Brussels, 30 October 2015

COST 069/15

DECISION

Subject: **Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of the COST Action "European Network for Research Evaluation in the Social Sciences and the Humanities" (ENRESSH) CA15137**

The COST Member Countries and/or the COST Cooperating State will find attached the Memorandum of Understanding for the COST Action European Network for Research Evaluation in the Social Sciences and the Humanities approved by the Committee of Senior Officials through written procedure on 30 October 2015.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

For the implementation of a COST Action designated as

COST Action CA15137
EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR RESEARCH EVALUATION IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND THE HUMANITIES (ENRESSH)

The COST Member Countries and/or the COST Cooperating State, accepting the present Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) wish to undertake joint activities of mutual interest and declare their common intention to participate in the COST Action (the Action), referred to above and described in the Technical Annex of this MoU.

The Action will be carried out in accordance with the set of COST Implementation Rules approved by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), or any new document amending or replacing them:

a. "Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities" (COST 132/14);
b. "COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval" (COST 133/14);
c. "COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment" (COST 134/14);
d. "COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation" (COST 135/14).

The main aim and objective of the Action is to enable the SSH to demonstrate their place in academia and society, by bringing together different strands of work consecrated to SSH research evaluation in different parts of Europe, in order to gain momentum, to exchange best practices, and to avoid unnecessary duplication. This will be achieved through the specific objectives detailed in the Technical Annex.

The economic dimension of the activities carried out under the Action has been estimated, on the basis of information available during the planning of the Action, at EUR 68 million in 2015.

The MoU will enter into force once at least five (5) COST Member Countries and/or COST Cooperating State have accepted it, and the corresponding Management Committee Members have been appointed, as described in the CSO Decision COST 134/14.

The COST Action will start from the date of the first Management Committee meeting and shall be implemented for a period of four (4) years, unless an extension is approved by the CSO following the procedure described in the CSO Decision COST 134/14.

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OVERVIEW

Summary
The challenge of the Action is to enable the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) to better demonstrate their true place in academia and society. To do so, the Action proposes to bring together different strands of work consecrated to SSH research evaluation, currently under development in different parts of Europe, in order to gain momentum, to exchange best practices and results, and to avoid unnecessary duplication. Its main aims, deeply interrelated, are:

- to improve evaluation procedures in order to take into account the diversity and the wealth of SSH research;

- to make a robust case for the ways in which the SSH add value to the society;

- to help SSH scholars better appropriate their research agenda and overcome fragmentation.

The Action will improve the understanding of how SSH fields generate knowledge, what kind of scientific and societal interactions characterise different SSH disciplines, and what are the patterns of dissemination in the SSH. It will therefore benefit to European and international scholars in research evaluation and in the sociology of sciences; to research managers and policy makers at all levels; to research data managers and information system designers; and, last but not least, to researchers in the SSH fields themselves.

Areas of Expertise Relevant for the Action	**Keywords**
● Sociology: Sociology of science ● Political Science: Political systems and institutions, governance ● Media and communications: Library science ● Other social sciences: Qualitative methods for the social sciences ● Other social sciences: Quantitative methods for the social sciences	● SSH research evaluation ● qualitative indicators ● societal relevance of research ● SSH databases

Specific Objectives
To achieve the main objective described in this MoU, the following specific objectives shall be accomplished:

Research Coordination
● To improve the understanding of how SSH fields generate knowledge, through upscaling research conducted in local and national contexts.
● To observe what kind of scientific and societal interactions characterize SSH disciplines in general, and some in particular.
● To understand and explain patterns of dissemination in the SSH, through confrontation of information stored in national databases and field interviews.

Capacity Building
● To bring together all types of researchers whose tools and methods can help tackling the complex problems of SSH evaluation.
● To bridge the gap between scholars in SSH research evaluation, research managers and policy makers.
● To put together a pool of specialists upon which external stakeholders may call to solve questions linked to the evaluation of SSH research.

- To prepare a roadmap for a European database of outputs of SSH research.
- To create a movement promoting the research in the SSH as a cornerstone of European framework programmes and research strategy.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE COST ACTION

