Horizons for Social Sciences and Humanities

Next week the Lithuanian presidency of the EU Council organizes a conference “Horizons on Social Sciences and Humanities”. It will be a highlight of the event calendar in European research policy. As its title already indicates, the conference is closely related to the European Commission’s Horizon 2020 research-funding programme, with focus on the so-called third pillar, the Societal Challenges Programme.

In a joint effort with the European Union Member States and the European Parliament, the European Commission defines seven such “challenges”, reaching from “health, “demographic change and well-being”, “food security”, “energy”, “transport”, “climate action”, to “inclusive, innovative and reflective societies” and “secure societies”. With more than 28 Billion Euros over the next seven years, it will constitute an important fund for European research.

Peter Tindemans, Secretary General of Euroscience and member of the conference Steering Committee, commented: “It is obvious that Social Science and Humanities have a lot to contribute to each of those issues, and the European Commission has repeatedly emphasised that it would follow an “integrated approach” in the design of the Societal Challenges Programme. But the details of this approach are not clear yet. This is exactly where the Vilnius conference comes into the picture.”

Held under the Lithuanian EU Presidency, the conference concentrates primarily on implementation: How can integration of the Social Sciences and Humanities in each of the seven challenges be achieved? And, vice versa, what are specific requirements of the Social Sciences and Humanities in order to contribute in the best manner? European Commission officials will discuss the integration of Social Sciences and Humanities with representatives from academia in detail.