



NET4SOCIETY Position paper

on the

Common Strategic Framework for Future Research and Innovation Funding

Written response to the public consultation on the European Commission Green Paper

“From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding”

May 2011

NET4SOCIETY is the transnational network of National Contact Points (NCPs) for Socio-Economic Sciences and the Humanities (SSH) in the 7th EU Framework Programme (FP7). The network, funded under the SSH Theme of FP7, was first established in 2008 and has been expanding ever since. Currently 58 SSH NCPs from Europe and beyond are involved in the network. The SSH research community is one of the largest research communities in Europe.

NET4SOCIETY welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Green Paper “From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding”. We wish to give **particular emphasis to the questions** in the Consultation that focus on **how to foster innovation, deliver on the Europe 2020 strategy and tackle the societal challenges** that Europe and the world are facing. **These issues are** of specific relevance to the societal aspects of EU research – **the domain of SSH research**.

The views we are presenting are those of NET4SOCIETY, which include views that have been captured in the context of the report “**SSH Experiences with FP7 – a Commentary**”, a recent survey of 450 Social Sciences and Humanities researchers (The final report on the survey is available under <http://www.net4society.eu/public/survey>). Since numerous questions in this survey correspond with the Green Paper questions, we are using the survey results as a base for our response where applicable. As the NCPs organised in the NET4SOCIETY network are in daily contact with researchers from their national SSH communities, their experiences from these client contacts are included as well. NET4SOCIETY has asked SSH NCPs to share their individual answers to the Green Paper Consultation with the network. In addition, a number of SSH researchers have forwarded their consultation answers to NET4SOCIETY. The integrated input from these information sources forms the base for the NET4SOCIETY position paper.

Making Innovation Work for Europe

NET4SOCIETY supports the objectives and targets set out in the EU 2020 Strategy. The **prerequisite for achieving these goals is the interlocking of research and innovation**. Both are tools for achieving the targets set out in the EU Strategy. Innovation, however, is a

tool and not a goal in and of itself – it must be embedded in the needs not only of industry but also of society – in the context of research it must include all facets, from research discoveries, to applications, economic strategies, political decisions and social and cultural preferences and values. A holistic, innovative definition of “innovation” is crucial to the success of these tools. In order to tackle societal challenges and to strengthen competitiveness the Common Strategic Framework therefore needs to lay down and consequently **apply a definition of innovation that includes social innovation**. The concept of “**social innovation**” must be inherent and it will be imperative to the success of the EU’s future research agenda. Cultural and societal knowledge is essential for such a broadening of the concept of innovation.

But, what is social innovation? Social innovations seek answers to social problems by identifying and delivering new forms of organisations, interactions and services that improve the quality of life of individuals and communities. “In a nutshell... it is for the people and with the people. It is about solidarity and responsibility. It is good for society and it enhances society’s capacity to act.” (José Manuel Durão Barroso, 17 March 2011). Therefore, **it is pertinent that a European research programme – funded by European taxpayers – includes the needs of diverse and complex societies in its focus and design – enabling societies to cope in times of transitions**. How else can intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth be turned into a way of life for the people of Europe?

The Common Strategic Framework also needs to take consistently into account the societal aspects of all innovation processes. Meeting society’s and not only industry’s needs is essential in this approach. As a consequence, the ‘full innovation cycle’ as such encompasses societal pre-conditions of research on the one hand, and the uptake of innovations not only in markets, but in society at large on the other hand. It is a major scientific challenge to Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH) as well as their core competence to analyse and bring to the fore the relevance of innovations in markets, and the roles of markets embedded in society as a whole. Insights into society and culture, as can be provided by SSH research, are central to enhance successful and appreciable implementation of the various kinds of innovations.

