Horizon Europe: Social Innovation as a Path to a Sustainable, Resilient and Inclusive Europe

A statement from the Social Innovation Community[1]

Introduction

Europe's recent R&I Framework Programmes have increasingly acknowledged the diversity of innovation and its significance for social change. Horizon 2020 has not only supported traditional, technological and economic innovation, but has researched and enabled social innovation in efforts to tackle big societal challenges.

Across Europe, there is now an increasing awareness and promotion of social innovation. In many countries, the promotion of social innovation itself by the EU has served as a driver and opportunity for various actors to embrace new ways of working, access new funding streams, and catalyse change at a national level. However, even though good progress has been achieved in recent years, important steps remain to be taken in order for social innovation to move from the margins of policy to the mainstream.[2]

Horizon 2020 has established the European Union's position as a world leading proponent of social innovation, Horizon Europe has the potential to not only build on the success of its predecessor, but to surpass its ability to tackle societal challenges, and support ecological transitions. In particular it can do this by:

1. **Adopting a comprehensive understanding of innovation for the public good** that builds on the strong commitment to openness and the Sustainable Development Goals (as displayed already on page 1 of the proposal) and a strengthening of Europe's social and societal dimension - within both the concrete work programmes and the ways we measure quality and impact.

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[1] Social Innovation Community (SIC) is a Horizon 2020-funded project with a mission to 'connect, strengthen and grow Europe's social innovation community'. Since November 2017, SIC has led several public consultation activities to understand how Horizon Europe could take the next step in enabling social innovation in Europe to achieve an even greater impact.

[2] Policy Declaration of SI-DRIVE, the largest research project on social innovation so far which was funded in FP7

2. **Promoting R&D to drive direct societal benefits** – for instance, by creating more synergies between SSH research, social innovation, business and technological innovation to tackle societal challenges.
3. **Moving beyond award-based support for social innovation to the incorporation of social innovation principles and values at a programmatic level in Horizon Europe.** This will help sustain, institutionalise and scale innovation's societal benefits.
4. **Give greater recognition to the contribution of civil society and the wider public in research and innovation.** National, regional or local participation currently does not sufficiently unlock the potential of civil society in co-creating solutions for the most pressing challenges of our society. Participating citizens strengthen established structures both of democracy and of peaceful and prosperous societies more generally.

Horizon Europe: SIC's reactions to the European Commission proposal

To achieve its ambitious objectives - for example, to see EU R&I as the engine of European and global transitions - Horizon Europe must support both social and technological innovation. To achieve these aims, **we propose that a budgetary target be set such that 10% of the EU research and innovation budget is 'social' in both means and ends by 2027.** This ambitious but achievable budgetary target of 10% on social innovation would adopt the logic motivating the 35% budgetary target for tackling climate change in Horizon Europe. It could be achieved through a package of initiatives that include:

Proposals of a regulatory nature:

i. **Creating new governance structures, simplified rules for participation and funding and dedicated capacity building to optimise citizen and civil society participation in R&I.** While SIC applauds the openness towards co-creation of the strategic plans with citizens and citizen representatives, we would like to suggest an operationalization that clearly involves the broader social innovation community – including citizens groups, social economy, civil society players, and social NGOs – in all key phases of the programming process, including problem formulation, work programme drafting and topic design and the relevant groups and committees. Involving citizens and 'beneficiaries' in the co-creation and evaluation of projects and programmes will need new governance structures, simplified rules for participation and funding as well as dedicated capacity building.

ii. **Increasing expenditure on social innovation goals and actions by specifically inviting the social innovation community within dedicated programme parts**, for example: ERC Proof of Concept grants for social innovation actions; Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions specifically supporting mobility between academia and social innovation stakeholders; align the European Innovation Council's objectives more clearly with delivering social (and societal) benefits and include a voice representing the community in the EIC Board; social entrepreneurship and social innovation as explicit components of the European Institute of Innovation and

Technology (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs); in the Sharing Excellence Programme specifically mentioning the support of the social innovation dimension to overcome the current technological bias. Moreover, many social innovations are triggered by contributions from SSH research. Therefore, SSH must be better positioned financially and programmatically in Horizon 2020, acknowledged with dedicated budgets that go beyond the perspective that social sciences and humanities are a mere support to achieve missions. All programmes should further include SSH and social innovation stakeholders in their evaluation panels.

