

World Humanities Report Europe
Recommendation UNESCO

European research group with:

University of Belgrade, University of Bologna, University of Goettingen, University College
London, University of Utrecht, GUNi (Global Network for Innovation) and SHAPE-ID
(Shaping Interdisciplinary Practices in Europe)

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1. Overview

The International Council of Philosophy and the Human Sciences (CIPSH), in collaboration with UNESCO and the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI), proposed in 2017 to undertake a World Humanities Report (WHR). The WHR is designed to be a tool to better understand and reflect the contributions of the Humanities to knowledge and society. The report shows where and how the Humanities are practiced and make recommendations for the Humanities in the 21st Century, with a medium-term concentration on the next five-to-ten years.

The Regional Research Team Europe, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, was charged with contributing chapters to the WHR and to work as a team preparing different independent projects that will lead to several distinct chapters, focusing on core Humanities disciplines, including philosophy, literature and languages, critical theory, aesthetics and art history, cultural studies, history, and musicology, as well as new areas of inquiry, including the digital, environmental, and medical Humanities.

The key terms that structure our advocacy of the Humanities are: subtlety, complexity and cross-overs or transversal connections. The field of the Humanities today allows us to focus our attention on emergent areas of knowledge production, where experimental modes of thinking, the quest for alternative values, and a dose of perplexity before the great challenges of the day are welcome and encouraged. These critical orientations are taken as indicators not only of sharp minds and well-trained intellects, but also of human ethical compassion and decency and of active and discerning citizenship. In the broader sense, they express an unshakable commitment to the democratic exercise of social and cultural criticism.

The WHR- Europe describes where and how the Humanities are threatened and where and how they can influence these core areas of experience. The threats include both the dismissal of value and underfunding of teaching and research, as well as more fundamental risks to intellectual freedom, critical discourse, diversity, and imagination. The multidimensional impact of Humanities on core areas of human experience examined in the Report includes, among other, the formulation of new frames of reference for our relation to the world and the processing of experiences, new ethical imaginaries, spaces of transculturality as the loci of processual identity formation "inbetween" cultures, forms of "polylogue" able to overcome dichotomous constructions of the world, patterns of de-naturalization of ossified interpretive schemes and the devising of innovative tools for the sensitization of humanity to forms of injustice, exclusion and suffering. On the basis of selected social fields, the current challenges are addressed by the research presented in the report. People and planet require new ways of thinking.

Therefore we, the authors of the European Hub of the WHR, demand not only to accept these new ways of thinking, but also to actively support and promote them. The Humanities provide a qualified set of tools to address national and global/supranational problems and to develop solutions. The first step in making the most of these tools useful in a wider range is the recognition of their potential, which must culminate in practical promotion by the member

states and relevant institutions. That is in the text reflected by the division of recommendations into a symbolic level (general and specific recommendations) and a practical level.

2. General recommendations on Humanities

The Member states/ relevant institutions should recognize:

- a) that the Humanities are connectable to all areas of human life.
- b) to recognize social fields that are identified and treated with urgency and attention in the Humanities.
- c) recognize in this context the connections between these fields and the effects of their change on private and social life.
- d) that the Humanities possess a rich body of experience for all contexts of human existence.
- e) that the Humanities have a productive capacity for transformation of their own institutions and academic mindset that is unparalleled. This includes, among other things, as shown in the report:
 - 1) the ability to redefine their conceptions of humanity and the human actor.
 - 2) the ability for interdisciplinary cooperation and thus filling a human vacuum within technocratically dominated (world) social processes.
 - 3) the ability for intercultural cooperation and thus overcoming centrisms of all kinds.
 - 4) the ability to address and overcome issues of imbalanced representation and bias, including towards cultures, languages, race, gender and physical attributes, in and outside of the academic context.

Furthermore, the member states/ relevant institutions should recognize essential interrelationships, as they are shown in the World Humanities Report – Europe:

- a) The Humanities stand in the context of all human and non-human life (Environmental Humanities; Utrecht).
- b) The Humanities stand in the context of internationalization and cooperation (Intercultural Humanities; Göttingen I/ Interaction; London).
- c) The Humanities can flourish by developing fruitful interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary relationships (SHAPE-ID; Dublin).
- d) The Humanities are in the context of policy-making (Public Humanities; Belgrade).

e) The Humanities are in the context of digitalization (Göttingen II, Bologna).

f) The Humanities are in the context of transformation (GUNI; Barcelona).

