Dear MEP,

The European Commission released its proposal for the Horizon Europe (formerly known as FP9) on 7 June.

[*name of the organisation*] expresses its support for excellent public engagement to be included in the next Horizon Europe programme.

The current proposal relies on a top-down communication approach where the research and innovation results are “delivered” and “explained” to citizens, but more than information, dialogues are urgently needed, and research shows that such top-down approaches are inadequate to address current societal issues such as fake news, fear of new technologies, or pseudoscience. In addition, contrary to H2020, Horizon Europe does not have a Science for and with Society (SwafS) specific strand. This presents the highly feasible risk of seeing science engagement reduced to top-down communication done with outdated modes of science engagement and without the contribution of professional mediators.

The engagement of citizens should not be confused with public outreach. Engagement refers to actions aimed, notably, at mutual learning between different types of stakeholders and does not refer to one-way transmission from experts to publics. Engagement can include public outreach but is not limited to it. Different engagement modes are needed for re-building science-society interfaces, particularly on emerging technologies.

Moreover, the connection between research / innovation with the formal and informal education system is too weak. Education is an important part of the R&I system, from an early age to late adulthood. The whole education ecosystem should be considered, both formal (schools, universities, etc) and informal (science museums and similar, other learning opportunities) to, notably, promote the 21st century skills needed for research and innovation.

In response to this first proposal, a list of amendments has been prepared asking for:

* A strong science engagement approach in Horizon Europe
* A specific strand on SwafS with a budget of at least the level of Horizon 2020 (€460 million)
* A stronger integration of formal and informal education as well as a stronger integration of social sciences and humanities to tackle science and society relations issues.

Thus, we would strongly invite you to reinstate a version of the excellent “Science with and for Society” programme (with a similar budget to the current level of €460 million) that would make science relevant to citizens.

I attach to this letter the specific amendments proposed by science engagement colleagues at Ecsite in Brussels, which we support.

Best wishes,