

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"

Name: Ellen Hazelkorn

Work group: 1

Thematic Network: The role of the humanistic arts and social sciences in European society, education and research

Some points for consideration:

1) Today, as nations compete for shares of the global market, governments are asking how higher education can more effectively and efficiently contribute to economic growth. Many people claim that higher education has always had a societal or economic role or remit, but today's governments are 'deliberately and specifically targeting and designating universities as a key component in generating new economic activity.' These developments are having a profound impact on higher education and higher educational institutions, placing a strong focus on science and technology or techno-science as 'wealth creators' for the 'knowledge economy.'

- What are the implications of this prioritisation for the arts, humanities and social sciences?
- What are the implications and challenges for academics, researchers and higher educational institutions?
- What are the implications for the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Agenda strategy?
- What are the implications for the 'knowledge society'?

There appear to be two different responses: 1) to argue that the arts, humanities and social sciences are essential to human and civil society because they cultivate aesthetic sensibilities and emotional intelligence and 2) to argue that 'innovation' occurs in the arts, humanities and social sciences. What are the implications of these approaches?

2) In recent years, there has been a growing international debate about the relationship between society and research and the role of higher education. Discussion centres around the extent to which higher educational institutions should operate in active engage and collaboration with society – the wider community, industry and the region. Today, 'new knowledge' is seen as being produced in the context of being useful and via interdisciplinary partnerships, within HEIs and between HEIs and other institutions/organisations.

- What are the implications for the arts, humanities and social sciences as disciplines?
- What are the opportunities for the arts, humanities and social sciences as disciplines?
- To what extent does 'new knowledge production' prompt a new knowledge/research paradigm?
- To what extent should curriculum and research focus on individual specialisation or should there be additional or new focus placed on interdisciplinarity?
- What are the implications and challenges for higher educational institutions?
- To what extent should the curriculum include business or employment-related subjects or prepare students beyond the bounds of particular disciplines or professions?

