

**‘SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES IN EUROPE’  
Framework 7 conference: - Brussels December 2005**

**Conference report**

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**Background**

Social scientific and humanities researchers across Europe are beginning to prepare themselves for the opportunities offered by the EU’s new Framework programme (FP7). This will run for c.7 years from 2007 to 2013, and the first calls will be coming later this year (c.August). There are significant differences in FP7 compared to other FP programmes. These include, among other things, a more explicit recognition of, place for and resources for social sciences and humanities (SS & H), and the beginning of funding for ‘blue skies’/response mode research (including in SS & H) through the development of the new European Research Council (ERC).

To help orientate the SS & H research community and also to consult with it about the content of the FP7 programme DG Research (DGR) organised a conference in Brussels in December 2005. (Specifically, the conference organisers were DGR’s Foresight Directorate K, under their Director Theodius (Dius) Lennon). Well over 300 academics and researchers participated in the 2-day meeting which was held in the European Parliament’s new building. Since an equivalent number of potential participants who applied could not be accommodated the organisers indicated that a further conference might well be organised early in 2006 to respond to this demand from Europe’s SS&H research community and to extend the consultation process.

Notable inputs to the conceptualisation and preparation of the conference, which give an insight into DGR’s thinking about FP7, and the EU’s more generally, include the following policy documents. (For reasons of space I will not attempt to summarise them here, but see References below):

- a DGR letter/memo on the Specific FP7 Programme on ‘Cooperation’ in Socio-Economic Sciences and the Humanities (see DGR 2005a).
  - a report coordinated by Prof. Helga Novotny which aims to represent SS&H interests on the EU’s Advisory board for FP7’s development of the European Research Council (see EURAB 2005)
  - a report coordinated by Prof. Manfred Horvat for DGR reviewing SS and Foresight aspects of FP6 and considering how they might be integrated (see Horvat 2005).
- NB. Profs. Nowotny and Horvat were both speakers at the conference and referred to their reports in their presentations.

## The Conference

The conference was opened by the DGR Commissioner Janez Potocnik (who in his previous life as an economist was an adviser to the Slovenian government).

It was organised into 6 sessions:

1. Social sciences and humanities in Europe: aspirations and the current situation
2. The influence of the Framework Programme on SS&H in Europe
3. Priority Areas for research cooperation in SS&H
4. Supporting the basic creativity of SS&H
5. Building bridges: international cooperation in SS&H
6. Towards a strategy for SS&H in FP7 and beyond

The sessions were mainly plenary (5), with one session being set aside for parallel meetings on the Priority Areas which are likely to structure the FP7 SS&H programme (session 3).

The three Priority Areas (and parallel group sessions) were as follows:

- A. Growth, Competitiveness, Employment and Sustainability in a Knowledge-based Society
- B. Societal Trends and European Citizens
- C. Europe in the World: Understanding changing interactions and interdependencies between world regions

### *Plenary Sessions 1, 2, 4 and 5*

#### Session 1: Social sciences and humanities in Europe: aspirations and the current situation

Intro: Janez Potocnik (Commissioner, Science and Research, European Commission)

Chair: Dius Lennon (Director of SS&H and Foresight Directorate K, DGR)

Speakers:

- Helga Novotny (see refs), (sociologist, Vienna-based, Chair of EURAB advisory to Commission, prospective member of the European Research Council)

‘Re-inventing the social and natural order: major challenges for the SS&H’

- Christopher Whelan, (social policy, Dublin-based, chair of social science advisors to the European Science Foundation)

‘European social science: challenges and potential’ (MR He supports policy-relevant Europe-wide social surveys and stats = current and new ‘social research infrastructures’)

- Bjorn Wittrock, (political scientist and sociologist, Uppsala-based, President of the International Institute of Sociology.

‘The social and human sciences: European legacies in a global context’

(MR He proposes European version of USA ‘institutes of advanced studies’.

Practical steps could be taken in the early years of FP7 to move towards an ERA for post-doctoral studies).

