



Vetenskap & Allmänhet

Vetenskap & Allmänhet, VA (Public & Science)'s comments on the proposal for Horizon Europe, the new EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme

Vetenskap & Allmänhet, VA (Public & Science) has been interested to see the European Commission's most recent proposal for a new Research and Innovation Framework Programme. VA gave some initial comments on the proposal at a hearing on Horizon Europe organised by the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research and Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation on 20 June 2018. We hereby submit more detailed comments on the proposal.

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Summary

We believe that the main SwafS dimensions; Gender, Ethics, Public Engagement, Science Education, Open Access and RRI (Responsible Research and Innovation) should have their own work programme under "Strengthening the European Research Area" with well-defined activities/topics and their own budget. This is important in order to:

- involve and engage citizens/civil society/end users in research and innovation processes and be able to realise the Research Commissioner, Moeda's vision of "connecting the public to European science".
- develop, measure and evaluate methods and processes for co-creation, public engagement and citizen science.
- gain understanding of how citizens in the EU understand research and whether, and how, they use research findings.
- invest in developing the knowledge society and addressing future skills needs.
- develop methods to open up science and to overcome obstacles within the EU to realise Open Science.

Science being challenged globally

Populist political parties are making electoral progress in Europe and science faces growing criticism from many quarters. Distrust of the establishment, including the research community, has become a common theme in European debate, where bias and twisted facts risk distorting public debate. This is also reflected in Sweden's 2017 list of new words that featured terms such as *alternative facts* and *fake news*. At the same time, the March for Science, held in both 2017 and 2018 has been a positive counter movement involving hundreds of thousands of people around the world marching in support of science.

More than four out of ten Swedes believe that research is not taken into account enough when political decisions are made in Sweden.¹ It is in times like this that it particularly important that researchers, innovators and decision makers communicate with, and engage citizens and civil society organisations in research and innovation. Or to quote Professor Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, ITRE: *"This new reality is a challenge which science, academia and politics have to face. We have a crucial role in making the truth and facts essential for our citizens again."*²

Citizens central to EU research policy

In many speeches and interviews, the EU's Commissioner for Research, Carlos Moedas, has also stressed the importance and value of EU citizens being involved in research and innovation. He has also promoted the three O's as goals for EU research policy: *Open Science, Open Innovation and Open to the World*. In an interview when Horizon Europe was announced, Moedas said that *"Horizon Europe will connect the public to European Science"*.

In recent years, the need to connect research, society and citizens has been central to European policy. In addition to statements by the Commissioner for Research, similar mentions include:

- The EU's High Level Group, led by Pascal Lamy, that stressed the importance of ensuring that citizens and society are able to understand the value of investing in research and innovation and to involve them in the process. The group's eighth recommendation is, for example, to *Mobilise and involve citizens*³
- The European Commission's own conclusions from the evaluation of the Seventh Framework Programme and the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020.

¹ VA Barometer 2017/18 (VA report 2017:3)

² Speech given by Professor Jerzy Buzek at a STOA Committee meeting on 24 January 2018.

³ LAB-FAB-APP - investing in the European future we want (2016)



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- The European Commission's Open Science Policy Platform, which is seeking to define eight dimensions of Open Science: *Rewards and Incentives*, *Research Indicators and Next Generation Metrics*, *Future of Scholarly Communication*, *European Open Science Cloud*, *FAIR Data*, *Research Integrity*, *Skills and Education* and *Citizen Science*.
- The fact that the principle of Open Science will become the modus operandi of Horizon Europe

Not enough Open Science in FP9

In light of what is outlined above, it is extremely surprising and concerning that the current proposal for Horizon Europe generally equates Open Science to *open access to publications and data*, and talks about citizens and other end-users of research and innovation being given access to *outputs* and *outcomes*. This seems to be based on an opinion that the public should be able to understand and rely on the results that emerge, rather than be involved in the research process. This is contrary to previous policy goals defined by the EU.

