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## **AGATE – A European Academies Internet Gateway for the Humanities and Social Sciences**

Project title: “Elaboration of a Concept for a European Academies Internet Gateway (AGATE)”

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### **1. Introduction**

From 2013 to 2015 the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities (Akademienunion) and the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities (ALLEA) conducted a survey gathering data of over 600 SSH projects run at or by science academies that resulted in a report titled *Survey and Analysis of Social Sciences and Humanities Research at the Science Academies and Related Research Organisations of Europe*, Leathem & Adrian, 2015, short: SASSH. With this survey, academies’ SSH research in Europe has been systematically investigated for the first time. The survey results pointed at great untapped potentials in the fields of cooperation, digital infrastructures, digital methods and publication practices. The study revealed that international cooperation and collaboration and the exchange of knowledge and experiences with other academies’ projects are frequently hindered by a lack of information about their research. Furthermore, many of the researchers seemed to be unfamiliar with the exact mission, services and cooperation possibilities of the European SSH infrastructures (e.g. CLARIN, DARIAH, and Europeana). In terms of visibility for the general public, it was acknowledged that SSH research of the academies is difficult to find on the internet.

Many of these challenges could be addressed via a pan-European digital infrastructure for the academies’ SSH research. It was recommended to set up a database that contains detailed information on research projects and that has the potential to highlight available digital resources. To make more digital resources available, general awareness raising and concrete guidance on the implementation of Open Access and Open Data is needed. Further, it was suggested to promote knowledge exchange and cooperation in the field of sustainable digital research and publication practices amongst the academies’ researchers and with pan-European infrastructures. These measures would not only strengthen the SSH research at the academies of Europe in general and foster international cooperation amongst the academies and beyond. Additionally, an improved cooperation with the pan-European infrastructures and use of their services would lead to a win-win situation for all parties involved.

The ongoing project of the Akademienunion funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) from October 2015 until March 2017 aims to conceptualise the framework of the suggested pan-European digital infrastructure for the academies' SSH research with regards to content and scope, organisation, technical issues, and the necessary resources.

Therefore, the basic requirements of a future European Academies Internet Gateway (AGATE) for the Social Sciences and Humanities will be mapped and possibilities examined for integration, reuse and scaling of existing services and solutions. Two workshops and bilateral talks with representatives of European science academies and infrastructure experts as well as selected user interviews provide the necessary input and feedback on the basic requirements of the projected infrastructure. Additionally, a straw consortium is being formed – i.e. a core consortium of partners that are interested to participate actively in the future implementation of AGATE, provided that funding can be secured – and a strategy will be developed to ensure the sustainability of the results of the implementation phase. The ongoing project will lead to a conceptual exposé for the future portal that serves as a starting point for the actual implementation by the members of the core consortium.

## **2. Chances and potentials of AGATE**

### **a) Increase visibility and connectivity of the academies' SSH research**

AGATE would be a central source of information at European level for specialists and non-specialists alike and promote the richness, quantity, quality, and broad relevance of SSH-research at the European academies and provide a platform for the projects to promote their research. AGATE would be an easy and relatively low-threshold way to present the basic information of a research project without setting up a website. AGATE would open doors for interdisciplinary knowledge exchange and collaboration amongst the academies and beyond. Furthermore, it would be supportive for the European academies' SSH-community to speak up with a stronger voice especially in (research) policy discussions by showing the wealth, abundance, and relevance of its research.

### **b) Increase reuse of digital project outputs through better findability**

AGATE would offer the potential to develop a centralized search over the dispersed heterogeneous digital resources of the academies' SSH research. State of the art techniques for the connection of the heterogeneous resources and digital 'silos' would make the AGATE database a valuable discovery and research tool and open the doors for reuse of the academies' digital research results to a vast audience. Clusters of typical publication formats of academies' SSH research like editions, dictionaries and corpora could be especially highlighted and presented, thus giving these works a platform that by now does not exist.

While increased general findability and technical interoperability are one side of the coin, the other side is the necessity for the promotion of the principles of Open Access and Open Data amongst the academies' SSH researchers to fully enable actual reuse and to move along with the European Commission's vision of the broader picture of 'Open Science'. AGATE, as a central showcase of the European Academies SSH-research, would function as an incentive to individual academies and academies' researchers to make more research material and results available online (e.g. via repositories, specialized community portals, and parallel via AGATE). This process could be supported

by providing practical assistance to individual projects to prepare their resources for integration, for example via demo cases during the implementation phase, as well as by providing guidelines, best practices, and liaising with relevant infrastructure partners. The latter could play an important role in the working of AGATE's so called Service and Information Hub.

### **c) Increase sustainability of digital research and publication practices by fostering knowledge exchange and cooperation**

AGATE would foster new transnational and collaborative approaches and facilitate close cooperation by providing information on relevant infrastructure partners and other organisations and initiatives, their services, and possibilities for cooperation through either active involvement or as a data provider. AGATE would also provide a comprehensive range of information on training and information material focused on digital research and publication practices (e.g. tools, standards, guidelines and best practices). The concrete information modules featured on the portal will be defined in close cooperation with the relevant European SSH-infrastructure to avoid the doubling of efforts. The focus will be on pointing at relevant resources and activities by third parties (e.g. DiRT Directory, DHd-Blog), not on developing own materials.

## **3. Components**

At the current stage of planning, the platform will consist of two basic components that have the future potential to be gradually scaled up with more sophisticated features: a Project Database and a Service and Information Hub, designed to have a positive impact on the three major fields of potential described above.

### **Component A: Project Database**

#### **First Stage:**

- The database includes information about all kinds of SSH-projects at European Academies, not only DH lighthouse projects.
- The database is meaningfully searchable (more than alphabetical list).
- In order to highlight the specific nature of academies' SSH research, clusters of enhanced publications such as digital editions, dictionaries and corpora could be presented separately and prominently.

#### **Second Stage: Integration of digital publications and project results**

- Integration of available digital resources stemming from the academies' SSH-research projects, especially enhanced publications in the AGATE-database, thus making them centralized searchable
- High level of automated harvesting plus manually edited entries
- The user can easily identify all available digital resources that have been integrated into the AGATE database instead of having to search for them via a multitude of projects' or academies' websites.

## **Component B: Service und Information Hub**

### **First Stage:**

- Meaningfully searchable directory of relevant infrastructures and organisations, their services and possibilities for cooperation through either active involvement or as a data provider
- Includes tutorials how to use and register in the AGATE Database
- Promotion of special topics (e.g. Open Access, Open Data, Research Data Management, Standards, Guidelines, Best Practices, Science Communication)
- Basic information is provided, but mainly points at relevant information or training material (e.g. video tutorials, interesting tools) and organisations respectively websites

### **Second Stage: An editorially supported forum**

A blog or a news area with regularly updated content including:

- Presentation of digital research tools that have been developed as a solution for the specific need of academies' SSH research projects or are otherwise highly relevant ("Tool of the month")
- Expert articles/tutorials on special topics, like IPR, Open Access, Open Data, standardisation, harmonisation
- News from relevant SSH infrastructures
- Information about upcoming events, workshops, trainings, etc.
- Special presentation of projects ("Project of the month")

The basic framework will be elaborated in close cooperation with future stakeholders, especially the European Academies of Sciences and Humanities, researchers in projects and experts from academies' ICT-departments and libraries, and representatives of relevant discipline specific and/or European SSH-infrastructure initiatives. In this context, the project will closely work together with ALLEA in order to make use of its wide network of European academies and the expertise assembled within.

Feedback and suggestions for the project's next steps can be conveyed to the project coordinator.

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