1. S&T EXCELLENCE

1.1. Challenge

1.1.1. Description of the Challenge (Main Aim)

The social sciences and humanities (SSH) are in a transitional phase. At the origin of European universities, they continue to attract large numbers of students, produce world class research and contribute significantly to the financial viability of the European university system. Nevertheless, they struggle to adapt to evaluation systems that do not fully reflect the aspirations and research patterns of SSH disciplines and that tend to emphasize impact in terms of immediate economic returns. Since the nineties (Nederhof, 1989), studies have been developed showing that SSH output is, for a very large part, invisible through the large international databases (Web of Sciences and Scopus), currently used for metric informed decision making in research programs and policies (Hicks, 2006; Archambault, 2006); significantly, SSH research is not taken into account amongst the criteria of the major league tables for the universities, like the ARWU (Shanghai) ranking. The effects of this lower visibility are multiple, spanning from a lower consideration in academia to closing of SSH departments and drastic personnel reduction in certain universities. Conscious of this problem, a number of countries (e.g. United Kingdom or the Netherlands) have adopted qualitative evaluation processes for research evaluation, but the strong correlation between the funding discourse and quantitative indicators and measures remains a reality, preventing the development of SSH full potential. Particularly problematic are the effects of the failure to demonstrate economic returns, at a time when economic and societal impact is becoming an increasingly pervasive element of research funding argument, resulting in reduced research funding made available for the SSH. Much knowledge exists about SSH impacts, but, because of its heterogeneity, it has proven difficult to upscale this value and to demonstrate it clearly, in the way that other disciplines have been able to do through a set of metrics, counting spin-offs, licenses and patents as evidences of economic and societal impact. There is recognition that the marginalisation of the SSH arises at least in part because of a certain recalcitrance in SSH scholars to take control of the agenda and to reflect more fully on understanding how their research contributes value for society as a whole, but the reasons of this recalcitrance are still to be analysed and solutions to cope with are still to be elaborated.

The challenge is therefore to enable the SSH to better demonstrate their true place in academia and society. To do so, the Action aims to bring together different strands of work consecrated to SSH research evaluation, currently under development in different parts of Europe, in order to gain momentum, to exchange best practices and results, and to avoid unnecessary duplication. Its main aims, deeply interrelated, are:

- to improve evaluation procedures in order to take into account the diversity and the wealth of SSH research;
- to make a robust case for the ways in which the SSH add value to the society;
- to help SSH scholars better appropriate their research agenda and overcome fragmentation.

These outcomes are essential if Europe is to fully benefit from one of its historical and major assets in the competition to become the world leader of the knowledge economy and to attract international students. They are also a key for building the European Research Area.

1.1.2. Relevance and timeliness

This Action is most relevant considering that SSH researchers represent roughly 30% of the human resources mobilised by the higher education and research systems in Europe; under the current circumstances, this huge potential is insufficiently taken into account. It is also clear that too narrow a focus on technological transfer does not just disadvantage SSH, but it means that all kinds of similar benefits from sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), beyond narrow technological measures, are not sufficiently promoted. Thus, a holistic approach to how a range of knowledge can benefit society, by placing a rightful emphasis on a broad set of impacts, will unlock the hidden potential not just of SSH but also of science as a whole. Tackling the challenge of SSH recognition, in all senses of the term, will result in a much greater benefit across the board in the European Union.

The timeliness of the Action can be appreciated in relation to the awareness of the need to embed the SSH in all European research, expressed in political statements (discourse of the Commissioner for Research, British Academy, November 2011) and field mobilisation (see "The Vilnius declaration", 2013).

Relevance and timeliness can be also appreciated with regard to the SSH community itself, where the manifestations of discontent multiply (see Plumpe, 2009; Andersen et al., 2009), in spite of steps and initiatives taken by the European Commission and other EU coordinating bodies to forge answers to the marginalisation of SSH research. Bottom-up generated, it is not only an initiative for the SSH, but from the SSH, trying to answer, through a thorough scholarly approach, to legitimate demands (fair and adapted research evaluation procedures).

1.2. Objectives

1.2.1. Research Coordination Objectives

To progress in the design of research evaluation procedures for the SSH and the assessment of their societal relevance and impact, it is necessary to improve, above all, the understanding of how SSH fields generate knowledge, what kind of scientific and societal interactions characterise different SSH disciplines, and what are the patterns of dissemination in the SSH. Interviews, observations and experiences targeting these issues have been conducted in various parts of Europe. The Action will upscale knowledge from the particularities of local and national contexts, and will create a cooperative space for coordination, further testing and development of common answers to these research questions. Through confrontation of information stored in national databases, the Action will help building a picture of SSH scholarly behaviour that cannot be achieved without European coordination.

