

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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I propose that a central issue which could be fruitfully discussed in the work-group is the double issue of funding / relevance. Unless the Humanities are perceived as being relevant and even essential in today's world, then cuts in funding will continue to be approved.

- Funding at University and other levels in the Education spectrum is a persistent issue.. Resources are clearly limited and priority is rarely given to the Humanities in Education budgets. A case must be made to highlight the intrinsic value to society that a general grounding in the Humanist spheres of learning provides.
- Perhaps one of the most central issues is to make a clear case for the RELEVANCE of Humanist activities. Many other subjects lead to career choices and paths into tertiary education that are clearly laid out and which lead to professions or easily identifiable jobs. Through the Humanities, career choices are less clearly defined. Since there are no equivalents to, for instance, a Chamber of Advocates or a Medical Council, to deplore lack of state spending and to oppose budget cuts in these areas of learning, it is easier for Governments to reduce or withdraw essential funding.
- “ Unless the literary institution discovers a need for society, it might quickly discover that society has little need for it.” Terry Eagleton, 1985. As Eagleton points out with particular reference to the literary institution but which easily applies to the whole area of study in the Humanities, there are two sides to this problem, and the ball is in our court to prove the role of the humanities in society.