

DECLARATION – Version 1: **SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES IN THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA**

This Declaration is **for consideration** to

- the European Commission,
- the Member States of the European Union and Accession Countries,
- research funding agencies and RTD promotion organisations on national and EU levels,
- public and private research institutes, universities, EU RTD-project consortia and networks,
- professional associations and other organisations in the relevant scientific communities,
- and for discussion and adoption to the audience of the conference "Integrating Europe. Potential and performance of SSH in the process of EU enlargement" (November 23-26, 2003, Vienna)



Background: Depicting the starting point

There are some very **common complaints** in SSH – more or less – across Europe:

- **Low status and low funding** of SSH compared to „science“ in the classical sense
- Inappropriate or even lack of **infrastructures** (databases, institutions, methods)
- **Imbalance between (big) theory and (little) practical effectiveness** of research in SSH
- Prevalance of national communities due to **language boundaries and cultures**

The first items on this list differ – according to the importance of the last one – between European states in Northern/Scandinavian, Western, Central, Eastern, and Mediterranean regions. Some countries in these regions represent „delayed nations“ that became independent nation states only during the 20th century. It is thus a **crucial challenge** to manage the **transformation from nation-based development and functions to trans-national concepts** in theory, methodology and application of SSH in the new context of the envisaged ERA.



In fact it is the traditional close linkage of SSH to national cultures, language and tradition itself that proofs the **urgency of the development of a new European concept of research in SSH:**

- The creation of modern sociology, political science and other disciplines in the SSH (for a recent discussion of definitions cf. [Huws 2002](#), [Smith 2003](#)) was linked to the emergence of the *nation state* and the upswing of the *Industrial Society*.
- Nowadays a more transnational concept of SSH is required because of the *downturn of the nation state* (significantly indicated by the making of the EU) and the transition towards a knowledge-based global *Information Society*.
- Up to now SSH played an important role concerning nation building and the development of national social systems. In the global Information Society SSH are required to extend their competencies to **contribute to transnational social systems**, particularly in the EU.



Future perspectives:

Improving the potential, relevance and effectiveness of SSH in the ERA

Taking note of the background and current state of SSH in Europe, a new strategy is needed for moving forward towards a scientifically sound and practically efficient development of contemporary transnational SSH in the ERA.

Research in SSH should become better capable to

- respond to new challenges of the global Information Society and knowledge based economy,
- contribute to social, economic, cultural and institutional sustainability of the establishment of a viable knowledge-based economy and society in Europe.

In order to **make SSH more relevant in the ERA**, supporting crucial European developments towards enlargement, integration, the continuation, adaptation and creation of new social systems, and a peaceful and prosperous societal development in Europe at large, we have identified **five objectives** and a series of **recommendations** for achieving them.



Objective 1: Improving the acceptance, efficacy and relevance of SSH in the ERA

SSH will become more productive in the ERA, if the scientific communities involved manage to not only conduct and improve comparative research, but to turn towards **transnational collaborative research**. Moreover, this requires **meaningful co-operation** between „schools“, traditions in existing institutions, i.e. co-ordination of management structures, theories, methods and the application of research on national and EU levels („Internationalisation“).

Recommendations:

- Discuss, establish and implement a European „Action Plan: Effectiveness and internationalisation of SSH“ (a similar yet specified concept like „Science and Society“).
- Regard „multi-disciplinarity“ and „cutting across strategic objectives“ and/or programmes in FP6 as evaluation criteria.



Objective 2: Increasing financial support for SSH and transparency of accounting systems

Research policies should be geared towards the establishment **and improvement of infrastructures** and funds to allow reliable planning on the basis of **real costs** for private and public research organisations. This should enable institutes to change and develop under comparable conditions, securing **human resource development, mobility, gender mainstreaming, quality assurance** and higher **effectiveness**. New instruments in FP6 (IP, NoE) require **higher costs** in preparatory stages and **higher risks**, hence there is an urgent need for more stable and reliable infrastructures (data bases, methods, communication channels etc.).

Recommendations:

- Funding of infrastructures in terms of human and material resources addressing the specific needs of research in SSH.
- Provision of national co-funding of European research projects.
- Combined efforts to adjust the conditions between public and private research institutions concerning the participation in FP6 and ERA-activities.
- Structural EU-funding for private non-profit socio-economic research institutes to strengthen comparative advantages besides universities and publicly funded national institutes.



