

People's Union

According to the Eurobarometer on the future of Europe, its citizens would like to see greater solidarity across the Union in addressing key challenges such as unemployment and social inequalities ([November 2017, the Future of Europe](#)). There is broad agreement by all stakeholders concerning the importance of a more open and inclusive debate about the future directions of the EU. However, our weak understanding of European society and the relative lack of reliable evidence for policy making impose major constraints on discussion and action. The ongoing elaboration of FP9 offers a unique window of opportunity to bring about a step change in our understanding of society. Together, **Civil Society Europe (CSE)** and the **European Alliance for Social Sciences and Humanities (EASSH)** call for an ambitious investment in FP9 for a **grand challenge to achieve the people's Union**.

A People's Union research challenge in the 9th Framework Programme.

EASSH and CSE consider that there is a compelling argument for a research cluster in the 9th Framework Programme, which not only recognises the importance the social dimensions of the problems we face but which will also encourage the close partnership between grass-roots civil society and Europe's research community across the whole research cycle. Identifying and framing the social challenges and issues Europe needs to address, participating in the implementation of research projects and being empowered to enhance the impacts of research results. Research has developed many powerful tools to identify and understand a range of social and economic transformations; big data promises to transform aspects of social research. However, the outputs of analytic research will be enhanced if also produced in collaboration with those civil society organisations, which are closely engaged at the grass-roots level with citizens. Members of CSE and EASSH agree that this requires a research cluster focussed on the social dimension of the challenge and which will connect Europe **academic research and civil society actors**.

EASSH and CSE members support a call for a People's Union cluster which include areas of engagements addressing, for example, growing inequalities and insecurity (***Understanding and addressing inequalities***); supports a resilient and agile European democracy (***A vibrant European democracy***); promotes mutual understanding and solidarity both through increased understanding of Europe's cultural heritage (***The role of Culture and Art in European society***) and through developing innovative new education and learning experiences by investing in educational research (***Education for the Future of Europe***).

It is of paramount importance that research in these areas contributes to the digital single market, receiving resources to contribute to the European Open Science Cloud, which will enable interoperability of results and openness to the public. This is the European value added of FP9 funding.

Understanding and addressing inequalities

Sixty years after the foundations of the European Union were laid, household income has grown, participation in education and higher education is no longer restricted to a

privileged few, and access to health care is very nearly universal. Yet despite the improvements in living standards, the proportion of citizens who report being content with their lives remains at stubbornly low levels. While general levels of income have increased, income and wealth inequality have increased in most European countries. The 10% of wealthiest households hold 50% of total wealth; the 40% least wealthy households own little over 3%.¹ The economic crisis has hit Europe but some groups of society are hit harder than others; youth unemployment remains worryingly high.

For many in Europe the sense of personal and community insecurity is growing. Mistrust towards the EU in countries that were once key supporters of the European project is on the increase. It is becoming clear that despite economic successes, people in Europe report their lives as more disrupted and surrounded by fast change, globalisation, isolation, demographic changes, manmade and natural disasters, and uncertainty. Technological innovation is not just a source of economic growth but also a potential cause of inequalities. It is then inequality, which many see as the force undercutting the established democratic institutions in Europe.

In the 9th Framework Programme the EU must invest in understanding the wider effects of unequal economic growth on the lives and behaviour of people living in Europe; to have the evidence base for policies that **reconcile the gap between wealth and wellbeing through 2030 bringing greater security for all.**

A vibrant European democracy

Understanding **social change** and **increasing democratic legitimacy** through greater participation of citizens in Europe's democratic institutions is one of the European Commission's priorities. People living in Europe value and demand a renewed commitment in favour of strengthening democracy in the EU. However, more needs to be done to understand what forces are reshaping society and how social structures are adapting. There is a need to understand not just the changes to established institutions but also their reshaping under the effects of **technological innovation** and **artificial intelligence**.

States have become too small to deal with the waves of global challenges and too big to address the routine service delivery affecting a citizen's everyday life. Challenges to state capacity and scale come both from above and below. Accountability and transparency have become critical issues for citizens, yet measures in place are not always effective. President Juncker commissioned a report: *[Reaching out to EU citizens, Seizing the opportunity](#)*, which stresses that to regain the trust of European citizens, they need to "be involved in making choices that they can discuss and subsequently act upon", implement real and participatory democracy and "increase the sense of ownership by citizens".

¹ OECD understanding the socio-economic divide in Europe, 26 January 2017, <https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/cope-divide-europe-2017-background-report.pdf>. The gap between poor and rich regions in Europe is widening <https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21709336-austerity-partly-blame-gap-between-poor-and-rich-regions-europe-widening>.

A cluster in FP9 must address the democratic challenges we face and the legitimacy of the European project, and should examine the drift apart of EU institutions and those living in the EU. It must also look for ways to bolster citizens' participation – not only in the form of periodic formal elections - but by encouraging mediators and civil society actors to channel people's concerns, which leads to transparency, responsiveness, accountability and reinforces legitimacy and trust. Participation as active citizens showing solidarity with one another must also be addressed, and opportunities to focus on gathering of data and evidence concerning volunteering and other forms of citizen engagement in the EU should be taken into account.

The role of Culture and Art in an intercultural society

As it is stated in the Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council '[Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations](#)', Europe needs a strategy to put 'cultural cooperation at the centre of the EU's diplomatic relations with countries around the world'. Intercultural dialogue, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental values are crucial for social and economic development, security, fighting radicalisation, strengthening trust.

