

EURAB

Follow-up of Recommendations on

“The European Research Area and the Social Sciences and Humanities”

of January 2004.

EURAB’s recommendations

In several of its recommendations [1 a-c]¹, EURAB emphasized the specific nature and potential of the Social Sciences and Humanities in their own right as well as alongside the natural, medical and engineering sciences, and called attention to the specific needs of SSH for research infrastructures. EURAB suggested measures to strengthen the socio-economic dimension in main FP RTD themes and provided operational advice on “instruments and procedures”. These recommendations included embedding “Science and Society” interactions and perspectives across all FP RTD programs in a similar way to those parts addressing gender and ethical issues.²

EURAB’s recommendations were targeted mainly towards the European Commission. It was hoped that the recommendations would have some impact on the preparations of the remaining calls for proposals under FP6, but the principal thrust of the recommendations looked towards FP7.

Where do we stand?

The groundwork for the latter calls of FP6 and FP7 is in progress [3 and 4]. While the SSH are alluded to and certainly not specifically excluded, neither are they given special attention.³ Given the important (potential) role of the SSH coupled with their relative under-representation compared to that of the natural, medical and engineering sciences, this is particularly worrisome.

The Marimon report that evaluated the effectiveness of the New Instruments of FP6 [5], did not incorporate in their criteria either the inclusion of SSH nor “Science and Society”.⁴ The results from the Competitiveness Council in March and the priorities and the

¹ The numbers in [...] refer to List of References in the Annex. In the Annex there is also a list of abbreviations used in the text.

² Gender issues were not specifically addressed in EURAB’s recommendations since this “embedding” is clearly stated in the First Calls of FP6: Actions to promote gender equality (as enshrined in the Treaty on European Union, Articles 2 and 3), gender issues in research where relevant (e.g. health research, information technologies, gender roles and responsibilities, new forms of relationships between citizens and institutions).

³ The place in FP6 where the SSH do have a role, are in Priority 7: Citizens and governance in a knowledge-based society. This priority that is funded with EUR .225B over four years, includes consequences of EU integration, enlargement; new forms of governance; resolution of conflicts; citizenship and cultural identities.

⁴ The gender dimension which is specifically referred to as a criterion in the First Calls for the New Instruments, is not evaluated by the Marimon group, but hopefully “gender disaggregated data” will be included as an indicator in the final evaluation (as also recommended by EURAB’s recommendation on evaluation, EURAB 04.008).

provisional agenda for the Dutch Presidency are also available. Also here the SSH are not directly excluded, but neither are they nor “Science and Society” specifically mentioned [6 and 8].

With regard to Research Infrastructures for the SSH, ESFRI’s working group, RISSH, published its report in May 2004 [7]. This report has taken note of some of EURAB’s recommendations, however, it is mainly concerned with the social sciences and very little with the specific needs of the humanities disciplines.

The Commission held a workshop on 4 February 2004 on research infrastructures and SSH [9], and a meeting on Research Infrastructures for the social sciences is planned for 13 October 2004. On 30 September, during the Dutch Presidency, ERCH will hold a workshop in Amsterdam on “Research Infrastructures in the Humanities”.⁵

Tentative conclusions

Several activities relating to the SSH have taken place during the past few months or are on the agenda of DG Research. However, there is no indication as of yet that this interest and the results of these activities are reflected in the current official EU documents or in those of the Competitiveness Council and the Dutch Presidency. SSH, including “Science and Society”, do not yet seem to be given required attention or due consideration in the last calls of FP6 or in the current planning of FP7 [4, 5 and 7].⁶

Maybe not surprisingly, due to the relative lack of success this far in reaching:

- a. the Lisbon objective “*to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*”,⁷ and
- b. the Barcelona goal of “*overall spending on R&D and innovation in the Union should be increased with the aim of approaching 3% of GDP by 2010. Two-thirds of this new investment should come from the private sector*”⁸,

the opposite may be true. More than ever, the focus seems solely to be on the natural sciences, technological development and innovation. The necessary framework conditions that need to be in place to support these goals and the overall strategy outlined in Lisbon are more or less forgotten. The overall strategy where SSH are still seriously underrepresented in the implementation stage, includes:⁹

⁵EURAB member, Professor Gretty Mirdal will attend the workshop in Amsterdam. <http://www.erch.info>

⁶ This lack of status or acknowledgement may also be reflected in the composition of EURAB, i.e. among the EURAB 2 members, only four (or five, if law is included) of the 45 members represent the SSH.

⁷ Presidency Conclusions, Lisbon European Council, 23 and 24 March 2000, p. 2. The concept of “more and better jobs” are detailed further in the Presidency Conclusions, Nice European Council, 7, 8 and 9 December 2002, p. 17-23: “...change in the working environment by creating a new balance between flexibility and security, ...reconciling family and professional life for both men and women, ...attain quality in work and its importance for growth as a significant attractive factor and as incentive to work,...and ... promote social integration... social dialogue and consultation must create the right conditions for workers to participate in changing the organisation of work, etc..”

