

Submission on FP8 Green Paper on Common Strategic Framework

The National Committee for Geographical Sciences considers that in view of European needs of social and cultural cohesion, and the maintenance of a European social model and European identity based on its history, culture and multilingualism, it is necessary to enhance and support research endeavours in the social sciences and humanities.

The biggest issues facing our society are economic, social, cultural and political. The nomenclature of most government departments highlights the importance of social science issues for society and public administration: ministries of *finance, transport, health, education, social welfare* etc. The discipline of Geography especially across Europe contributes a lot of research to government departments much of it on very limited funding.

In a general sense Europe encompasses values such as social and cultural cohesion, social innovation, democracy and participation, gender equality, maintaining quality of life and the European social model. Striving for these values, and tackling existing and emerging societal challenges by European policy makers and civil society requires a sound scientific basis which only social science and humanities researchers can deliver.

Historical and spatial analyses are important in highlighting geographical and social inequalities and assisting policy makers in taking effective steps to reduce exclusion across Europe's regions.

Spatial sciences like Geography aim to monitor changes in regional inequalities and such things as land zoning with reference, for instance, to the future of cities and rural regions. Applied research on spatial processes and their effects on social and economic development in member states are concerned with the capture, storage, management, analysis and display of spatial data. Currently Geocomputation and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) represent some of the most strategically important contributions by the geographical social sciences to government and government policy in helping states understand what is going on in their societies, economies and landscapes.

There is already much collaboration between geographical and social science researchers on one hand and policy makers and public authorities on the other. Researchers cannot give simple answers, but highlight sound criteria according to which decisions should be taken and clarify consequences of policies. They thus enable policy makers and other actors to make decisions based on scientific evidence.

Why does research funding need to come from the European Union?

It makes sense to try and understand the society we live in and not to do everything based on anecdote and uninformed discourse. The European Research Area aims to create a European-wide open space for knowledge. Without European funding, cooperation projects with four to ten European partners would not be carried out. European research projects offer expertise to European actors such as policy makers and institutions. SSH build on comparison over time and space, necessitating transnational projects. We live in a time of fast societal changes. Therefore, research objects in SSH change rapidly, creating the necessity for interaction with colleagues from various countries to transfer insights to various Member States. Hence, there is a clear added value in European-wide collaborations which only become possible through European funding.

Geographical science, for instance, has engaged partners across Europe in the issue of Climate Justice. This is an issue which requires a broad European approach to internationalize the European Research Area and research links outside it. Historically Europe bears some responsibility for the creation of climate change, and now has a duty to reach out to the developing world in an effort to mitigate the most severe impacts. This can only be effectively undertaken at EU level and research in this area needs to be actively supported at European level.

In addition, International Relations theory and Geopolitics have been primarily concerned with the foreign policy postures of the Great Powers, yet most of the world consists of minor powers. EC supported research developing an account of the international strategies of minor powers would help to raise an appreciation of the potential for progressive engagement of smaller countries of Europe with the international world of states, multilateral institutions and transnational corporations.

SSH research has only begun in the 5th Framework Programme (FP5), but has seen a huge success in the scientific community. Trust in the stability of European funding needs to be sustained. SSH researchers themselves are an important part of civil society. Especially in the case of societal tensions and difficult political relationships, researchers can contribute to dialogue across groups with opposing views or borders.

Does not this cost too much?

Most public money is spent on social science issues and problems. Employment, economy, housing, environment, crime, health, planning, etc all require evidence-informed policy based on fundamental research aimed at understanding the issues in conceptual and practical terms. But in spite of the primacy of social, economic and cultural issues for government, most research funding is spent on ... Science. There should at least be disciplinary parity in funding. Science may create innovations that lead to jobs, but most jobs are service jobs, and most issues are socio-

economic. It makes sense to try and understand the society we live in - not to do everything on the basis of anecdote and uninformed argument. You can't have a smart economy, without a smart society and smart policy.

Though 50% of academic staff in most universities work in Social Science and Humanities, less than 2% of the Cooperation budget in FP7 was devoted to social science and humanities - €0.6 billion for SSH versus €9.1 billion for ICT).

The Interim Evaluation of FP7 by the independent expert group has shown that SSH projects reached the highest evaluation scores, both regarding the average total evaluation score and also specifically the criterium of scientific excellence. Despite these outstanding results, out of 3004 signed grant agreements, only 134 were channelled to SSH projects. This means that a large number of excellent research proposals could not be carried out due to funding limitations.

Therefore, the budget for the specific Cooperation programme for SSH needs to be doubled in FP8, ie., a budget of €1.2 billion needs to be allocated for the specific theme SSH, maintaining its status as independent, not auxiliary, to themes and programmes of the natural sciences or engineering. Even then, SSH would remain the least expensive theme in Cooperation and, assuming a total budget for FP8 of €90 billion, still receive less than 2% of the total budget of FP8.

SSH projects have proven to be very cost effective, in most cases, requiring only one to five million Euros. This demonstrates the added value through European funding: the European Union can foster world-class SSH research by using only a minimal share of its funding. When carrying out impact assessments of various FP7 instruments, the substantial difference in funding should be taken into account, as some individual projects and initiatives in FP7, which focused on natural science and engineering, received more than the entire SSH Cooperation budget.

Increasing the budget for SSH would also allow striking an improved balance of projects in social sciences on the one hand and humanities on the other.

It is of utmost importance that SSH will continue to have a budget independent from natural science and engineering, with an annual or biennial work programme dedicated to SSH projects in order to be able to address the multiplicity of societal issues facing European society. Topic selection should be made using a combination of a bottom-up (by the research community) and top-down (by the European political institutions and other relevant stakeholders) approach.