Strategic positioning of the socio-economic sciences and the humanities in the European Commission's Horizon 2020 programme

CPU recommendations, 12 January 2012

The French Rectors Conference (CPU), which represents 77 universities, 21 institutions of higher education, takes note of the proposals for Horizon 2020 objectives.

Committed to the development of European research, the CPU announces desired changes to the European Commission's proposals for Horizon 2020, presented to the Competitiveness Council on 5 and 6 December 2011.

1) The CPU wants new objectives to be defined for the "inclusive, innovative, and secure societies" challenge

Horizon 2020 is based on three priorities: "Scientific excellence," "General conditions of industrial leadership and competitiveness" and "Societal challenges."

The six "societal challenges" are geared to:

- Health, demographic change and well-being,
- Food security, sustainable agriculture, and the bio-economy,
- Secure, clean and efficient energy,
- Smart, "green" and integrated transport,
- Climate action, resource efficiency and raw materials; and
- Inclusive, innovative and secure societies.

The "inclusive, innovative and secure societies" challenge raises numerous questions and criticisms: it does not provide for satisfactory multi-disciplinary synergies, nor for the community of socio-economic studies and the humanities or for the community of ICT… thereby restricting the possibilities of collaborative research in the different disciplines.

The CPU consequently wants to see the objectives for "inclusive and innovative societies" separated from the objectives for "secure societies" by calling for a 7th challenge to be created.

- ➢ The CPU proposes that the 6th societal challenge should pertain to "inclusive and innovative societies" and the 7th societal challenge to "secure societies"

2) **Proposal to set an "inclusive and innovative societies" challenge**

As the socio-economic sciences and the humanities play a specific role in the understanding, forecasting and anticipation of changes to come in our societies, this societal challenge could, in the CPU's view, gear its work to:
- *inclusive societies:*
  - ✓ Culture, cultures, inter-cultural relations, art ;
  - ✓ Citizenship, constructing society, democracy, social ties, solidarity ;
  - ✓ Education, training, social group, equality, employment ;

✓ Europe, international; …

- *innovative societies*: forecasting activities, quantitative and qualitative understanding; non-technological innovation, innovation economy and social innovation, inter-disciplinary co-creation (information and communication science and technologies (ICST) and art, ICST and cognition, ICST and learning); development of economies and practices; human networks; ethics and society; innovative research methodologies; public policies, organisations and systems; supervision and study of -- particularly technical and technological – risk.

3) The CPU wants to see a balance struck between top-down and bottom-up strategies in all societal risks.

Whereas the CPU recognises the major role of the ERC and of the Marie Curie programmes, it wishes to strengthen and integrate the bottom-up approach proposed in this connection to the 7 societal challenges of the third priority of the Horizon 2020 programme.

➢ The CPU wants to see white calls for proposals published in each of the societal challenges.

4) The CPU is in favour of integrating the socio-economic sciences and the humanities in each of the societal challenges of the 3rd pillar of Horizon 2020.

➢ The CPU wants to see a proportion of the projects financed per societal challenge (apart from challenge 6) with a compulsory (predominant or secondary) dimension of the socio-economic sciences and the humanities;

5) Towards a "reinforcement" of a progressive toolbox

The CPU wants to see a platform established for the exchange of inter-disciplinary information on all pillar 3 challenges which should in particular group all European calls. The platform would enable a vertical, cross-sectional and horizontal reading of the three pillars of the Horizon 2020 programme and would thereby give greater visibility to the different disciplines, including the socio-economic sciences and the humanities, and would make it possible to coordinate research efforts better, particularly by:
- Deciphering the calls to list all potentially interested disciplines (e.g. "contribution of the socio-economic sciences and the humanities");
- Structuring the interconnection between potential partners and coordinators.

For its part, the CPU proposes greater visibility for the skills map of the universities, including in the socio-economic sciences and the humanities, to make their skills and capacities more transparent and thus to facilitate the deployment and use thereof for the market policy and society in general.

6) Instruments and timetable

By way of reminder, within the societal challenges, the CPU wishes to:

- Encourage collaborative research, which also brings innovation;
- Promote Intra- and inter-disciplinary networking;
- Promote small and medium-sized projects, functioning in part on a "bottom-up" basis without pre-established priorities to anticipate yet unknown socio-economic and human issues;
- Promote targeted co-operation schemes.

Certain instruments of a broader, general scope, proposed in the current Challenge 6, must be integrated under pillar 3 as a whole: these include activities relating to all societal challenges such as COST, INCO, Knowledge regions, intelligent specialisation issues, SIS, etc.