- Gabriele Griffin (gender studies, Hull University, coordinator FP6 project ‘Integrated research methods in the SS & H’)

‘Balancing Agendas: - SS & H in Europe’

MR This was a stimulating presentation which was commented on throughout the conference. GG argued that humanities need greater profile because of their political importance in an era of identity and difference politics, multi-culturalism and culture conflicts etc. They also need this because they have long been integrated into the design and aesthetics of commodity production and are now important in terms of ‘human computer interaction’ in a context in which ICT developments are being built in to and are revolutionising domestic environments, clothing etc. with implications for the future in terms of people’s health, welfare and quality of life. The USA has been much better at giving culture and gender studies greater profile and developing interdisciplinarity. The social sciences have not been very interdisciplinary in relation to humanities in Europe. Humanities hasn’t helped its cause by overly focussing on ‘lone scholar’-type research rather than recognising the utility of team-based research. There are lessons for FP7 in these observations.

Session 2: The influence of the Framework Programme on SS&H in Europe

Chair: Ragnhild Sohlberg (economist and policy analyst, Oslo-based, member EURAB)

Speakers:

- Manfred Horvat (see refs)

‘The integration of socio-economic dimensions in FP6; a review’

- Michael Kuhn, (policy analyst, Bremen-based, Director of the Forum for European Regional Research), and

Svend Remoe, (policy analyst and sociologist; innovation policy, DGR adviser)

‘The Framework programme and European social sciences: influences and implications’ (critical of nation-state base social sciences, need to go beyond comparative to international level, need new research infrastructures)

Maria-T Patricio (no info)

Session 3: Priority Areas for research cooperation in SS&H (see below)

Session 4: Supporting the basic creativity of SS&H

Chair: Gordon Marshall (V-C, Reading University, sociologist, ex-Director ESRC)

Speakers:

Yehuda Elkana (V-C Central European University, Budapest (Soros Foundation),

‘The breakdown of the distinction between the natural and social sciences and the humanities’ (MR mankind’s problems are multi-dimensional e.g. poverty, AIDS, political oppression, etc. – so research needs to reflect this)

Bjorn Henrichsen, (social statistician, Oslo-based, Director of Norway's Social sciences data services, member European Science Foundation (re. SS), member of European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), chair of ESFRI’s working group on Roadmap for the SS&H)

‘Social science infrastructures for the European Research Area’.

Alain Peyraube, (no info)

(no topic title)

Roger Jowell (social statistician, London, European Social Survey )

(no topic title) MR talk on the importance and use of monitoring Europeans’ attitudes.

Commentators:

Manfred Niessen, (Education and sociology, Director SS&H, German Research Council;  
Joao Caraca (physicist, science policy, Director Science at Gulbenkian Foundation,  
science adviser to Portuguese president)

Session 5: Building bridges: international cooperation in SS&H

Chair: A. Siegler (ex-Hungary and EU policy; DGR Director of Directorate N re.  
International Scientific Cooperation, runs this aspect of the FP6 programme)

## Speakers:

David Lightfoot (Linguist, Director for Social Sciences, National Science Foundation,  
USA, Washington-based),

MR Topic: The current digitization of all types of data and information is promoting new  
interests in interdisciplinarity in USA research, in a context which is already functions in  
a much more theme-oriented and problem-oriented rather than discipline-oriented way as  
compared with European research.

Yang Yang, Vice-Director of International Cooperation Bureau of the Chinese Academy  
of Social Sciences, spokesman for the Chinese Cabinet in this field.

Olive Shisana, (President and CEO of South Africa's Human Sciences Research Council)

Hiroshi Fukai, (career in state science policy, Director of International programme Dept.  
at Japan Society for the Promotion of Science)

Glauco Arbix (sociologist, President of Brazil's Institute for Applied Economics  
Research)

*Priority Areas (Session 3)*Group 1: Growth, Competitiveness, Employment and Sustainability in a Knowledge-based Society

Chair: Ramon Marimon (economist, EUI Florence)

Maria J Rodrigues (sociologist, Lisbon-based, chair of DGR's Advisory group for the  
Social Sciences for FP6; manager of Commission's mid-term review of Lisbon Strategy  
2005)

'The Lisbon Agenda as a Research Agenda'

Stan Metcalfe CBE (economist and science/technology policy analyst, Manchester-based,  
Director ESRC centre for research on innovation and competition)

'Enterprise and transformation: challenges for the service economy'

Jan Svejnar (economist, Michigan-based, ex-Prague & Czech gov. advisor)

'Improving social science research and competitiveness in post-transition economies'

MR pro USA system of research funding)

Sylvie Faucheux (economist and ecologist, Paris-based)

'Knowledge and action: sustainability as a multi-stakeholder partnership process'