The competitiveness of Europe is increasingly determined by the ability to integrate and employ innovation processes in economic, societal, and cultural measures capable to advance smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Europe’s innovation power has great impact on our quality of life and on the societal challenges we face. Therefore knowledge and science-based insights into technological as well as non-technological innovation processes are of great importance and of strategic relevance for the future research and innovation programmes at European level. Empirical research, as well as theoretical clarity concerning structure and function of innovation systems, their interdependences and interactions, are important on the pathway (the ‘value chain’) from understanding demands and conditions of change and conducive innovation, on to beneficial research and likewise outcomes in markets and society (i.e. in private, public and civil society sectors). Therefore **social sciences have to play an important role, since technological innovation is always accompanied by social impact**, which may lead directly to social change or will in many cases require social innovations as a precondition for new technologies taking effect.

A serious shortcoming of the European innovation system is, among other things, the hesitant uptake of innovations by European societies demonstrating various degrees of more or less (at least: different) innovation friendly cultures. Thus, the promotion of innovation requires innovating Europe itself – again an objective that will not be attainable without key contributions from SSH. There are numerous bottlenecks between ideas and strategies for innovations before they may become implemented in daily life (micro level of society), public and private organisations (meso level of the society, e.g. companies, social partner’ institutions), or even on the macro level of major societal institutions (such as health, social security and environmental protection systems). **More effort (and funding) should be**

invested in enhancing social change in order to motivate society to accept and uptake technological, non-technological, social and eco- innovations. In order to direct social change towards such openness, explicit social innovations must be researched. Such a social innovation process enhancement must include insights from the socio-economic sciences and humanities, as well as a much higher degree of citizens' participation in RTD and innovation processes. SSH can provide applicable methodologies.

Cultural and societal knowledge is also a major source of creativity and innovation in itself. Sufficient inclusion of SSH perspectives both in the more technological-driven societal challenges that are addressed in the CSF, and in measures aiming at strengthening competitiveness is therefore vital. **In many cases social innovations also precede the development of innovative technologies and economic processes.** Such interrelations, e.g. innovations in education or in managing demographic change and their share in favouring new technologies and their implementation in markets, are not yet focused appropriately in research programmes. It is the domain of SSH to extend innovation research towards such hitherto rather ignored topics.

The above mentioned aspects of innovation should be clearly addressed by the future structure of the framework and by future research topics.

To address societal challenges and to foster innovation, **both curiosity-driven and agenda-driven activities are needed.** It is vital that research results from the two approaches will be better connected in the future and that research agendas pick-up results from curiosity-driven activities. To address the EU2020 strategy, agenda-driven approaches should – with 70% percent of the funding – be at centre stage of the Common Strategic Framework. The agenda-setting procedure for the societal challenges must be transparent and integrate stakeholders and researchers. Agenda-driven activities should also include bottom-up research opportunities in the sense of setting general goals but not prescribing the approach to be taken to achieve these goals.

Stakeholders and users should be integrated in bodies that manage research funding and/or make strategic decisions on the focus and priorities of research funding. For socio-economic sciences and humanities the public sector and public administration (including policy makers) at all levels and civil society organisations are important stakeholders. **Funding instruments should facilitate the participation of Civil Society Organisations by taking into account their non-profit character** and allowing for a one hundred percent funding of their eligible project costs. The current funding scheme “Research for the Benefits of Specific Groups – Civil Society Organisations” was adapted from a funding scheme for the integration of Small and Medium-sizes Enterprises and does not fit the needs of non-profit Civil Society Organisations.

To foster innovation, both larger and smaller projects are needed. The project size should suit the objectives of the research topic and the expected impact. **The major focus, however, should be on small and medium-scale targeted projects and on the funding of more than one project per topic to ensure a variety of perspectives.** These smaller projects could cooperate and might be connected via coordination actions. Such a framework suggests more room for innovative approaches and less effort regarding project management than the funding of one single large project. Possibilities for smaller projects to evolve into larger projects or the option to fund follow-up projects, e.g. with a focus on dissemination, would also stimulate innovation.

With regard to simplification, issues of inconsistency in interpretation and implementation of rules within the European Commission's administration need to be addressed and overcome. A more trust-based approach based on good practice in each Member State should be the future guideline.

