



Federal Ministry  
of Education  
and Research

# European societies of the future:

Research for a democratic, culturally diverse and socially just Europe

This paper supplements the “German discussion paper in preparation for the 10<sup>th</sup> EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation” of the Federal Government, which was published and submitted to the European Commission by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) in May 2024. It is thus part of a series of papers by the BMBF that more closely address individual aspects of Germany’s provisional position on the next EU framework programme for research and innovation.

This focus paper addresses the potential of social and cultural sciences research for society. As set out in the discussion paper of the Federal Government, transnational collaborative research projects can deliver effective approaches for solving crises and other societal challenges that will safeguard our European way of life. The “Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024–2029” portray the present as an “era of profound change” with insecurities, (security) risks, conflicts and the need for joint action. Europe finds itself in the middle of a far-reaching economic, digital and social transformation. In view of future challenges and the corresponding need for crisis preparedness, European R&I funding must support this comprehensive transformation of our economy and society. In doing so, the relevance of research must not be subordinated to the primacy of competitiveness; rather, it will be of central importance to support research in FP10 that contributes to strengthening democracy and societal cohesion in Europe. This is an important basis for our economic and societal resilience.

In order to be able to deal expertly with new technologies such as artificial intelligence and with societal and economic transformation, future skills need to be developed with the help of social and cultural science. In this context, social innovations play an important role in finding viable and sustainable solutions.

Against this background, we consider thematically focused research funding on a democratic, culturally diverse and socially just Europe to be necessary. Below, we set out our ideas and considerations on this.

### **1. In the context of research on societal challenges there continues to be the need for an area dedicated to collaborative research concerned with culture and society in the 10<sup>th</sup> EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10).**

The Federal Government’s Future Research and Innovation Strategy emphasizes the role which the humanities and social sciences play in studying the prerequisites for a society’s capacity for innovation and transformation and in strengthening societal resilience, diversity and cohesion. In order to be able to pool the potential of these disciplines effectively and in order for these disciplines to develop their cultural and social impact on a sustained basis, there is an urgent need to bring together thematic fields that primarily require research related to culture and society. Long-term provision of support for the humanities and social sciences as well as the cultural sector is the prerequisite for sustainable European networks and structures to be able to develop, building on the initiatives of the preceding programmes. This will bring progress to the European Research Area and contribute to sound knowledge bases for decision-making.

### **2. The following topics, in particular, should be addressed in FP10:**

- a. Democracy, governance and international relations: Strengthening democratic values and institutions (including participation and the role of education), the rule of law and fundamental rights, but also expanded to the global context in order to take account of geopolitical topics, including conflict prevention and strategies for conflict resolution.
- b. Culture and society: including topics such as values/ethics, traditions, cultural diversity, identities, cultural education, societal self-perception, societal role of cultural heritage/culture/arts and the creative industries in Europe, societal role of cultural ties in the global context, historical perspectives for the better understanding of political and societal developments, reflection on cultural narratives and their impacts on society, memory and remembrance, culture and societal cohesion.

- c. Fair societal change: including topics such as more sustainable, more inclusive design of the economic system and industrial policy oriented to the common good, including with a view to linking state support to the fulfilment of social and employment policy criteria, job markets, social policy, tax systems, fair transition to a green/digital economy, social justice or social inequality (including the role of education), fighting poverty and enabling social participation, societal cohesion, demographic change including migration and integration.
- d. Anticipating the future of Europe: New technological developments such as artificial intelligence pose an increasingly important challenge for Europe's societies and this should be addressed in a fourth thematic field, including consequences of the rapid continuing development of AI, digitalization and other new technologies on individuals and society; strategic foresight and research into the future; including ethical, philosophical, legal, economic and social aspects.

**3. The principle included in the German discussion paper that a balance should be sought between smaller and larger projects and between more basic research-oriented and more application-oriented projects is also relevant for the cultural and social sciences.**

**4. The existing funding instruments of the framework programme, in particular Research and Innovation Actions (RIA), Innovation Actions (IA) and Coordination and Support Actions (CSA), appear still to be useful for implementing cultural and social science projects.**

The main emphasis should be on Research and Innovation Actions as these are particularly suitable for the outlined topics. Where appropriate, participatory research approaches should be applied.

**5. There should also be more flexibility in the choice of topics for applicants for collaborative research on societal issues.**

Within the thematic limits set for the promotion of the cultural and social sciences in the Regulation and the Specific Programme, there should also be experimentation with flexibly formulated topics – where useful and limited in extent – that allow researchers the freedom to decide for themselves what focus to set.

**6. In order to support the effectiveness of funded projects, further activities are necessary to link the projects that address similar topics including on a cross-programme basis.**

Culture and society should be enabled to derive greater benefit from project results and their application, for example through targeted measures in the work programmes (e.g. Coordination and Support Actions which support transfer into application or Innovation Actions that follow up Research and Innovation Actions and further develop their results) or through the improved use of the CORDIS and Horizon Results platforms.

**7. In order for societal challenges to be adequately addressed, the integration of social sciences and humanities expertise (SSH Integration) should be strengthened in all thematic areas, including through the design of the funding areas from an interdisciplinary perspective.**

One example of the relevance of such synergies will be sustainability research in FP10, in which social and democratic aspects of the transformation to sustainability must also play a central role, in the BMBF's view. In the field of civil security research, the protection of democracy will increase in importance, which will also lead to cross-programme synergies.