3. Special recommendations on Humanities

The member states/ relevant institutions should create the following framework conditions, which are necessary for the support and promotion of the Humanities and thus for global welfare:

a) Promote a culture of meaningful and honest engagement, diversity and inclusion in the Humanities

b) support a climate of recognition and equal opportunities.

c) promote democracy as a basis for free scientific work.

d) promote research and development in both the private and the university sector and promote cooperation.

e) promote of equipment, institutions and personnel financially.

f) support mobility of knowledge and scholars.

g) promote internationalization and polylogs through education, research and academic or not academic programs.

h) support capacity building for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research through education, training and career incentives at universities and more substantial humanities involvement in designing and evaluating interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary funding programs.

Recommendations directly related to the Humanities:

a) support the Humanities research profile and the role as knowledge producer.

b) defend an humanistic education.

c) Member states/ relevant institutions should recognize that higher education needs to cultivate the highest possible excellence in the disciplines and also advanced critical skills in thinking and in criticism, as well as more technical academic skills.

Member states/ relevant institutions should:

a) prevent the reduction of university research to the level of a provider of intellectual commodities in the contemporary culture of narcissism.

b) take into account the conviction that the discussion about excellence needs to be open and comparative. Critical work is needed to discuss the paradigms at work in the making of contemporary science and scholarly research. This discussion requires an inter-disciplinary approach and a dialogue among different disciplines from the humanities, social sciences but also natural and exact sciences.

c) recognize the necessity to develop adequate means and analytical tools to assess the digital aspects of the world of research point in the direction of a new inter-disciplinary area of study that could be called: the Posthumanities, including areas such as "humanistic informatics", "digital humanities", or "environmental humanities".

d) recognize the emphasis on the international dimension of education and research today. Both within the new European Union and in the globalized world the university community needs to compare its century-old tradition of cosmopolitanism to the realities of the global flows of capital today.

4. Practical recommendations

Member states/ relevant institutions should take action and

a) critically assess and improve the Humanities curriculum and pedagogy to move towards eliminating the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) awarding gap through the decolonization of curriculum and research and teaching methodologies and resources

b) provide access for Humanities scholars to funds to support mobility and international collaboration.

c) encourage Humanities scholars to start shaping international institutes and departments that will foster work on democracy and policy regarding humanities research.

d) implement Humanities research as a required course in every university in Europe.

e) provide a specific budget for Humanities research equal to sciences and social sciences.

f) should count Public work toward requirement in career advancement.

g) allow Humanities scholars to develop their own analytical tools to measure success in Humanities research and careers.

h) make it possible for Humanities scholars to take part and be involved in every body that has scholars in sciences and social sciences.

5. Extracts from the European Research Group Report

Necessary focus on New Humanities

In the contemporary university we witness the rise of programs, curricula, centers and institutes in new fields of enquiry, which are known as the new humanities.

We propose that, far from being a crisis, this set of circumstances and historical conditions offers productive conditions to renew the profile, the identity and the function of the Humanities in a globally linked, ethnically diverse and technologically mediated world. It may lead to the generation of creative re-appraisals of humanism, but also to attempts at overcoming anthropocentrism while preserving the legacy of critical posthumanism.

- The Environmental Humanities raises issues linked to the Anthropocene, the place of humans in planetary history, and their ability to self-destruct and the motivation to construct sustainable futures.
- The Digital Humanities connects the debate about the new digital media and information technologies to the civic mission of the university to train responsible, active and informed citizens.
- The Biomedical Humanities move beyond bioethics to develop an interdisciplinary field that studies the impact of genomics, synthetic biology, stem-cell research, but also the neural sciences, not only on medical practice, but also on society as a whole.

These areas should be supported by the member states/ relevant institutions in structure and personal.

