

HERA VISION 2018-2022

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1. HERA'S VISION AND MISSION

Who we are

HERA (*Humanities in the European Research Area*)¹ is a network of European funding organisations dedicated to creating new opportunities for innovative, transnational research in the humanities. By supporting a range of activities, including research programmes, conferences, workshops and advocacy, HERA promotes the value of the humanities for society and for policy-making. HERA has been active since 2002.

Our vision

The vision of HERA is to be the voice for European humanities:

- to be the reference in international humanities, both in funding as in research collaboration;
- to achieve the integration of humanities' viewpoints into national and European research agendas;
- to inform policy making about the vital contributions humanities bring to societal issues;
- to strengthen the role of humanities research in public debates.

Our core principles:

- *Humanities matter.*
Humanities research plays an indispensable role in society's development and well-being, by addressing the most fundamental challenges of human history, culture and identity; by reflecting on the basis of knowledge and truth; and by promoting the values of intellectual curiosity, innovation, critical thinking and tolerance.
- *Interdisciplinarity works.*
Collaboration across academic disciplines creates new and valuable knowledge that extends the insights of individual disciplines.
- *Humanities build bridges.*
Humanities research plays a vital role in building relationships among a wide range of societal stakeholders, including academics, citizens, communities, civic organisations, industries, museums and memory sites, creative practitioners and policymakers.
- *Europe needs the humanities.*
In a time of fundamental debate about the nature of Europe and the European project, the humanities allow us to understand more comprehensively what Europe is, what it has been in the past, and what its future options may be.

¹ www.heranet.info

HERA's mission 2018-2022

1. To fund excellent, innovative, collaborative humanities-led research across disciplines and borders, with a diverse portfolio of funding instruments that pool national and EC funding;
2. To support the full range of humanities disciplines – including traditional as well as emerging disciplines, and those oriented towards investigation of the past as well as the present – and to support constructive collaboration across disciplines;
3. To exemplify the world's best practice in transnational research programming in the humanities;
4. To create collaborative research opportunities for European humanities researchers at all career stages from doctoral to senior researcher;
5. To promote leadership roles for humanities in interdisciplinary research;
6. To foster best practice in knowledge-exchange, public engagement and impact for European humanities research;
7. To advocate the humanities across the academic community, among policy-makers, with public and private sectors, and to the European public;
8. To contribute to strategic planning for European framework programming;
9. To grow HERA membership where appropriate and possible;
10. To promote the values of critical thinking, co-operation, respect, tolerance, equality, diversity, ethical integrity and academic freedom in European research.

How HERA defines the humanities

The word “humanities” has somewhat different connotations across Europe, reflecting different national cultures, traditions and educational structures. Broadly defined, “humanities” includes those disciplines that focus on the dynamics and legacies of human culture and history. Traditionally this includes (but is not limited to) literary studies, languages, linguistics, history, philosophy, archaeology, comparative religion, art history, heritage studies, musicology, ethnology, film studies, media studies and digital humanities. It sometimes also includes disciplines like sociology, economics, geography, anthropology, psychology and law that overlap with the social sciences, particularly in cases where such disciplines employ humanities methodologies.

Methodologically, the humanities are defined by their continual (re-)interpretation of historical evidence and data, and as well as their investigation of contemporary cultural phenomena and production of new data. They pay particular attention to the effects of ideas, language, culture on human understanding and behaviour. They scrutinise the epistemological and ideological assumptions that underpin the dynamics and conditions of “knowledge” itself. They analyse the nature and forms of creativity and cultural practice. Some forms of humanities research also use methodologies stemming from the creative arts.

Thus, the humanities make vital contributions to the investigation of the most fundamental human and societal challenges, including cultural dynamics, environmental change, technological development, health, migration, social cohesion, security, governance and more.

