

## **The role of ALLEA in uniting European Academies**

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Mr President!

Distinguished colleagues and friends!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak at the General Assembly meeting of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic! I am honoured and pleased to speak from this rostrum for several reasons. First I think that the role of ALLEA in uniting academies includes also the presentation of general ideas to national academic communities. Second, I am always pleased to come to Prague because I have spent a post-doc year here 40 years ago. You could easily count that it was in 1968. Just a month ago I was invited by the Czech Ambassador in Estonia to open a photo-exhibition in Tallinn entitled „From Prague Spring to Velvet Revolution”. It recalled the events 40 years ago but it also stressed the present situation being back again to the democratic world.

Allow me now to turn to the main topic – the European Federation of National Academies of Sciences and Humanities, shortly ALLEA – All European Academies. ALLEA was launched in 1994 as an independent nonprofit organisation and in 2008 ALLEA has 53 members – academies from 40 countries. I always would like to stress that in some sense ALLEA represents the „ideal” Europe compared to the EU. From 2006 on, ALLEA is legally incorporated under Dutch law, the Office is hosted and supported by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) in Amsterdam. The structure of the ALLEA is not complicated. The highest authority of ALLEA is the biannual General Assembly with representatives of all the member academies. Just last week (April 16-19) we had the GA meeting in Madrid, hosted by the Institute of Spain. And it is my pleasure to remind that in 2000, the GA of ALLEA met in Prague. Between the meetings ALLEA is run by the elected President and Vice-President, assisted by the Steering Committee and Office. The Steering Committee meets at least twice a year and is consulted on all important questions.

The ALLEA mission is to facilitate the exchanges of information and experience between academies, to unite the voice of national academies in service of society (advisory role), to address ethics, proper conduct and responsibility of science and scientists. The main principles are independency, institutional membership and multi-science and multi-scholarship. The practical analytical work is carried on by Standing Committees and Working Groups. Presently ALLEA has two Standing Committees: Intellectual Property Rights and Science&Ethics. The Working Groups analyse the special questions and after they present their report to the Steering Committee or to the GA, they will be determined. The recent WGs were: Science Cooperation, Science and the Media; Privacy in the Information Society. The reports are published either in the ALLEA Yearbooks or in separate Report Series. The Yearbooks cover certainly all the events in ALLEA including also the Profiles of Academies.

ALLEA has organized several conferences on general topics – like „European Science and Scientists between Freedom and Responsibility”, 1997; „In Search of Common Values in the European Research Area”, 2005; „The Ethical Commitment of Scientific and Scholarly Academies”, 2005; etc. A recent conference „Emerging Regional Cooperation. Southeast

European Academies of Science and Humanities in the ERA”, 2007, has shared the experience from other Academies (including Vyshehrad academies) to Academies in the Southeast Europe which still face serious economical and structural challenges to solve. The materials of this conference will be published in the nearest future.

An important part of ALLEA activities is related to position papers and statements concerning European science policy. These documents are based on opinions from the member academies which are collected and finalized by the Steering Committee and Presidency. Such position papers include reflections on the Framework Programmes and other EC activities. Two recent documents should be mentioned: „Challenges of the Future: Reflections of ALLEA on ERA”, 2007; „Reflections of ALLEA on the EC Green Paper 2007”, 2008. The first one was issued before the EC has published the Green Paper 2007. It has been stressed there that cooperation and complementarity are important issues and there should be a balance between exact sciences and technology from one side and humanities and social sciences from another side. The self-organization of research cooperation and clusters are important and regional cooperation should be supported. Certainly the barriers which still exist within EU and in the larger scale should be removed for free moving of researchers and students. The second document on the EC Green Paper agreed on the instruments listed and explained in the Green Paper, but stressed the basics. This is really important: the ERA should be based on the understanding that research matters! It matters because it is a vital part of the social tapestry of a modern state and in this point ALLEA and the League of European Research Universities (LERU) have the same position. Research not only contributes to innovation and to economic development, it is about man, society and the world, about culture and human perception, about inquiry into phenomena; it is a response to societal problems, to natural hazards and to climate change, a way to improving health and education and so on. And so ALLEA has stressed that such a position should be the basic one before the instruments are listed. ALLEA stressed also that normatives in research must be avoided and that the EC should work as a catalyst. There are certainly many other points (for details see the document) but Academies have also an important role in ERA: they are strong advocates for excellence in research, they have an advisory role to society and to governments and they foster international cooperation. In this process of building up ERA, ALLEA is able to marshal the voices of its members and to speak with authority on the behalf of the academic community.