Necessary focus on Intercultural Humanities

We recommend creating conditions in which the Humanities and especially the Intercultural Humanities can contribute optimally to education and research. This includes in particular the promotion of polylogue and mobility of researchers and access to other mindsets. Global learning in schools and universities and thus interculturality is becoming increasingly important. The term interculturality is used in many Humanities as a suffix to define itself as a subject and to emphasize its own perspective on interculturality as a global academic mindset based on cooperation and polylogue.

The Intercultural Humanities as a perspective on diversity in research and teaching, understood as a resource, represent a central new role for the Humanities, as the cultural in its core is more strongly taken into account and strengthened for the global and should be further focused on.

- The high potential and social relevance of the Humanities lies above all in their interaction competence and networking in the sense of interdisciplinarity and interculturality and teaching conducted from a cultural perspective.

- The Intercultural Humanities' potential lies above all in the use of various fruitful perspectives and synergies and at the same time in its bridging function in the international university landscape.
- Outside the subjects that define themselves as Intercultural Humanities, interculturality is insufficiently represented because it is only implicitly present. Therefore, stronger support not only in personal and structure is needed, but also for programs and projects which make Interculturality visible and academic practice.

Necessary focus on Interaction

Uncertainties and disruptions are putting into jeopardy not only our health, socio-economic and political structures, but also our ways of thinking, acting, working and living. They are all part of newly emerging and perceived crises of the human and its relationship to others, both human and non-human. In this definitional space, what we understand and experience as knowledge is being constantly challenged and put into question by far-reaching, rapid, chaotic, simultaneous and interconnected changes. Consequently, the very notion of what it means to be human has changed and continues to change. We are being forced to reassess our notions of human relationships and emerging virtual and actual forms of 'sociality' with others. Some of these novel interactions are the result of freshly created animate beings, robots, memories and imagined futures, yet others are returning us, through a form of repositioning, to forms of sentient life recognised by indigenous peoples, as in sentient lakes, rivers and mountains. The result is the continuous questioning, rethinking and reimagining of our interactions with the 'self' and with the 'other', not just other humans, but non-human others, the living world, our environments and the modern materialities of human creation.

The Humanities can help us build more and hopefully better social connections with these others:

- When adopting new ways of thinking and doing, of speculating and envisioning things, we must pay attention to language and to how we communicate. Bridging the divide between academic and non-expert, ordinary understandings of what means to be human and what is to know, requires us to engage with these emerging and reimagined bodies of knowledge, practice and imaginings not along disciplinary, epistemological, geographical or chronological lines, but as 'historically situated attitudes' and 'ethical sensibilities'.
- This means that the forms and means through which the Humanities study and imagine the self and its novel interactions with the other, the alternative frames of reference and the speculative potentialities, must start from ethical imaginations, forms of engagement between the self and the other, that animate fantasies, practices, ideologies, normative frameworks and institutions based on care, honest collaborations and solidarity.

Necessary focus on Interdisciplinarity

We address the challenge of better integrating the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) in interdisciplinary research (IDR) and transdisciplinary research (TDR) addressing societal challenges. For many years the importance of AHSS integration has been emphasized at both national and European policy levels, yet change has been slow. We highlight a number of challenges:

- AHSS researchers are often limited to playing instrumental and subordinate roles – for instance, providing an ethical or legal perspective on a technology or science project, or communicating project results to the public.
- The biggest challenge for AHSS disciplines is to fight prejudice and misconceptions, both among other researchers and from policy makers.
- The Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) (or Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) as the grouping is commonly referred to by the European Commission and others) do not constitute a homogenous set of knowledges and practices. The full spectrum of potential contributions from these disciplines should be considered.

Significant changes are needed to build a culture that supports more meaningful involvement of AHSS research in inter- and transdisciplinary research. Based on our analysis of the academic and policy literature and our survey, we make the following specific recommendations to improve pathways to AHSS integration.

- 1) Improve funding supports for IDR/TDR and explicitly invite meaningful AHSS contributions for all research addressing societal challenges.
- 2) Engage more substantively with AHSS communities across the spectrum of disciplines and with IDR/TDR experts when defining, designing and evaluating IDR/TDR calls.
- 3) Support and incentivise universities to build capacity in IDR and TDR by taking steps to de-risk inter- and transdisciplinary career paths and integrate IDR/TDR into education and training at an early stage.

