

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES IN H2020



The integration of Social Sciences and Humanities research (SSH) in Horizon 2020 projects comes with great opportunities but also with certain challenges. For decades, the European research was mainly focused on the expertise of researchers specialised in life and physical sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Now, the Horizon 2020 policy looks further - **it is based on a premise that integration of SSH aspects into European research is essential to generate new knowledge** and produce interdisciplinary and innovative solutions to both societal and technological issues.

Since SSH encompasses various disciplines - from sociology, psychology and political science to economics, history, culture, law and ethics - the added value of including different aspects of SSH in a research project is unquestionable. **The question remains: how to ensure fruitful and effective integration of SSH into a project?**

To address this issue, an **Expert Meeting** entitled **'SSH in H2020: Societal Challenge 6 and integration in other Challenges'** has

been organised by Net4Society - the Network of National Contact Points of Societal Challenge 6 'Europe in a changing world -inclusive, innovative and reflective societies', in cooperation with the 'Open and inclusive societies' Unit of the European Commission's DG Research and Innovation. The meeting's objective was to share and discuss the results achieved so far in the integration of SSH in Horizon 2020 and to discuss concrete experiences of interdisciplinary collaboration.

The workshop brought together representatives of the European Commission responsible for SSH integration, several high-level experts in interdisciplinary research and management as well as coordinators of Horizon 2020 projects that successfully integrate SSH. The latter have been invited to the Workshop based on their outstanding results, as recognised by the European Commission, in bringing SSH expertise into research projects. The workshop discussions clearly revealed that successful involvement of SSH aspects is attainable and advantageous for the overall implementation of the project and for the quality of the final results.

SUCCESSFUL SSH INTEGRATION

WHY

- To steer the R&I process towards solutions and products that are relevant to tackle societal challenges
- To go out of the box and enrich your project results - observation of the same problem from different perspectives may generate valuable and innovative solutions, test new approaches or develop synthesis
- To make your deliverables more user- and reader- friendly - by providing social accent and humanistic language to purely technical deliberations
- To maximize impact - by involving SSH experts you can reach a wider public and implement your project results more effectively.

WITH WHOM

Benefit from your existing networks and connections within the SSH field - previous work experience with SSH experts will increase your chances to build a successful consortium.

BUT...

Do not hesitate to contact SSH experts you do not know - experience shows that SSH organisations are highly responsive and interested in participation in EU funded projects.

HOW

1) Different scientific language used by SSH and STEM experts

- SSH and STEM experts together develop a compendium where a common language used within the project is defined and standardised (do it as soon as possible in the project and update it regularly)
- ensure the review of all deliverables by a panel composed of both SSH and STEM expert

2) Different research methods and contrasting scientific approaches

- create cross-sectoral working groups in tasks involving SSH and STEM experts to facilitate sharing common ideas, problems and solutions
- provide mixed expertise (SSH and STEM) in all WPs - to ensure regular communication between all disciplines and to guarantee that all partners are confident with and understand the proposed scientific approach
- In case of conflicts, ensure knowledge exchange where experts in the disputed field can suggest best solutions and most suitable research methods
- regular communication at the proposal stage and in the implementation stage that ensures an environment open for discussion and exchange of ideas

3) Underestimation or lack of acknowledgement by other (non-SSH) disciplines

- create and cultivate the environment of mutual respect and curiosity between SSH and STEM experts - this will minimize the arrogant or arbitrary attitudes of some researchers who tend to overestimate the importance of their work
- at all occasions underline the primary and common objective of the project and the fact that all disciplines and opinions are equally important in the project
- allocate sufficient time and resources to deal with possible misunderstandings or conflicts