ALLEA is not alone in the complicated scenery of European academic institutions. We stress the importance to work closely with our partners, like the European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC), the European Science Foundation (ESF), the InterAcademy PANEL (IAP) which is a world-wide institution, a.o.

In very general terms, EASAC works for „science to policy” and ALLEA – „policy for science”. In the ESF, however, are other possibilities for the cooperation. The ESF is a unique blend of research funding agencies, research performing organizations and academies. From 75 members of the ESF, 19 are academies, who also are the members of the ALLEA. Recently we organized an ESF/ALLEA Workshop „Strengthening the Role of Academies in the ESF” (Brussels, March, 2008). Before the Workshop, a questionnaire was sent to all ESF member academies and the opinions were collected. There are many ideas, how to enhance the role of academies in the ESF and how to use their potential. Several joint ESF/ALLEA activities are planned like creation of the Research Integrity Network (joint application already submitted to the FP7); cooperation in preparation of the European Reference Index for Humanities; cooperation in peer review/evaluation (ALLEA will launch a new Working Group on Evaluation), etc. There is one direct question to all academies: the ESF has started

to issue the Forward Looks in several fields of research. These Forward Looks are prepared by teams of top-scientists in the field. The question to academies is – could we give opinion to published Forward Looks and could we cooperate directly in preparing new ones? The Workshop actually gave a strong mandate to ALLEA to represent academies in the ESF. The future cooperation on many problems was discussed, like „ERA beyond 2013” or „Young Academies”. These are the challenges not only within the ESF/ALLEA cooperation but for the large academic community.

The relations between InterAcademy Panel (IAP) and ALLEA are progressing. ALLEA is invited to chair of the Programme Committee for the Conference „Core Competencies for Success in Research – Moving Beyond Scientific Training”. This will be a world-wide Conference for young prospective leaders in science to hold later in 2008.

The Action Plan for ALLEA is full of events and activities – Research Integrity Network, WG for Evaluation, WSF 2009 in Budapest, etc. ALLEA would like to enhance the cooperation with many partners and for better coordination we would like to establish an *ad hoc* Advisory Group. All proposals how to improve our activities are welcome – ALLEA depends very much on activity of its members.

Let me finish with some general thoughts. The role of academies in contemporary world is multifaceted. Academies are the strongholds of knowledge, they represent independence of thought, they generate new ideas, they advise society on complicated issues of nature, technology and societal problems. The advisory role of Academies is actually very old. Even *Akademos* of Plato more than 2000 years ago has advised society and rulers on different issues.

Are we able to use all this richness of knowledge that cannot be measured by simple GDP figures or by an amount of published papers? Bureaucrats certainly like it but there is much more behind it. It is not the bulk of the scientific production but the quantity of research is that counts and we must set it up into the context of our social and natural environment. The value of knowledge as a soft power becomes stronger and stronger in the world. Our role in academies, in ALLEA and in all the academic community is to foster research, and to disseminate the knowledge. Only then Europe will be a society of values supported by solid scientific information and rational decision making. Let me quote George Bernhard Shaw: „Activity is the only road to knowledge”. I think this is the way for ALLEA, for academies and for all the academic community.

It is a real pleasure to visit Prague again! Thank you for your kind attention – děkuji za pozornost!