



Cultivating Europe in Disruptive Times

Europe is currently facing a myriad of interconnected challenges that are both social and technical in nature: demographic shifts, migration, social inequality, erosion of democratic processes, climate change and the digital transformation of society driven by artificial intelligence (AI). Additionally, the alarming rise in conflicts and wars along our borders demand reflected answers rooted in European values. Disciplines from the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) are crucial for understanding the social, cultural, political, and ethical dimensions of these complex challenges. They provide essential insights into human behaviour, governance, ethics, culture and societal resilience and thus a baseline for solutions to tackle the pressing societal and global challenges of our time.

ROSE is a network of liaison Officers at German Universities and Research Institutions and is part of a broader EU-wide network promoting the perspective of the Social Sciences and Humanities in the EU R&I landscape. ROSE members influence research policies in their own institutions, administrate projects and have direct contact to the researchers, know their interests and expectations. ROSE aims to strengthen the voice and the role of the Social Sciences and the Humanities and to shape the future EU Framework programmes and the European Research Area.

The Power of European Values. The strength of SSH Collaborative Research

It is challenging to lobby for the immaterial values that the Social Sciences and Humanities stand for. Nevertheless, this is necessary. Social Sciences and Humanities write the meta-text of European ideas, beliefs and values that influence action of individuals, groups and governments in our societies. Such ideas, beliefs and values are in danger. Everyday we are witnessing attempts to re-write and jeopardize the “European script” that builds on democracy, solidarity and human rights. By reflecting on our societies across borders, collaborative research in the Social Sciences and the Humanities is an investment in Europe. It is a powerful instrument of knowledge generation and reinforcement of European identity with genuine European added value.

Where collaborative SSH research matters

Collaborative research in the Social Sciences and Humanities tackles important questions that matter in our lives and that of future generations. It underpins the development of strategies aimed at:

- 1. Mediating Peace Processes:** By integrating cultural and historical knowledge, SSH research fosters trust between conflicting parties, supports the development of conflict-sensitive policies, and involves communities in post-conflict reconstruction to promote sustainable and locally accepted solutions.
- 2. Strengthening Democratic Processes:** By addressing trends such as declining trust in institutions, the rise of populism, and the spread of disinformation, SSH research strengthens democratic processes, promotes transparency, and encourages citizen participation.
- 3. Facilitating Migrant Integration:** SSH offers frameworks for addressing migration and issues of integration into European societies fostering democratic values, human rights, and societal cohesion.
- 4. Demographic Changes and related Future Health Challenges:** Research in sociology, anthropology, and political sciences is essential for understanding social determinants of healthcare challenges such as demographic change, or coping with future pandemics. It supports the creation of inclusive societies that effectively manage demographic changes, such as aging population and migration, whilst preventing the exacerbation of social divides.

5. **Promoting Environmental Responsibility:** SSH fosters shifts in cultural attitudes towards environmental policies by engaging communities and developing inclusive models of climate governance.
6. **Ensuring Ethical AI Development:** SSH is vital in shaping responsible digital governance to ensure the ethical development and use of AI across diverse sectors, from democracy to industry. Moreover, SSH has an important role to play in supporting civil society in the critical assessment of AI developments and expanding expertise in recognizing fake news or deep fakes.

Strengthening SSH collective Research to tackle Europe's global Challenges

In times of tight budgets, there is often a tendency to prioritize investments in technology over human-centred sciences. However, investing in the future and the unity of our societies around the European values is more than necessary, especially in socially and politically disruptive times. Investing in such unity requires to strengthen the exchange on our joint history, narratives, destiny and values.

For the next Framework Programme, **ROSE recommends to reinforce collaborative research in the Social Sciences and Humanities** through the implementation of the following policies:

Increased Funding for SSH-Centred Projects on crucial societal challenges:

- ROSE recommends to increase the funding for collaborative research in the Social Sciences especially around the topics of peace keeping, democracy, migration, environmental responsibility, demographic change and ethical AI development.

Consistent SSH Integration in Evaluation Processes:

- ROSE advocates for the systematic integration of SSH experts across all pertinent domains that examine the social causes and consequences of technological development. Reflection on underlying values and ideas behind behaviours should be an integral component of research across all fields.

Creation of a Societal Challenges Council (SCC):

- ROSE has followed discussions on the creation of a Societal Challenges Council (SCC) and sees potential to design an institution similar to the ERC and EIC. The Council should design and monitor funding instruments that amplify the societal impact of projects. ROSE supports the creation of both thematic top-down and bottom-up types of calls. A strong participation of SSH researchers in the Council must be guaranteed.

Fostering Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship:

- Inspired by the ERC Proof of Concepts, small consortia involving SSH researchers from funded projects could apply for "Fast Tracks to Transition", as part of the SCC portfolio. This would enable the transfer of SSH project ideas into social innovation in areas such as services, creative industry, and NGO engagement. Social Entrepreneurship, in particular, offers a means to implement solutions addressing social, cultural, or environmental issues.

SSH research effectively contributes to navigating Europe's complex challenges, fostering a resilient and united future for all its citizens, which is even more necessary in times of disruption. By prioritizing SSH collaborative research, the European Commission will ensure that Europe's research agenda is not only technologically advanced but also socially inclusive, ethically sound, and culturally aware. In doing so, SSH can play a critical role in shaping a future where innovation, human well-being and peace go hand in hand.

If you want to support this Position Paper feel free to contact us at rose-eu@lists.uni-mainz.de