Open Science is an umbrella term aimed at more inclusive and transparent research and innovation processes. The term has no clear definition, and there are differing views on what Open Science is, not least among the researchers themselves. In addition to open access and open data, the term also usually encompasses altmetrics (alternative methods of measuring the impact of research), citizen engagement (citizen science, public engagement) and communication between researchers and other groups in society.

Regardless of the definition, there are many benefits to Open Science: Different social actors gain greater insight into, and access to research and innovation; it leads to better, more sustainable and useful results; society functions better when decisions are made based on scientific evidence; more citizens are inspired to enter higher education, and the public's involvement in research is strengthened.

At the Competitiveness Council meeting in May 2016, all EU member states agreed to work towards an open science system. However, although everyone is committed to the transition to Open Science, there is a currently a lack of research relating to the interface between science and society and insufficient incentives for researchers to engage with society. Therefore, Open Science needs to feature much more prominently in Horizon Europe than what is outlined in the current proposal.

Call for Science, Society and Citizens programme

In order to "connect the public to European science", there needs to be clear descriptions of the incentives and activities required to achieve this. It is inadequate to just rely on citizen science and co-creation activities, as outlined in the proposal. If Open Science is to permeate all three pillars of the framework programme, it needs to be clearly written in calls for proposals and topics how this should be achieved. In addition, assessment criteria and measurement tools are needed to support monitoring and evaluation.

We support the idea that *SwafS, Science with and for Society*, should play a key role in strengthening the entire European Research Area, but more than rhetoric is needed in order to realise this. The work programme that is called SwafS in Horizon 2020 should be an integral part of the concept of excellent research/innovation. If citizens are to have any real influence on research and innovation, we need to continue to research, develop and test different methods to achieve this.

A previous version of Horizon Europe included a special work programme called *Science, Society and Citizens* that addressed this. This work programme has now been removed. The lack of a separate programme sends contradictory signals - it is difficult to see how the EU is prioritizing Open Science if there are no resources earmarked for developing new methods and approaches to open up science and engage citizens in research and innovation. This could also jeopardize political and societal support for investing public funds in European research.

Links to UN's sustainability goals

The current Science with and for Society programme in Horizon 2020 supports and contributes to achieving the following UN sustainable development goals:

- Goal 4: Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning
- Goal 5: Gender Equality: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 11: Sustainable cities and societies: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Horizon Europe should also highlight the link between these sustainability goals and 'science and society' in order to ensure sustainable societal development.

More civil society involvement

Non-profit organisations can serve as an important vehicle through which citizens can influence, for example, research, but there are a number of obstacles that prevent civil society organisations and citizens from participating in the current framework programme that need to be removed. According to a study, conducted as part of the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020 to examine the participation of civil society, civil society organisations represented less than three percent of those involved in H2020 and received only seven percent of the total funding.

We would like to make a comparison with gender mainstreaming. SwafS dimensions such as gender, ethics, collaboration, science education, open access and RRI (Responsible Research and Innovation) should, like gender equality, be integrated throughout Horizon Europe. However, it is not the right time to simply make SwafS a cross-cutting issue. It is important that the SwafS dimensions continue to have their own work programme, with their own budget. We need a better understanding of how citizens in the EU understand research and whether, and how, they use research findings. We not only need to encourage the research community to involve the public, but also to understand and overcome the obstacles to achieving Open Science. In order to create a knowledge society and a competitive EU, investments also need to be made in young people through science education. These are necessary to be able to attract the future workforce, meet future skills needs and showcase opportunities offered by a career in science, research and innovation.

Citizen science and public engagement

Finally, it should be noted that Citizen Science is a part of Public Engagement, but NOT an umbrella term for all forms of public engagement, or science-society interaction. Unfortunately, in the proposal for the framework programme, no other forms of Public Engagement are mentioned.

Nevertheless, Open Science and Public Engagement are areas that provide clear European added value! This was particularly highlighted in the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020; the EU can really make a difference. By implementing assessment criteria for open science and science-society interaction in both calls for proposals and evaluation, the EU can play a leading role!