At the same time, because of its European width and visibility, the Action will allow a better dissemination of information about SSH research activity, outputs and value to the general public. It will also become a space for harmonisation of recommendations about policies in the SSH research to decision-makers, acting as a provider of policy briefs, surveys about best practices, road-maps for implementation of evaluation frameworks**.**

1.2.2. Capacity-building Objectives

The Action seeks to bring together all types of researchers whose tools and methods can help tackling the complex problems of SSH evaluation: sociologists and historians of science, bibliometrists, specialists in political sciences, as well as philosophers, cultural studies specialists, librarians and linguists. It will therefore act as a platform for putting together research teams able to act as pool of specialists upon whom external stakeholders (evaluation agencies, policy makers, HEI's managers and directors) may call to solve questions linked to the evaluation of SSH research.
The experiences of ERIH PLUS demonstrate that SSH can have a common interest in large

infrastructure projects, and this Action will help identify areas where European added value might be generated for SSH through such ESFRI investments. A possibility is an European database of outputs of SSH research, to be developed as a separate facility by nationally funded research facilities, or as part of the shared information infrastructure recommended by "Assessing University-Based Research" Expert Group.
Last but not least, through engagement with SSH scholars the Action will create a movement to promote research in the SSH as a cornerstone of European framework programmes and research strategy. It will help in the transition phase from isolated SSH research paradigms to fully internationalised research that can clarify its role for the society and its interrelation to other knowledge fields.

1.3. Progress beyond the state-of-the-art and Innovation Potential

1.3.1. Description of the state-of-the-art

The specificities of SSH research, and therefore of SSH evaluation and societal impact, have been addressed in three different types of studies:

- rooted in academic research in sociology or history of sciences, and focusing on questions like the field structure, its organisational processes, the scientific judgment in the SSH (see Whitley, 1984; Lamont, 2009);
- developed in the applied research field, where particular attention is paid to journal and books assessment in the SSH (Gimenez Toledo et al., 2012), publication patterns and research profiles (Ossenblok et al., 2012, Mutz et al., 2013);
- commissioned by various institutions and organisms, sometimes with a broader focus than the specificities of the SSH, and answering questions as how to assess the societal and environmental impact of research (Ricci report, 2005), what are the emerging trends in socio-economic sciences and humanities (METRIS report, 2010, 2012), how to document university based research (EUMIDA report, 2010; AUBR report, 2010), etc.

Current efforts largely focus on three main strands of work that are discussed below: (1) identifying representations of quality research in the SSH disciplines; (2) understanding the ways in which SSH scholars and results speak to society; (3) developing research information systems for the SSH.

(1) Difficulties by SSH scholars to accept bibliometric measures of their work and, more generally, its evaluation, make necessary a direct engagement with SSH researchers in order to clarify their own perceptions about identifying the best results and practices in their fields. This option has been taken by several scholars in Switzerland, in certain cases with the financial and scientific support of the Rector's Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS). Such interactions have enabled an initial identification of tacit and explicit quality criteria in certain fields of the humanities (Ochsner et al., 2012). To a certain extent, these representations of quality are also investigated by studies about the reputation of publishing houses and scholarly journals. Still, this remains a huge field of research, asking for confrontation of results from different disciplines and different countries, and raising subsequent questions about the heterogeneity of the qualitative criteria put forward by SSH scholars.

(2) The increased attention paid to the societal impact of research, which recently became an important criterion in research evaluation protocols like SEP in the Netherlands or REF in the United Kingdom, has aroused interest in the ways and means by which research speaks to society. A less linear view of the interactions and processes through which scholarly agendas are shaped by external stakeholders, and scholarly output flows outside academia, has been deepened by various papers, and was specifically considered within research projects like "Social Impact Assessment Methods for research and funding instruments through the study of Productive Interactions between science and society" (SIAMPI, a Framework Programme 7 Cooperation project, 2009-2011). While the SSH are not here specifically in the focus, their

activities and relevance have been brought to the fore thanks to these initiatives and researches. Moreover, studies shown that SSH are not less useful, but differently useful to the society (Olmos Penuela, 2014).

To date, there is ample evidence about the fact that SSH scholars do create scientific and societal impact, but the question remains about how to generate an overarching vision about the ways in which the SSH contribute to and strengthen science and society in Europe as a whole.

(3) Confronted by the limitations of the current databases with regard to the SSH research (circulated in a large variety of languages, and often published in other outlets than international peer-reviewed journals), some Northern countries have chosen to develop their own national current research information systems, with complete bibliographic coverage of the scholarly output at research institutions: Current Research Information System - CRISTIN - in Norway, Flemish Academic Bibliographic Database for the Social Sciences and Humanities - VABB-SHW - in Flanders. More recently, similar initiatives have been taken in Italy (CINECA), United Kingdom ("Research Outcomes System"), or Slovenia (SICRIS). A larger initiative was undertaken in 2009 within the "European Scoping Project" at the request of several research councils (Moed et al., 2009), but the recommendations of the report have as yet not been translated into reality.

While progresses are been made in local contexts, there is an obvious need to coordinate the initiatives in terms of standardisation and interoperability of data. Moreover, an European system aimed to a better visualisation of data about and for the SSH remains a necessity.