2. HERA: HISTORY AND ACHIEVEMENTS

History

The origins of HERA go back to 2002 when the Danish, Dutch and Irish Research Councils established a European Network of Research Councils aimed at co-ordinating support for humanities research across Europe. In 2004 the network renamed itself “Humanities in the European Research Area” (HERA) and enlarged its membership to 14 partner agencies.² From 2004 to 2009 the HERA network was supported with funding by the EU Framework Programme 6’s ERA-Net co-funding scheme, the objective of which was to bring national research programmes together in order to strengthen the European platform for the humanities.

The original aims of the HERA network were to:

1. stimulate transnational research cooperation in the humanities;
2. overcome the historic fragmentation of humanities research;
3. ensure that the European Research Area (ERA) and EU Framework Programmes benefit from the relevance and dynamism of humanities research;
4. advance innovative collaborative research agendas;
5. improve cooperation and share best practices between research funding agencies and co-ordinate existing funding programmes.

(HERA brochure, 2005)

HERA’s initial phase focused on fact-finding and knowledge exchange activities that were to lay the ground for the first HERA Joint Research Programme. These activities included five annual HERA conferences which were held between 2005 to 2009, in London, Helsinki, Tallinn, Strasbourg and Berlin:

- *Past into Present: Understanding Policy and Innovation in Europe* (London, 2005)
- *Present into Future: The Role of the Humanities in Foresight Exercises* (Helsinki, 2006)
- *New Technologies in Humanities Research* (Tallinn, 2007)
- *European Diversities – European Identities* (Strasbourg, 2008)
- *Humanities – Impact, Trends and Challenges* (Berlin, 2009)

Between 2006 and 2009 HERA also researched and published several reports (archived on the HERA website), which were intended to inform and facilitate the creation of HERA’s first Joint Research Programme in 2009. These reports included:

- *HERA mapping report of humanities research priorities* (2006)
- *HERA report on European Research Index for the Humanities* (2007)
- *HERA strategic infrastructures report* (2007)
- *HERA report on evaluation and benchmarking of humanities research in Europe* (2008)
- *HERA report on open access* (2009)

² AT, BE-FWO, CZ, DK, EE, FI, IE, IS, NL, NO, SE, SI, UK and ESF. Two agencies – BE-FNRS and CH – were associated partners.

HERA's first thematic Joint Research Programme (JRP) was launched in 2008, and was followed by three subsequent JRPs:

JRP 1 *“Cultural Dynamics: Inheritance and Identity”* and *“Humanities as a Source of Creativity and Innovation”* (2009-2012)

[13 countries, €16.5m total, 234 applications, 19 projects funded]

JRP 2 *“Cultural Encounters”* (2013-2016)

[18 countries, €18.5m total, 593 applications, 18 projects funded]

JRP 3 *“Uses of the Past”* (2016-2019)

[23 countries, €21m total, 605 applications, 18 projects funded]

JRP 4 *“Public Spaces: Culture and Integration in Europe”* (2018-2021)

[24 countries, approx. €20m total, 217 applications, in process]

Over the course of its first three JRPs the HERA partners, together with the European Commission, pooled €56 million to fund 55 transnational humanities-focused projects. Through these projects 231 scholars, 206 postdoctoral researchers and 88 PhD students were funded, and worked together with 173 associated partners from civil society and cultural institutions.

By 2017, HERA's membership had grown to 26 agencies in 25 countries: Austria, Belgium (both FWO and FNRS), Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Reflecting the success of the HERA JRPs and the expansion of the network, HERA's mission statement of 2017 built on the network's original aims, but highlighted new priorities, including “multi-disciplinarity”, “knowledge exchange”, and “giving a strong voice to the humanities”:

1. To pool national and European funding in order to support innovative, collaborative humanities-focused research across borders;
2. To enable investigation of humanities-focused research questions that require transnational and multi-disciplinary perspectives to answer;
3. To support knowledge exchange with wide range of stakeholders;
4. To assist capacity-building for collaborative humanities research;
5. To share knowledge and best practice in joint research programming;
6. To give a strong voice to the humanities in the European Research Area.

