

## Call on the European Union to create high-quality dedicated and embedded SSH research opportunities in FP9

The undersigned universities, from countries [leading](#) in Social Sciences & Humanities (SSH) in Horizon 2020 research and innovation, call on the three EU institutions to assure that researchers from the entire range of SSH disciplines can fully participate in the 9th EU Framework Programme for Research & Innovation (FP9).

European citizens have indicated in the [Special Eurobarometer about The Future of Europe](#) that they would like the EU to remedy “unemployment, social inequalities, migration, terrorism and security issues, the public debt of Member States, insufficient economic growth and the ageing population”. Many of these societal issues are at the heart of SSH research. SSH also plays an important role in disruptive innovation and social acceptance of science and technology. In order to face the grand challenges and to contribute responsibly to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Europe needs these disciplines to fully unfold their capacity. The recommendation in the [Lamy report](#) to give SSH researchers an initiating and leading role for some of the FP9 missions therefore seems crucial.

The undersigned universities call on the three EU institutions, i.e. Commission, Parliament and Council, to act upon their statements. First, the Commission states that 59% of the H2020 budget devoted to SSH (i.e. SC6) is spent on topics and activities [other than SSH research](#), such as ICT research, innovation policy and other actions. It also acknowledges that the quality of SSH integration is “[highly uneven across H2020](#)”, while SSH deserves an improved integration within SSH-flagged projects, both quantitatively (involvement of more SSH disciplines) as well as qualitatively (strengthening their role). Moreover, key findings of the Interim Evaluation of H2020 show that SC6 is amongst the parts of the programme with the [lowest success rate](#), an indication of fierce competition. Second, the Parliament warns in its report that “[SSH integration means SSH research in interdisciplinary projects](#) and not an ex post add-on to otherwise technological projects”. Third, the Council stresses the importance of taking “into account the diversity of contributions of R&I to knowledge and society” and to [fully take “advantage of social sciences and humanities”](#). Finally, the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) in its Interim Evaluation of H2020 found that the [Societal Challenges 1 to 5 and 7 are mono-disciplinary](#), i.e. *de facto* dedicated to one of the Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM) subjects only.

Therefore, it is necessary **to combine a dedicated approach with an embedded approach to SSH**. This means strengthening SSH-led interdisciplinary research, both within SSH and with STEMM (cf. SC6), as well as encouraging high-quality contributions from SSH to STEMM-led Societal Challenges and/or missions.

The diverse SSH community, including Arts and Law, represents on average one third of the human resources within universities. Europe's knowledge capital in SSH is world leading, as proven by the rapid growth of its academic impact. At the European level, many SSH-fields are working towards improved collaboration, internally as well as with STEMM disciplines and societal partners. Given the consensus on the need to strengthen SSH research and improve its integration in FP9, **the undersigned universities and organisations urge for 5 concrete commitments.**

- 1) **The creation of an SSH Platform**, analogous to ETPs, can consolidate this collaboration and structure the way this community provides input to scoping papers, work programmes, societal challenges and missions. The platform would also facilitate the search for SSH evaluators.

The support for multidisciplinary collaborations can be increased, by

- 2) **encouraging researchers to think about how to generate academic and societal impact when drafting proposals,**
- 3) **recognising that all disciplines crucially contribute to the goal of an inclusive and prosperous Europe and**
- 4) **investing in high-quality SSH research and innovation opportunities.**
- 5) **A target budget for SSH spending of 10% of the overall civil research budget for FP9 will help in better facilitating the highest-quality SSH activities and consequently activating its full potential to academic and societal impact for the future of Europe.**

This declaration was adopted by the following universities:



*Should you, or your organisation, in any way wish to refer to/quote (parts of) the message brought forward in this paper, please do so by using the following name of the paper: "Joint call to EU regarding SSH in FP9" (<http://www.ugent.be/ssh-call>).*

*Questions/remarks? Contact person on behalf of the writers group: Ms. Wendy Sonneveld, Sr Policy Advisor European Affairs at Ghent University, T + 32 9264 9562, [wendy.sonneveld@ugent.be](mailto:wendy.sonneveld@ugent.be).*