1.3.2. Progress beyond the state-of-the-art

To summarise the previous state-of-the-art, research conducted to date opened vistas about new ways to visualise, document and ultimately assess SSH research. This Action intends to move further through:

(1) developing a robust conceptual framework for underpinning new research evaluation methodologies;

(2) more systematically investigating norms and practices for what is regarded as legitimate engagement in societal challenges, as a basis for stimulating it further ;

(3) identifying the conditions for effective databases for recording SSH outcomes and impact and then the technical work associated with initiating, compiling and sustaining those databases.

Therefore, the Action will deepen the understanding of the SSH research process and of the place of SSH research in modern societies. Its ambition is to offer a more precise picture of the field, going further than the usual assumptions, ideas and representations: "SSH write books", "SSH are in their ivory tower", "SSH are dispersed and individualistic", etc. While such statements are not always inaccurate, such generalisation is far too broad when applied across the board. To take but one example, books produced by the humanities scholars come in many forms and shapes, responding to very different needs and resulting from quite different processes of information gathering and knowledge production, as well as targeting different audiences. Looking at a more elaborated concept, while the SSH can be globally characterised as scientific fields with low degrees of functional and scientific dependence (Whitley, 1984), there is a clear need to observe closely the contrasts and the similarities, in this respect, between geographical and disciplinary situations of and within the SSH, as a prerequisite for designing adequate policies of development and valorisation.

By uniting currently dispersed forces and enabling genuine cross-national and cross-disciplinary interactions, the Action will also put under scrutiny the structural and epistemological factors contributing to a successful embedding of the SSH in research answering to social challenges and priorities, and will spot the internal and external drivers of

change. New knowledge will be generated about quality representations in the SSH and their weight upon agenda shaping and research conduct, with obvious applications for stimulating cooperation between the specialists of the field and other sciences, as well as for supporting the general European move towards a more responsible research and innovation.

1.3.3. Innovation in tackling the challenge

The innovation comes from the choice of the research evaluation as a perspective and a tool to help the SSH underline their true place in academia and society. It is related to the fact that the Action seeks to identify internal causes of the (real or perceived) marginalization as a prerequisite to propose effective solutions for embedding the SSH in national or European research. The resolute focalisation on the SSH knowledge production and patterns of dissemination, in order to develop a conceptual framework underpinning new research evaluation methodologies, constitutes another innovation. Last but not least, this Action distinguishes itself from previous research efforts by close cooperation between the researchers and the researched within the participants of the Action (i. e. between the Sirius point of view of above-mentioned SSH historians, sociologists, bibliometrists, and the SSH scholars themselves).

1.4. Added value of networking

1.4.1. In relation to the Challenge

The COST framework is ideally suited for tackling the SSH recognition challenge for a number of reasons. First and above all, it gives the necessary flexibility to mobilise and build a scholarly dialogue, embedded within a European platform, that can address the major issues facing SSH research evaluation. Despite the fruitful initiatives as HERA, NORFACE or NET4SOCIETY, a wide number of issues remain that can be tackled by such a scholarly network, which will endeavour to:

(i) bring together different national strands of research on evaluation and impact, and encompass diverse knowledge within a range of associated disciplinary fields, thanks to conferences and Working Group meetings;

(ii) create the conditions for an extensive activity (i.e. not a single research project or programme but a coordinated action) through the use of short term scientific missions (STSM) ;

(iii) engage with the most relevant stakeholders through Training Schools and dissemination activities.

1.4.2. In relation to existing efforts at European and/or international level

There is currently no other COST Action bearing on the same topics as this Action, even if some EU-funded projects explored or explore similar grounds.

One such was the FP7 project "European Educational Research Quality Indicators (EERQI)", aimed at developing intrinsic and extrinsic quality criteria, a research database, and a multilingual search engine for educational research. However, this project focused only on one discipline (education studies). Furthermore, the quality indicators were developed only for one category, namely publications.

More recently, the INTERCO-SSH project, aimed at understanding the factors that facilitate or hinder international exchanges in SSH research, deals with close concepts and ideas as it studies the relationship of seven academic disciplines from the SSH with the political and economic powers, as well as the transfer of knowledge between countries and disciplines, and the circulation of ideas. Even closer, the IMPACT-EV project aims to develop a permanent system of selection, monitoring and evaluation of the various impacts of Social Sciences and

the Humanities research.

This Action can build on the findings of these projects, but is different in its focus (all aspects of research evaluation methods for the SSH), aims (new evaluation methodologies and an integrative approach of SSH societal impact) and the broad spectrum of scholars from different disciplines it gathers, integrating, but not limited at, the specialists from the sociology of sciences and intellectual history which are majority in the above-mentioned projects.

