

**HUMAN PLUS 2004**

**First Conference of the Archipelago of Humanistic Thematic Networks  
"The role of the humanistic arts and sciences in European society, education and research"**

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Work group: 1

Thematic Network: ATHENA - **Advanced Thematic Network in European Women's Studies**

**1. Conceptualising, explaining and making visible the reasons for which the Humanistic Sciences are of fundamental importance – for aware citizenship, quality of life and employment – and not just luxuries or 'frills'.**

The vast area of Humanistic studies, including but not limited to the Humanities, is of vital importance for European society, in particular for building cohesive citizenship.

ATHENA sees as one of the main aims of the Archipelago to mobilise the rich and varied tradition of European Humanistic subject areas to deliver a balanced and incisive contribution to the construction of a multicultural European Space in education, culture and research.

ATHENA, as a Thematic Network in the interdisciplinary field of Women's Studies and gender research, sees a crucial role for interdisciplinarity in the Archipelago. An interdisciplinary gender approach needs to cover philosophical, historic, cultural and social concerns as well as socio-economic research on women and men.

Gender, one of the core concepts in ATHENA, is valuable when looking at current debates in Europe: it is, for instance, central to issues of multicultural citizenship and cultural identity, marginalisation and power, and crucial in the critiques of universalism.

Gender can be used as a window on European culture and as an indicator of cultural differences in Europe, of continuities and discontinuities in historic processes. It is a methodological tool that indexes power and can contribute to the Humanities by increasing our understanding of diversity within Europe, including ethnic and racial diversities. Gender-window is already changing a view of the rough texture of established bi-polarities in European culture, and is offering a finer web of inter-European cultural colonialisms, models of reception and nodes or meeting points of interpretations of the other. This calls for new research orientations, experiments with new methods, and generally richer and quicker academic and cultural communication.