Tackling Societal Challenges

With a comprehensive, interdisciplinary and comparative research approach, research can help meet present and future societal challenges, while identifying and developing opportunities for innovation in the context of society. The necessity for the Common Strategic Framework to focus research on societal and economic aspects of innovation processes has already been emphasised and reasoned above. Research on the dynamics of social change needs to form the overall framework. Societal transitions, their underlying dynamics, their inherent opportunities and threats as well as options to manage these transitions are aspects of upmost importance for all societal challenges that Europe and the world are facing. Only the establishment of an independent research scheme (“Challenge”), focusing on societal challenges and innovation in this societal context, can ensure a holistic approach to the uniquely interlinked goals of the EU 2020 Strategy to promote intelligent, sustainable, and smart growth.

In order to achieve these goals, it is necessary that a society-oriented and society-driven “challenge” is included in the Common Strategic Framework. Such a challenge needs to build upon the achievements of past EU research, and incorporate new dimensions and areas of activities. This challenge not only focuses on European societies and its people (I. Building Resilient Societies) but also on the new and arising responsibilities of the European Union in a volatile political and economic environment (III. Actor Europe). It recognizes the necessity of research focusing on explicit targets of the EU 2020 Strategy (II. Social Innovation, IV. Education and Employment). These four thematic areas will be enhanced and supported by a number of horizontal activities including infrastructure. Infrastructures in the area of Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities are still underdeveloped and in need of further promotion and funding. These infrastructures and their continuing development are in many cases necessary pre-conditions for the successful undertaking of research in the areas of society and economy.

For the implementation of this challenge a minimum of 5 billion € will be necessary.

Proposal for a Societal Challenge:

“Understanding Europe in a global context – transitions towards innovative and inclusive Societies”

I. Building Resilient Societies

- Smart and sustainable growth
- Societies in transition
- Demography (changing life circles and ageing)
- Diversity – inequality (working title / harnessing diversity, overcoming inequality)
- Cultural change, Memory and identity

II. Social innovation

- Social innovation in the public sector
- Social entrepreneurship
- Social dimension of grand challenges
- Creativity and innovation
- New media and networks
- Diversity and migration

III. “Actor Europe”

- Europe in the world
- Governance issues
- Democratisation and development
- Human rights and global values
- Conflicts prevention and global justice

IV. Education and employment policies in the modern economy

- Intergenerational equity
- Innovative Educational systems (Educating Europe)
- Challenges for European welfare states (employment policies)

Horizontal (Capacity and support activities):

- Foresight
- Indicators
- International networks
- Infrastructure
- Capacities

In-depth and comparative research in the above listed areas that refer to the Europe 2020 strategy goals will create a solid knowledge-base for informing policy-makers of different levels and sectors. Only the inclusion of such a society-centred “challenge” within the Common Strategic Framework that focuses on the contributions of socio-economic sciences and humanities within a multidisciplinary frame will produce the research results within these areas that can provide the necessary insights for decision-makers.

As a number of societal challenges and social transitions that Europe is facing are indeed of a global character, **it is essential that research also takes into account this global context**, as suggested in the research topics for the thematic area “Actor Europe”. Such research has to include international partners from *Third Countries* that are not EU member states or associated to the Framework Programmes, To facilitate their participation in the Common Strategic Framework there should be a focus on smaller scale projects, which can serve as an elementary platform for closer cooperation between researchers from EU and *Third Countries*. Smaller projects provide better chances for *Third Countries* to launch deeper communication and understanding with the European research community. Equal rights and obligations should be rendered to all the consortium members, and the project success should be attributed to the consortium as a whole. There is also room for a more profound involvement of stakeholders from both EU and *Third Countries* in order to improve the impact upon both European and the *Third Countries* societies and to support the dissemination of innovations.

Contact

NET4SOCIETY

www.net4society.eu

Coordinator: Angela-Schindler Daniels, DLR

contact@net4society.eu



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
European Research Area



Funded under Socio-economic Sciences & Humanities

NET4SOCIETY is an FP7 project funded by the European Commission.