2.1. Expected Impact

2.1.1. Short-term and long-term scientific, technological, and/or socioeconomic impacts

The Action will make possible foresight activities that will harness the potential of SSH fields, by improving conceptual frameworks and methodologies to demonstrate their structural, behavioural and cultural impact.
It will create clarity as to precisely how SSH create scientific and societal impact within Europe, based on a rigorous set of conceptual lemmas and synthetic models. Thus, the Action will contribute to the visibility of research in these fields, and therefore to a better inclusion of the disciplines in national and European programmes.
By exploring perceptions and representations of quality, it will contribute to the emergence of a common language and shared standards for research evaluators, external stakeholders and SSH scholars. It will enable European and international scholars in the field of SSH research evaluation to better perceive the different ways of tackling research quality issues. Confronting different national perspectives, it will underline the differences and commonalities in practices and standards for monitoring, evaluating and funding SSH research. It is expected to help in the development and the improvement of different methodologies in the field, both quantitative (statistics or metrics) or qualitative (peer review evaluation, achievements compared to missions, etc.).
In short, this COST Action will bring benefit to:
1° European and international scholars in research evaluation and in the sociology of sciences, many of them having been involved in the preparation of this proposal;
2° research managers and programmers at all levels, with whom a dialogue about their needs for new tools for research management has been engaged, in order to conceive some of the deliverables of this Action;
3° research data managers, as librarians, also involved in sharing, evaluating and disseminating science;
4° information system designers, who can expect to benefit from the best practices guide for attaining a more complete representation of the SSH in bibliometric data sources;
5° researchers in the SSH fields, by stimulating increasing awareness about quality issues, societal needs and responsible research and innovation opportunities.

2.2. Measures to Maximise Impact

2.2.1. Plan for involving the most relevant stakeholders

Relevant stakeholders involved in the recognition of SSH research fall in three categories:

a) academic stakeholders: scholarly and representative societies (Academies, Sciences Institutes), international disciplinary associations, national or international alliances for the SSH;
b) policy-makers: i.e. members of Directorate General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission, heads of SSH units in national ministries, delegates to Research and Development, but also rectors, pro-vice-chancellors and other heads of relevant divisions in the universities or associations of universities;
c) economic actors and representatives of the civil society.

In accordance with its approach, the Action will especially seek to involve representatives of the first and second category of stakeholders; their active participation will be sought in the Working Groups, whose annual agendas may be set in accordance with needs and points of interest expressed by such stakeholders. It is to be noted that researchers whose first domain of specialisation is not the research evaluation are already part of the consortium, bringing in their own experience as humanists or researchers on the society, in parallel with their theoretical and practical knowledge about SSH evaluation, gathered in activities developed in parallel to their principal field of studies (administrative responsibilities and tasks, expertise, peer-reviewing, etc.)
In addition, members of the present network are involved in or have close contacts with the above-mentioned academies, societies or alliances. In order to further this involvement, one of the first tasks to be carried out by the dissemination group is to compile lists of national and European associations, societies and bodies which might be interested by the aims and achievements of the Action and by the events it organises. Information will be sent systematically to all these entities, and their representatives will be invited to the conferences or workshops of the Action, or otherwise will be offered the opportunity to organise presentations of the Action to the general meetings of their members.
In order to engage with the second category of stakeholders, the Management Committee of the Action will particularly seek to propose round tables or other forms of scientific cooperation to pan-European visible events as EUA Annual conference, EARMA annual conference, EASH, ALLEA and Academia Europaea meetings, etc. Also, support for the Action has been sought, during the conception of this proposal, from nearby representatives of Ministries in charge of research and innovation, funding agencies and other institutions and organisations. Objectives and aims of the Action have been partially conceived in accordance to their input.

2.2.2. Dissemination and/or Exploitation Plan

The Action is structured by a series of conferences and workshops targeting scholars in research evaluation; other stakeholders (especially policy makers) are also invited to participate. Diffusion lists and other media largely consulted by these scholars and stakeholders will be used to communicate about the aims, events and outcomes of the Action. In addition, the Action clearly includes among its deliverables a series of scientific papers, if possible gathered as special issues of well-known journals. All conferences and main workshops will ensure a form of publication of proceedings, whether in electronic format or in print. The website will be designed to offer access to an open access library. The Action will aim at making all publications freely available in some form 6 months after publication at most.
A dissemination group will be created, which will decide upon the creation of 1. a newsletter and 2. appropriate Social media (eg RSS feed) to distribute the news more widely.
Manuals, reports and policy briefs (deliverables of the Action, see below) will, of course, be totally free access on the website of the Action. The Action's website will not be simply an information channel, but will actively contribute to the network enlargement and to the collection of data and cases. It will therefore include interactive activities (newsletter or RSS feed, blogs, etc.). It will propose a forum on SSH research evaluation, intended to offer a joint learning platform for research evaluation specialists, SSH scholars and research programmers or managers. The Forum will be open to experts of national bodies or organisations in charge of the research evaluation. Participants will be able to provide, via the Forum, their consultancy services.
The Action will also propose training sessions targeting information system developers, national or international representatives of scientific observatories, bibliographers and documentation managers, peers and policy officers involved in SSH evaluation. There will