Necessary focus on Public Humanities

We discuss the notion of Public Humanities and its relevance for the European context. The problem with the ways in which Public Humanities is defined is that, rather than breaking down the boundaries and hierarchies, it reproduces them; it does not seek to change the structure of the University, the so-called objective and neutral knowledge production or foundations of the University, leaving them to insist on the cultural authority of the expert rather than allowing oneself to be surprised and changed by new forms of experience. Furthermore, the discourse is firmly entrenched in the liberal notion of public sphere and individualism that centers on the transmission of the heritage of mostly white people leading either to abstractions and disembodiment or commodification of knowledge. It advocates change without changing the structure of knowledge and what counts and who counts as knowledgeable. Political and social change happens through collective work and not with individual acts.

- It is necessary to understand the work of creating intersubjectivity and collectivity as a way to move beyond the heroic individualism and the notion of the expert in the traditional public sphere.
- We argue that the notion of Public Humanities can and should be rescued in a different context by supplementing and correcting some of the basic premises, by offering critical perspectives and judgments as a first step in the changing of meaning of the Public Humanities.
- We shift our gaze not to neutral and objective truth but to sights that produce plural, multiperspectival possibilities of addressing an event. Such changes strike at the heart of what Public Humanities could be: a deep inquiry into the state of the human condition.

Necessary focus on Digital Humanities

On the one hand the Humanities can help to address some of the challenges posed by the information age, on the other hand, digitisation has the capacity to transform research in the Humanities. We discuss the efforts, chances, and shortcomings of the Digital Humanities as a academic discipline as well as the impact of the “traditional” Humanities to a digital world:

First, how digitisation transforms the Humanities with regard to

- New research modes and methods: Digital research in the Humanities is almost by necessity interdisciplinary and collaborative. A major challenge of interdisciplinary research is the communication between different academic fields.
- New skills and the influence of the Digital in Humanities teaching: The changing nature of the research process requires Humanists as well as Computer Scientists to acquire new skills and knowledge of research processes in the other fields.
- Institutionalisation and Internationalisation: By examining data of EU funded research projects (FP7 & Horizon2020), we examine which countries and institutions play a major role in Digital Humanities research, and which areas are under-represented. We also investigate the role of GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) institutions within the field of Digital Humanities.

Second, what the Humanities could and do contribute to a digital world.

Therefore, we highlight some of the areas where the Humanities step up to carry responsibility and where we societies and individuals need their insights and critical thinking, e.g. to point out inequalities:

- Preserving cultural heritage in a digital world
- The use of digital methods to identify off-canon potential and elevate the status of previously

under-studied works

- Creating open source tools and corpora for low-resource languages that can help resolve imbalance in access to language technology
- Ethical questions in a digital world of bias, dual use and privacy. For example that internet access and digital resources are distributed unevenly or that facial or voice recognition systems do not work well for African or Asian individuals and machine translation software can reinforce gender stereotypes.
- Decision making in the age of big data and artificial intelligence: In the information age, more and more decisions will be made on the basis of big data, which could lead to disadvantages for minorities.
- Increasing understanding and tolerance: Digitisation and the widespread use of social networks and alternative news media means that a growing number of people spend much of their time online in echo chambers and are not confronted with cultural diversity and different perspectives. The Humanities can counteract this trend by raising awareness of and fostering appreciation for different cultures.

Member states/ relevant institutions should support the digital transformation of the Humanities and acknowledge the above-mentioned key contributions that Humanities can make in a digital world.

Necessary focus on Transmedial Humanities

New technologies have made an epistemological, ethical, legal and cultural impact in our contemporary world and have enabled innovations with regards to how culture is experienced and transmitted, how knowledge is produced and disseminated, how we engage with cultural heritage by bringing humanistic modes of inquiry into digital media. The role of the Humanities should be thus rethought in light of the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and of transmedia narratives and products.

