

# Open Digital Humanities: International Relations in PARTHENOS

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**Abstract.** One of the strong instruments for the promotion of Open Science in Digital Humanities is research infrastructures. PARTHENOS is a European research infrastructure project, basically built upon collaboration between two large the research infrastructures in the humanities CLARIN and DARIAH, plus a number of other initiatives. PARTHENOS aims at strengthening the cohesion of research in the broad sector of Linguistic Studies, Humanities, Cultural Heritage, History, Archaeology and related fields. This is the context in which we should see the efforts related to international liaisons. This effort takes its point of departure in the existing international relations, so the first action was to collect information and to analyse it along different dimensions. Secondly, we want to analyse the purpose and aims of international collaboration. There are many ideas about how the international network may be strengthened and exploited, so that higher quality is obtained, and more data, tools and services are shared. The main task of the next year will be to first agree on a strategy and then implement it in collaboration with the rest of the project. By doing so, the PARTHENOS partners will be contributing even more to the European Open Science Policies.

**Keywords:** Research Infrastructures, International collaboration, Digital Humanities.

## 1 Introduction

One of the strong instruments for the promotion of Open Science in Digital Humanities is research infrastructures. Research infrastructures make sharing of data and tools easier and facilitate the access, discovery and use of these resources. At the same time research infrastructures provide a forum for support and knowledge sharing for researchers. The two largest European research infrastructures in humanities are CLARIN and DARIAH.

In this presentation, we will describe the work done in PARTHENOS, aiming at the strengthening of international liaisons within the PARTHENOS project.

PARTHENOS stands for “Pooling Activities, Resources and Tools for Heritage E-research Networking, Optimization and Synergies. PARTHENOS [1] is a European research infrastructure project, focussing in particular on the collaboration between the research infrastructures in the humanities CLARIN ERIC [2], DARIAH ERIC [3]

and several other research infrastructure projects like ARIADNE, CENDARI, EHRI, see [1]. The project is coordinated by PIN (Servizi Didattici e Scientifici per l'Università di Firenze), University of Florence, Italy, and runs for 4 years, 2015-2019.

**Goal of PARTHENOS:** PARTHENOS aims at strengthening the cohesion of research in the broad sector of Linguistic Studies, Humanities, Cultural Heritage, History, Archaeology and related fields through a thematic cluster of European Research Infrastructures, integrating initiatives, e-infrastructures and other world-class infrastructures, and building bridges between different, although tightly interrelated fields. PARTHENOS will achieve this objective through the definition and support of common standards, the coordination of joint activities, the harmonization of policy definition and implementation, and the development of pooled services and of shared solutions to the same problems.

This is the context in which we should see the work on international liaisons.

## 2 Collection of information on existing international liaisons

PARTHENOS is by nature strongly international. Not only does PARTHENOS cover many countries in Europe, but additionally all the project partners already have strong connections with international committees, initiatives, projects and other important research infrastructures (RIs) worldwide. So, we are looking at how we can coordinate and pool such liaisons and propose joint plans for fostering these connections.