Objective 3: Expanding SSH research topics and domains

Until now there are limited possibilities for participation in FP6 and other EU RTD-programmes. In future the ERA may turn out to become favourable for the development of SSH, as the **vision of Europe** as such, **European values** and other topics require more attention and research in SSH, as well as **integrated collaboration of SSH-disciplines**.

The research agenda of SSH on a transnational (European) level shall include not only the traditional spectrum of specified research areas. In *addition* new and increasingly relevant issues are those highlighted in **Priority 7** of the FP6 and some research areas in the **other priorities** (IST, health, environment ...), in other parts of the Framework Programme, and in a variety of **sector programmes** (e.g. for youth research, education and training; www.cordis.lu). As a matter of fact, to **identify currently relevant societal research topics** and to find (or make available) suitable programmes for funding **across the manifold and diverse programmes** will emerge as one of the major issues relevant for research institutes and donors of RTD as well.

Recommendations:

- Mapping of social sciences and humanities in Europe.
- Identification and benchmarking of clusters of research capacities and excellency in SSH.
- Support and reflect comparative analysis of national research programmes and traditions.



Objective 4: Strategic development of SSH activities and practical application

Many of the new and increasingly relevant research issues require intensified collaboration across disciplines and with different kinds of practitioners as well – „**transdisciplinarity**“: The development of a **European constitution, RTD** (Research, Technology Development) and **innovation policies, institution building**, and the interaction between **science and public** are examples among others to which this applies. Historic and national development must be taken in consideration when it comes to

an **assessment of education, research and practical activities** in SSH. A particular European variety of institutions, competencies and networks in different countries causes regionally distinct impacts of projects and programmes.

Recommendations:

- Intensify innovative forms of co-operation between universities, private research institutes, NGOs and practitioners in public administration and private businesses.
- Enhancement of increased and effective participation of SSH in FP6 in spite of the challenges of new instruments and research topics cutting across several priorities.
- Support strategic alliances in SSH between universities, private research, NGOs; particularly between organisations in current and new EU Member States and accession countries.



Objective 5: Advancement of education, professional training and mobility

By world standards European science and RTD development is lagging behind USA and Japan, in particular concerning RTD output (S&T productivity). One of the results of this situation is a permanent flow of researchers to the US – **EU brain drain** – even though Europe provides relatively higher numbers of PhD graduates. However, also within Europe and in the EU there are exceptions with outstanding performance: Finland, Sweden and Switzerland invest relatively much more in RTD than the EU average. Awaiting EU enlargement of May 2004, it becomes even more important to address the **growing discrepancies in RTD investment and internal brain drain** in the then larger EU. Therefore **human resource development deserves prioritised attention in Europe**, and SSH are the disciplines required to tackle such issues.

Recommendations:

- Strengthening of networks and SSH professional communities.
- Development of strategies for career advancement of young scientists, gender mainstreaming, and assurance of high quality of education, training and research.
- Set up bi- and multilateral agreements between public and private research organisations, and users of SSH expertise regarding mobility, fellowships and research topics.
- Adjustment of specified national and EU programmes to facilitate productive exchanges of knowledge, ideas and intellectual capital across the ERA.



Concluding summary and implementation schedule: The most relevant things to do

- **EC:** Call for a working group to create an „Action Plan“ and thereby provide new structures for the work of other stakeholders. An initial time frame and objectives of this working group should be presented during the conference „Integrating Europe“ in November 2003, to start the working groups activities early 2004, asking for an intermediate report in September 2004. Some activities outlined in the Action Plan should become installed in the second half of 2004 (e.g. „mapping“ research clusters and connecting SSH centres of excellence).
- **National governments and research agencies:** Provide assistance for SSH for successful participation of SSH in FP6 – primarily and first by supporting grants for co-financing and improved infrastructures for public and non-profit private research institutes. Parallel to the EU Action Plan national governments should compare and adjust national funding systems.
- **Professional organisations:** Build platforms and linkages among themselves and with RTD agencies. Their most relevant aim should be to establish joint and compatible research agenda, and to contribute to the mapping of research clusters and identification of excellent centres of SSH research, leading towards Networks of Excellence.
- **Institutes, universities and other research organisations:** Education, training and quality assurance of research are of topical relevance.
- **Media:** The public and practitioners/users of SSH-knowledge should become involved in agenda setting and implementation of research results, as far as applied research is concerned. Regarding basic research and development of the disciplines in the sector of SSH the scientific communities and research organisations require granted autonomy.



If you want to send **other comments or messages** to the author and co-ordinator of the ERA-declaration debate, please use the following email

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