Proposals of a content-specific nature:

i. **Integrating social innovation in all pillars of Horizon Europe to enhance the programme's ability to improve understanding of social needs and to deliver greater societal benefits for all.** This should be underpinned by a <u>separate programme supporting SSH research</u> evidence and a <u>programme with a citizen-focused approach</u> (similar to SWAFS) that supports European values of equity and solidarity and includes a strong focus on social entrepreneurship, improving access to finance for social innovators and stimulating the scale-up of their initiatives. Moreover, more developed pathways need to be established to ensure key learning from social innovation experimentation is more widely adopted into EU policy practice.

ii. **Boosting citizen science and catalyse community-led social innovations to bring EU R&I closer to European citizens' real needs and local priorities -** by opening up clear opportunities for practitioners and ordinary citizens to get directly involved in agenda-setting, co-creation processes, research and innovation activities and open (social) innovation processes. This should entail engagement and deliberation with a wider group of stakeholders beyond the R&I community to inform the programming of EU R&I investments, and to open up participation in "missions and dedicated actions (e.g. Coordination and Support Actions), to increase trust and the willingness to engage and to deliver on their societal potential. Here, <u>additional small-scale projects allowing experimentation are very important</u>. The involvement of citizens and the social innovation community in projects requires small-scale contributions to reward their input and to avoid the exploitation of organisations that are not explicitly beneficiaries to the projects but involved to increase the impact of the collaborative projects. We are convinced that a trust-based approach towards the involvement of additional actors during the run-time of the projects will increase the quality of the project outcomes and their uptake.

iii. **Alongside a focus on channelling R&D towards tackling grand global challenges, Horizon Europe should include local, <u>place-based innovation actions</u>.** These would take full account of local contexts, originate from the grassroots, and involve citizens in identifying place-specific societal goals.

iv. **Promoting universities' and research centres' capacity to support social innovations.** Social innovations often lack knowledge support, especially from scientific knowledge partners such as universities and research centres. Connecting

social innovations with sufficient expert knowledge, monitoring and evaluation, the integration of new technologies, impact assessments including social impact frameworks, pilot and demonstration projects, and better managerial competences helps contribute to a more favourable development environment. Accordingly, universities and research centres should be asked to provide impulses to processes of societal change; to integrate social innovation in teaching as well as research; and to better include societal actors in research and knowledge transfer at an early stage. Additionally, a new instrument - 'Social Knowledge Transfer Actions' should be established in the next Framework Programme specifically to dedicate more resources and support to strengthening the exploitation of academic research for better social outcomes, through the creation of social innovation products, services and spin-outs, and the linking of practitioners who have developed high-potential social innovations with researchers who can help them make use of evidence and evaluate their work.

v.   **Ensuring social impacts are highlighted in impact pathways, but also that potential negative social impacts are taken into account.** We would also like to see Horizon Europe as a programme that proactively communicates and disseminates results towards marginalised groups and the grassroot level of the social innovation community, and which establishes coordinated, longer-term approaches to developing and exploiting integrated social innovation solutions with the potential to tackle structural and complex societal challenges. Themes like the Sustainable Development Goals and Societal Challenges should therefore not be limited to vertical pillars, but should be mainstreamed across all Horizon Europe pillars.

