This document collects an overview of the position elaborated by the working group Connect-EU: Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) about the Green Paper on a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding.

Such working group placed in Catalonia (Spain) is created in 2010 with the support of the Catalan regional government and is constituted by researchers and managers of science from different catalan institutions highly involved and compromised with research in SSH in an european environment.

The Connect-EU Group for the Social Sciences and Humanities is an interdisciplinary team specialising in the social sciences and humanities in the broadest sense. Its purpose is to promote Catalan R&D in this field across all disciplines at a European level. It thus aims to become a strategic forecasting instrument in the definition of Catalonia’s strategy on European programmes.

The Consortium is made up of a core group comprising Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), which acts as coordinator, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), Universitat de Barcelona (UB), Barcelona Institute of International Studies (IBEI), the Centre for European Initiatives and Research in the Mediterranean (CIREM), the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) and the Centre for Demographic Studies (CED). In addition to this core group there are other institutions (for instance ESADE, etc.) which have also contributed to the green paper position and are involved in the activities of the group.

The position of the group regarding the CSF is composed firstly by some brief conclusions and secondly by the specific answers to the questions established in the questionnaire with a focus on SSH.
Main conclusions of the position about the Green Paper on CSF

Connect-EU: SSH

The future of EU research and innovation funding programmes are asked to address the societal challenges Europe faces in the XXI century with innovative solutions. In doing so, EU funding programmes should support not only the thematic technology oriented research activities (through demand and supply side measures) but also prioritise cross-disciplinary research where socio-economic sciences and humanities play a key role. Socio-economic sciences and humanities provide the socio-economic perspective needed to support policymaking at European, national, regional and local levels to confront societal challenges. Particularly, non technological societal challenges (such as migration, etc...) can only be addressed as long as sufficient funding at EU level is devoted to foster comparative research in social sciences (for instance by developing long lasting databases and archives and fostering social innovation).

In addition, it is essential for Europe to mobilise not only the EU research and innovation funding programmes but also to guarantee that the new initiatives led by Member States aimed at coordinating national R&D&I funding at European level (through for instance Joint Programming Initiatives) pay specific attention to social sciences and humanities through fostering interdisciplinary research.

Specific Proposals

1. The effort to be made to prepare a project proposal should be reduced and the process should be user-friendly specially for first users to EU research and innovation. A two-step process or a pre-check system to evaluate eligibility of the proposals are encouraged.

2. In the field of SSH larger projects are more an exception than a rule. They are usually small-medium targeted projects. Thus in SSH the continuation of support to small and medium collaborative research projects appears to be critical. In SSH, what creates more impact are small networks of researchers having a very cohesive research focus, which can produce significant scientific innovations having also a critical mass to disseminate them. In addition, bottom-up activities should be present in all programs (including research infrastructures/capacities) and the conditions should be created to facilitate the mushrooming multiple bottom-up activities.

3. The “frontier research” should be maintained and expanded by the maintenance or expansion of the current Specific Programme IDEAS in the framework of the ERC. Basic research in SSH, focused in frontier knowledge, will keep Europe ahead within the global
SSH community and created larger externalities to all other dimension of the research and innovation cycle.

4. In SSH diffusion or communication of the SSH research conducted with public funding should reach our main clients or “consumers” (“SSH market”). They are basically public institutions (executives, parliaments, agencies, etc.) for all levels of government, or stakeholders involved in the decision-making process and in the elaboration of public policies. By creating a smoother interaction between the SSH community and public policy community might improve the evidence-based component in public policies and management, resulting in great social and economic gains.

5. EU funding should be promoted to boost the creation of start-up or spin-off based on social innovation to take advantage of the research potential coming from SSH. Spin-off based on innovative SSH knowledge could be promoted in fields like policy evaluation, democratic participation, social innovation experiences, policy experimentation, institutional design, or public management processes.

