



**Founding meeting of the European Alliance for the Social Sciences and Humanities** (project name, henceforth: EASH): meeting notes

Host: ALLEA (Federation of the European National Academies of Sciences and Humanities)

Venue: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Amsterdam, 20 December 2011.

The meeting was attended by 36 delegates mainly from European level organizations (umbrella science organizations, consortia of universities and research institutes in the fields of SSH, European and international subject associations/scientific unions (associations of national associations and associations of individual members) and multi-disciplinary national research performing organizations, and some influential networks (Net4Society; ERA-Nets).

The meeting was chaired by R. Klein (ALLEA) who gave an overview over the background of the initiative, exchanges with national and European policy makers, as well as the recent symposium on the role of SSH under "Horizon 2020", convened at the British Academy with Commissioner Maire Geoghegan-Quinn (speech in the attachment), and on the relevance of the "Open Letter" initiative (slides in the attachment). Klein also emphasized the need to be watchful as to the consequences of the ERA Framework policies at national level.

Milena Žic-Fuchs (ESF/SCH) and Angela Schindler-Daniels (Net4Society) gave respectively an overview over the recent developments of ESF and Science Europe main objectives of the Europe 2020 agenda (among the slides in the attachment).

EASH aims at mobilising the SSH community across Europe by facilitating their interactions at EU (for example: EC; SciEu) and national level. Klein stressed the diversity and inclusiveness of the Alliance's envisaged membership, and the multiple intellectual resources it would offer to engage with the process of increasing coordination of national science policies in the context of the ERA framework. These would include interactions at discipline/field level (promoting common concerns through mutual learning, awareness-raising, advancing shared research agendas) and with non-academic stakeholders alike.

It was proposed that after a "stage 1" when Alliance membership would include primarily such organisations as were present at this meeting, in a second step – once a legal entity would be in place and a profile would have been created (see below) – users of SSH research would also be invited, e.g. foundations and civil society organizations/NGO's, international/European organizations, incl. political organizations, and other non-academic stakeholders. Many of these had already been contacted and had expressed keen interest.

Participants agreed on the usefulness and timeliness of setting up such an Alliance, as the crisis for SSH research and education (caused by more than the current financial and budgetary crisis) requires robust and assertive, decisive and united action and reaction. Better links into the policy domain as envisaged by the Alliance, that would serve to mobilize and activate the community through multiple channels, and an improved sharing of relevant information among all parties concerned would certainly be helpful.

There was agreement that there are important objectives for the Alliance that go beyond the areas requiring immediate intervention with a view to "Horizon 2020". Participants found the catalogue drawn up by the Planning Group a very useful point of departure. EASH can, as a multi-stakeholder organization, develop a new approach to relating bottom-up and top-down views and visions of SSH research in Europe, and

- ▶ articulate, through a single voice, the strategic promotion of SSH research,
- ▶ offer, where appropriate, a single contact point and platform for interaction with the varied fields of SSH research in Europe (transmit, multiply, collect),
- ▶ feature achievements of SSH-research across Europe,
- ▶ create a platform for original, interdisciplinary, intersectoral research,
- ▶ advance discussions about SSH research infrastructures,
- ▶ facilitate access for potential users of SSH research to relevant knowledge,
- ▶ strengthen the capacity of SSH research communities to engage in policy discussions and to advise policy,
- ▶ encourage mutual learning between different institutional settings across Europe (and, eventually, beyond),
- ▶ develop a consistent argument about the nexus between a well-endowed, sustainably nurtured basic research environment and the capacity to produce innovating research for the use of society at large.

In the discussion, participants commented on a variety of issues related to the future operations of the Alliance, such as the interaction with non-academic users and stakeholders (SSH Fora), the need for a better involvement of Humanities subject associations, the importance of re-examining trends and opportunities in SSH education (at schools and universities), the need to critically examine of current restructuring of the Marie-Curie-Actions, and possible regional capacity building exercises that could be organised.

As to the internal structure of the Alliance, concerns were raised about the kind of associations / organisations to be eligible for membership (degree of inclusiveness). It was also proposed to develop a plan for exploring and fully exploiting new formats of electronic communication that would allow an active involvement of all the varied memberships.

There was agreement that moving ahead to register the Alliance as an AISBL (under Belgian Law) would a good way forward. Establishing a web-presence would also be a priority. Chair and co-chairs of this meeting would work on the details, and would report in due course.

Participants at the founding meeting and other organisations falling broadly into the categories agreed upon (see note distributed during the meeting) will invited to become founding members of the Alliance.

A date and venue for the General Assembly would also be proposed by chair and co-chairs of this meeting. On that occasion, the relevant votes would need to be held; dates would be proposed once the process of registration would be reasonably advanced.

The meeting chair will circulate the background material. Participants are invited to submit to the temporary contact address ([ruediger.klein@allea.org](mailto:ruediger.klein@allea.org)) all relevant documentation that they consider helpful in order to make visible the inclusiveness and objectives of the Alliance.

Participants agreed that first concrete actions need to be taken soon on a number of issues related to "Horizon 2020": A. Schindler-Daniels (Net4Soc) and R. Klein (ALLEA) will lead a group to produce a short policy paper on the relationship of SSH and security research (regarding the current 6<sup>th</sup> challenge). M Žic-Fuchs (ESF) and P. Holm (ECHIC) will be working on the challenges on influencing the strongly interdisciplinary environments of the emerging Grand Challenge approach of Horizon 2020. Participants are invited to propose expert volunteers for writing those two first position/policy papers (for details, see follow-up correspondence after the meeting).

ECREA – members and wider leadership permitting - may be leading the work of developing a communication plan. Together with Didier Georgakakis (ECPA), R. Klein will develop a timetable for the interactions with the European Parliament.