be a strong emphasis on engaging with young researchers so as to better understand their motivations and to assist them in appropriating evaluation tools in their own career plan.
In a multilingual Europe, a dissemination plan carried on exclusively in English is not the best adapted. The Action will seek to translate some of its deliverables (especially the manuals), into other European languages,.
Information about the developments and achievements of the Action will also be generated towards this society at large through participation in activities promoting SSH research, organised by partner associations or groups. The policy about these partnerships will be discussed at annual meetings of the Management Committee. Information will be also sent to the specialised press (especially, press dedicated to Higher Education) about conferences and relevant cooperation of the Action to the strengthening of the European Research Area. All participants will, of course, be required to communicate about the Action through their professional or institutional web-pages.

2.3. Potential for Innovation versus Risk Level

2.3.1. Potential for scientific, technological and/or socioeconomic innovation breakthroughs

The Action will push forward the standardisation and the interoperability of the current research information systems dedicated to the SSH research outcomes, concentrating on the development of common rules and procedures. It adopts a bottom-up approach as an operational perspective, building on existent systems and the will to cooperate demonstrated by their developers, seeking thus to counterbalance the risk of non-realisation associated with this potential breakthrough.
New types of indicators and evaluation procedures, better adapted to the specific perceptions of quality of scholars in the field, will be proposed. These have been under development, in different countries, for some time, but the Action is definitely a chance to achieve more convincing results thanks to cooperation and larger scale testing.
The Action will contribute to the improvement of procedures for collecting data about SSH impact outside academia and will make recommendations about their conservation. It will generate a large typology of “proofs of impact” and will bring new insights about their comparability and usefulness in assessing SSH research programmes and activities.

3.1. Description of the Work Plan

3.1.1. Description of Working Groups – Provide for each WG the Objectives, Tasks, Milestones and Deliverables

The participants in the Action will form three Working Groups (WG), reflecting the three strands of work described above (1.3.1-1.3.2), and contributing to the research coordination and capacity building objectives stated in 1.2 section. An additional fourth group will be dedicated to the dissemination of Action’s activities and outcomes.

In addition to their own tasks, all Working Groups will participate in the preparation of two conferences dedicated to SSH research specificities, and the value(s) and evaluation of it. The first one is intended to ensure a maximum of publicity for the Action in the academic world, while the second one will constitute a showcase of the major achievements of the network and will prepare the general conclusions and other materials to feed into the final report.

The scientific work of this Action will be carried out over four years through several workshops and other scientific meetings organised by the Working Groups, and remote cooperation through IT means, including the use of a dedicated platform. Short-Term Scientific Missions

(STSM) will be organised within each Working Group, allowing on-site confrontation of methodologies between partners of different countries, and a more accurate understanding of the different national contexts. Young researchers candidatures will be selected in priority to benefit from these STSMs.

WG 1. Conceptual frameworks for SSH research evaluation
The objective of this Working Group is to further our understanding of the SSH knowledge production processes and strategies, as a basis for developing evaluation procedures that adequately reflect the research practices, goals and aims of the SSH scholars. The Working Group will tackle the dialectic issues of the potentials and drawbacks of (a) metric approaches and peer review; (b) international exchange and cooperation and the local rootedness of SSH; and (c) the need for interdisciplinary exchange and disciplinary expertise.
Tasks
Task 1. Collect, conduct, and review studies on motivations of the researchers (quality perceptions and representations), both for knowledge production and for dissemination behaviours.
Task 2. Analyse quality representations and assumptions intervening in peer-review processes
Task 3. Observe national regulations/ recommendations/ procedures for research evaluation in the SSH (including uses or refusals to use metrics) and their effects on SSH knowledge production.
Task 4. Overview of quality criteria based on SSH scholars' representations and perceptions of research quality.
Milestones
Month 5 and 27: working plans for the subsequent periods (month 5 to 26 and month 28 to 48).
Month 14: overview of quality perceptions and representations projects/ bibliography of reports and publications on peer-review/ presentation of national evaluation systems.
Month 6, 15, 27 and 38: intermediary reports, describing group activities and achievements
Month 23: call for participation in the Training School.
Deliverables
Scientific papers on the topic of knowledge production in the SSH.
An overview of peer-review practices.
Recommendations for evaluation agencies on better adapted criteria and indicators for evaluating the SSH.
Training School for young researchers about evaluation procedures and their impact on their careers.

