Publication: "AGATE: Concept for a European Academies Internet Gateway for the Humanities and Social Sciences"

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Executive Summary

The European academies of sciences and humanities' research significantly contributes to the study and preservation of Europe's cultural heritage. Still, the great potentials of an increasing digitalization to better access and exploit this wealth of knowledge are not fully being seized. The project of the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) from October 2015 until June 2017 aimed to conceptualize the framework of a pan-European digital infrastructure that improves the visibility and findability of the academies' SSH research and promotes international cooperation. Therefore, the basic requirements of a future European Academies Internet Gateway (AGATE) for the Social Sciences and Humanities were mapped and possibilities examined for integration, reuse, and scaling of existing services and solutions.

Two stakeholder workshops, numerous bilateral talks with representatives of European science academies and research infrastructure experts, as well as interviews with future users provided the necessary background information and feedback to conceptualize digital access to academies' research. Furthermore, a potential core consortium of partners was formed, that is a working group comprising of academies and research infrastructures that declared a dedicated interest in actively contributing to a future implementation of AGATE.

The project results led to a conceptual exposé for the projected portal that serves as a well-founded starting point for the actual implementation and is comprised of recommendations for technical and organizational aspects, user and outreach concepts, as well as for sustainability and the planning of estimated resources.

Based on the project results, the conceptual exposé recommends a modular structure, building up on a central web portal for user entry. As an integral part of the portal, the recommendation envisages the development of a database that comprises detailed information about the research projects at European Academies and points to available digital resources, the "AGATE Knowledge Map". At the same time, the web portal would provide guidelines that enable the users to enter or rather integrate the project information and digital resources into the "Knowledge Map" and offer focused information and resources on topics of special interest for the academies' researchers such as Open Access and Open Data.

In addition to online offers like FAQs and webinars it is recommended to develop, preferably in cooperation with strategic partners, individual workshops and trainings that meet the specific user needs, and could be promoted via the portal and channels of the partners. The enhanced integration of social media could strengthen and facilitate knowledge exchange and cooperation in the field of sustainable digital research and publication practices among the researchers of the European academies and beyond, as well as with pan-European infrastructures.

To guarantee the sustainability of the AGATE project, several strategies were pursued. First, the project substantially participated for the Union of the German Academies in the Horizon2020 proposal "Designing an Open Innovation Research Infrastructure demonstrated on the example of European Scientific Academies (AGATE)", that was submitted under the leadership of the Austrian Academy of Sciences on 29 March 2017. The H2020 project aims at the design of an Open Innovation Research Infrastructure with a focus on the academies' research. Second, the project provided important input for the national project database, that was resolved by the Executive Committee of the Union in March 2017 and will be implemented under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences and Literature, Mainz.