6. Databases and archives are the main infrastructures of SSH. Producing, storing and updating quality data (political, social, economic) should be considered a fundamental and relevant infrastructure activity for SSH, and also harmonizing data produced overall Europe. The lack of common criteria to build databases and for data elaboration is a problem which should be faced by the scientific community with the strong involvement of the EU official institutions (i.e. EUROSTAT). In SSH, large projects should oriented to long-lasting data producer projects (i.e. ESS, EES, ...). Ideally, all this information should be provided as microdata to researchers and available in a homogeneous way at both territorial level (countries and regions) and sectorial level (economical sectors). Good examples of this are the European Social Survey (ESS) or the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) (previously European Community Household Panel, ECHP).

7. In Joint Programming Initiatives should be kept the evaluation and ranking for funding outside the countries, promoting that across Europe the best scientific projects get funded and removing later double evaluations (at national level) for that funding (deciding each country the amount of resources devoted to areas, but not which individuals get funded).

8. Research in SSH is not really represented in JTs or in general in “public-private partnerships” although SSH research has an impact on decisions of policy-makers responsible for setting up relevant measures to boost the economical activity and the social cohesion. Thus, more research in SSH should be promoted in projects carried out by such platforms.
Questions

EU2020

1. How should the Common Strategic Framework make EU research and innovation funding more attractive and easy to access for participants? What is needed in addition to a single entry point with common IT tools, a one stop shop for support, a streamlined set of funding instruments covering the full innovation chain and further steps towards administrative simplification?

a. To set up a single portal or a single entry point for all the EU research and innovation funding opportunities (not only for 7PM as currently) which provide information about other funding programmes from other DGs (ex. Educational and Culture, Health and consumers, INTERREG) and avoiding the multiplication of internet portals (EIP, EIT, Joint Programming, JTIs, CIP, etc.). This webpage could contain and summarize all the calls from the different European programmes and clearly identify those that are open. At the same time, unifying programs, agencies and types of awards might help avoid the present atomization and the proliferation and excessive use of acronyms, which is a bit dizzying.

b. To facilitate the access for first users with a specific section for new comers to EU research. This section would provide: basic information (documents, videos, etc…) on the different instruments, and practical advices for those who are interested in joining or being a coordinator of an EU project for the first time (for instance how to find national partners on specific topics or different fields since an important obstacle for being a coordinator of a project is to be able to find the right researches who may be interested in your idea or being part of an specific project, many times this step rely too much on your personal networks in a set of countries).

c. Administrative simplification should go hand in hand with the user-friendliness of the single entry point. The web page should be made easier to navigate (good example is the NEH (http://www.nsf.gov/funding/) and the NSF (http://www.neh.gov/grants/index.html) pages.

d. Regarding proposal preparation:

Tools that could enhance and facilitate the process could be a nice addition. For example, it will be useful to streamline the pre-proposal consultation process making it more flexible. In addition to that, an extended notification service that could send further relevant information about calls such as summaries of the information days, and so on could certainly be useful.

To extend a two-step process for proposal preparation would be useful to avoid big efforts to prepare proposals which will not be finally retained.

A balance between simplification and continuity regarding rules, templates, guides, etc. concerning the submission of proposals in the new framework programme is highly advisable.

The work packages methodology required in the proposal should be clarified and simplified. What is important is to explain how the objectives of the research proposal will be completed, but not necessarily the procedures or the internal organization of the workload. Completing and preparing work packages are many times a burden on the coordinator and members of the consortium which many times take apart the time and focus on the main objective of the research.

e. Concerning research networks should be more flexible, allowing smaller groups to participate.
2. How should EU funding best cover the full innovation cycle from research to market uptake?

a. Probably, as more close to the market, innovation can be better supported by regional and local governments, while more basic research, having a more public good nature, should be more intensively supported by the EU. However, EU should be present in all segments of the cycle, using more complementary and signaling instruments to stimulate the well-functioning of the whole cycle.

b. However, it is not entirely clear that this question has a unique answer. It depends on the kind of project and also on its orientation (fundamental research projects may be less oriented towards ‘market uptake’ – whatever that means).