(HERA factsheet, 2017)

Achievements of HERA 2005-2017

In 2016, two HERA programme reviews were undertaken: Prof. Tony Whyton, who had been project leader in the first HERA JRP³, investigated the knowledge exchange activities in “Cultural

³ Prof. Tony Whyton and Dr. Loes Ruch: “The Dynamics of Exchange: A review of Knowledge Exchange Activities for the HERA Cultural Encounters Joint Research Programme”, <http://heranet.info/assets/uploads/2018/02/The-Dynamics-of-Exchange-HERA-JRP-report-Feb-2016-copy.pdf>

Encounters”; Technopolis Group was commissioned to deliver an “Evaluation of the Humanities in the European Research Area Joint Research Programme 1 (HERA JRP 1)”. In 2017, a questionnaire⁴ on HERA benefits was circulated to HERA partners. According to these exercises, the specific achievements of HERA have been perceived to include:

For researchers:

- Providing much-needed large-scale project funding opportunities for humanities researchers (especially important given the marginalisation of humanities-focused funding in other European programmes);
- Provision of research programmes with broad themes hospitable to many humanities disciplines;
- Enhancing career development for hundreds of scholars and early-stage researchers across Europe;
- Establishing important trans-European relationships among researchers that lead to further collaborations;
- Providing models of knowledge exchange practices, and ways to articulate the impact of humanities research;
- Affirmation and promotion of the humanities at academic and policy levels in Europe.

For partner agencies:

- Creation of an effective central administrative body for trans-European funding calls;
- Establishment and successful management of four pioneering humanities-focused JRPs;
- Establishment of strong, trusting relationships among funding agencies;
- Sharing of best practice across agencies, particularly in knowledge exchange and articulation of impact;
- Positive impact on international strategy formulation at agency level;
- Achievement of closer integration between EU15 and EU13 countries;
- Establishment of a HERA “brand” in Europe on behalf of humanities.

⁴ HERA and NORFACE: “Research Beyond Borders: The value of European networks in the social sciences and humanities”, <http://heranet.info/2018/02/08/hera-and-norface-publish-research-beyond-borders/>

3. HERA ACTION PLAN 2018-2022 *[HERA internal document]*

3.1 Funding calls

HERA Joint Research Programmes (JRPs) have been characterised by the following core features:

1. Humanities-focused research questions and methodologies;
2. Multinational teams;
3. Interdisciplinary approaches ;
4. Strong knowledge exchange and impact dimensions;
5. Inclusivity (e.g. mixing large and small countries, and EU-15 and EU-13 countries) to assist research capacity-building across Europe;
6. “Excellence” as the most fundamental criterion for evaluation of HERA applications.

Future JRPs will need to consider whether these features should be modified or re-prioritised.

A number of factors indicate that HERA should diversify its funding instruments over the next number of years. These factors include: changes in the ERA-Net regulations; the growth of the HERA membership, and the possibility that for national budgetary reasons not all HERA partners will always be able to join each future JRP.

ACTIONS 2018-2022 (Funding):

1. Create new joint calls with other networks or funders (for example NORFACE, T-AP, EQUIP, JPI Cultural Heritage, NEH [US], SSHRC [Canada]). Each of these organisations has expressed interest in the possibility of joint funding calls. This would usefully expand the possibilities for HERA projects to involve non-European partners.
2. Create “variable geometry” calls within HERA, to allow for bilateral or multilateral calls. This would allow countries to establish smaller scale humanities programmes outside of the large JRPs to meet national or occasional strategic priorities, while also availing of the infrastructure, experience and “brand” of the HERA network.
3. Create “follow-on funding” and/or knowledge exchange awards available on a competitive basis to HERA projects that have come to completion but can demonstrate significant added-value if given limited budget support for a further activities.
4. Scope and explore options for new sources of co-funding.
5. Contribute humanities perspectives to the planning and design of Framework Programme 9 (such as the recent collaborative statement “Living Together: Missions for Shaping the Future” in December 2017 and a HERA response to the EU Commission proposal for Horizon Europe in 2018).