⁸ Presidency Conclusions, Barcelona European Council, 15 and 16 March 2002, p.20.

⁹ Presidency Conclusions, Lisbon European Council, 23 and 24 March 200, p. 2.

- a. stepping up the process of structural reform for competitiveness and innovation by completing the internal market;
- b. modernising the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion;
- c. sustaining the healthy economic outlook and favourable growth prospects by applying an appropriate macro-economic policy mix;
- d. full employment in Europe in a society more adapted to the personal choices of women and men.

Economic growth and improved competitiveness are not ends in themselves and do not always -- or automatically -- lead to more and better jobs for all citizens, improved quality of life and to social cohesion and stability in an enlarged European Union. Judging from the current agendas and documents, the crucial role that SSH have in addressing key issues that are vital to the future development of Europe, is still not properly recognized. For example, referring to the EURAB recommendations, many of the problems that Europe is currently facing, are issues that must be dealt with by the SSH, e.g. the legitimacy of the European institutions, terrorism, and European cultural heritage.

On 29 June 2004 the Commission hosted an informal meeting addressing the challenge of establishing an action plan for the SSH [10]. The follow-up of this first initiative, needs to be actively supported -- also by EURAB.

A commendable and highly relevant initiative was taken by DG Research, Directorate K (Knowledge-based economy and society), Unit K2 ("Science and Technology Foresight; links with the IPTS") by constituting in December 2003 a High Level Expert Group, "Foresighting the New Technology Wave". The major findings were published in a report in July 2004, Converging Technologies – Shaping the Future of European Societies. Many of the 16 recommendations as well as the accompanying text are highly relevant, not only to EURAB's recommendations on "ERA and SSH", but also to EURAB's recommendations on "Technology Platforms" (Technology Initiatives) and "Interdisciplinary research" [12 and 13]. In spite of the relevance to several of EURAB's Working Groups, no EURAB member was included in this HLEG. EURAB should, however, somehow be involved in the follow-up of "Converging Technologies".

A general reflection: Clearly the several excellent initiatives taken by the Commission will have greater impact and be more effective if there is a better overlap in membership between the various groups that are established -- http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2004/ntw/index_en.html -- as well as an easily accessible overview of the various initiatives.

List of References

1. EURAB recommendations on:
 - a. The European Research Area and the Social Sciences and Humanities” (EURAB 03.076-final)
 - b. Interdisciplinary Research (EURAB 04.009-final)
 - c. Research Infrastructures (EURAB 03.053-final)
2. Letter from Commissioner Busquin on response to EURAB recommendations on “Social Sciences and Humanities in the ERA” (EURAB 04.042), 10 March 2004. *Note: Unlike other responses from the Commission, this one does not contain an annex with detailed technical reactions prepared by the services.*
3. EU Financial Perspectives, “Building our common Future: Policy challenges and Budgetary means of the Enlarged Union 2007-2013”, COM(2004) 101 final, Brussels, 10.2.2004 (EURAB 04.023)
4. Communication from the Commission, “Science and technology, the key to Europe’s future – Guidelines for future European Union policy to support research”, COM(2004) 353 final, Brussels, 16.6.2004.
5. Report of a High-level Expert Panel chaired by Professor Ramon Marimon, “Evaluation of the effectiveness of the New Instruments of Framework Programme VI”.
6. Results of Competitiveness Council, 11 March 2004.
 - a. Presidency Summary of Debate
 - b. Priorities Paper, Dutch Presidency, 1 July – 31 December 2004
7. Report of the working group on infrastructures to socio-economy and humanities, “Blueprint for the European Resource Observatory for the Humanities and Social Sciences (ERHOS)”, May 2004.
8. Council of the European Union, “Dutch Presidency – provisional agendas for Council meetings prepared by COREPER (Part I)”, 11014/04, POLGEN 31, Brussels, 30 June 2004.
9. Report of the Workshop on “Support to Research Infrastructures in the 6th Framework Programme: New Opportunities for Social Sciences and Humanities”, 4 February 2004.
10. Informal report from meeting 29 June 2004 on “Towards an Action Plan for the Social Sciences and Humanities”.
11. Work Programme (2002-2003) and First Calls, “Integrating and Strengthening the European Research Area: Priority 7, Citizens and Governance in a knowledge based society”
12. “Converging Technologies – Shaping the Future of European Societies”: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2004/ntw/pdf/final_report_en.pdf
13. “Converging Technologies for a Diverse Europe”, Conference 14-15 September, 2004. Draft Conference Programme: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2004/ntw/index_en.html

Abbreviations

COREPER	Committee of Permanent Representatives (Comité des Représentants Permanents). Every Member State has a Permanent Representative in the EU with the rank of ambassador. When the ambassadors meet, this happens in COREPER II. COREPER I consists of the deputy Permanent Representatives.
ERCH	European Network of Research Councils in the Humanities

ESFRI	European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures
FP	Framework Programmes
HLEG	High Level Expert Group
RISSH	Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences and Humanities
RTD	Research and Technology Development
SSH	Social Sciences and Humanities