It may be even deleterious to the purpose of promoting scientific research to try to set explicit systems and procedures to cover the full innovation cycle.

c. SSH is a discipline close related with Administrations and Public institutions and companies. In that sense, it’s necessary to intensify the research in SSH because they are very necessary for the almost 50% of the economy, social areas which are basically affected by the Public Sector. It’s necessary to increase the role of Experimental disciplines in EU Programmes, for the industry and tertiary sector, but also it’s necessary to increase the role for SSH disciplines for other topics more related (or conditioned) by the Public sector. Thus, the budget should be substantially increased in the future research and innovation programme.

d. In the field of SSH diffusion or communication of the research conducted with public funding should reach our main clients or “consumers” (“SSH market”). They are basically public institutions (governments, agencies, etc.) involved in the decision making-process and in the elaboration of social policies. Specific plans addressing this challenge should be a part of the project implementation i.e. to include actions to produce press releases, interviews or even the possibility of including the participation of journalists. In addition to that, additional extra EU calls for dissemination of on-going and successful existing projects would be welcome.

e. The full innovation chain should integrate social innovation together with other kinds of innovation and should take into account the importance in SSH to have databases and archives to produce relevant products in SSH (see question 14 for further details).

f. Regarding funding instruments, Innovation is not at all well represented, particularly studies on Innovation Management, such as Open Innovation or User Innovation that are key for the progress and competitiveness of Europe.

h. A large missing area is the one related to Innovation Management Studies and the diffusion of Best Practices, such as Open Innovation or User innovation and their promotion in European Industries.

Also, calls are too focused on technology and lack focus on fostering structures and networks of collaboration in order to spur innovation. For example, there are no relevant Open Innovation Intermediaries or Crowdsourcing platforms and none of the CIP calls address this major problem.

3. What are the characteristics of EU funding that maximise the benefit of acting at the EU level? Should there be a strong emphasis on leveraging other sources of funding?
4. How should EU research and innovation funding best be used to pool Member States resources? How should Joint Programming Initiatives between groups of Member States be supported?

a. First, a clear delimitation and identification of synergies and complementarities between the different available instruments to pool national MS resources (Eranet, Eranet +, art. 185, JPIs, etc...) should be defined. These instruments should all be targeted to research priorities.

b. In relation to JPIs, evaluation and ranking for funding should be kept outside the countries (Eurostars-like programme), promoting that across Europe the best scientific projects get funded and removing later double evaluations (at national level) for that funding (deciding each country the amount of resources devoted to areas, but not which individuals get funded).

A specific amount of the national research money should be guaranteed for EU cross-national initiatives to support infrastructure projects (i.e. European Social Survey or the European Election Studies) and the creation of EU data archives. Projects of this kind which have been already approved at the EU level, should receive funding at the national level not requiring further national funding decisions.

5. What should be the balance between smaller, targeted projects and larger, strategic ones?

The EU has a unique position compared to any other EU institution (including national and regional agencies) to fund strategic projects. However, strategic projects should not necessarily be equal to a large number of partners. Thus, there is no contradiction between strategic and targeted projects.

a. In the field of SSH larger projects are more an exception than a rule. They are usually small-medium targeted projects. Thus in SSH the continuation of support to small and medium collaborative research projects appears to be critical. Small projects should offer the possibility of studying in depth specific topics or research questions and produce results that are both academically more sound and policy-wise more relevant and implementable. They can also be dedicated to produce first step projects with initial production of the data with a few set of countries, open a window for future innovative initiatives that may justify future investments.

In SSH, large projects should be reserved for long-lasting data producer projects such as the ESS, the EES or the National Election Projects.

Thus, what is important is to make sure that smaller and mid-size project are available, more flexible in how to apply them, and also better funded (allowing for more excellent projects for each call to be funded).

b. Larger projects promote an excessive atomization of resources that could be more efficiently allocated if given to a reduced number of partners. The larger the consortium is, the more technically complex the management is and this detracts time and energies from research. In addition, the EU should not contribute to the creation of artificial consortiums (the more partners, the better) for certain projects.

c. The actual structure favors too much that EU contributions end up covering for existing large projects in European multinationals, which is not the objective of the calls.

c. The EU has a unique position compared to any other EU institution (including national and regional agencies) to fund strategic projects. However, strategic projects should not necessarily be equal to a large number of partners.
d. Access to the results of strategic projects (ie. infrastructures) should be as open as possible.

e. Finally, fostering long-term curiosity-driven research is also strategic. Time is required to get things move.

