

# Elements of a national strategy in France for the DARIAH ERIC

## 1) Preamble

This document aims to define Huma-Num's policy regarding DARIAH, the European Infrastructure, for the next three years (2017-2019). It should be remembered that the CNRS and the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MENESR) have granted Huma-Num responsibility for coordinating French participation in the DARIAH and CLARIN ERIC.

This document was validated by the Scientific Committee as well as Huma-Num's governing bodies.

## 2) Historical Context

The DARIAH project was launched in 2006 in the context of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures. It was created to equip the European Union with an infrastructure that would allow common means of communication and services. The founding partners of the project (France, Germany, Holland) defined the scientific and organizational (Virtual Competency Centers and their tasks) directives for DARIAH<sup>1</sup> until 2014, at which point the ERIC (European Research Infrastructure Consortium) was created in July of that year. The ERIC has international organizational status. The main objective of DARIAH is to facilitate research by means of digital objects and to share work methods associated with these objects in the arts and humanities. The specific objectives are to:

- Make digital resources accessible
- Make digital services accessible
- Share and cultivate skills on a European level

In 2015, DARIAH's General Assembly suggested creating thematic Working Groups based on the RDA (Research Data Alliance) model. The operational structure of the DARIAH ERIC was set up at the same time. Since then, the number of national partners has risen considerably and is now 17, not counting the institutional members and associated projects that are also a part of it.

The DARIAH ERIC has also taken on another task, consolidating the construction phase of a H2020 project "Humanities at Scale" and is also involved in a second H2020 project, "Parthenos", which concerns research infrastructures. As a partner for these two projects, DARIAH, as an international organization, associates the countries which are a part of it. France's participation in these two projects is coordinated by Huma-Num.

It should be remembered that the contribution of each of DARIAH's partners is made up of contributions in kind as well as direct financing (150k€ on average from France taken from the Huma-Num budget). The amount of the contribution is based on the GDP for each country and the split is 90% in kind and 10% monetary. During the beginning phase of the ERIC (2014-2015), France sent out a call for contributions throughout the humanities and social sciences community, which resulted in 39 contributions in 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://dariah.eu/about/organisation.html> [d.c. 2016/06/19].

For 2016, Huma-Num's Steering Committee, on the recommendation of the Scientific Committee, decided to extend all of the previous contributions in kind. The first batch of 2015 contributions including their evaluation by the Scientific Committee made it apparent that a reworking of how the contributions in kind were conceived was called for. This was a necessary adjustment due to the varied nature of national contributions. In addition, the interest shown by other national members in DARIAH varies and they have developed different organizational models that have yielded disparate types of contributions which are not easily comparable whether it be in terms of quantity or quality (scientific and financial).

The years 2015 and 2016 mark a time of evolution of the DARIAH entity which is currently taking measures to be able to work on H2020 projects concerning infrastructure. The DARIAH ERIC is a consortium of 17 national members and can take on projects from the European Commission. One of the main stakes for DARIAH at present is to justify its results, mainly its ability to be operational before the end of the first term of undertaking by the principal countries for the 2014-2019 period.

### **3) Roadmap suggestions for French participation within DARIAH**

#### **a) Consolidating French activity within DARIAH**

The French research infrastructure Huma-Num considers that these different activities require careful management of the scientific, technical and organizational choices. And as such, any individual initiatives, though they may have scientific legitimacy, should be avoided if they risk being counterproductive, for instance if they do not comply with interoperability or do not conform to international standards (methods, models, dissemination). Similarly, Huma-Num's involvement with the DARIAH ERIC should not have a negative impact on its own digital services by planning ahead of schedule and by not adapting its rate of contribution. The goal is to set up a realistic plan for participation, based on the actual resources made accessible, and that promotes French expertise within DARIAH. A better management of the French contributions in kind and an appropriate French implication in DARIAH's coordination should allow this strategy to take hold.

#### **b) Organizing France's contribution: from networks to infrastructure**

After two years of experimentation, France is in a position to base its contribution on principles that allow involvement from the scientific community in association with robust infrastructural services. France's contributions in kind were set up in 2015 and revealed a diversified set of candidate projects. The Scientific Committee's analysis of these projects concentrated on identifying the actual working blocks that made up these projects whose objectives were quite disparate. The committee also observed a risk of reducing the indicated objectives to a simple label for contributions and of perpetuating a misunderstanding among contributors hoping for direct financing from DARIAH in return. Finally, difficulties with budgetary evaluation and comparing contributions from different countries made it necessary for DARIAH to develop more precise and unified descriptions for national contributions as well as defining evaluative criteria. It is essential to closely follow and contribute to this process. In this regard, 2017 will be a transitional year.

If DARIAH is to develop a network of expertise on a medium to long-term basis, namely through its participation in Working Group activities which are currently in their starting phase, as well as

through its involvement in DARIAH linked H2020 projects, France should have a solid working foundation to rely on which promotes a strong development of community projects.

