

Statement on Theses Paper for shaping the next (9th) EU-RTD Framework Programme

IGO - Interest Group of Public Benefit Organizations appreciates the proactive key role Austria is playing in shaping the next EU RTD-programme. We support many of the recommendations that are made in the Theses Paper. However we would appreciate, if **socio-economic and ecological issues** would be given higher importance.

The Paper refers in various parts but particularly in Thesis 4 to **Civil Society (CS) as a relevant actor for a Common Research and Innovation Policy** that shall serve the leitmotif of “instilling a renewed sense of purpose and belief into the future of Europe and the European Union” (p.8). We are convinced that CSOs in member states and acceding countries will gladly accept this responsibility, once that supportive framework conditions exist.

In this statement

1. we will give you an **overview about the specific potential of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)** that we - from within the sector – would see, if supportive framework-conditions were created.
2. we will outline the **main aspects** that we consider important for creating these **supportive framework conditions**.
3. share our **thoughts on** some of the ten **Theses**.

1. The Potential of organized Civil Society

Civil Society Organizations are crucial actors when it comes to tackling the most urging European Challenges.

CSOs do significantly often work in areas that can be defined as the current European Challenges:



Particularly in applied Sciences CSOs can

- provide **information / data** for research.
- provide **expertise on how to create relevant research-programmes and research-projects** that truly help mastering the mentioned challenges.
- be important **partners in creating and analysing social innovation**.
- **apply the results of research directly** and hence **make the importance of the EU RTD-programme clear to the public**.
- provide **scientific expertise** which is gathered within many CSOs.
- **conduct research-projects themselves**. Many professional CSOs operate evidence-based and have a research-infrastructure at their disposal.
- **assist in the evaluation of EU RTD-programmes and projects**. (referring to Thesis 7)

2. Supportive Framework Conditions

- **Representatives of CSO-sector** shall be **integrated more actively** in Stakeholder-Processes and Joint Standing Committees.
- **Social Sciences shall no longer be marginalized**, since they play a crucial role in solving societal challenges and therefore are an important instrument for CSOs. Same can be said about arts and humanities. This position is widely shared in the scientific sector, as for example in the evaluation of Horizon 2020 by “Allianz der Wissenschaftsorganisationen”.¹
- Horizon 2020 and the Theses Paper for FP9 contain **incentives for SMEs** (p.18f), similar instruments shall be applied for **CSOs**.
- **Platforms that help to link CSOs and existing scientific institutions** (universities, etc.) would be of great help. They should facilitate communication and could serve as contact point for CSOs that want to share their expertise or use the FP for gathering more scientific knowledge.
- **Increase of funding for transdisciplinary Sustainability Science.**
- As for any other applicant **“user-friendly”, comprehensive and not too complex administration-procedures** will support the participation of CSOs. Application-processes need to be simplified.

3. Referring to the Theses

Thesis 1: We welcome the recommendation to create a Common Research Technology and Innovation Policy, which allows a complementary use of all its structures and mechanisms. This implies high responsibility, since it will have high impact. It is hence very important that **research-funds, which consist of public-money, are invested in a way that serves the general public and future generations.** This has to be ensured, monitored and evaluated, particularly when profit-oriented enterprises get research-funding.

Thesis 2: When it comes to Human Resources and Excellence we should not forget about a **permeable education and research system** that allows children from less privileged households to enter the field of science. One could assume that this has nothing to do with the scientific-sector, because it’s the responsibility of the education-system. But when working towards more cohesion, complementarity – this has to be thought together. Additionally, the trend towards **casualization and precarious working conditions** in European Research Institutions has to be tackled.

Thesis 3: **Sustainability** as prerequisite for funding could be more emphasized. **The support-measures for SMEs could serve as a model for support-measures for CSOs.**

¹See: <https://www.mpg.de/10647199/allianz-zwischen-eval-horizon-2020.pdf>

Thesis 4: We welcome the recommendation that at least one third of the FP9 budget should be allocated for societal challenges. We underline the importance of your recommendation that - opposed to former top-down approaches - **citizens and society shall be involved in a substantial manner**. CSOs can be a strong partner, if framework conditions are adequate (see above). We do hope that Thesis 4 will get the attention it deserves in the future process of shaping the next EU RTD-programme. It truly bears high potential for tackling the challenges of our time.

Thesis 5: We underline the recommendation that the **selection of themes should be based purely on relevance to the European Society** and/or economy and not on national or sectoral lobbying.

Thesis 6: As for any other applicant **“user-friendly”, comprehensible and not too complex administration-procedures and application-procedures are necessary** for the participation of CSOs. Application-processes need to be simplified.

Thesis 7: Explicit information on how to get an **independent outside view** is missing.

Thesis 8: **Representatives of the Civil Society Sector** should be members of **Joint Standing Committees**.

(A glossary would be of great help)