6. How could the Commission ensure the balance between a unique set of rules allowing for radical simplification and the necessity to keep a certain degree of flexibility and diversity to achieve objectives of different instruments, and respond to the needs of different beneficiaries, in particular SMEs?

a. Simplification and flexibility are not opposite terms, they are two issues fully compatible. A further simplification of rules is a prerequisite for enhancing bureaucratic efficiency and avoiding excessive red tape.

b. Some specific instruments for SME should be set up. They should have specific rules separated from those for the other general instruments of the framework programme for research and innovation. Programmes for SME are more linked to innovation and market tools than research based.

7. What should be the measures of success for EU research and innovation funding? Which performance indicators could be used?

a. SSH should have indicators different from those for other disciplines. Academic outputs are easily measurable (articles, books, etc.) but, additionally, policy relevant outputs coming out from projects may have a long-term impact which is always difficult to measure. Researchers should be able to have some flexibility in proposing indicators which match their specific research and to monitor the project objectives.

8. How should EU research and innovation funding relate to regional and national funding? How should this funding complement funds from the future Cohesion policy, designed to help the less developed regions of the EU, and the rural development programmes?

The regional dimension is a key word to develop Europe. It has demonstrated in several research papers the role of the space in the behavior of the economy and the development of Europe. The national level, sometimes, it’s not enough, because there are a lot of differences among Regions in each nation. But these regional research initiatives should be cross-regional and comparative. Monographic regional states in one area of a country tend to be useless. So, stressing the research studies at regional level is absolutely necessary.

Cross-regional smart specialization is a key issue to be competitive.

Tackling Societal challenges

9. How should a stronger focus on societal challenges affect the balance between curiosity-driven research and agenda-driven activities?

a. Calls should state broad societal challenges and research priorities, leaving room for curiosity-driven research proposals. This means that calls should not only include agenda-driven priorities to be addressed by one funded project.
b. In any case, this should not be affected, if focus is placed on stimulating creative research proposals to cope with societal challenges. This issue is especially clear for SSH: promoting social and policy experiment, for example, could make a great contribution to social innovation. Disseminating successful examples and experiences through all European countries is a key task for European institutions.

c. Curiosity driven topics are located currently under People and Ideas while agenda driven topics are confined in the existing Cooperation Programme. Such division is too strict and does not help much for the SSH researchers. Future research and innovation programmes may benefit from some combination and flexibility. As it is currently the case, there could be agenda-driven topics (Cooperation programme continuation), but also funds should also be available for

(a) Broader thematic areas: leaving researchers to judge in their proposals what are the important topics/challenges to study.

(b) Implementation topics with very concretely focused on specific policy areas. that may be useful for current challenges in current societies and political systems (gender inequality, increasing political disaffection, immigrants discrimination, and so on).

d. There should also be instruments to respond to new and unexpected challenges by short notice calls (Urgent and current calls).

10. Should there be more room for bottom-up activities?

a. Yes, definitively. Bottom-up activities should be present in all programs (including research infrastructures/capacities) and it should be created the conditions to facilitate the emergence of multiple bottom-up activities. Although strategic priorities are most relevant, researchers should be free to pursue innovative lines of research and open up new fields even if they are not fully in line with thematic priorities.

b. It is especially relevant for risk-taking initiatives. Top-down initiatives might be more based on indicators rather than on specific steps to be taken or results to be achieved. When specific areas are to be favored, open targets should be favored (encouraging even the competition of multiple approaches to solve a problem).

c. The “frontier research” should be maintained and expanded by the maintenance or expansion of the current Specific Programme IDEAS in the framework of the ERC.

d. Bottom-up activities should have even more transparent procedures, and the European Commission should make even a stronger effort in setting the rules of the game (fair play) and in evaluating these activities.

e. More open calls for small networks should be open all year long, especially for already functioning networks or projects that require money for something specific and concrete.

