July 5th 2018

Dear

I am writing on behalf of the UK Association for Science and Discovery Centres to express our enthusiastic support for excellent public engagement to be included in the next Horizon Europe Proposal.

The UK Association for Science and Discovery Centres (ASDC) is the national organisation that brings together the UK’s major science engagement organisations to play a strategic role in the nation’s engagement with science. Within our network are over 60 of the nation’s largest publicly accessible science centres, discovery centres, science museums and scientific bodies. Together, our vision is for a society where people of all backgrounds and in all parts of the UK are inspired and fully involved with the sciences. We work closely with Ecsite, the European network of Science Centres and Museums, and are the UK partner in two Horizon 2020 programmes.

Every year in the UK alone, 20 million people of all ages and backgrounds choose to engage with science at one of the UK’s science and discovery centres or science museums. This equates to 385,000 people every week who want to explore and discuss science in an involving and personal way. Over half (ten million) are girls and women. Over half, are school-age children. Many millions more engage across Europe. We engage families, children, schools and communities with all areas of science in ways that are interesting and relevant to them, and reach and involve people widely.

**I am writing to express our considerable concern that the draft of Horizon Europe appears to be enormously lacking in its desire to engage the public with science in meaningful and participatory ways. Instead it appears to be using an outdated top-down model of ‘informing’ citizens with science and ‘disseminating’ and ‘communicating the research results’. This is in place of involving and inspiring them to be part of the discussion, and to find ways for everyone across society to explore and consider issues that involve science. Opening up access to new data from research is of course good, but it won’t reach those who are not already keenly interested in accessing science.**

The approach given in the draft proposal for Horizon Europe is concerning as it goes against all the latest evidence from the academic field of science engagement which advocates for models that are much more about participation and co-creation to involve all our citizens.

As a nation and as a global society we have some major challenges ahead, especially around climate and carbon. It will take a combination of technological innovation and societal change to address these. Horizon Europe has a huge opportunity to be forward-thinking actors in this space, championing inclusion and diversity in STEM, striving for new ideas and approaches in engaging communities, and ensuring children and citizens across the Europe have access to great, interesting and relevant science.

We need people across our societies and communities to be familiar with the scientific method and the processes of science and choosing to be involved, discussing the issues, setting the agenda and being part of the solution. We want young people to explore the variety of careers available that involve science, and to help them to be adaptable and entrepreneurial for the future.

This is a tremendous opportunity to put the people and citizens of Europe at the heart of the excellent scientific research of Horizon Europe. Let the science funding work for everyone. Fund the great science and then focus some funding to ensure that people of all backgrounds across Europe have real and high-quality access to it, rather than sharing the results in a manner that only appeals to the well-read and scientifically-skilled.

**Thus, we would urge you as our MEP and your colleagues to ask the team currently drafting Horizon Europe, that they do not remove the main funding stream that would make science relevant to citizens and put science at the heart of culture in fresh and innovative ways. In summary we would urge them to reinstate a version of the excellent ‘Science with and for Society’ programme similar in budget to the current level of €460 million, as they make their amendments this July.**

I attach to this letter a map of the UK centres, and the specific amendments proposed by my science centre colleagues at ECSITE in Brussels, which we fully support.

Please feel free to contact me if we might be able to be of any further assistance in any way.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Penny Fidler, CEO of ASDC