Digital dimensions in HERA research

HERA projects now incorporate digital technology in a range of ways, from the use of digital networking tools, to data storage, to the design and use of digital dissemination/KE platforms, to digital content creation. HERA should explore the possibility of closer co-operation with the European infrastructures DARIAH and CLARIN in order to develop and enhance the digital dimension of HERA research programmes.

ACTIONS 2018-2022 (Digital dimension)

1. Develop “technical annex” templates for future HERA applications;
2. Avail of DARIAH/CLARIN expertise in evaluating digital aspects of HERA applications;
3. Avail of DARIAH/CLARIN training and support for HERA researchers;
4. Develop guidelines on strategy and best practice for data management in HERA projects;
5. Develop policy on issues of sustainable management for HERA project digital outputs such as websites and data collections.

3.2 Advocacy: HERA as voice for European humanities

HERA promotes the value and visibility of the humanities through its JRPs, which provide a showcase for high-quality humanities research. The JRPs have also provided the HERA network with occasions for interactions with policymakers where the value of the humanities can be articulated. However, with its pan-European scale, its expertise and its credibility with both policymakers and the research community, HERA is well-positioned to take on an even more prominent role as a voice for the humanities in Europe. There is no other European-wide organisation dedicated exclusively to support for the humanities, or having such strong potential for the provision of advocacy, policy advice and foresight exercises. On the other hand, it has sometimes been argued within the network that the expansion of HERA’s advocacy role is inhibited by the fact that the HERA Network Board represents multiple governments and state-sponsored agencies, whose policies and positions may not be always be fully aligned – in other words, there may occasionally be specific issues on which HERA will not be able to speak with a single voice.

Nevertheless, there is appetite among many partners for HERA to take a more prominent role in contributing to public and policy discourses around the humanities. Urgent societal issues such as climate change, social cohesion, migration, governance, security, health, the impacts of data technology, etc. are all areas in which the contribution of the humanities are vital and the value of the humanities can be demonstrated. Policymakers, including officials of the European Commission, have frequently expressed a desire for access to a single representative voice for the humanities for consultation. It is especially vital that humanities perspectives be heard as forcefully as possible in the development of Horizon Europe. HERA has already begun to act on this – see its joint statement with ALLEA and others: “Living Together: Missions for Shaping the Future” (2017) as well as statements on budget, design and content of Horizon Europe (2018).

ACTIONS 2018-2022 (Advocacy):

1. Develop a plan for HERA advocacy activities (e.g. HERA-led conferences/annual congress, workshops, networking events, meetings with European Parliamentarians and European Commission);
2. Publication of occasional “HERA Briefs” on strategic issues (including, for example, the better integration of humanities in framework programmes, the practice of interdisciplinarity, the measuring the impacts of humanities, etc.);
3. Promote humanities priorities in collaboration with other advocacy bodies (e.g. ALLEA, Net4Society, LERU, COIMBRA Group, EASSH, Irish Humanities Alliance, etc.);
4. Identify international calendar opportunities for promoting HERA (e.g. European Year of Cultural Heritage, etc.);
5. Develop a HERA communications strategy to support advocacy.

3.3 Impact and Knowledge Exchange

The significance of humanities research to stakeholders outside the academy, variously referred to as “impact” and “valorisation”, is a growing concern throughout Europe (see, for example, “Leading the world: The economic impact of arts and humanities research” published by the Arts & Humanities Research Council⁵, June 2009; and “A radiant future—policies for valorisation of the humanities and social scientists” by Adviesraad voor het Wetenschaps – en Technologiebeleid⁶, March 2007). There is also increased expectation from humanities funders that projects be able to articulate and demonstrate the impact of their research. “Impact” in this respect is broadly conceived to include:

- Academic impact: The demonstrable contribution that research makes to academic advances, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, methods, theory and application;
- Cultural, societal and economic impacts: The demonstrable contribution that research makes to culture, society and the economy by, for example:
 - enhancing qualities of life, health, citizenship, social cohesion and culture;
 - increasing the effectiveness of public services and policies;
 - fostering global economic performance.