11. How should EU research and innovation funding best support policy making and forward-looking activities?

a. EU research funding is crucial to support the development of evidence made policy making at all levels, local, regional, national and European. EU research and innovation funding can support not only the collection of data which would be used to provide evidence of policy recommendations but also single out good practices through peer review processes.
EU funding should foster the translation of research into policy measures or policy recommendations. To do so, in some cases, it is needed to involve in projects the local, regional and national policy authorities throughout the processes (at an early stage) so that ownership of results are taken by those who would finally implement them. Including in some specific projects a European representative as observer (who could act as link with the European institutions) could help to translate the research in policy measures working in closer collaboration with the consortium.

Policy making can be supported through EU research and innovation funding through different channels:

- Fostering the collaboration between public authorities from different countries (through Coordinated Actions) to exchange good practices and jointly develop coherent and consistent policies to be implemented at national/regional or local level.

- Funding 'Socio-economic sciences and the humanities' projects to contribute to an in-depth, shared understanding of the complex and interrelated socio economic challenges confronting Europe. Both technological and non technological challenges need to be addressed from the socio-economic perspective in order to better understand and develop the right policies. Socio economic sciences and humanities research can make a significant contribution to creating an evidence base to support policymaking at European, national, regional and local levels.

- Funding studies and foresight studies through calls for tenders at European level to provide data at EU level on specific issues.

- Structural funds can also support policy making at regional and local level, for instance fostering the development of smart specialization strategies at regional level.

b. SSH projects should always include concrete plans (i.e. a Work Programme) on policy implications and recommendations. It is important that policy-makers are made aware of the implications of the research results in terms of policies and take advantage of them by developing evidence-based policies.

c. However, in SSH it is perhaps unrealistic to think that research should always produce policy results. Some programmes might offer this possibility as optional, and at the same time it should be policy driven programmes to implement existing research.

12. How should the role of the Commission's Joint Research Centre be improved in supporting policy making and addressing societal challenges?

13. How could EU research and innovation activities attract greater interest and involvement of citizens and civil society?

National and Regional Authorities:

a. Local, regional and national authorities are the closer authorities to the citizens and therefore the ones who can better raise the national/regional civil society awareness of EU research and innovation activities. Raising motivation and interest is closely link with cultural attitudes, thus, local and regional public authorities should develop strategies to increase the interest in EU research and innovation activities (starting from the school age). To do so, good professionals capable to understand the EU research and innovation activities and communicate it to citizens and civil society are needed.
Researchers:

b. Researchers in charge of European projects should be encouraged to disseminate their research to broader audiences. For this reason proposals should include a specific plan of outreach activities and dissemination of results. His can be considered a positive asset for evaluation, either proposals or finalized projects. Publishing press-release related with the research projects addressed to civil society, citizens and the media as a target could be a best practice to be implemented (instead of long academic reports). Therefore, based on this logic other potential deliveries could include:

- Organizing public workshop for officials, public and the press. The content of these workshops should be easy and basic, and containing open floors for the debate with the participants.
- Organizing informative meetings with the sector of the society, economy or political actors affected by the conclusions of the research.

c. Research projects should provide easy access information in their websites, explaining the basic of the research and principal findings for public consumption, not only for the academic community.

Media:

c. All the society and not only the professionals directly involved in a particular R&D challenge, might be “educated” on the matter: Thus, the education of the media professionals is a must.

Others:

d. Addressing topics relevant to citizens and involving them in the areas where a qualified position is not required (for instance, assisting in data collection, currently facilitated by ICT technologies, social webs, etc), making their contribution to the result visible.

e. Better explaining the nature of research – not just focusing in success stories but also on failures. Europe does not have the failure culture as a further –and usually required - step to succeed.

f. In general, we recommend an overall improvement of working conditions and reputation of scientists, making it attractive for young people to embark in R&D activities – instead of current basically vocation based system

Strengthening competitiveness

14. How should EU funding best take account of the broad nature of innovation, including non technological innovation, eco-innovation and social innovation?

a. To take into account all disciplines, EU funding should take also into account the concept “Social Innovation” in the way that some scholars have defined it (Mumford & Gustafson, 1988). It is referred to the generation and implementation of new ideas about how people should organize interpersonal activities, or social interactions, to meet one or more common goals. As with other forms of innovation, the products resulting from social innovation may vary with regard to their breadth and impact.

