

New Horizons: Research on Societies in Future European Research Funding

Brussels, September 2018. The Conference room at the Representation of the State of Hessen to the EU is getting more and more crowded. What once was the initiative of some EU liaison officers at German Universities – Research on Societies in Europe (ROSE) - has increasingly gained attention in Brussels. On 27th September ROSE invited the European Commission, researchers and stakeholders at national and European level to an intensive exchange on the role of the Social Sciences and the Humanities in the future Framework Programme Horizon Europe and provided an evaluation of the first Proposal published by the European Commission in June 2018.



The organization team (from left to right: Ursula Schlichter, Geny Piotti, Nicole Birkle, and Christian Veldman)

„No doubt that the Commission proposal accounts for crucial issues for contemporary Europe, such as democracy or social inclusion. Nevertheless, there is still potential for improvement“, as the event organization team argues. „Education should be included among the issues to be addressed in research at European level, Research on Societies and on Security should better build up two different clusters. Finally, a more balanced budget allocation and a less technology-driven approach across all clusters would help focusing on the analysis of societal challenges and the production of social innovation“.

Challenges

After three scientific keynotes it was immediately clear: Europe is being confronted with big challenges that can only be addressed if European research funding leaves more room for Research on Societies.

Jürgen Neyer, European University Viadrina, Frankfurt Oder, calls for a **‘Roadmap for Europe’** in the field of democracy research. What holds Europeans together? What is the future of democracy in Europe in the context of increasing illiberal tendencies, social fragmentation and growing weight of artificial intelligence in democratic life? Answers to these questions have never been more urging.

Jutta Mata, University of Mannheim, brings case examples from her work as a psychologist and makes clear that trainings for counselors developed from basic research in **sociology and health psychology can save lives** as much as medical research does. However, reaching a wide-scale impact on society requires time. A rethinking of the project lifetime in EU funded projects is highly recommended.

Beate Hörr, Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, finds clear words when she states that functioning democratic systems, social inclusion and a reasonable approach to the digital media depend on citizens’ education. Therefore, for her it would have been essential that **research on education was a constitutive part of EU research agenda** not only as special area of intervention in Horizon Europe Pillar 2 but also as a Mission on its own.



Three keynotes, three clear statements: 2. from left: Jürgen Neyer, Frankfurt Oder with Loukas Stemitsiotis, European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. In the middle: Jutta Mata, University of Mannheim. On the right: Beate Hörr, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

Budget and Impact

The debate among researchers and stakeholders has stressed that research on today's political, economic and societal challenges needs an **adequate budget** in Horizon Europe, which, unfortunately, has not been accounted for in the current proposal by the European Commission. The scientific community is aware of the fact that research results should be transferred into society in a stronger and effective way. However, an increased **impact of collaborative research as much as of individual basic research** projects such as in the ERC programme can only be provided if a **critical mass of projects** on genuinely societal issues will be financed in the first place.

Impact on society of applied, technology-driven research can only work through the cooperation with the Social Sciences and Humanities (**SSH integration**). Such **cooperation should be on equal terms** and account for genuine research questions from both sides. Therefore, specific funding lines should be set up in order to strengthen cooperation of social science and humanities research with natural sciences and engineering and to improve network and synergy opportunities among existing projects that deal with similar issues from different perspectives (mainly technical or social).

The European Commission is aware of the fact that urgent societal challenges cannot be adequately addressed without the engagement of the Social Sciences and the Humanities and stronger synergies among different European Funding Programmes, as stated by Alice Xenia Rajewsky (Head of Sector Humanities, ERCEA) and Loukas Stemitsiotis (DG-EMPL). The mutual discussion of these topics in view of Horizon Europe has taken place at the right moment“, Harald Hartung (Head of Unit, DG-RTD) concluded, taking home further ideas about strengthening research on society in Europe.



From the left: Peter Fisch, Harald Hartung, European Commission DG Research and Innovation, Alice Xenia Rajewsky, ERC Executive Agency

For further information on ROSE and its future initiatives please contact Nicole Birkle: rose-eu@uni-mainz.de

*Thanks to the participants

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