⁵ <https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/publications/leading-the-world/>

⁶ <https://english.awti.nl/documents/publications/2007/3/15/a-radiant-future>

Defining and embedding Knowledge Exchange in HERA

Knowledge Exchange (“KE”) and public engagement are considered to be core components of cultural, social and economic impact. Developing best practice in knowledge exchange has been a key feature of HERA from its beginning. The multiple European partners involved in HERA have differing national approaches to defining, capturing, assessing and communicating KE and impact; however as a network HERA is committed to maximising the impact and dissemination of research activity across Europe.

KE can be broadly defined as: “the processes by which new knowledge is co-produced, co-created or co-designed through interactions between academic and non-academic individuals, groups and communities for mutual benefit”; it is the means by which impact can be increased. The application process for HERA JRPs has foregrounded the need for projects to have clear and robust KE strategies, and statements on knowledge exchange and impact are integral to the application and assessment process for HERA awards. Accordingly, projects funded under the HERA JRPs have included a broad and impressive range of partners across the public, private, governmental and non-governmental sectors. These partners have included policy makers, festivals and venues, military regiments, religious institutions, artist organisations and performing arts practitioners, heritage sites and historic buildings, museums and galleries, libraries and archives, media organisations, professional networking organisations, activist groups, academic bodies and societies, legal and financial institutions, businesses, professional societies, public sector institutions, voluntary and community groups, and charitable organisations.

Challenges for HERA Knowledge Exchange

Despite the significant progress that has been made through previous HERA calls, a number of challenges remain that need to be addressed. In particular:

- The network would benefit from an agreed formulation of “impact” that can accommodate different national approaches.
- In developing its KE and communications activities, the HERA network needs to consider what is unique about its “impact potential”, particularly in terms of capacity-building, leveraging additional funding and building partnerships.
- The network needs to make itself more visible to disciplines and audiences outside the humanities, and to increase the public profile of the projects it funds.
- The network needs to consider how it can capture impact more effectively, during and after awards at both network and individual country level, and the lines of communication that are required to achieve this.
- Projects funded through HERA would benefit from more “how to” toolkits and exemplars of best practice to support KE; this could include, for example, toolkits that support best practices in KE; developing effective project websites and/or the benefits of social media; understanding copyright and intellectual property; open access publishing; engaging with the media/new audiences.
- There is need to improve communications and networking opportunities between and across project teams funded through previous JRPs (HERA “alumni”); this could also take the form of mentoring support.
- The HERA network and its constituent projects would benefit from greater connectivity to other platforms funded through the European Commission such as NORFACE and T-AP, and should potentially consider developing a shared agenda for KE and communications with such programmes.
- HERA would benefit from more extensive use of reporting, scoping and comparative exercises – for example relating to best practice - to ensure that KE and communications activities are as coherent and robust as possible.

- The network should consider more flexible funding mechanisms alongside the large JRPs in order to support more extensive and impactful KE and communications activity; for example, through the provision of a “follow-on-funding” route with the specific aim of scaling up successful project initiatives or engaging with wider partners.

