

## EDITORIAL

The European conference "Science in Society: dialogues and scientific responsibility" has its origins in several initiatives: a M.U.R.S. conference at the Collège de France in 2006 (cf. *Cahiers* n°52-53 "A la recherche de la confiance perdue" ["In Search of Lost Trust"]); a conference in Lisbon, Portugal, in October 2007 on "The Future of Science and Technology in Europe", initiated by Mariano Gago, the Minister for Research; a conference in Munich, Germany, in June 2008 entitled "Responsible Research: Science and its publics", organized by Peter Weingart, a professor at Bielefeld University, to name but some of the most recent. These are all little European building blocks intended to contribute to our understanding of the connection between research and wider society.

In 2007, we suggested returning to this theme during the French Presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2008. This initiative on the part of M.U.R.S. was endorsed and supported by the French government. The title was designed to emphasize the autonomy of science and society from one another. The choice of words was deliberate - this dialogue does not aim to achieve consensus, but responsible debate between parties and responsibility in the domain which is the preserve of scientists.

What were the issues? We wanted to understand whether Europe was becoming a "flat" and homogeneous world on account of globalization. We wanted to know how dialogue between scientists and co-stakeholders in science exists in three dimensions: in geography, which invited numerous European countries to take part; in a thematic approach with, as its major fields, energy and climate, health, agronomy and communication; and in variations and consistency in current mechanisms for dialogue. Nine workshops each debated these topics in turn.

The aim was an ambitious one. The result was that 300 people from 33 countries took part and 88 colleagues gave papers. I would like to thank them all very much.

We are offering these conference proceedings as food for thought; they are being published in two volumes (*Cahiers Science & devenir de l'Homme* n°59 in English and n°60 in French) to ensure international circulation. We hope that we have contributed to the debate on dialogue between science and society. However, there are gaps and we agree that there are still many issues to be addressed.

by **Jean-Pierre ALIX**

In the closing exchanges, our President, Jean Jouzel, announced a practical initiative: the creation of a European working network, which may be called "Science & devenir de l'Homme", ["Science and the Future of Mankind"].

Therefore, our concern for scientific responsibility will be able to develop gradually through exchanges with other Europeans. Further details will be provided in the next issue. We hope that you will be able to take part in this initiative.

**Jean-Pierre ALIX**

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