

Astrobiology and Society in Europe Today

Klara Anna Capova (1), Erik Persson (2), Tony Milligan (3) and David Duner (4)

(1) Department of Anthropology, Durham University, UK (k.a.capova@durham.ac.uk) (2) The Pufendorf Institute for Advanced Studies, Lund University, Sweden (3) Department of Theology and Religious Studies, King's College London, UK (4) Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences, Lund University, Sweden

Abstract

The talk entitled 'Astrobiology and Society in Europe Today. The White Paper on the societal implications of astrobiology research in Europe and the need for a European Astrobiology Institute' gives an outline of a recently completed joint work of Working Group 5 Philosophy and History of Astrobiology, a part of a Trans-Domain European COST Action LIFE-ORIGINS TD1308 Origins and evolution of life on Earth and in the Universe.

With contributions from authors in twenty-five countries and over thirty scientific institutions worldwide, on societal implications of astrobiology research in European context and its relation to society at large.

1. Introduction

Astrobiology enjoys a great deal of interest among the public, probably more than most other fields of research. It also has implications for human life outside laboratories and lecture halls. It has the potential to be a flagship of European cooperation in science.

Astrobiology is inherently interdisciplinary and based on collaboration between disciplines, universities and countries. For Europe to take a leading role in this research, it is very important to have a stable structure that can coordinate research, research infrastructure, funding and relations to the surrounding society in an efficient way. In detail, during the talk will be introduced the two main objectives of the Astrobiology and Society White Paper:

(1) It recommends the establishment of a European Astrobiology Institute (EAI) as an answer to a series of challenges relating to astrobiology but also European research, education and the society.

(2) It also acknowledges the societal implications of astrobiology, and thus the role of the social sciences and humanities in optimizing the positive contribution that astrobiology can make to the lives of the people of Europe and the challenges they face.

2. Poster Outline

With the aim to inform space science professionals as well as interested public about the White Paper, the sections related to contributions of astrobiology to society, advancement of science in Europe, environmental protection, as well as societal challenges from astrobiology, and potential conflicts of interest between astrobiology and commercial use of space will be introduced. Furthermore, the poster aims to point out to the timely role of an organised initiative in astrobiology education and popularisation of science.

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