b. The boundaries between basic research, applied research and innovation are more and more blurred. This is also true for the distinction between technical and social innovation. The social implications of most technical innovations are not usually fully taken into account; nor are the social conditions that make technical innovations feasible. The promotion of multidisciplinarity (technical/social research teams) should be a priority in the field of
innovation-driven projects. Basic research projects should reinforce dissemination to a multidisciplinarity expert audience to stimulate further innovation.

c. EU funding should also help for the diffusion of innovations and its adaptation to local environments. Stimulating the strong diffusion of innovative practices will help to increase productivity across countries and sectors. Broad processes of diffusion of innovations rely basically on occasional encounters of individuals having weak ties, not building closed communities.

d. Put the effort in lowering the entry barriers for SSH researchers, institutions, SMEs and citizens to exploit the possibilities offered by e-science, data, tools and service access, independent of the discipline or the specific project addressed. Penalise the activities just aimed to recreate and collect data instead of adding value to them, unless this is the main objective of the call, the project or the network (as we said above this kind of specific data gathering projects are needed and should be very specific, but they should be separated from other kind of projects).

The creation of tools to manipulate these data is even more demanding in terms of skills and expertise, especially if they have to be accessible for non-professionals like the SSH community. Promote that collections allowing the deployment of services are known, easily accessible, and personal is trained for their use according to discipline-specific needs. Specifically within SSH, train a new generation of SSH data scientists which can later exploit this knowledge in many different innovation-related activities. A good example of this is currently taking place under the ESS.

e. EU funding should be promoted to boost the creation of start-up or spin-off based on social innovation to take advantage of the research potential coming from SSH.

15. How should industrial participation in EU research and innovation programmes be strengthened? How should Joint Technology Initiatives (such as those launched in the current Framework Programme) or different forms of 'public-private partnerships' be supported? What should be the role of European Technology Platforms?

a. Research in SSH is not really represented in JTIs or in general in “public-private partnerships” although SSH research has an impact on decisions of policy-makers responsible for setting up relevant measures to boost the economical activity and the social cohesion. Thus, more research in SSH should be promoted in projects carried out by such platforms. Some recommendations should be established so that research in SSH could be integrated regularly together with industrial participation (i.e. impact studies on certain technologies, etc.). Both through simplification and transparency measures and including topics more related with SSH participation should be guaranteed.

In general not only for SSH, SME access is difficult and often has a significant amount of confidentiality aspects, being forced to disclose part of their competitive advantage to larger companies and, therefore, not taking part on those activities.

b. The basic problem is that Joint Technology Initiatives and in general “public-private partnerships” are under control of large companies or corporations and access and participation in the making decision process is difficult and unclear universities are very well positioned institutions for providing the educational actions required by the ETPs and JTIs as well as providing the right research mix (including SSH) they may need. Specific actions targeted to increase and facilitate collaboration between industry and universities within the ETPs and JTIs would be welcomed.
16. How and what types of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) should be supported at EU level; how should this complement national and regional level schemes? What kind of measures should be taken to decisively facilitate the participation of SMEs in EU research and innovation programmes?

a. Neelie Kroes “My vision is a scientific community that does not waste resources on recreating data that have already been produced, in particular if public money has helped to collect those data... scientist should be able to concentrate on the best way to make use of data”

Rewards to SMEs focused on data access (infrastructure, training, services for data reuse) to overcome the currently fragmentation of data and to provide a unique opportunity to place SSH researchers in the center of new R&D and innovative activities derived from ICT presence.

17. How should open, light and fast implementation schemes (e.g. building on the current FET actions and CIP eco-innovation market replication projects) be designed to allow flexible exploration and commercialisation of novel ideas, in particular by SMEs?

18. How should EU level financial instruments (equity and debt based) be used more extensively?

19. Should new approaches to supporting research and innovation be introduced, in particular through public procurement, including through rules on pre-commercial procurement, and/or inducement prizes?

20. How should intellectual property rules governing EU funding strike the right balance between competitiveness aspects and the need for access to and dissemination of scientific results?

a. Research in SSH has relevant academic and policy outputs but not produce patents. In particular policy studies can have confidentiality issues or produce documents with limited access. However, a balance should be sought with Open Source results.