WG 2. Societal impact and relevance of the SSH research
The objective of this Working Group is to analyse the non-academic partnerships and environments of SSH research, in their diversity.
Tasks
Task 1. Generate a typology of societal forms of engagement in the SSH, and observe commonalities and specificities in national and disciplinary practices of engagement.
Task 2. Observe the structural requirements and conditions favouring the flowing of SSH knowledge towards society at large.
Task 3. Observe national policies to stimulate cooperation between the research sector and the socio-economic or NGO partners.
Task 4. Propose easier procedures for collecting data about engagement with society, or socio-economic stakeholders. Reflect about possibilities of their inclusion in national information systems.
Task 5. Propose measures to better value the SSH.

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Milestones
Month 5 and 27: working plans for the subsequent periods (month 5 to 26 and month 28 to 48).
Month 14: overview of knowledge transfer systems.
Month 6, 15, 27 and 38: intermediary reports, describing group activities and achievements.
Month 28: call for participation in the Training School.
Deliverables
Scientific papers on societal relevance of the SSH.
Policy brief about stimulating societally relevant research.
Recommendation and guidelines for proof-based impact narratives.
Training School about increasing the visibility of SSH relevance to society.

WG 3. Databases and uses of data for understanding SSH research
The main objective of this Working Group is to reflect upon the standardisation and the interoperability of current research information systems dedicated to the SSH research outcomes.
Tasks
Task 1. Confront productivity and structure of outputs in various SSH disciplines, using data from existing national information systems or other databases and repositories (identify dissemination profiles, clusters and hybrids).
Task 2. Analyse characteristics of divers dissemination channels used in the SSH.
Task 3. Develop common rules and procedures for building the databases.
Task 4. Design a roadmap for a European bibliometric database.
Task 5. Develop alternative metrics for the SSH.
Milestones
Month 5 and 27: working plans for the subsequent periods (month 5 to 26 and month 28 to 48).
Month 14: presentation of the existing databases/ summing up of the existing studies on dissemination particularities in the SSH.
Month 6, 15, 27 and 38: intermediary reports, describing group activities and achievements.
Month 30: call for participation in the Training School.
Deliverables
A best practices manual for research database developers.
Training School for research information systems developers, library managers, bibliometrists.
Recommendations for evaluation agencies on the construction of national labelled lists of journals and publishers, classification of journals and publishers.
A proposal for a distributed research infrastructure to be included in ESFRI agenda.

WG 4. Dissemination
The objective of this Working Group is to ensure a maximum visibility to Action, among specialists in research evaluation and sociology/ geography of sciences, as well as among political, societal or economic stakeholders and among SSH researchers themselves.
Tasks
Task 1. Compile lists of national and European associations, societies and bodies which might be interested by the achievements of the Action.
Task 2. Build annual communication plans (to be submitted to the approval of the Management Committee).
Task 3. Design, build, feed and maintain the website of the Action, as well as other communication tools (newsletter, RSS feed, etc.)
Task 4. When possible, stimulate and coordinate the translation of main deliverables of the Action in other European languages.
Task 5. Organise the main conferences of the Action.

Milestones
Month 3. Website of the Action operational.
Month 5 and 27: dissemination plans for the subsequent periods (month 5 to 26 and month 28 to 48)
Month 6 and 31: call for participation in conferences of the Action.
Month 14. List of national and European associations, societies and bodies.
Month 15, 27, 38: diffusion of newsletters.
Deliverables
A directory of SSH research organisations and associations.
The Action website.
Templates, graphic chart, and possibly translations for the deliverables of the other Working Groups.
Newsletters of the Action.
Proceedings of the conferences.

3.1.2. GANTT Diagram

Months	Meetings of MC	Meetings of WG1	Meetings of WG 2	Meetings of WG 3	Meetings of WG4	Remote coop. / STSMs	Conferences	Training Schools	Reports WG	Policy briefs
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3.1.3. Risk and Contingency Plans

Type of risk	Risk description	Impact	Proba bility	Contingency plan
Risk of delays	Deliverables or reports not submitted in time	Time	Medium	The Action will use a comprehensive set of project management techniques to help minimize the risk of delays. In the case of delays, at the first indication of a delay, the Working Group Leader and Chair of the Action will discuss the delay and develop a strategy for addressing the delay. The main strategies used to address delay include devoting extra resources to the task, starting other tasks in

