Success stories in SSH-STEM collaboration

The contribution of Social Sciences and Humanities to Environmental Research

As a cross-cutting issue of broad relevance, Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) research was not only fully integrated into each of the priorities of **Horizon 2020,** but the effective integration of Social Sciences and Humanities will also be a principle through the programme cycle in **Horizon Europe** including clusters, missions, and partnerships.

Integrating the socio-economic dimension of grand societal problems into the design, development and implementation of research itself, and of new technologies, can help find solutions to societal issues and enhance the impact of such activities for society.

SSH can provide essential contributions to **Environmental research**:
✓To tackle the **cultural, behavioural, socio-economic and institutional change** needed to move to a more self-reliant and resource efficient economy
✓To understand and influence **citizens' behaviour** in order to face climate change and its consequent risks for citizens
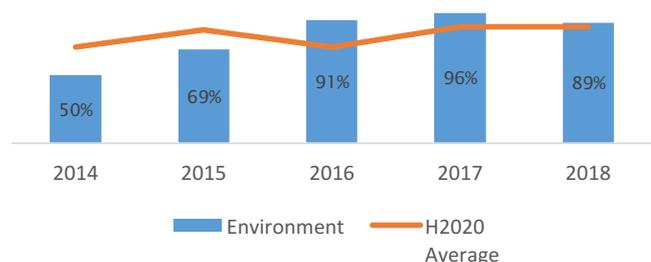
FACTS & FIGURES

Collaboration between SSH and STEM researchers in H2020 has been gradually increasing in the period 2014-18: the proportion of projects funded under SSH-flagged topics with at least one SSH partner increased from 50% to 89% while the budget going to SSH partners went from 13% to 23%.

In terms of SSH expertise across the 36 funded projects in 2018, the most prevalent disciplines were Economics (22%), Political Science (12%) as well as Business/Marketing (11%).

Source: Monitoring reports (2014-18) on Integration of Social Sciences and Humanities in Horizon 2020 (EC)

Proportion of projects with SSH partners

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Environment	50%	69%	91%	96%	89%

■ Environment ── H2020 Average

SSH: Social Science and Humanities
STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

RURITAGE: a success story of collaboration between SSH and STEM researchers

Interview with Simona Tondelli, Project Coordinator of Ruritage

Why did you decide to integrate SSH in your project ?

The integration of SSH was encouraged by the call, but to us this was intrinsically linked to the topic, so it was natural to build an interdisciplinary consortium involving both STEM and SSH.

How did the process of SSH integration go from proposal writing to project implementation?

It has been easy to establish contacts with SSH organisations, both from previous contacts and also from publications or desk research on the topic key words.
We didn't experience real challenges in integrating SSH because this is the way we normally work as urban and regional planners: **using scientific methods and tools to make changes at social and institutional level** and collaborating in large and diverse teams keeping together experts of different disciplines.

What is the added value of integrating SSH in your project and what is the contribution from SSH partners?

SSH allowed us **to better understand participative processes and stakeholder engagement** in RURITAGE Rural Heritage Hubs, thanks to the integration of different disciplines and actors, adopting a transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach. The SSH partners have contributed in tackling the cultural, behavioural, socio-economic and institutional changes building upon cultural heritage, history, culture and identity.

Which are the factors that facilitate collaboration between different disciplines and which are the factors that hamper it?

Effective dialogue and direct collaboration with the relevant stakeholders are important for consolidating a transdisciplinary approach. Factors that hamper this collaboration are **reciprocal diffidence** between STEM and SSH researchers and the need to step outside from one's "comfort zone", that is, starting to work in a more undetermined way.

What would be your main recommendation for both researchers and EC?

✓For the researchers: embrace transdisciplinary projects. Even if it is more secure and probably easy to work within one's specific research field, transdisciplinary work allows to tackle more complex challenges and at the end is more satisfying.
✓For the European Commission: it is still needed to encourage a transdisciplinary approach, so this should be explicitly required in the research topics.

Ruritage

All over the world, rural areas tell us the story of a thousand of years long collaboration between nature and human society. These places embody unique examples of cultural and natural heritage, which not only needs to be safeguarded but also recognized as communities of sustainable development. The RURITAGE project turns rural areas into laboratories to demonstrate natural and cultural heritage as an engine for regeneration.
https://www.ruritage.eu/