Some suggested amendments to strengthen social innovation dimensions in Horizon Europe in the proposed Regulation 2018/0224 (COD)

1.   Take up a reference to social innovation in the activities of the EIC and the EIT:

Original Article content	Suggested Article content
Clarifications *(21) The EIC through its instruments – Pathfinder and Accelerator – should aim at identifying, developing and deploying breakthrough market creating innovations and supporting their rapid scale-up to EU and international levels. Through coherent and streamlined support to breakthrough innovation the EIC should fill the current vacuum in public support and private investment for breakthrough innovation. The instruments of the EIC call for dedicated legal and management features in order to reflect its objectives, in particular market deployment activities.*	*(21) The EIC through its instruments – Pathfinder and Accelerator – should aim at identifying, developing and deploying breakthrough market creating innovations as **well as social innovations** and should support their rapid scale-up to EU and international levels. Through coherent and streamlined support to breakthrough innovation the EIC should fill the current vacuum in public support and private investment for breakthrough innovation. The instruments of the EIC call for dedicated legal and management features in order to reflect its objectives, in particular market deployment activities **for both technological, as well as social innovations**.*
(23) *The EIT, primarily through its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), should aim at strengthening innovation ecosystems that tackle global challenges, by fostering the integration of business, research, higher education and entrepreneurship.* *The EIT should foster innovation in its activities and should support the integration of higher education within the innovation ecosystem, in particular by: stimulating entrepreneurial education, fostering strong non-disciplinary collaborations between industry and academia; and identifying prospective skills for future innovators to address global challenges, which includes advanced digital and innovation skills.* *Support schemes provided by the EIT should benefit to EIC beneficiaries, while start-ups emerging from EIT KICs should have access to EIC actions. While the EIT's focus on innovation ecosystems should make it naturally fit within the pillar 'Open Innovation', the planning of its KICs should be aligned through the strategic planning process with the pillar 'Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness'.*	*(23)* *The EIT, primarily through its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), should aim at strengthening innovation ecosystems that tackle global challenges, by fostering the integration of business, research, higher education, entrepreneurship, **civil society and citizens (including marginalised groups)** .* *The EIT should foster innovation in its activities and should support the integration of higher education within the innovation ecosystem, in particular by: stimulating entrepreneurial education, fostering strong non-disciplinary collaborations between industry, academia **and society**; and identifying prospective skills for future innovators to address global challenges, which includes advanced digital and innovation skills, **including social innovation**.* *Support schemes provided by the EIT should benefit to EIC beneficiaries, while start-ups emerging from EIT KICs should have access to EIC actions. While the EIT's focus on innovation ecosystems should make it naturally fit within the pillar 'Open Innovation', the planning of its KICs should be aligned through the strategic planning process with the pillar 'Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness'. **KICs should also put a focus on the integration of social entrepreneurship and social innovation skills, and should seek to create greater diversity and inclusion of stakeholders in the R&I Community.***

2. Take up social innovation in the Programme objectives

Article 3 *Programme objectives* *2. The Programme has the following specific objectives:* *(a) to support the creation and diffusion of high-quality new knowledge, skills, technologies and solutions to global challenges;* *(b) to strengthen the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing Union policies, and support the uptake of innovative solutions in industry and society to address global challenges;* *(c) to foster all forms of innovation, including breakthrough innovation, and strengthen market deployment of innovative solutions;* *(d) to optimise the Programme's delivery for increased impact within a strengthened European Research Area.*	*Article 3* *Programme objectives* *2. The Programme has the following specific objectives:* *(a) to support the creation and diffusion of high-quality new knowledge, skills, technologies and solutions to global challenges;* *(b) to strengthen the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing Union policies, and support the uptake of innovative solutions in industry and society to address global challenges;* *(c) to foster all forms of innovation, including breakthrough innovation **and social innovation**, and strengthen market deployment **and/or exploitation** of innovative solutions;* *(d) to optimise the Programme's delivery for increased impact within a strengthened European Research Area.*

3. Involving citizens in the definition of social innovation needs in all parts

We propose that an additional amendment be made to Article 6 (new) ***10. The Programme shall ensure the participation of citizens and citizen representatives in order to define the necessary social innovations in all pillars of Horizon Europe. They shall be involved in all key phases of the programming process, including problem formulation, work programme drafting and topic design and the relevant groups and committees as well as in all evaluation panels.***