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				parallel with the delayed task, and developing plans for reducing time needed to complete follow-on tasks.
Risk of inaccessibility of data	National information systems on research become unavailable	Scope, quality	Low	Scholars involved in the building and the maintaining of the databases and repositories mentioned in the work plan are part of the network proposing the action. In most cases, data are freely available, as part of transparency policies about public spending. In the case of temporary unavailability, the Action's internal schedule will be revised, without affecting the overall schedule.
Risk of insufficient quality	Deliverables and reports produced by the Action are of poor quality	Quality	Low	Because of the very nature of the COST cooperation scheme, the deliverables of the Action do not rely on single researchers or teams, but are to be produced though interactions in Working Group meetings and remote cooperation. The Action will have a strict quality management system to ensure that all findings and deliverables are of the highest quality. The quality management system consists of reviews by the Action's scientific review committee, If any Action deliverable or intermediate work product fails to meet the highest possible quality standard it will be returned to the responsible party for revision, accompanied by detailed comments.
Risk of insufficient dissemination	The Action doesn't succeed to touch the most relevant stakeholders.	Scope	Low	The Action addresses a need, identified as such as well by decisions makers, as well as by the researchers themselves. Therefore, it is to be expected that its developments will be followed with interest by both categories. Moreover, the Action has the particularity of involving SSH scholars themselves, which will use their own networks to raise awareness. The number and quality of interactions with institutional stakeholders and SSH research associations will be under a close scrutiny of every meeting of the Working Group on dissemination, and solutions for a more attractive or targeted communication will be sought, if necessary with help and the financial support of the management committee.

3.2. Management structures and procedures

The Action will follow the guidelines described in the COST Implementation Rules. It will be managed through a Management Committee (MC) formed by two nominated members from each Participating COST Country.

The MC will be convened twice a year to discuss the annual scientific plan, on the basis of the inputs of each Working Group, to plan the annual budget, and to define the number of STSM per year. In order to ensure a flexible organisation of the STSM, two calls will be organised per year.
The Action will also include a Core Group (CG), comprising of a Chair, Vice Chair and the four Working Group Leaders. The Core Group will be in charge of preparation of reports and other administrative tasks associated with the Action management. They will also act as a scientific review committee, involving when necessary external experts, in order to assess the quality of the deliverables of the Action.
The Action will be managed by means of an advanced collaborative digital platform, accessible through Action's website, in order to guarantee network members to work together on WG plans, activities, drafts and documents, sharing the same agenda.

Each Working Group meets at least once a year.
They endeavour to gather at least one expert from each participant country. A member of a group can also be member of another group, or temporarily join an activity in which he or she has a specific interest. At the first Management Committee of the Action, a Leader of each Working Group will be elected, in charge of the implementation of the work-plan and of the monitoring of the activities. The WG Leader is also responsible for providing inputs for the annual report of the Action; he or she assists the MC Chair in writing these reports.
At the end of the first year of the Action, when the number of participant countries will be consolidated, the chair may organise, if necessary, a new round of elections.
At their first specific meeting during the Action, the Working Groups will decide upon a more precise division and programming of the tasks to be carried out, in order to attain their specific goals. Every year, they define an annual working-plan, taking into consideration, when appropriate, the achievements of the previous period. The plan is accompanied by a succinct budgeting (workshops to be organised, planned STSM), in order to help the MC in coordinating the whole.
At the first meeting of the dissemination group, the architecture of the Action's website will be designed, as well as a calendar for its implementation. Decision will be taken as to procedures for providing the webmaster regularly with new and relevant information. At the annual meetings of this WG, attendance statistics will be presented, in order to identify topics of maximum interest and to improve the service offered to the web-users. During the last six months of the Action, the question of the maintenance of the site after the end of the Action will be studied in more depth, in its material aspects (costs of infrastructure and webmastering), as well as in its scientific and scholarly aspects.

3.3. Network as a whole

Some 50 participants from 20 European countries participated to the building of the proposal. In addition, the proposal has been publicised towards Near Neighbour Countries (NNC), whose participation will be further sought. As many of these countries are in the process of building research evaluation systems, they could benefit from the expertise already accumulated in more research intensive countries; in exchange, it is expected that these countries bring in innovative perspectives on topics as societal relevance of the SSH, due to the different historical role played by SSH in these countries.

Involved scholars have expertise in the three main areas of studies developed in this proposal: knowledge production processes and representations of quality in the SSH; societal impact and relevance of the SSH; metrics and databases for the SSH. Participants are members of institutions involved in national and European research evaluation, academics who have been actively involved in building and analysing databases, organisers of events into SSH research

valorisation and impact. Several intensive-research universities are represented, as well as smaller higher education institutions, as to balance points of view. Importantly, scholars involved cover a variety of SSH disciplines including philosophy, history, literature studies and linguistics in addition to sociology of sciences and policy studies.

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