



EuroHESC

Higher Education and Social Change

The ESF's EUROCORES programme Higher Education and Social Change (EuroHESC) represents a unique international effort to promote interdisciplinary comparative research into topical and important questions concerning the changing relationship between higher education and society. The research agenda involves the development of theories and hypotheses about this relationship and also addresses methodological issues of comparative research in the field (e.g. data comparability, combination of quantitative and qualitative research, and different levels of analysis).

EuroHESC is an outcome of the recent ESF Forward Look 'Higher Education Looking Forward'¹, which sought to relate the study of higher education to more general conceptual frameworks such as human capital theory, theories of power, inequality and social exclusion, organisational theory and new public management. The research programme is therefore premised on the need to interpret and explain the relationships between contemporary socio-economic changes and transformations and the changes and transformations occurring within higher education institutions and academia.

The larger questions addressed by the funded projects concern:

- The relationship between higher education and the creation and development of so-called knowledge societies.
- The relationship of higher education to processes of globalisation (including migration patterns and the impact of new technologies).
- The impact on higher education and research of processes and developments in new public management, marketisation and consumerism, globalisation and the changing role of the state.

EuroHESC will thereby help to place higher education research firmly into its social and cultural context, with a research agenda of relevance not only to scientists, but also to policy makers and practitioners.

The programme was formally launched in October 2009 and will run for three years. The four funded Collaborative Research Projects bring together 29 research teams, including Associated Partners in the USA and Japan.

1. See www.esf.org/helf

Collaborative Research Projects (CRPs)

Re-Structuring Higher Education and Scientific Innovation (RHESI): The consequences of changes in authority relations for the direction and organisation of research (DFG, NWO, SNF, VR)

The aim of this project is to find out how the changing governance of public science and higher education systems is altering key features of scientific innovation, particularly the selection of research goals and the evaluation and integration of results.

Project Leader:

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The Academic Profession in Europe: Responses to Societal Challenges (EUROAC)

(CNCSIS, DFG, FWF, IRCHSS, NZZ, SNF)

The aim of this CRP is to establish how the academic profession perceives, interprets and “digests” recent changes in its societal environment and the organisational fabric of higher education systems. As regards the former, attention will be paid notably to the growing relevance of knowledge, diversification and internationalisation. For the latter, groups of Individual Projects will explore the impact of changes in government, management and evaluation, changing academic career settings, and professionalisation, both within academic roles and through modes of interaction and division of labour between new higher education professionals and the academic profession.

Project Leader:

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Change in Networks, Higher Education and Knowledge Societies (CINHEKS)

(AKA, DFG, FCT, ESRC, NSF)

This project will analyse how higher education institutions (HEIs) are networked within distinct knowledge societies in Europe, the USA and Japan. The study will illuminate the nature of linkages between academics, HEIs and crucial actors within the dynamics of knowledge production in these regions. The objectives of CINHEKS are based on the juxtaposition of historically distinct societies, global policy debates and conceptually defined empirical data, chosen to reveal their key similarities or differences. These objectives are:

- The historical analysis of key features shaping and explaining contextual differences underlying present patterns of knowledge production.
- The analysis of policy discourse explaining how nation states and regions have understood and promoted the development of knowledge transfer and use.
- Empirical studies based on institutional case studies and surveys explaining the way in which basic units, HEIs and academics are networked in distinct knowledge societies.

Project Leader:

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Transforming Universities in Europe (TRUE)

(DFG, ESRC, FCT, NWO, RCN, SNF)

The aim of TRUE is to clarify how steering and governance have affected organisational characteristics of higher education institutions (HEIs) and how this has affected the differentiation of the European higher education landscape. The transformation will be analysed by means of three perspectives: 1) universalism assumes that universities are specific organisations; 2) instrumentalism assumes that universities are just like any kind of organisation; and 3) institutionalism assumes that the crucial question is the fit between the norms and values of universities and reformers. The CRP focuses on three interrelated themes: governance and steering, organisational change and the higher education landscape.

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The European Collaborative Research (EUROCORES) Scheme enables researchers in different European countries to develop collaboration and scientific synergy in areas where international scale and scope are required for top class science in a global context.

The scheme provides a flexible framework for national basic research funding and performing organisations to join forces in supporting forefront European research in and across all scientific areas. The national organisations support all aspects including scientific coordination, networking and research funding.

www.esf.org/eurocores

THE FOLLOWING NATIONAL FUNDING ORGANISATIONS SUPPORT THE EuroHESC PROGRAMME:

Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung in Österreich (FWF)

Austrian Science Fund, Austria

Nacionalna zaklada za znanost, visoko školstvo i tehnološki razvoj Republike Hrvatske (NZZ)

The National Foundation of Science, Higher Education and Technological Development of the Republic of Croatia, Croatia

Suomen Akatemia/Finlands Akademi (AKA)

Academy of Finland, Finland

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)

German Research Foundation, Germany

An Chomhairle um Thaighde sna Dána agus sna hEolaíochtaí Sóisialta (IRCHSS)

Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Ireland

Nederlandse Organisatie voor

Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO)

Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, The Netherlands

Norges Forskningsråd (RCN)

Research Council of Norway, Norway

Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT)

Foundation for Science and Technology, Portugal

Consiliul National al Cercetării Stiintifice din Invatamantul Superior (CNCSIS)

National University Research Council, Romania

Vetenskapsrådet (VR)

Swedish Research Council, Sweden

Schweizerischer Nationalfonds (SNF)

Swiss National Science Foundation, Switzerland

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

United Kingdom

National Science Foundation (NSF)

United States



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