Strengthening Europe's science base & the European Research Area

21. How should the role of the European Research Council be strengthened in supporting world class excellence?

22. How should EU support assist Member States in building up excellence?

23. How should the role of Marie Curie Actions be strengthened in promoting researcher mobility and developing attractive careers?

24. What actions should be taken at EU level to further strengthen the role of women in science and innovation?
25. How should research infrastructures (including EU-wide e-Infrastructures) be supported at EU level?

a. Databases and archives are the main infrastructures of SSH. Producing, storing and updating quality survey data should be considered a fundamental and relevant infrastructure activity for SSH. Ideally, all this information should be provided as microdata to researchers. Good examples of this are the European Social Survey (ESS) or the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) (previously European Community Household Panel, ECHP). In recent years these infrastructures, despite their limitations, have had a great impact on comparative research in social science.

SSH research is currently faced with unprecedented volumes of scientific information, at a scale still not fully envisaged. The very nature of SSH research is worldwide moving towards the “fourth paradigm of science”. SSH are therefore already driven by the need to add value to information, not the information itself, at all the stages. The importance to promote the paradigm change should be central in all activities, one of the drivers being the absolute change in the samples of countries and unit of analysis of most comparative research.

b. The quantitative and quality of good comparative data in the Social Sciences and Humanities is still very low. There are many topics on which we have none or very limited information (the few existing EU-wide surveys such as the Eurobarometer or the EU-SILC are clearly insufficient). Our research still relies on data which are fragmented, dispersed, unarticulated, inconsistent and not comparable cross-nationally. It is true that we have very good surveys on certain topics in some countries, but we still lack a more systematic approach to data collection following similar methodological and design criteria. We need more funded incentives to collect data at the European level that could be basic for the analysis and understanding of our political and social systems. We badly need long-term calls for producing data archives on essential topics in social sciences and humanities.

We need more useful and valid comparative and longitudinal data. Especially, EU-wide databases in certain areas are still missing. A few examples would be:

1. Panel data surveys based on the follow-up of demographic cohorts enabling longitudinal analysis of life cycle transitions and the study of long term outcomes. These are essential for the assessment of many social problems such as educational and occupational attainment, divorce, poverty and crime and, in general, for the study of social mobility.

2. Databases of comparable administrative registers integrated with statistical archives.

3. Permanent funding for postelectoral surveys after European, national and regional elections.

The lack of common criteria to build databases is a problem which should be faced by the scientific community with the involvement of the EU official institutions. The need of such collaboration is already collected in the main conclusions arising from the European project IAREG (VII framework programme) and is key to give a definitive impulse high quality research in SSH...

c. It is important that the infrastructure funding does not depend so much on national funding from member states. It is key to create a fund for these infrastructures by collecting country contributions that do not have a project-specific content in order to guarantee the funding and continuation of these projects in the long-term.

d. Inaction from European SSH has the risk of being overflowed by a huge amount of solutions about SSH aspects coming from other disciplines, mainly ICT progress. Metadata, related information and analysis are mainly correlated and analysed from an ICT perspective, decreasing the overall quality and risking of losing the sound European strength in SSH activities.
26. How should international cooperation with non-EU countries be supported e.g. in terms of priority areas of strategic interest, instruments, reciprocity (including on IPR aspects) or cooperation with Member States?

27. Which key issues and obstacles concerning the ERA should EU funding instruments seek to overcome, and which should be addressed by other (e.g. legislative) measures?

a. Confidentiality is often a relevant issue in the relation of universities with companies or corporations, and they are especially sensitive to this in SSH as they are often very small companies, well positioned within a very specific niche. Promote those mechanism which allow funding and relation with universities without the need to disclose core activities in this niche market (i.e. evaluation by experts is, necessarily, done by competitors, making many SMEs reluctant to participate in the process; PhD thesis are finally public).

b. Collaboration with third countries (i.e. American or Asian organizations) in the current framework is complicated. It will be nice to have agreements of collaboration with organizations such as NSF and the Asian ones that could allow a better and easier collaboration in European projects.