Social Sciences and Humanities for the European Green Deal

10 recommendations from the EU Energy SSH Innovation Forum

Energy-SHIFTS

ENERGY
SOCIAL SCIENCES &
HUMANITIES
INNOVATION
FORUM
TARGETING THE
SET-PLAN

- The European Green Deal will underpin research, innovation and policy work towards a climate neutral future for Europe. However, outcomes will be limited in terms of speed, effectiveness and equality, without increased attention to Social Science and Humanities (SSH) matters.

- Over 2019-2021, the Horizon 2020 project Energy-SHIFTS (*Energy Social sciences and Humanities Innovation Forum Targeting the SET-Plan*) has supported SSH and energy policy stakeholders in working together to address EU energy and climate commitments.

- The 10 recommendations given here are drawn from Energy-SHIFTS research on energy, however they are relevant across the wider remit of the Green Deal when it comes to how SSH can be meaningfully involved in setting and implementing policy and governance strategies for a sustainable future.

- These recommendations were delivered to the European Commission (DG RTD) in March 2021, but will also be of interest to those working on climate and energy matters across national and local policy, funding, and research in all disciplines (within and beyond SSH).

- This document is deliberately short, and is planned to be made available in the following languages: *Basque, Catalan, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Ukrainian.*

- For further details, including over 25 open access project publications which underpin these recommendations, visit: energy-shifts.eu

Suggested citation

Robison, R. and Foulds, C., 2021. *Social Sciences and Humanities for the European Green Deal. 10 recommendations from the EU Energy SSH Innovation Forum.* Cambridge: Energy-SHIFTS.
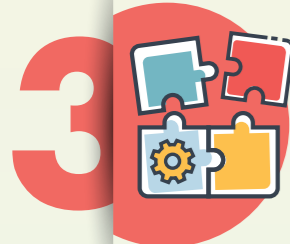
10 Energy-SHIFTS Recommendations

1 The integration of SSH into the European Green Deal must be urgently prioritised. SSH research shows transition to climate neutrality is not easy and may be impossible to achieve over short time scales; we therefore need to scale up this integration immediately. Climate targets are slipping away and the vital role of societies has never been more clear, yet the Green Deal currently neglects essential SSH themes. Meaningful inclusion of SSH insights offers the only chance to truly deliver on the EU's commitment to *"put people first"* in the European Green Deal[1].

2 Major energy and climate research funding programmes (e.g. Horizon Europe, but also at the national level) should enable SSH themes to be positioned centrally in at least 50% of projects. These themes include: a) Participation, deliberative democracy and citizen engagement; b) Governance, policies and institutions; c) Equity, justice and inclusion; d) Power relations and conflicts; e) Cultures, narratives and imaginaries; f) Risks, rebounds and unintended consequences. Funding assessment processes should ensure SSH expertise is adequately represented (including in project leadership positions) within any project claiming to inform policy on societal matters, as well as monitoring whether a diversity of SSH disciplines are funded overall. Commitments to 'mainstreaming' of SSH as a cross-cutting priority (i.e. requiring *all* projects to account for SSH themes) require active monitoring to ensure targets are being achieved. Evaluators with SSH expertise are vital in this work.

3 All revisions to Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET-Plan) Implementation Plans should have dedicated SSH sections, including tangible recommendations. The EU SET-Plan Steering Group should make this commitment and oversee its fulfillment within the Implementation Plan Working Groups. The new Offshore Wind Implementation Plan - which is the first to have a dedicated 2-page SSH section - should be utilised as an example of what is possible. Most Implementation Plans are being revised right now as part of aligning with new European Green Deal strategies and targets; there is thus a window of opportunity in 2021 that should not be missed.

4 When undertaking citizen engagement, remember timing, influence and inclusivity. *Timing* means the need to engage citizens early on to find out their needs and wants; *influence* means ensuring that citizen input will practically impact on actions taken (listening is not enough); and *inclusivity* means accounting for citizen diversity and how some will be vulnerable and harder to reach. Inclusive engagement, including but not limited to considerations of gender, takes dedicated time and planning, and proposals for Coordination and Support Actions within Horizon Europe should be assessed on their provision for this.
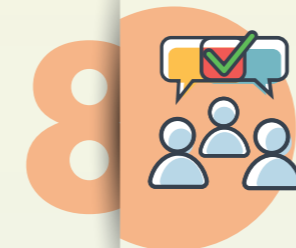
5 The SSH agenda on social innovation should move beyond the concept of community energy, and incorporate issues such as multilevel governance, democratic innovation, reinventing municipalities, exploring the roles of incumbents (e.g. traditional energy suppliers), and the influence of technologies and infrastructures on engagement. In making this move, SSH research and policy communities should work together in creating practical tools and resources that tangibly demonstrate how social innovation solutions can be rolled out.

