Don't just complain, take the lead! Social Sciences and Humanities must look to integrate into Horizon 2020 targets.

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It is a crucial point in time for the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) to demonstrate their value and relevance. Nothing would be more fatal than to fall back to the "complaining mode", argues Helga Nowotny, President of the European Research Council. Rather, SSH must accept the fact that integration into policy research programmes is necessary and beneficial. Furthermore, disciplines themselves must take the lead to ensure this integration doesn't turn into box-ticking, empty rhetoric.

As has been noted elsewhere, we currently see two radically different approaches in research policy towards the Social Sciences and Humanities (commonly referred to as SSH). In the United States, SSH are under attack, whereas in Europe this wide and diverse field research and scholarship is embraced. Certainly, the latter is more preferable, at least as long as embracing does not mean to crush the SSH or to ritualize this caressing into irrelevance. But: if we are not careful, this is exactly what may happen.

Three weeks ago, more than 400 representatives of SSH and policy makers from across Europe attended the conference "Horizons for Social Sciences and Humanities" under the Lithuanian EU Presidency. Since I was involved in setting up and carrying through this major event, I would like to use this spot to reflect on the objectives of this conference. Together with my colleagues from the conference steering committee I put enormous energy into this project for two reasons. One, we felt uncomfortable with the old and widespread habit within SSH, namely the "complaining mode". This mode is reactive because it responds only to developments in research policy, it is shortsighted because it does not look at the larger picture of contributing to societal problems, but claims separate funding silos, and it is counterproductive because it reinforces the public -though wrong – image that SSH are more the object of public benevolence than serious contributors to the production of new knowledge.

Two, we realized that the new European research-funding program "Horizon 2020" to start in 2014 would be the ideal opportunity to change from the "complaining mode" to a "taking the lead mode". This plies to gain initiative for the SSH by changing old habits, and to vigorously contribute to the challenges ahead. The European Commission has allocated more than 28 billion Euros in its research funding programme to a "pillar" called "Societal Challenges" – challenges to society, but also challenges that await new answers from society. Who else would be better suited to contribute by co-shaping and tackling them than SSH? In that sense, we wholeheartedly supported, and continue to support, what Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn repeatedly said before and during the Vilnius event, namely that the Social Sciences and Humanities will be needed and should be integrated on equal footing with the other science domains in the Societal Challenges.

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We fully endorse the European Commission's ambitious goal of integration. But let us be clear: This integration comes along with big changes that many of us may not have realized yet. These changes offer new opportunities for SSH, but if not properly anticipated and attended to, the opportunities may turn into serious perils. Let us turn to the perils first.

It is important to recognize that, so far, the Commission has set the conditions for the integration in a one-sided way. After negotiating the budget of "Horizon 2020" with European Member States and with European Parliament, it has

considerably narrowed the budget of the one part that clearly is "SSH"-related. This part – the sixth Societal Challenge called "Europe in a changing world: Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies" – is the smallest of all the seven challenges (with approximately 1.2 billion Euros over the next seven years). Persistent rumours in Brussels have it that this budget will be further diminished by several "cross-funding" programs, such as COST, that are not at all related to the topic of this stream. Thus, the silo still exists somehow, but it is much smaller than previous ones.

At the same time, the Commission has not yet answered the most pressing question for successfully integrating SSH into the other challenges: how this will be done operationally. In Vilnius, the Commissioner frankly pointed out that it might take a while to make "integration" happen and warned that "mistakes will be made", asking for patience. We are grateful for this open and honest statement, but we also have to acknowledge that, for the next two years, the Work Programme establishing the content of research has already been set, without significant changes to accommodate the fresh perspectives to be brought in from the SSH. One big risk therefore which we see is that "integration" will remain on the rhetorical level for six of the seven societal challenges, while the budget line for the concentrated SSH-related challenge is further reduced. In addition, with a success rate of 10 %, the European Research Council that is often mentioned as an additional resource for funding remains extremely competitive and only attractive to the best researchers in Europe.

Nothing would be more fatal at this crucial point in time if we would fall back to the comfortable "complaining mode". Instead, we have to accept the fact that SSH, as a diverse field of scientific practices, needs to change in two regards, and to do so quickly. One, we will have to remain vigilant and proactive in order to prevent that all the talk about "embedding" and "integrating" the SSH into research programs on societal challenges remains empty rhetoric. In other words, SSH needs to get involved in the procedural processes of establishing "work programmes", "focal areas", and whatever other *termini technici* the Commission uses to process from formulating a policy question to setting up funding programmes. In other words, the SSH community must commit itself to become research policy entrepreneurs.

The second change concerns our willingness and ability to reach across the aisle and to take the lead in formulating research questions ourselves, questions that are of relevance to the societies in which we live. If we are not able to achieve a profound change in this respect, we may face an even more fatal danger: the purely formal integration of the SSH and thus their opportunistic or ignorant instrumentalisation. The history of research funding is full of fads with research proposals having been subject to fulfil politically imposed categories. They range from having to include project partners from under-performing countries to imposing preordained quotas of various kinds, irrespective of the question whether such an inclusion made any sense in the context of the proposed research. To put it bluntly: SSH must not become the latest box to tick in EU research funding.

These real dangers can be avoided only if we shift gear and do so swiftly. In order to get into the "taking the lead mode", the Vilnius Declaration contains several good suggestions; for example, developing research question in line with "Horizon 2020" in open forums and in exchange with researchers from other fields; and creating new forms of interdisciplinary cooperation. In the global competition of research policy regimes, the European way of dealing with SSH is definitely more promising and more ambitious. But it is not a convenient way in the sense that we as representatives from the SSH can expect to continue with business as usual. Even though the size of European funding in itself is almost negligible in comparison to national budgets in many, but by far not all member states, we must be aware of the normative signals sent by H2020. Many member states as well as associated countries regard the European programmes as a blue print for their own national funding schemes. In that sense, the success of integrating the SSH at European level may indeed be decisive for the future prosperity of the Social Sciences and Humanities in Europe.

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