

Constitutive General Assembly
European Alliance for the Social Sciences and Humanities
Friday January 16th, 2015, 10.00–17.00 University Paris 1, Panthéon-- -
Sorbonne, 17, rue de la Sorbonne, Paris 75005

List off attendees [to be included]

Rapporteur: Poul Holm, ECHIC

1. Welcome

The meeting opened at 10.30.

Prof. Philippe Boutry (President, Paris 1, Panthéon, Sorbonne) welcomed participants and read the opening statement by the French Minister for Education, Najat Vallaud-Belcacem, in her absence [see full text attached]. The Minister apologized for her absence due to the day of remembrance of the victims of the Charlie Hebdo terrorist acts and expressed the importance and invitation to the social sciences and humanities to research the causes and possible actions for the future of Europe.

Lejf Moos thanked for the hospitality of the University and stated that the tragedy of the Charlie Hebdo underlined the leading role of France in developing and defending civil liberties.

Unfortunately, Mr Carlos Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation sent his apologies shortly before the meeting and the proposed agenda item on The Role of the Social Sciences and Humanities in Horizon 2020 had to be cancelled.

2. Report and discussion of the Workshop “Embedding Social Sciences and Humanities in Horizon 2020”

This workshop was organized by DG RTD on 27 November 2014, and members of the EASSH core group attended as well as a number of prospective members of EASSH.

Didier Georgakakis, ECPSA, Noel B. Salazar, EASA, and Angela Schindler-Daniels, NET4SOCIETY, reported on the meeting.

ASD outlined that the background for the workshop was cuts in direct funding for the SSH in Horizon 2020; the Commission now sees SSH primarily as a cross-cutting issue across the thematic priorities. The need to embed SSH is nothing new but there seems to be a new sincerity about it. The workshop reflected that the Commission realizes that how to go about embedding remains a challenge. Monitoring embedding is also a problem because of lack of data. The Commission is actively looking for methods to improve embedding such as setting up SSH correspondents across H2020 pillars (a designated person responsible for promoting SSH embedding in funded projects) as well as organising events and workshops to facilitate embedding. DG Connect is looking at new ways to include the SSH as well. DG Connect is considering calling for ‘sister projects’ to provide perspective and social contexts for projects that are technologically driven. EC flags that 37% of all topics in the WP2014/15 are SSH relevant.

ASD further outlined the main points raised by the SSH representatives at the meeting. They argued that the SSH should be treated as science (and not as a

cross issue like gender). The first Work Programme shows clear weaknesses in embedding. The Commission needs to recognize that its priorities have effects not just at the European level but knock-on effects on the design of national funding programmes of Member States. It was made clear at the meeting that the SSH community is no longer a scattered community but speaks with a stronger coordinated voice.

Didier Georgakakis, ECPSA, pointed to the focus on innovation rather than research in H2020. Commission implements European Parliament decisions and DG is under pressure. Decrease of funding relative to earlier FPs.

Noel Salazar, EASA: need for SSH to be present at all stages to make sure that loss of translation is minimized. Good science requires best methodologies regardless of disciplines. The Commission consists of people and people make mistakes so there is a need for better engagement.

In the discussion Patrick O'Donovan, IHA, stated that the over-identification of research with innovation is alarming. We are facing a crisis for the SSH in H2020. We need to work with national delegates to influence wording.

Peter Golding, ECREA: we need to advocate that the SSH should not be seen as just the handmaiden of communication of science.

Sandra Laugier, CNRS, asked why the SSH delegates had argued to make a distinction between mainstreaming of gender and of SSH? Gender science is research. AS-D responded that gender needs to be mainstreamed across all projects but the SSH have a specific research agenda which needs to be articulated and may not always be relevant in all projects.

Carmella Agori, ESA: why not flip the question: how can technological solutions be embedded within the social challenges? We need to overcome the technocratic misunderstanding of social problems.

Dorethee Brantz, EAUH: we need to promote critical debate and disagreement – how can we do this if we need to be embedded and promote innovation technology?

Andre Torre, ERSA: who knows what is inclusive and smart? Cannot be left to technologists.

Einar Thomassen, EASR: we need examples of successful embedding of SSH in existing h2020 projects. Wolfgang Mackiewicz, CEL/ELC, responded that these are very early days of H2020 but FP7 shows that the order of the day was interdisciplinarity and involvement of stakeholders. Angela Schindler-Daniels added that Net4Society is currently working on mapping such projects. Gabi Lombardo, Science Europe, pointed to the Science Europe brochure on humanities important projects for society

Alan Kirman AMU: the disregard of social context is a major problem of our competence as society. Embedding needs to be reframed as ESA suggested.

Arianna Ciula, EADH: we should not just be embedded but have a voice on what embedding means.

