Foreword: The rationale of this book

Science is an international venture. However, research in Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) has, until recently, tended to evolve under more or less narrow conditions of national cultures and is notably bound to the various countries' languages.
Language is essential for human communication. This applies to everyday life and scientific research, particularly in SSH, where language is more critical to scientific content than in the natural or formal sciences. Yet communication in international research is not only influenced by particular languages, or the use of multiple languages in collaborative projects. Gestures, other forms of non-verbal communication and diverse psychological and cultural factors play important roles too. In addition, depending on the requirements of the specific research work under consideration, technological features of communication, scientific methods, professional background and the composition of participants become increasingly relevant the larger a research team is, and the more the work of an international research project is geared towards practical application.
At the level of the EU, the Framework Programmes for Research and Technology Development (FP for RTD) have enforced cross-country collaboration between research groups from the beginning. In the year 2000, the European Commission launched an initiative to establish and consolidate the European Research Area (ERA). The initiative aims to develop regular, top-quality cross-border research collaboration within the European Union, comparable to that in the USA. Though incomplete, achievements since 2000 may approve the assessment that *transnational collaboration* among researchers has become a regular property of research in Europe: In FP6 (2002-2006) a total number of 9,832 projects received funding and involved 75,614 participants[i]. Of these, a round figure of only 4,000 were researchers located in countries other than EU Member States or in Associated Countries (Island, Israel, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey). Thus, even though the EU Framework Programmes and the promotion of the ERA certainly did not initiate research collaboration in Europe from scratch, such measures obviously boosted European cross-border collaboration in unprecedented ways. In continuation European research co-operation will soon develop features distinct from other *international* research co-operation in more distant world regions ("rest-of-the world", encompassing major players like USA, Canada, Japan, Australia, and increasingly China and India). In Europe this is certainly important, generating a more substantial impact in countries with smaller scientific communities, compared to those with larger ones. Consequently, countries with small populations – and even more so, those with comparatively few speakers of their language – will be most affected by the rising intensity of cross-border research collaboration in Europe.
The 7th Framework Programme (FP7, ongoing 2007-2013) on the one hand re-emphasises the notion of international collaboration, denoting research that pools together participants from the ERA and other regions of the world: It is one of the issues cutting across the COOPERATION, PEOPLE, and CAPACITIES specific programmes of FP7. On the other hand, for the first time in the history of its Framework Programmes (initiated 1984), FP7 promotes *Frontier Research* without the requirement of international co-operation. The focus and core objective of the specific programme IDEAS is to foster *excellence of research* in the ERA, regardless of nationality and organisational particularities of applicants. *Individual* researchers are eligible – with research teams – as long as the *Principal Investigator* is, or will be, employed by a *Host Institution* ("Applicant Legal Entity") *situated in the ERA* (EU and associated states). By extending its research policy, the European Union introduces a new line to support bottom-up research, in addition to the traditional top-down approach of funding research according to targeted research programmes. In order to aspire towards excellence, distinguished scientific education and training, solidly condensed networks of research organisations, and effective co-operation between them, are necessary. However, despite good infrastructure and excellent funding schemes, top scientific knowledge and individual expertise, the results of a project may become severely disordered if the level of communication within multi-national and multi-disciplinary groups of researchers does not meet the same standards. Efficiency of scientific co-operation rapidly turns to malfunction if communication degrades. We may therefore denote communication in international research projects as *the* key to further development of problem solving, applied research and of excellence in fundamental research as well.
Besides the EU Framework Programmes, bi- and multilateral agreements exist between Member States of the European Union to enhance mutual research collaboration. One such national scheme is the ongoing Austrian Science and Research Liaison Offices, established and financed by the Austrian Ministry of Science and Research. Since 2005 the Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office (ASO) in Brno has initiated and supported interdisciplinary and trans-border co-operation, involving researchers from Austria and the Czech Republic, as well as from other central and South-Eastern European countries. In 2007 ASO Brno initiated and organised an international workshop, held on

November 19, 2007, in Vienna, to shed lights on communication processes in international research projects. The essential rationale was to share experience and pool anecdotal evidence concerning multi-national research teams in order to utilise knowledge and systematically reflect upon the issues at stake. To function effectively in the long run, a team requires good interpersonal relationships based on common values, a genuine sense of togetherness as well as a deep commitment to its mission of bringing new ideas to life. Good communication has proven to be crucial for identifying common goals and achieving results which contribute to science and its practical applications.
However, communication as an issue in international research co-operation apparently remains under-researched and inappropriately addressed in SSH. As a matter of fact, useful and relevant research requires multi-disciplinary and multi-national collaboration.
Presentations at the workshop and – as a follow-up to disseminate results – the contributions in this publication emphasise relevant themes pertaining to communication in international research projects:

- Analysis of communication issues from a variety of scientific areas (psychology, sociology, linguistics, philosophy, etc.)
- Social, psychological and linguistic aspects of communication in scientific collaboration in the ERA
- Intercultural competencies, language barriers, gender, status and roles of senior and junior researchers, skills and manners in project management, codes of conduct, ethics
- Relevance of tacit knowledge and of soft skills
- Empathy: emphasising ”listening“ compared to ”speaking“
- Non-fragmented learning facilitates emergence of non-fragmented specialists
- Language policies in international collaborative research
- Translation and contextual issues: Exact linguistic translation may not convey complete meaning – an issue relevant to reports, statements and debates as well as in the establishment of proper research tools such as questionnaires, the use of international data and other methods
- What is “good” (effective) communication compared to “bad” (defective) communication?
- How to establish indicators measuring the quality of communication in international research?
- Communication rituals, the role of trust and reliable modes of communication

Extensive knowledge and the establishment of adequate procedures concerning such fields of expertise will be of salient importance to prosperous future developments in science and research within the ERA. Resulting from the recent enlargement, the EU consists of many small countries with limited research potentials on the one hand, and with extremely high linguistic and cultural diversity on the other hand. Moreover, there is much common experience amidst significant socio-economic disparities in present times. This poses new challenges and calls for the revival of unsolved internal issues, with implications for mutual relations in, and beyond the ever globalising Europe.
We hope this book may inspire informed debates and research leading to the identification of ‘best practice’ examples in international research communication. Continuative research addressing issues of communication in international research projects will provide improved documentation and dissemination of lessons learned, and advancement of mutual learning in research collaboration.

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[i] M. Ehardt-Schmiederer, B. Wimmer, M. Ramadori, V. Postl, T. Coja, J. Brückner, F. Boulmé; PROVISO-Report: 6. RP – Ergebnisse 2002-2006, Stand Herbst 2007 (FOpro1424eha281107); Vienna 2007