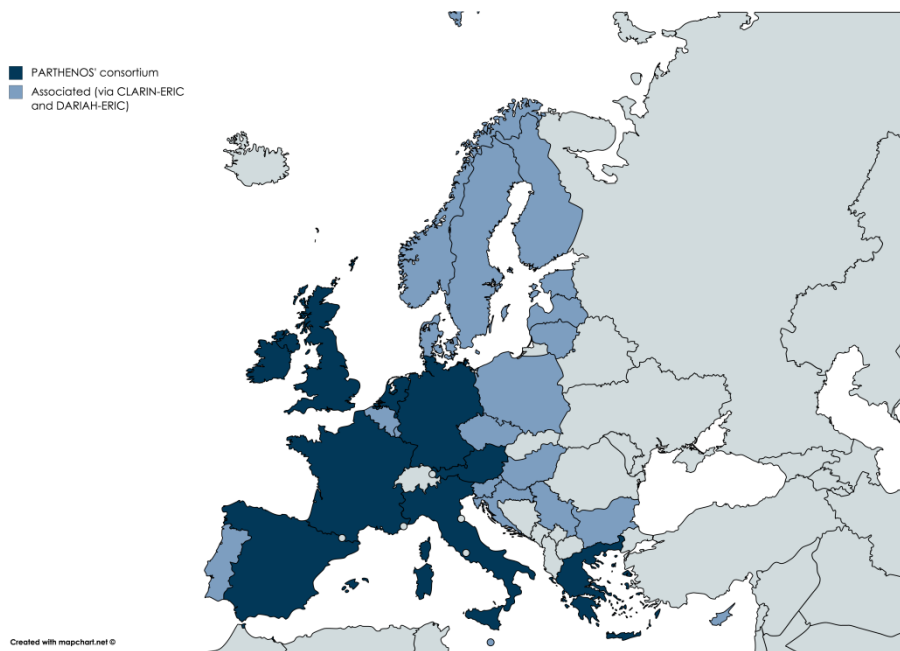


Figure 1. Map showing PARTHENOS partners

A note on the map: The dark blue colour is used to show the countries in which the partners have their headquarters. Since PARTHENOS has the two large humanities ERIC infrastructures, CLARIN and DARIAH, as partners, it can be said to cover also the geographical area of these, and this is shown by using a lighter blue colour in the map. This gives a very important addition of Nordic and Central/Eastern European countries, and by this PARTHENOS can be said to cover Europe much more nicely than if only the partners' headquarter countries are considered.

## 2.1 Existing international relations in the consortium

The first action by the group was to collect information about the existing international relations. This collection effort started in 2015 and is still going on. The current status is shown on the PARTHENOS website, see [4].

This collection shows that there is a very rich variety of e.g. types of relations and of domains represented. Below we report on the results along six different dimensions.

The first classification describes the **type of entity** with which there is a relation. It can be an association, a consortium or the like, an infrastructure or network, an institution or foundation, or a project. Here, it is important to note that the longevity of such relations depend on the type of entity.

Table 1. Number of relations to different entity types

Association , a consortium	21
Infrastructure or network	17
Institution or foundation	16
Project	20

Projects have a limited life time, so it will be important to think about how to continue such relationships beyond the project, e.g. by turning them into institutional relationships.

Secondly, we can look at the **geographical scope**: Contrary to the traditional use of the word “international”, in the EU context “international” is often taken to mean “outside of Europe”, probably because European collaboration is seen as the normal situation. In PARTHENOS we have however agreed that we are interested in both European and “truly international” collaboration. The main part of our collaborations in the collection is European, but more than 20 relations are beyond Europe, i.e. truly international in the EU sense. This means that there is a very strong international basis to build on.

Thirdly, we look at the **domain** treated. Here the existing PARTHENOS inventory of domains was used.

### Studies of the past

History

Medieval studies  
 Recent History  
 Art History  
 Epigraphy

**Language studies**

Literature  
 Linguistics  
 Philology  
 Language Technology

**Cultural Heritage**

Archaeology & cultural heritage  
 Archives, Libraries, Museums  
 Preservation / Conservation  
 Digital curation / edition / publishing

**Social Sciences**

Sociology  
 Political Science  
 Geography  
 Anthropology  
 Cultural Studies

**Humanities**

Digital Humanities  
 Other

For the sake of readability, we are only providing the numbers for the most general classes:

Table 2. The number of collaborations per domain

Studies of the past	34
Language studies	13
Cultural Heritage	28
Social Sciences	14
Humanities	all

Here we see a pretty good distribution over domains with a stronger focus on Studies of the past and Cultural Heritage.

In this respect it is also interesting to have a look at which sub-domains have little or no coverage at present. However, when we look at sub-domains we get into very small numbers, so it becomes slightly arbitrary which domains are not covered. Currently, there seems to be no international collaboration among our partners in the

fields of medieval history, literature and political science, and while at present this is not seen as serious, it of course raises a flag: When the collection grows, it will be checked if the issue persists.

The fourth dimension which is checked, is the **PARTHENOS topic** which is taken up in the collaboration. PARTHENOS has six main topics and the current distribution is as given in Table 3. In addition 13 collaborations are said to cover all or many of the PARTHENOS topics.

Table 3. Distribution over PARTHENOS topics

Common policies	32
Standards	33
Tools and Services	26
Training	17
Communication	15
Research agenda, foresight studies	8

Here again we see a good distribution with an overweight to common policies and to standards which are by default some of the main topics of the project. Collaboration on tools and services is also very important for the partners, as is training and communication.

