The research to address this challenge should in particular focus on the following key dimensions. It is expected to either comprehensively address one of these dimensions or to combine two or three of them. The research may also cover other issues relevant for addressing the specific challenge.

1) Using science in the context of European diplomacy

In an increasingly complex global context, diplomacy as a social practice and profession is undergoing considerable changes. In both bi- and multilateral contexts, it is no longer sufficient for diplomats to be skilled in the art of negotiation, but they also need to have the capacity - alongside specialist knowledge - to take better advantage of science and scientific cooperation. How to better prepare and employ 'science diplomats' remains a particularly unexplored research area. The research efforts should focus on examining the interface between scientific advice and expertise and diplomats' performance and capacity. It should analyse where science diplomacy can have the biggest impact and how it can be instrumental in strengthening EU capacities and strategic awareness and in establishing better mechanisms so as to anticipate events early and to swiftly identify common responses. This should involve 'practitioners' of science diplomacy.

Research should explore under which conditions science and scientific cooperation have contributed positively or negatively to reaching foreign policy objectives (peace, security, trade, development, humanitarian aid) in various challenging contexts and draw recommendations for the development of new actions at EU and Member States levels.

2) European culture, values and reflections of Europe's colonial past in contemporary European societies

European values are to a large extent determinants of behaviour. As values stay behind many societal patterns and organising principles of society, the knowledge of the past development of European values as well as the knowledge of their contemporary status could help to understand many aspects of behaviour of contemporary European populations.

Multidisciplinary research associating scholars from the humanities and social sciences should adopt an outside-in perspective on contemporary European societies and trace the manifold non-European and European colonial era-related determinants of present-day societal and cultural diversity in Europe. In so doing, it should pay particular attention to the way societal and cultural influences from outside of Europe have historically been framed, contested, transformed, refused or taken up in European societies. It should elucidate how and why some of these influences were able to strongly impact European societies, values, activities and culture, and why others were less successful.

Research under this topic will lead to a sound understanding of the social, cultural, linguistic and political legacies of colonialism within Europe and globally. It will assess their implications for policy-making, EU values and intercultural and interlinguistic dialogue, including the construction of plural cultural identities in nations and countries of Europe.

3) Global trends of secularisation and religious radicalisation and the role of Europe

Over the centuries the relations between the state and religion were of key importance for the functioning of state and society. Today's world is divided between secular states where government is officially separated from religion and states where this distinction is blurred, in addition to a few theocratic states. Whereas secular states are spread all over the world, and the religions professed and practiced by their citizens represent the widest possible spectrum of beliefs, the majority of countries which have embraced religion as their central norm are predominantly, although not exclusively, following Islam and are located in Africa, the Middle East, the Mediterranean region and Asia. A wide array of differences between official norms and practices still exist and should be taken into account in order to avoid undue generalisations between such countries and states.

Taking account of the diversity of forms of secularism and religion, and adopting a historical perspective, this multidisciplinary social sciences and humanities research should investigate and compare various types and experiences of the functioning of secular and religion-based states in and outside Europe. Its findings should clarify reasons for, and pathways of, transformation of the role of religion in state governance, and should explain differing perspectives of cultural and political co-existence within the polity. Specific attention should be paid to the analysis of the impact of religious radicalisation all over the world and its consequences on states' peaceful coexistence as well as of the foreign fighter phenomenon. Research should also focus on what these trends mean in terms of internal and foreign policies for the European Union, its Member States and the state-religion relationships on the European continent. In this perspective, it could also include the possible forms of injustice, inequality and exclusion that may contribute to societal tension and marginalisation of certain minority groups, as well as the common elements between religion-based values system and secular systems that could help to counter radicalisation.
The Commission considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the EU in the order of EUR 2.5 million for each dimension would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. This does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

Europe is faced with numerous challenges that are increasingly global in nature and that have become of more immediate importance: peace and stability, migration, climate change, resource efficiency, health pandemics, etc. In many cases, responding to these challenges requires science-based evidence to inform decisions and joint international efforts that often include also scientific and technological cooperation. This is where science and diplomacy can join forces to form a 'soft power' tool in external policy – science diplomacy.

A main challenge is how to best link scientific expertise and cooperation with diplomacy and political influence to tackle major global challenges, promote knowledge and improve international relations. Science diplomacy has a particular added value in providing additional communication channels, particularly in stalemate situations and relations where few other mechanisms are feasible as well as on sensitive bilateral and multilateral issues. It promotes cooperation and conflict prevention, rebuilds trust and fosters shared understanding across countries, regions and cultures.

At the same time, the global context is characterised by competing understandings of central values and organising principles of society, including the meaning and direction of politics, economics, culture and ultimately human life. This context, and Europe's place in it, needs to be better understood and accounted for, from both a contemporary and a historical perspective, if the European Union and its Member States want to continue to constructively take part and strengthen their position in global discourses about what constitutes a "good society" and to understand how European policy interventions have been understood and perceived globally.

Addressing this challenge requires a great dose of (self) reflexivity about European diplomacy, Europe's own history and its interactions with third countries, regions, cultures and religions. It calls for a continued investment in fostering scientific, political, economic, social and cultural relations with other non-European global actors on all continents, and for ways in which to sustain scientific and intercultural exchanges that effectively enhance mutual understanding despite differences.

Research under this topic is expected to impact the foreign policies of the EU and its member states and provide enhanced coordination between them and between the EU and its international partners. It will provide in-depth insights into the multiple ties and mutual influences between Europe and its neighbours, former colonies and other countries and regions, especially in the scientific, socioeconomic, historical cultural and religious spheres. It will also provide a sound understanding of contemporary European societies, of the multiple sources and expressions of diversity in the EU and of how non-European influences impact on the formation of European identities. Acknowledging the multiple sources of today's European diversity will have strong policy implications, not just for scientific and cultural policy, but also for immigration, integration, education and external policies. It will also facilitate Europe's future engagement with third countries.