Jacques Dubucs, Head of SSH at French Ministry of Education, then intervened with a specially prepared statement on the research agenda of the SSH following the Charlie Hebdo and other dramatic events in European countries. The French government considers that a suitable response to the challenge of radicalization cannot be limited by technological response but must be accompanied by SSH research. Dubucs outlined a vast research agenda on the challenge of

radicalization, the mechanisms, the role of prisons, the role of the Near East. Islam should be a focus, Islamic theology, scholarship, hermeneutics of texts. We cannot fight terrorism without understanding the subjective dimension of radicalization. We need contributions by cognitive science, anthropology, law studies, and studies of social media. This research agenda needs to be included in the next Work Programme of H2020. Dubucs concluded by stating that the SSH needs to refrain from deconstructing the question and respond by implementable and manageable answers.

3. Presentation of the EASSH Paris Statement,

Lejf Moos presented the proposed Paris Statement and outlined that the task of the break-out groups in the afternoon would be to identify the objectives for EASSH in the coming year.

Didier Georgakakis explained the potential of using the concept of 'Parliament' rather than conference or congress as a special event to bring together big figures of SSH and leading stakeholders such as the Commissioner, MEPs, etc. Arianna Ciula, EADH, and Karl Donert, EUROGEO, questioned the wisdom of using the word as we are still in the process of establishing ourselves.

Peter Golding, ECREA, queried the use of the word 'gateway' and suggested that EASSH should provide links not just for policy makers but also for scientists.

Patrick O'Donovan, IHA, proposed a new wording that EASSH 'highlights breadth and substance of SSH research and potential'. He agreed with PG that EASSH rather than being a gateway should be a channel working in both directions.

Alan Kirman, AMU: the text should talk of the SSH 'contribution' rather than 'potential'. Gateway for both directions.

In other interventions it was suggested that EASSH should be a channel for civil society and not just the European Parliament, and that the words 'university' and 'research' are absent from the statement. The notion of the European 'research system' was questioned.

4. Reports from the discussion groups

Group 1

Mission: bridgebuilding, lobbying, interface
Identify new challenges

Group 2

Formalization: legal procedure, identify new members and invite, website, social media presence

Questionnaire: examples of impact (success stories), what changes are happening with regard to national resources

Create research agenda: eassh facilitating regular event to bring together researchers, funders, politicians and private sector, to force implications of research

Group 3

Parliament ?

Round table of different associations, draw out the impact of research, different views of disciplines

Working groups of challenges to develop research agenda

Communication: website, dialogue with practitioners, impact of research

Group 4

Eassh is a pluralist body

Concise statement about the importance of ssh research, illustrated with examples

Develop a research agenda to identify undeveloped, under-funded research topics.

Include a broader membership

Futures conference with Commission, Delphi approach

Group 5

Website, Searchable tool by topics, Forum for announcements and news, Volunteers for e-services for the website

Develop position statements

Working groups, topics such as interdisciplinarity, communication

5. Discussion and vote of EASSH proposed Constitution,

Olivier Bouin, NETIAS, presented the proposal and thanked Jon Deer, RISE, for his contribution in writing up the constitution.

The language of the Constitution is written with a view to longevity and is therefore broad and inclusive.

Alan Kirman, AMU, stated that the English translation has certain inaccuracies that should be cleared up.

Carmella Agori, ESA, queried if there could be a distinction between large and small institutional members.

Peter Golding, ECREA: Is there a need to distinguish founding members after the transition? Why do we have individual membership?

Patrick O'Donovan, IHA: it is good to acknowledge debt to the founding members. But the distinct role of founding members is unusual. The President should be elected by general assembly to increase legitimacy.

Lejf Moos stressed the need to include members representing the diversity of SSH and that there is therefore a need for different member categories.

Olivier Bouin stressed that the constitution may be revised in 3-4 years but here and now there is a need for continuity. So need to ensure the continuing support of founding members in the next few years. Similarly the ability to appoint qualified members is valuable for a board in its early stages.

Karl Donert, EUROGEO, stated that his board will not approve the proposed level of fees and proposes lower fees.

Arianna Ciula, EADH, proposed to keep fees low and allow for additional donations by larger institutions.

Olivier Bouin then asked for a vote on membership fees. 16 votes were in favour of fees of 20 euro for individuals and 100 euro for institutions/organisations. 6 votes were in favour of the higher fees of 50/250 euro. The low fees will therefore be implemented in the first call for membership.

Lejf Moos then proposed a vote on the constitution which was approved unanimously.

6. Summary and conclusions of the Assembly – Next steps

Lejf Moos thanked the participants and concluded that the agenda for the next year is to work on visibility, get organized (membership, legal steps), focus more on projects to set the agenda rather than be driven by Commission. There will be an open call for membership in March, and the first general assembly of the legal entity of EASSH will be held in July 2015. After the first General Assembly the elected Board will co-opt qualified individuals in accordance with the constitution and elect the first president. The second general assembly will be held in January 2016.

The meeting ended at 16:50.

Core group

LM to collate all minutes of general assembly and core group

Next meeting in Berlin 23 March 10-17.