Group 2: Societal Trends and European Citizens

Chair: Poul Holm (historian of oceanic environments, South Sweden-based, currently  
Visiting Fellow, Kings, London; member European Science Foundation's Humanities  
committee)

Duncan Gallie, (sociologist, Oxford, V-P British Academy, advisor to EU group on SS & H in ERA, FP4 and FP5 projects on sociology of work, unemployment, social inclusion)  
 ‘Employment, the Family and Social Integration: Key challenges for the future’  
 (on labour market flexibilisation, changes in family patterns (including LATs (‘living apart but together’)), growing and changing demands on state welfare systems  
 (MR DG’s presentation sounded to me to be continuous with longstanding directions of his previous work and also to be complex enough to be a proposal for a whole research agenda for a section of FP7).

Richard Sinnott (public opinion researcher, Dublin-based)  
 ‘Societal trends and active civic participation: Europe as laboratory’

Ranier Fsadni (social anthropology, Malta-based)  
 ‘Modes of communication and identities’

#### My Comment on Group 2:

I attended this Group and I was struck by how much the discussion was dominated by familiar empirical sociology and social policy concerns, and how little attention was paid to issues of culture, and thus to issues which might provide a basis for humanities inputs. If this group is anything to go by (with the exception of the Chair, Holm, and Fsadni) the Humanities are likely to go on being marginalised in FP7 as they have been in FP6. To balance this troubling prospect I gathered that ‘behind the scenes’ efforts are being made to give a clearer and bigger role to humanities, and also it is still possible to have some input to DGR’s thinking about this.

#### Group 3: Europe in the World: Understanding changing interactions and interdependencies between world regions

Reimund Seidelmann (politics and IR, Giessen, EU-China interests)

Arjun Appadurai (anthropologist, New York-based, member SSRC )

‘Grassroots research and the capacity to aspire; lessons from Europe, lessons for Europe’  
 (MR re helping people imagine and shape alternative futures, European and Indian experience)

Mario Telo (political scientist, world regionalism interests, Brussels-based; member FP6 GARNET network on globalisation)

‘The political role of the EU at a global scale: what alternatives?’

Raimo Vayren (political scientist, peace research, Director of Finnish Academy, leading roles in European Science Foundation and EUI, member EURAB)

‘The European Union: A regional or global actor?’

Ann Deighton, (politics and IR, EU security issues, Oxford)

‘The EU in the global system: why we need to understand our past’  
 (Pro the relevance of history re. Europe per se and re. the EU)

*Concluding...(Session 6)*

#### Session 6: Towards a strategy for SS&H in FP7 and beyond

Chair: Dius Lennon

Panellists: Ragnhild Sohlberg, Maria J. Rodrigues, Paul Holm, Remund Seidelmann, Gordon Marshall.

Rodrigues stressed the new potential significance of the humanities in relation to such things as:

- the growth in economic importance of the creative industries
- the growth in social (and possibly economic) importance of cultural diversity

Holm:

- looked forward to FP7 support, as part of its support for Europe's cultural heritage, for a new wave of support for the digitisation of documents
- this was a field in which (because of its historical and linguistic richness Europe could overtake the USA.
- he also noted the importance of connecting up with the R&D effort of the emerging 'creative industries' in Europe.

Sohlberg noted that:

- FP7 is not 'business as usual' – it will change the research climate in Europe
- The EU is failing its Lisbon goals, and this could be relevant for FP7
- European humanities need to get more aware and better organised than they currently are to take advantage of FP7

Dius Lennon:

From his DGR perspective Dius Lennon concluded the conference by indicating that:

- the conference had been a success and had generated a lot of useful ideas
- there might be a further conference given the unmet expressed demand
- there would be follow-up workshops in some areas, e.g. the Priority Areas, in addition to web-based consultation.
- he noted Wittrock's proposals (session 1) for institutes of Advanced studies and also the idea of an ERA for post-doctoral studies.
- on research infrastructures they recognise the need for humanities to be well recognised in funding and they'll wait and see what the Henrichsen's 'Roadmap' Group recommend (session 4).

## References

DGR 2005a Text of the Specific Programme 'Cooperation' in Socio-economic sciences and the humanities (letter 9<sup>th</sup> December 2005)

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DGR 2005b Social Sciences and Humanities: List of Publications (DGR, Directorate K, Brussels)

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