The last dimensions are covered together. **PARTHENOS audience**, divided into researchers, technical developers, managers, others. And **research infrastructure themes**: management policies, technical topics or other areas of common interest. For these there is nothing particular to report. These aspects are evenly distributed.

An extra dimension which is not visible from the map, but becomes visible when investigating the actual liaisons, is the geographical distribution over European countries. Geography-wise, it seems worthwhile to try to intensify exchange and find partners in central and Eastern European countries that do not yet have a strong participation in the international collaboration.

## 2.2 Aims of the collaboration

What we have been contemplating this far, is just an overview of facts and details. But it is also important to discuss the **purpose** of these collaborations:

When the call for collection of information was distributed, it came with the following text. “International activities can have different purposes, here are some possibilities

- linking existing RIs
- knowledge exchange and education
- common standards and interoperability
- common methods

- common policies
- addressing common problems
- opening up new research avenues
- etc.”

We asked the respondents what they see as the main purpose of their international collaboration. Below we summarize the first batch of answers.

### **General level**

Comments at this level are to a large extent a repetition of the task description. Partners mention coordinating and pooling the strong connections the partners have. They mention that a good mapping and good communication with other initiatives is necessary to avoid duplication of efforts. And they mention that we should in particular focus on the longer-lasting (i.e. non-project based) ones.

### **Linking existing RIs**

There is no explicit mentioning of existing RIs, probably because the two largest European ones in humanities are part of the project already. What is mentioned is more specific: Common inventories, e.g. DH Research Data repositories, tool inventories, course inventories. Increasing and aligning the quality of repositories, data and metadata, by providing common policies throughout the research lifecycle, throughout Europe and throughout humanities disciplines.

### **Knowledge exchange and education**

This is the most popular purpose. Apart from mentioning exchange of knowledge about best practices, methods, policies and standards, and provision of training materials, the respondents mention practical activities for researchers and end users of the research activities (museums, conservation institutes, etc.). Furthermore it is suggested to involve representatives of relevant communities in events/workshops; this will be a good way of creating new international collaboration.

### **Common standards and interoperability, Common policies**

Interoperability is of course a key goal, internally in all infrastructures and across infrastructures. Consequently there is an interest in developing better standards for interoperability, data integration and accessibility. Common policies recommendations are also aimed at, not only in PARTHENOS, but also through the international liaisons.

In fact there were several more specific purposes mentioned which can be said to belong in this category: Improve access to (digital) sources, provide better tools to work with the sources, better understanding of the lifecycle of digital content, improve quality of tools for curating, analysing or otherwise dealing with digital content.

A slightly different goal is the enhancement of quality of digital content, with associated policies, guidelines, etc.

### **Opening new research avenues**

A few partners mention that the goal of international collaboration could be a research agenda / foresight studies to resolve eminent gaps.

### 3 Concluding remarks and next steps

The overview shows that the existing international relations of the PARTHENOS partners is already impressive and has a good deal of potential. Section 2.1 shows a quite even distribution over the main themes of PARTHENOS, but as mentioned not every subfield is equally well represented; this may be because of insufficient data, or it may be because the subfields did not represent the participating parties well. Altogether it is felt that the collection is already in good shape and can be used for finding audiences and collaboration partners for organizing workshops, creating new projects etc.

Section 2.2 shows that there are many ideas about how the international network may be strengthened and exploited, so that higher quality is obtained, and more data, tools and services are shared. Our next step is to make the data more accessible, easier to read etc. Several different modes of showing the results will be tried, various extracts will be made according to type, topic, etc. Additionally, the project has decided to try to determine those collaborations that have proven most important to our work package leaders, and to analyse the content of the collaboration, its importance etc, in order to be able to provide recommendations for the future.

As an instrument for collaboration a template for a collaboration agreement will be proposed: Such a template will list the activities in ascending order, starting with the most modest one as link to each other's website, moving on to organising workshops together, sharing content in catalogues etc. Such agreements have proven a good instrument for making collaboration stronger and more lasting.

By making existing collaborations more visible, and by supporting them through agreements, PARTHENOS and its partners will be contributing to the European Open Science Policies.

### 4 Acknowledgements

PARTHENOS is supported by the European Commission under grant number 654119.

The present paper reports joint work in the PARTHENOS project, and I would like to thank everyone in the working group *International Liaisons* for their contribution. Any misinterpretation or misrepresentation is however solely my responsibility.

### References

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