In fact, Art and Cultural Heritage is more than a collection of artefacts and traditions in everyday life. How societies preserve, select, manage, transmit and interpret cultural heritage is linked to their capacity for transformation and resilience, 'unsettling remembering and social cohesion', and transnational reconciliation (see [UNREST](#)). Improving understanding and awareness of our diverse and sometimes dissonant traditions and beliefs increases our ability to articulate, motivate and shape change in the future.

In the next framework programme, 'culture' cannot be confined solely within the heritage domain. A heightened awareness of complex cultural issues, interconnected with social and economic ones, is necessary. We propose, therefore, to make the cultural dimension (broadly understood) more visible and addressed with a holistic approach – with a human science led contribution. Of course, culture cannot be separated from the political democratic project. R&I activities must encourage reconsidering the relationship between **culture and democracy and the role culture plays in strengthening democratic governance and civic belonging**.

Education for the Future of EU

According to Eurobarometer surveys, **comparable education standards** remain the second most important factor for people living in Europe ([Eurobarometer 467, November 2017](#)). This demonstrates the vital role of educational research for enhancing democratic structures and facilitating positive social transformation. In an increasingly digitalised Europe, research is needed to address education standards implemented by coherent education systems. Higher Education systems should not be simply the 'factory of skills' but should provide European shared values for future generations.

Schools and universities and non-formal education providers such as youth organisations and other civil society organisations providing life-long-learning opportunities, are social microcosms and the first environments where our future generations of Europeans engage with democratic societies. Explorations of how schools and formal and non-formal educational experience are evolving and changing often suggest how learners can be empowered to use critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas, problems and policies. Learners equipped with the ability to develop a concern for the welfare of others, the common good, and for the dignity and rights of individuals show to be far more adaptable, and active citizens in society. More and in-depth research is needed on the development of education that will help learners to become active and critical citizens in a challenging and changing world. A better understanding of the role of formal and non-formal educators in fostering integration, equality and fair behaviour is crucial to design the education systems of tomorrow.

Only educational reforms – and indeed broader social reforms – that are based on evidence underpinned by sound research can lead to the societal changes we all strive for. An example is the area of education for key competencies in Europe. Educational research has shown clear evidence of the essential role of well-being and social and emotional competencies in pupils’ school success and success in later life (e.g. employment, active citizenship and personal fulfilment).

All the above sections are only few of the many examples about how such a cluster focused on People’s union can address among the most relevant issues for European societies; sustains European excellence in research on the global landscape; and responds to most pressing multidisciplinary challenges of our fast changing world. In a [previous paper](#), EASSH has also written about inclusion of bottom up scientific contribution from social and human research in other clusters focused on health, environment and energy.

A financially comparable Cluster among the others

In order to mobilize our research communities and our civil society actors, CSE and EASSH call for an ambitious investment and cluster addressing the People’s Union comparable to other clusters in FP9.

A cluster that addresses major social issues - some of which have been outlined above – will make a fundamental contribution to the design of European policies in the short, medium and longer term. We believe that such a contribution is of -at least- equal significance as other technical, environmental and health challenges in order to achieve Europe’s long-term goals. Indeed, the knowledge generated in this cluster will greatly enhance the societal contributions of the latter challenges. Furthermore, this cluster offers a unique opportunity for the active participation and **engagement of citizens**. We therefore call for a clear acknowledgement of the equal importance of the social dimension with other issues and call for **equality in investment in the 9th Framework Programme**.

The choices around our investment in research must be based on the significance and **importance of the challenge** we face and not on prior perceptions of the relative cost of different forms of scientific enquiry. Projects funded in areas such as health, digital

technologies, and environment deploy research methodologies, which are similar if not the same as many social research methods. From EASSH's preliminary analysis, the differences in funding are predetermined by pre-conceived notions of research costs in the work programme; an artificial cap which is not supported by and does not derive from the requirements or significance of the research.

New technology is changing the way research is done across all scientific fields, but perhaps the greatest change is being seen in the social sciences and humanities: fields which lack the long term investment in instruments and laboratories as they have not traditionally relied on technology. Big data analysis, the use of MRI for behavioural studies, satellites to augment spatial and geographical tools, digitalisations have changed not just the scale of the results but profoundly transformed the methodologies and the training of all scholars today. If funding 'caps' are applied to the social research based on historic norms then Europe will not be able to access the research at the cutting edge, which could have a profound impact of the way we describe, understand and address social processes.

Reports prepared by the Commission on the ad interim evaluation of [Gender as a cross cutting issue in Horizon 2020](#), the [Integration of SSH in H2020](#) and EASSH data analysis covering the participation of researchers from across all the EU, indicate that the SSH projects are the most inclusive of female and eastern European scholars across all challenges. **Such a cluster represents then a path to address some of the important priorities of the European framework programme.**

*This paper is the result of **a consultation of the members of Civil Society Europe (CSE) and European Alliance for Social Sciences and Humanities (EASSH) on Framework Programme 9**. There is strong consensus among our members that Europe needs to step up its investment in research and innovation to gather the knowledge and the evidence for the social and democratic changes in our society by 2030. This is to address the need to achieve greater equalities, stronger democratic representation and a creative and dynamic European society as a model for the world.*

***Civil Society Europe** is a coordination of Civil Society Organisations which includes networks and platforms of not for profit organisations active in a number of areas ranging from human rights and citizenship, to social rights, culture, education, volunteering, environment, youth, and international cooperation who are committed to working towards dialogue on European policy around the shared values of Equality, Solidarity, Inclusiveness and Democracy.*

*The **'European Alliance for Social Sciences and Humanities'** (EASSH) brings together more than 50 European disciplinary associations, scholarly networks and institutions. The main purpose of EASSH is to promote research on social sciences and humanities as a resource for Europe and the world and to give a voice to SSH disciplines in the design of science policy at and international levels.*