6 Green Deal policy should move beyond social acceptance as a central framing for outcomes. This framing is problematic because it assumes solutions are already decided on, and that they are inherently acceptable. It often relies on public consultations which lack any real engagement. To counter this, we recommend: early participation of stakeholders in meaningful ways (see recommendation 4); learning from innovative bottom-up approaches (see recommendation 5); and designing policy which recognises the important roles of professionals in the energy system (not just 'end-users').

7 Green Deal policy should embed social justice outcomes more centrally in targets and utilise well-developed SSH research, which has shown how justice needs to be integrated from the earliest decisions and across the whole lifetime of the policy initiative. In particular, SSH understandings must urgently be better integrated into the Just Transition Mechanism, as well as throughout other instruments. Specific areas that require greater attention in policy include a focus on individuals and groups with high consumption patterns, different regional needs (e.g. Central and Eastern Europe as compared to Western Europe), and gender.

8 Impactful research-policy exchange requires properly funded facilitation. Facilitators are needed to support: trust-building, unpacking policy challenges, and managing power dynamics and expectations. The value for policymakers in these exchanges often comes from learning about the different approaches possible, and building capacity to approach their policy challenges with a critical lens, rather than finding ready-made examples which perfectly fit their, unique, contexts. Real exchange means involving policy within research at earlier stages, and building long-term relationships where each side can learn from and challenge each other. There is significant appetite from SSH researchers to be involved in these initiatives.

9 Policy organisations need to explicitly prioritise interactions with SSH experts. There is significant demand from frontline policy staff who recognise the tangible benefits this brings including: better understanding and communication with stakeholders; use of SSH approaches to improve methodologies and processes; deeper understanding of justice issues in their work; and contribution to systemic and long-lasting change. Such results will not be realised however without commitment of time and finance by institutions. By posing policy problems for SSH experts (both in and out of academia) to respond to, policy organisations can show leadership in helping develop policy-relevant social understandings.

10 SSH methods are needed to improve metrics. Accountability and monitoring procedures should assess quality and depth not just numbers and scope. This means moving beyond tokenism in areas from SSH inclusion and gender considerations to citizen engagement. Horizon Europe needs to be reflexive and learn lessons for future Framework Programmes, including learning from failures. These are areas where SSH methods are essential.

[1] European Commission, 2019. *European Green Deal.* p.2.

Energy-SHIFTS
Activities in brief
(up to 31 March 2021)

Horizon Scanning

4 Working Groups on renewables; smart consumption; energy efficiency; transport and mobility | In-depth deliberation by 130+ SSH researchers | Each group identified 100 SSH priority research questions | 50+ SSH sub-disciplines represented | 30+ nationalities represented | 1350 Qs originally submitted by ~400 SSH researchers

Policy Fellowships

19 Fellowships | Connected 21 energy policyworkers with 86 energy-SSH researchers | 21 EU & H2020-Associated countries represented | 100+ online meetings and workshops

Online, searchable database

258 policyworkers & organisations signed up to show their willingness to engage in SSH issues | Covers 30 EU & H2020-Associated countries | 238 with interest in renewables (excl. transport fuels) | 177 in smart consumption | 207 in energy efficiency | 109 in transport | 67 in carbon capture and storage | 44 in nuclear

EU policy engagement

Energy-SHIFTS has supported the integration of SSH into EU policy | 2 presentations to EU Member States' SET-Plan Steering Group | Assisted revision of SET-Plan Implementation Plan for Offshore Wind | Presence at EC's 2018 and 2019 SET-Plan Conferences, including SSH session at 2019 EERA side event | Energy-SSH workshop jointly hosted with DG ENER and DG RTD | Engagement with all 13 ETIPs and sectorial fora

Diverse data streams

SSH methods used to transparently investigate energy-SSH priorities as well as project experiences | 65 Interviews (42 as part of Working Groups, 13 with ETIPs, 10 for Evaluation) | Fieldnotes recorded by Working Group Steering Committees and Policy Fellowship facilitators | 397 Horizon scan surveys responses | 97 Policy Fellowship debrief survey responses

Multi-stakeholder events

Numerous interactive events on engaging SSH issues, with participants from research, consultancy, policy, industry, media | 4 scoping workshops | 4 masterclasses on the utility of SSH | 8 Working Group meetings | 5 Policy Fellowship dialogue workshops | 2 Early-Stage Researcher workshops | 1 global online conference with over 350 attendees

Engaging communications

Active social media and online channels | 28 open access reports | ~60k people viewed our 4 citizen debates | 72 project videos | +430k social media impressions | +2k social media followers | 500+ subscribers | ~74k website views

Inclusive activity design

Dedicated programme for 17 Early Stage Researchers | Genders & career stages accounted for in Working Groups and Policy Fellowships