4. Ensuring a broad understanding of exploitation, use and uptake

Article 46 *The Commission shall also establish a dissemination and exploitation strategy for increasing the availability and diffusion of the Programme's research and innovation results and knowledge to accelerate exploitation towards **market uptake** and boost the impact of the Programme.*	*Article 46* *The Commission shall also establish a dissemination and exploitation strategy for increasing the availability and diffusion of the Programme's research and innovation results and knowledge to accelerate exploitation towards **uptake in the market, the public sector, civil society organisations and social enterprises** and boost the impact of the Programme.*

Some suggested amendments to strengthen social innovation dimensions in Horizon Europe in the proposed Decision 2018/0225 (COD)

1. Ensuring significant investment in social innovation

We propose an additional amendment to recital 7 (new, in line with the Lisbon Conference "Opening up to an ERA of Social Innovation")

… in close synergy with Common Agricultural Policy, relevant actions under the Specific Programme will be supported with EUR 10 billion for the cluster 'Food and Natural Resources' for the period 2021-2027.
In synergy with social policy, the Programme will support the development of social innovation with an investment of at least 10% in research and innovation that is 'social' in both means and ends.

2. Strengthening the reference to social innovation

Article 2 – paragraph 2 – point n	*Article 2 – paragraph 2 – point n*
Improving skills for innovation	*Improving skills for **technical and social** innovation*

3. Ensuring a dedicated cluster for SSH and SI

We propose to split the cluster that merges the social sciences and humanities and the reflection about the social aspects with security research	
Article 3 – paragraph 1 – point 2	*Article 3 – paragraph 1 – point 2*
*(b) cluster 'Inclusive and **Secure** Society'*	*(b) cluster 'Inclusive, **Creative and Reflective** Society'*

4. Ensuring a dedicated programme part for science with and for society

We propose to keep a dedicated part of the programme focused on citizen-driven research and innovation and place-based innovation actions.
Article 3 – paragraph 1 – point 4 (new)
(c) supporting citizen-driven research and innovation, place-based innovation actions and actions

5. Strengthening social innovation in the ERC

Article 6 – paragraph 5	*Article 6 – paragraph 5*
The activities of the ERC shall support research carried out across all fields by individual and transnational teams in competition at the European level.	*The activities of the ERC shall support research carried out across all fields by individual and transnational teams in competition at the European level. **Particular efforts of the ERC encourage innovative social sciences and humanities research and encouraging the translation***

	of research into social innovation via Proof of Concept grants.

6. Ensuring a position for social innovation in the EIC

Article 9 – paragraph 1	*Article 9 – paragraph 1*
*The Commission shall establish a European Innovation Council (EIC) for implementing actions under Pillar III 'Open Innovation' which relate to the EIC. The EIC shall operate according to the following principles: focus on breakthrough and **disruptive innovation**, autonomy, ability to take risk, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability.*	*The Commission shall establish a European Innovation Council (EIC) for implementing actions under Pillar III 'Open Innovation' which relate to the EIC. The EIC shall operate according to the following principles: focus on breakthrough and **disruptive technological and social innovation**, autonomy, ability to take risk, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability.*

Conclusion

Horizon Europe has a significant role to play in enabling Europe to achieve future targets, such as fulfilling the UN Sustainable Development Goals; but also in allowing an even greater cross-section of European citizens to witness, participate and share in the societal benefits of innovation. Yet without the bottom-up and top-down cooperation, collaboration and experimentation that social innovation represents, it is difficult to imagine how the EU can achieve such ambitions.

In the coming months, Social Innovation Community will continue its consultations with the community and different European, national and regional stakeholders to qualify and, where needed, further refine the policy proposals made here with respect to Horizon Europe; with a longer-term goal of helping ensure that Horizon Europe lives up to its potential to drive transformative societal progress. Furthermore, this activity fits into a wider Social Innovation Declaration framework, which is being coordinated by the Social Innovation Community with input from our community, and which will include other key aspects of policy covered by the Multi-Annual Financial Framework - and is due to be launched later this year.