We can imagine a near future in which human societies will make a pervasive use of artificial autonomous systems or agents (AI), self-driving vehicles, drones, a large variety of AI software platforms such as intelligent digital personal assistants and smart home's hubs, and a multitude of industrial applications. The emergence of Artificial Intelligence raises several questions regarding how a humanistic approach to AI can have an epistemological, ethical, legal and cultural impact on our contemporary world (AI designed according to a new idea of humanity); and how AI can impact on traditional humanistic issues and on the humanities understood as a field of knowledge (AI transforms and reshapes the idea of humanity).

One of the crucial aspects of the so-called "digital revolution" is undoubtedly an impressive mutation of communication forms and modes of cultural circulation and consumption. For some decades now, we have been witnessing a change that involves production strategies as well as the fruition, increasingly linked to networking, of literary, artistic, cinematographic, television, theatrical works and other visual productions. The multiple mutations of the 'cultural industries', the social and cultural transformations intertwine, merge and hybridize

the digital and the 'real': technology, society and culture are linked by relationships of mutual co-determination and co-evolution.

We consider the creation of transmedia narratives as part of this general mutation of expressive and representative forms, which implies, more deeply, a change in individual relations with reality and in the forms of socialization and construction of him/herself and the world, but also a significant alteration of cultural hierarchies.

With the development of digital technologies, the world of translation has also broken cultural boundaries benefitting greatly from the potentialities of new technologies. In recent decades, thanks to a successful interaction between gender studies and translation studies, translation has been interpreted as a committed activity, in which (female) translators can weave feminist intertexts through the use of translation itself, thus involving readership in this process. In fact, translation is above all an historical and historicizable operation that is conditioned by the contexts of reception.

The development and circulation of literary works and visual products in diverse areas that involve readerships and audiences beyond their geographical origins and belonging, have completely innovated not only the content of cultural productions but also their reception and changed the classical view of literary and visual genres, overturning in drastic ways the relationship between the so called high and low culture through a shared imaginary. Their circulation from single individual national to a global market, and their global changes also through migration and translation, have renewed themes and forms also through their reception.

What is, however, also interesting and at the same time questionable and discussed is the belief that the creation of networked communities gathered around the transmedial product (novel, its visual adaptations and productions) is a viaticum for the creation of new forms of cultural and political aggregation and participation, for new forms of citizenship education in the global age. The transmedia product is the object of a fidelity sought by the producers, while the appropriation by the users makes it the object of discussion, growth of awareness and knowledge through the sharing of opinions and points of view within a community that discusses, analyses, interprets, recreates. This product, according to some, can be accused of acting on our customs (ways of dressing, speaking, establishing interpersonal relationships), without intervening on our opinions and without being able to change our point of view on things. Conversely, the critical, educational, relational and civic potential can, according to us, be stimulated and enhanced by discussions in the communities, while inspiring social and political movements, social actions and cultural changes.

Transmedia narratives are also affecting the ways in which European cultural memory has been transmitted: digital adaptations of literary works contribute to educate younger generations about the past in cognitive, creative, and affective ways, thus making them responsible global future citizens. More importantly, these digital adaptations awake awareness about fundamental ethical principles. They critically engage with issues regarding the social and political conditions of segregation, marginalization and apartheid, while advocating for the adoption of human rights for all individuals.

Humanities are therefore necessary to promote a reflective and generative discussion in the digital era: humanities are a way to change social paradigms, to address global challenges and re-orient them by envisioning long- and short- term innovation. We can foresee a near future in which human societies will significantly be transformed by the digital world. We need new humanities to devise comprehensive epistemological, ethical, legal and cultural models for our contemporary societies. Humanities are thus also expected to reshape the idea of humanity itself.

Necessary focus on Transformation of Humanities

We propose to work for the Humanities' reappraisal and transformation from a dynamical and holistic point of view. Many of the problems that affect the Humanities are not exclusive to these disciplines. Hence the need to integrate perspectives and combine efforts and reflections to reappraise today's challenges in terms of research, teaching, the socialisation of knowledge and social commitment within the global university system. Thus, Humanities are seen as a series of dynamic and constantly changing activities that are part of the dispute and the production of meaning in our time, in reciprocal permeability with all other fields of knowledge, including, and very especially, science and technology.

