

## Making research work: SSH challenges for the EU Framework Programme Horizon 2020 and beyond

*"Understanding Europe in a global context  
– transitions towards innovative and inclusive societies"*



**An Open Letter to the European Commissioner for Research and Innovation,  
Máire Geoghegan-Quinn**

### Horizon 2020: Social Sciences and Humanities research provides vital insights for the future of Europe

A policy-oriented European research programme such as *Horizon 2020* must have at its heart the needs of Europe's diverse and complex societies. It must enable European societies to understand and to adapt to current and future transitions – in culture, in demography, in the economy, in the environment, in technology etc. – and to develop creative responses. It must generate new knowledge and enrich democratic debates about societal choices.

While for many questions, natural, human and social sciences need to join forces, there are also important societal and economic transformations, which can be described as Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)–centered challenges: they regard areas as diverse as education, gender, identity, intercultural dialogue, media, security, social innovation, to name but a few.

Similarly, only SSH research can address many of the key behavioural changes and cultural developments which provide the backdrop to the EU's current approach to "Tackling Grand Societal Challenges", such as for example changing mindsets and lifestyles, models for resilient and adaptive institutions, or the evolving position of Europe in a global context.

A diverse and European-minded SSH research environment can offer those analyses, insights and tools that are necessary to critically explore opportunities for and assess threats to sustainable societies.

The undersigned therefore request the inclusion of:

- a substantial and independent SSH-centered research programme (Challenge "Understanding Europe ...") into the new Framework Programme *Horizon 2020*;
- SSH- research into the programme development and implementation of all other Grand Societal Challenges, such as climate change, energy, food, health, security, or transport;

Daring to shape the Europe of the future does indeed require some bold decisions. In the immediate context of the new Framework Programme *Horizon 2020* the requirements are

- for the Challenge "Understanding Europe...": a dedicated budget of 5 billion Euro as discussed in the stakeholder workshops on *Horizon 2020* convened by the European Commission in summer 2011;
- for the diversity of approaches: a deliberate effort to involve in policy-relevant programmes leading SSH research from across the whole of Europe and beyond;
- for the sustainability of the research thus supported: involve diverse and forward-looking perspectives from different cultures, backgrounds and schools of thought to stimulate critical reflections and to better anticipate future societal challenges.

We are convinced that the European Commission and the European Parliament as well as national governments and parliaments will agree that a climate of sustainable and inclusive innovation in Europe can only be established, if European societies are conscious of their opportunities and constraints – this knowledge is generated by Social Sciences and Humanities research.

We are looking forward to building a European Research and Innovation Area where constructive exchanges mutually enrich society, policy and scientific research.