



ECTRI ANSWER TO THE LITHUANIAN EU PRESIDENCY CONSULTATION

on

HORIZONS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

***“The state of the Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities
(SSH) in Europe”***

June 2013

The European Conference of Transport Research Institutes (ECTRI) is an international non-profit association that was officially founded in April 2003. It is the first attempt to unite the forces of the foremost multimodal transport research centres across Europe and to thereby promote the excellence of European transport research. Today, it includes 26 major transport research institutes or universities from 19 European countries. Together, they account for more than 4,000 European scientific and research staff in the field of transport. ECTRI as the leading European research association for sustainable and multimodal mobility is committed to provide the scientifically based competence, knowledge and advice to move towards a green, safe, efficient, and inclusive transport for people and goods.

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Questionnaire
HORIZONS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
« Consultation on the state of the Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH) in Europe »

The European Conference of Transport Research Institutes (ECTRI) welcomes the opportunity of replying to the Consultation on “the state of the Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH) in Europe” launched by the Lithuanian EU Presidency. This answer reflects the position of the association and can be made publicly available.

- 1. SSH research is often conducted in disciplinarily defined contexts. This may be an obstacle in a problem-driven research environment (“societal challenges”). Can you give examples of how your own research area has been involved in (a) opening up to other research fields, (b) translating findings and/or methods to or from other academic fields, (c) contributing to the emergence of new, cross-disciplinary fields, and/or (d) transcending, with its results and insights, the fields of academic research?**

Transport research is often considered a research discipline of its own and addresses its “own” societal challenge in Horizon 2020. In fact it combines a multitude of multi- and trans-disciplinary approaches, ranging from physics and engineering sciences (PES) to the social sciences and humanities (SSH) as well as medicine. It is an active research field *par excellence* for the combination and integration of different scientific disciplines, which are steadily responding to the points raised above (a-d).

Prominent examples of the integration of different SSH disciplines into a multidisciplinary approach include:

- Traffic safety, where medicine and psychology interact with physics;
- Mobility and travel behavior, where economics, psychology and sociology as well as political science are closely interacting;
- Traffic impacts, where physics, engineering, medicine, psychology, sociology and economics are heavily involved; and
- Climate change and local air pollution, where mobility and travel behavior as well as traffic impacts are integrated with engineering approaches.

- 2. The research agendas of the different subfields of SSH are very heterogeneous. What are the broad research questions, new methodological or theoretical developments, or generally new approaches that are high on your own research agenda? Which ones are high on the research agenda of your field? Where do you see potential contributions to societal relevance?**

- Influencing travel behavior, by combining legal, economic, psychological and technical instruments, and measuring and assessing the impact of each instrument as well as the combined impact.

- Forecasting and foresight of the development of mobility, by taking into account (exogenous) social, technological, economic, environmental, political and demographic trends and drivers.
- Bringing together mobility and transport research with urban development and land use, transport-related energy providers, and system technology integrators to generate system-wide knowledge on transport needs and societal developments in an ecologically sustainable setting.

3. “Horizon 2020” will provide new opportunities for SSH to contribute to new research on “societal challenges”. What are the potential contributions from your field? Please specify the “societal challenge/s” to which contributions from your research community are most likely, and suggest successful steps in this direction, if possible.

Contributions are primarily expected in the specific transport challenge

- Smart, green and integrated transport

but as well in the challenges

- Secure, clean and efficient energy;
- Climate action; and
- Inclusive, innovative and secure societies.

The most promising steps are raising awareness on SSH-related issues and helping those issues to be included in the Work Programmes of Horizon 2020 in their “own right”.

Selected steps related to the transport challenge could include:

- Risk taking, dangerous/disaster/crisis situations and learning: challenges for the development of safer mobility;
- Gender and road safety: integrating mobility, psychosocial and cultural aspects to better understand road fatalities;
- Human and cultural characteristics of individual and subgroup behavior as well as deviations from governing patterns, in relation to mobility preferences, needs, motivators/barriers;
- User reactions to hard/soft control measures for the better design of collaborative and distributed technologies to enhance citizen participation in the development of user-oriented mobility systems;
- Promoting the mobility of all citizens, including vulnerable road users (e.g. seniors and the mobility disadvantaged).

4. Do you foresee (or have you experienced) obstacles that may prevent you and your research community from making contributions to the “societal grand challenges” approach? Please provide specific indications.

An obstacle can emerge if SSH-issues are not addressed in their “own right” but are subordinated to other issues, e.g. the user acceptance of new technologies. Indeed SSH-issues can be used more active and as key driving factors for the type of society and mobility system we are striving towards.

5. In order to foster a more integrative approach that would also benefit the SSH research communities, what would you consider the most important incentives that “Horizon 2020” could provide?

A clear identification/earmarking of SSH-related research topics in the specific challenges and the identification of cross-cutting (across challenges) issues in the different WP’s would clearly foster a more integrative approach.