Three main types of changes have been identified. (1) Those related with environmental and climate issues; (2) those connected to the scientific advances and technological developments; and (3) those associated with cultural and social aspects.

From these three clearly interrelated axes of change, the Humanities have not to be conceived as a set of disciplines to preserve or conserve, but a set of utilitarian and applicable activities, which we must continue to cultivate through relevant research, with goals and models as necessary and appropriate for tackling new challenges, in interrelation with other human knowledges contributing to humankind advances, i.e. science and technology. And this is in the good understanding that they are indispensable, for it is on them that the capacity to make sense and value out of human experience depends, especially in times of change, and this needs to be done in commitment to dignity, equality and the reciprocity of these values.

We have three general considerations that merit being emphasised:

- First, the Humanities are no longer viewed only as a series of disciplines but as a way of addressing and understanding human experience in all its manifestations. Their existence and focus conditions the conception of the general paradigm of knowledge that we are developing in other areas and disciplines of knowledge. So, it is not a case of working out how we can keep a place for subjects like literature, history, philosophy, art and so forth, but of how we can guarantee and accompany sufficiently consistent education in all these fields, and how this can have an impact on the knowledge system as a whole.
- This means, secondly, that the question about the place of the Humanities in the system has led us to the need to rethink everything. The specific problems we face today have to do with the rules of play that are determining the global higher education system as a whole. Changing just one part is the start of changing everything.

- Thirdly, despite the differences in local political, cultural, economic and other contexts, the higher education system appears to be far more similar around the world, both in terms of its problems and of the solutions being tested. A system that despite being institutionally heterogeneous, nationally diverse and economically very unequal is today a global system where changes spread very quickly and have an immediate effect on the specific ways that each place works.

The danger of this is that any trend soon becomes strong and apparently irreversible. The positive side of this is that if we properly coordinate the focus of critical debate and its follow-up, then the drive for major change will also catch on quickly.

6. Summary

The enduring and current importance of the role of the Humanities is beyond question. Based on their experience in the historical and cultural sciences, the Humanities have the knowledge that crises are not new and are not only accompanied objectively or with the help of numbers or so-called "hard facts". The limitation to the fields of medicine and economics leaves a human vacuum. There is a lack of discussion and knowledge about the interrelationships of networked social and global connections of human life. The Humanities help to understand the impact on society and to develop an understanding of the future. The changes we can expect for the future are already becoming apparent. Innumerable areas of society are being reshaped and placed in a new relationship to one another. When it comes to the question of how we want to live (together) in the future, these ideas can be formulated together with the Humanities. They can prepare people to assume personal and social responsibility and provide instruments for the necessary further acquisition of knowledge for the future. We therefore recommend further and more intensive funding, but also a reduction in the boundaries between disciplines to do justice to the networking of the emerging fields and their interdependencies, and increased support for internationalization by allowing researchers, teachers and students and knowledge to move freely. We therefore recommend further and more intensive funding, but also the active promotion of a culture of engagement with diversity of cultural traditions, ontologies, epistemologies and practices in the Humanities through: the reduction in the boundaries between disciplines to do justice to the emerging fields and their interdependencies; the increased support for internationalization by allowing researchers, teachers and students and knowledge to move freely; and active movements towards eliminating ethnocentrism and racism from Humanities curriculum and pedagogy and creating spaces for a critical assessment of traditional and alternative research and teaching methodologies and resources.

The success of the project will be measured in the long term by its capacity to effect changes in funding for the Humanities and policy recommendations that support Humanities research. Evidence will include citation of the report and adoption of the recommendations put forth in the report and by its stakeholders, including CIPSH, CHCI and UNESCO. More immediately,

success will be measured by institutional, intellectual and financial investment by other organizations and individuals in the European region; by reaching key milestones set forth in the timeline, particularly with regard to inclusivity and completion and presentation of research; and by determining whether the World Humanities Report should become a regular and ongoing process, to be repeated on a 3-5 year-cycle. In the mod-term every effort will be made to ensure a representative and stable organization to represent the Humanities in the European region.