Statement on Grand Challenges and Horizon 2020

November 2011

Horizon 2020 is based on Europe 2020. The Grand Challenges described here are contested as the only frame for producing the next Common Strategic Framework, because the perspective is on development of economies only, and because development is understood as a linear process from science & technology to innovation to products/services. As much as we acknowledge the role of science and technology in the development of Europe, we find that it is a narrow perspective, ignoring the major contributions from non-technological sections of society and also ignoring the innovation processes and the social and human and educational aspect hereof.

To respond successfully to the challenges of climate change, depleting natural resources, population growth and migration, globalisation and multiculturalism, our lives and lifestyles must change and this necessitates an educated understanding of these issues and their consequences.

Missing in the descriptions of the Grand Challenges is acknowledging a broader view on societal development such as growth in human capabilities that further citizens' construction of deep and comprehensive knowledge; climate and environmental awareness, and inclusion-consciousness of all citizens. These phenomena are only examples of what social science, humanities (SSH) and educational research bring to the European development. Those disciplines can make social, cultural, political and human analyses of the context, structures and motivation for change, so the processes of innovation and development can be planned for in coherent ways. They can bring the human factor into innovation and they can produce knowledge of, what works in developing sectors, institutions and agents. They can also remind us of the need to combine top-down, strategic planning with bottom-up and curiosity driven initiatives.

Based on this argumentation we welcome the construction of an 'Inclusive, Innovative and Secure Societies Challenge' from the workshops on CSF because human and societal aspects are included in the description. The Report from the workshop argues that SSH can contribute to all societal challenges because SSH are actually focusing on this.

It also argues, that combining SSH with the digital Security Programme is sensible and productive. However we fear that it will not be because the objectives and interests are very different, the Security community focuses on industry and technology while SSH and educational research of course focuses on human aspects of society and can therefor not advocate linear research –to-service connection. These communities can gain from collaboration, but need to develop research strategies on their own.

We propose the construction of another Societal Challenge: 'Understanding Europe in a Global Context – transitions towards innovative and inclusive Societies.[1]' This Challenge can be made up of five themes:

- Building resilient societies: investigating challenges to European societies because of demography, migration, the need for sustainability and cultural identity;
- Social innovation: looking into ways public sectors etc. change with entrepreneurship and creativity;
- 'Actor Europe:' researching into the Globalization-effects on society, governance and democracy;
- Education and employment policies in the modern society: investigating equity in employment policies and the how educational systems can develop and
- Capacity and support activities: foresight, indicators, networks, infrastructure, and capacities.

This challenge will to cover major and pivotal areas of societal development, not covered by the Grand Challenges, in well-informed, comprehensive and coherent ways. Thus it needs to be constructed in ways that allows for the specific SSH and educational research perspectives and ways of researching.

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[1] With inspiration from net4society Position Paper, May 2011