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Answer given by Ms Zaharieva
on behalf of the European Commission
(18.6.2025)

The Commission is aware of the funding of MEN4DEM¹. The project will contribute to the expected impact of the Horizon Europe area of intervention on democracy and governance². The call under which the project is funded stated that the implementation of the research activities should develop evidence-based innovations, policies and policy recommendations that expand political participation, social dialogue, civic engagement, gender equality and inclusiveness³.

The preparation of the work programmes and calls of Horizon Europe are guided by the programme's operational objectives, as outlined in the Specific Programme Decision⁴. For the area of intervention on democracy and governance, under cluster 2 'Culture, creativity and inclusive society⁵', these objectives aim to strengthen democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights.

In addition, a collaborative and consultative process with stakeholders, Member States and experts, ensures that the calls' topics are relevant and aligned with the programme's objectives.

The selection of projects for funding is based on an independent evaluation by external experts, assessing submitted proposals against three criteria: excellence, impact, and quality and efficiency of the implementation. Apart from social sciences and humanities, Horizon Europe funds research on other key thematic sectors, including artificial intelligence, health, energy, and environment.

Overall, and during its first three years of implementation, Horizon Europe could not fund nearly seven out of ten high-quality proposals⁶ due to a lack of sufficient budget⁷.

¹ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101177356>.

² I.e. the reinvigoration of democratic governance through, among others, the expansion of active and inclusive citizenship (see Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2021-2024, p. 45 at <https://op.europa.eu/s/z5ah>).

³ <https://europa.eu/!JHk7XR>, pp. 12-23.

⁴ Council Decision (EU) 2021/764 of 10 May 2021, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2021/764/oj/eng>.

⁵ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/cluster-2-culture-creativity-and-inclusive-society_en.

⁶ Proposals with an evaluation score above the minimum quality threshold defined in the call.

⁷ See the Communication Horizon Europe: Research and Innovation at the heart of competitiveness, COM(2025) 189 final, at <https://europa.eu/!897NPW>.