ACTIONS 2018-2022 (Impact and Knowledge Exchange)

1. Establish a HERA Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group (KESG);
2. Review the role and remit of the “HERA Knowledge Exchange Fellow” position(s) to drive and co-ordinate KE activity among HERA research projects and assist in network communications strategies;
3. Develop a plan and timetable for new KE activities; for example, through more extensive use of conferences, position papers and reports that establish a more visible and influential presence beyond the community of HERA-funded projects;
4. Consider the creation of a scheme for “follow-on-funding” that will enhance the impact of project KE and communications activity;
5. Explore options to collect and promote examples of best practice and sustainability, for example by supporting networking opportunities between current and previous HERA award holders;
6. Consider establishing an “Early Career Network” for HERA PhD and postdoctoral researchers;
7. Develop new toolkits to support project teams in implementing effective KE and communications activity.

3.4 Organisational challenges

Enlargement

There are some additional countries that may wish to join HERA in the coming years, especially if HERA develops new bi-lateral or multi-lateral funding instruments or activities. HERA will need to consider the desirability of developing a formal policy about enlargement: is there any limit on how large the network should be? How would the network respond to applications from non-EU countries who participate in other EU programmes (e.g. Turkey, Israel, former Soviet states)? Enlargement allows more researchers to participate and increases overall budgets, but it also produces additional complexity and administrative challenges. Similarly, the possibility of different kinds of HERA membership or affiliation should be considered, to facilitate the building of partnerships with other platforms such as TransAtlantic Platform, EqUIP, the National Endowment for the Humanities (USA) and the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Complexity

As HERA has grown in membership and is also diversifying and augmenting its activities, clear and efficient management and organisational structures will be required. Questions to be considered

include: Do we need to re-define the roles of NB and MT? Is the distinction still useful? Should NB and MT continue to always meet jointly? Should HERA have a core “executive group” to monitor and implement activities? What role should Working Groups play and how should they be managed and funded?

Role of HERA “alumni” and “ambassadors”

HERA has an increasing complex and diverse mission but limited personnel resources, and no fulltime executive. It may be that HERA would benefit from the assistance of a small number of “ambassadorial” individuals who are thoroughly familiar with the aims, value and achievements of HERA and also have the capacity to communicate these with enthusiasm and effectiveness to diverse audiences. While it is clear that certain important interactions between HERA and researchers and policymakers are best conducted by the Chair and other members of the HERA Network Board and Management Team, there are many other interactions with the public, the media, the research community and a wide range of stakeholders that might effectively be conducted by “ambassadors” who are not current NB or MT members, but who are informed and supportive enough to champion the HERA “brand”, as well as provide useful advice to the NB/MT based on their interactions with those stakeholders. The advantages of having these “ambassadors” would include: increasing the public visibility of HERA; enhancing and expanding our channels of communication with general public and research community; assisting HERA outreach tasks that NB/MT members do not have time or capacity to undertake; helping to build a stronger sense of community among HERA “alumni”; and acting as a source of advice to the NB/MT to assist planning and strategy.

ACTIONS 2018-2022 (Organisational):

1. Develop policy on new HERA memberships and affiliations;
2. Establish efficient organisational, communication and management structures with clear roles and responsibilities;
3. Consider the feasibility of formal HERA “alumni” and “ambassador” roles.

4. GLOSSARY AND LIST OF ACRONYMS

ALLEA	European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities
CLARIN	European Research Infrastructure for Language Resources and Technology
DARIAH	Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities
EASSH	European Alliance for Social Sciences and Humanities
EqUIP	EU-India Platform for Social Sciences and Humanities
ERA-Net	European Research Area Network
EU	European Union
HERA	Humanities in the European Research Area (ERA-Net)
JPI	Joint Programming Initiative
JRP	Joint Research Programme
KE	Knowledge Exchange
KESG	Knowledge Exchange Strategy Group
MT	Management Team
LERU	League of European Research Universities
NB	Network Board
NEH	National Endowment for the Humanities (USA)
Net4Society	International network of National Contact Points (NCPs) for Societal Challenge 6 in Horizon 2020
NORFACE	New Opportunities for Research Funding Agency Cooperation in Europe (ERA-Net)
SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Canada)
T-AP	Trans-Atlantic Platform