Huma-Num intends to set up a work structure that takes advantage of existing infrastructures in the social sciences field that have a strong potential for European development and that can pool their resources (Research Infrastructures, Maison des Sciences Humaines, consortia) while also allowing better integration of the Working Groups' activities and Work Packages attached to H2020 projects directed towards DARIAH.

This structure should be dedicated to a European level scaling of contributions from the French humanities network which will establish a strong vertical chain defined through a bottom-up approach:

- A talent pool made up of research unit projects and research groups (service projects or tools that can consolidate national infrastructures) and the MSH:

Early on in 2016, Huma-Num financed and launched a survey among higher education and research facilities in order to obtain a situational analysis of research programs and organizations that identified themselves as belonging to the digital humanities. They were filtered along the following criteria: the project must be defined as being innovative (in terms of method and organization), it must be interdisciplinary, it must be of critical size and have a policy that is open to having European partners.

This survey led to the creation of a talent pool that assembled programs and initiatives which are invested in Huma-Num's consortia through their quadrennial program, furthering both national work and European projects. In addition, the survey in itself is a contribution that Huma-Num has offered DARIAH.

- Huma-Num's consortia :

Contributions to DARIAH shall also be derived from the program of each of Huma-Num's consortia. Each of them is made up of research groups (over one hundred), and also include cultural heritage institutions (libraries, museums, etc.). These programs will be the second link in the chain which will facilitate partnerships.

- Huma-Num's digital services and major scientific and technical data operators (STDO) in the humanities:

By horizontally matching the major STDOs in the humanities and the totality of Huma-Num's digital services, the axis around which France coordinates its contribution aligns with the DARIAH core requirements. This part of the contribution will be fulfilled by Huma-Num's services (mainly ISIDORE and NAKALA) and by its main partners' services: the CCSD (Centre pour la Communication Scientifique Directe), Open Editions/CLEO and the MCC (Ministère de la culture et de la communication).

These three kinds of contribution are based on the following criteria which are fundamental to a European infrastructure:

- Contributions derive from an official interdisciplinary structure (Huma-Num, a research unit, a consortium, a federation) or a geographical organizational structure such as the MSH (Maison des Sciences de l'Homme).
- Contributions are based on an innovative scientific foundation recognized by the scientific community (scientific articles, deliverables from the National Research Agency, the creation of platforms).

- Contributions are based on a technological foundation which complies with the standards or norms advocated by the international community and are managed nationally by the scientific community.
- Contributions put forward a precise schedule which encourages skill enhancement within the scientific community.
- Contributions put forward a medium-term organization that guarantees the sustainability of the resources and services that are offered.
- Contributions can be linked to activities taking place within existing Work Groups; they can also be a reason for the creation of a new Work Group based on the content of the contribution or share in the European projects taken on by DARIAH.

This organizational setup resolves certain difficulties encountered over the course of the past two years: there will no longer be open calls for contributions that generated hope for financing which ended in disappointment; “evaluations” based on vague criteria have been removed; Huma-Num’s partners and its digital tools for humanities research have been made to work together. A national piloting body with a limited number of members has been established which will allow the inclusion of new contributions once they have achieved a certain degree of maturity (sustainability, community familiarity, long-term development planning).

With such a setup, France’s contribution is organized around several major undertakings of the MSH, consortia and national operating partners which are set on giving the DARIAH-EU network functional digital services. These services will satisfy the national partners’ requirements and will also help to promote national contributions that are already working through networks.

### **c) Structuring France’s coordination**

The MENESR has entrusted the CNRS with representing France within the DARIAH ERIC, and has named Huma-Num as the coordinator for national participation.

It is in this capacity that Huma-Num manages in kind and annual financial contributions for France’s contributions to DARIAH. Huma-Num represents France on the Joint Research Committee<sup>2</sup> while working closely with the DARIAH Coordination Office<sup>3</sup> and attends the work meetings of the NCC, the national coordinator’s network.

The MENESR is France’s representative at the General Assembly in collaboration with the CNRS. Huma-Num organizes and prepares France’s representation at the General Assembly and can, if necessary, be designated to fill in for the MENESR. Huma-Num transmits all preparatory documents to the participations unit of the CNRS via the INSHS.

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<sup>2</sup> The Joint Research Committee organises the scientific and technical integration of DARIAH activities. It is chaired by Henk Harmsen, the DARIAH Chief Integration Officer (CIO) and consists of the Heads of each of DARIAH’s [Virtual Competency Centres](http://www.dariah.eu/about/organisation/joint-research-committee.html). (<http://www.dariah.eu/about/organisation/joint-research-committee.html>)

<sup>3</sup> The daily work of DARIAH-EU, whose formal seat as an ERIC is in Paris, is undertaken by the DARIAH-EU Coordination Office (DCO). The DCO itself is based in Berlin ([Centre Marc Bloch](#)), Goettingen ([GCDH](#)) and The Hague ([DANS](#)). The DCO is responsible for finance, coordination and communications.