three scientific domains.