This declaration is supported by the following organisations:

**EVALHUM**

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**uc3m** | Universidad  
**Carlos III**  
de Madrid



VYTAUTAS MAGNUS  
**UNIVERSITY**  
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**UAB**  
Universitat  
Autònoma  
de Barcelona

**upf.** **Universitat  
Pompeu Fabra**  
Barcelona

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Generalitat de Catalunya  
Escola d'Administració Pública  
de Catalunya

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Schweizerische Akademie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften  
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**This declaration is supported by the following individuals:**

Elena Castro-Martínez, Scientist at Ingenio (CSIC-UPV)

Eric Zimmerman, Director of Research & Global Engagement at IDC Herzliya (Israel)

Christian Jowers, International Relations Coordinator at IDC Herzliya (Israel)

Saša Babič, Postdoctoral researcher at Estonian Literary Museum

Reet Hiimäe, Researcher at Estonian Literary Museum / Center of Excellence in Estonian Studies

Egge Kulbok-Lattik, Advisor to the Prime Minister, Estonian Government Office, KUPUKE Estonian Center for Cultural Policy Research

Ülle Must, Chief Specialist at Estonian Research Council

Fabiana Di Paola, Project Manager at International Panel on Social Progress

John Pearson, Research Support Officer at Catholic University of Leuven

Daniëlle De Vooght, SSH research advisor at Catholic University of Leuven

Marc Vanholsbeeck, Lecturer at Université Libre de Bruxelles

Katarzyna Tarnawska, Expert at Polish Science Contact Agency

Luule Mizera, Science officer at COST Association

Gemma Derrick, co-Director Centre for Higher Education Research and Evaluation at Lancaster University.

Janja Komljenovic, Lecturer at Lancaster University

Stefan de Jong, Postdoctoral researcher at University of Manchester

Liz Todd, Professor at Newcastle University

Maria Mroz, Lecturer at Newcastle University

Sue Robson, Professor at Newcastle University

Simon Gibbs, Researcher at Newcastle University

Elina Meliou, Lecturer at Newcastle University

Elena Olariu, MSCA fellow at Newcastle University

Mark Bason, Research fellow at University of Sussex

Mohammed Shahid, MSCA fellow at University of Glasgow

Que Anh Dang, Researcher at Bristol University

Jack Gillian, Researcher at University of St Andrews

Asya Natapov, Postdoctoral researcher at University College London

Emma Davenport, Senior lecturer at London Metropolitan University

María José Estarán Tolosa, Research affiliate at LatinNow Project (University of Nottingham / University of Oxford)

Susan Hogan, Professor at University of Derby

David Sheffield, Professor at University of Derby

Emmanuelle Honoré, MSCA fellow at University of Cambridge

Jane Ohlmeyer, Professor of Modern History & Director of the Trinity Long Room Hub, Trinity College Dublin

Bradley Good, PhD researcher at Trinity College Dublin

Gonçalo Emanuel Duarte Rosas da Silva, Researcher at Queen's University Belfast

Anna Tijsseling, Postdoctoral researcher at Utrecht University

Konrad Turek, Postdoctoral fellow at Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute

Agnes Andeweg, Assistant professor at University College Utrecht

Vittoria Caradonna, PhD researcher at University of Amsterdam

Itamar Shachar, MSCA postdoctoral fellow at University of Amsterdam

Laia Colomer, Affiliated researcher at Linnaeus University

Sheryl McDonald Werronen, MSCA fellow at Copenhagen University

Ainara Sistiaga, MSCA fellow at Copenhagen University

Anette Therkelsen, Vice dean at Aalborg University

Søren Kristiansen, Associate Dean for Research at Aalborg University

Arunas Poviliunas, Professor at Vilnius University

Ilona Laurinaityte, Associate professor at Vilnius University

Philippe Combessie, Director of Sophiapol

Dorina Strori, Postdoctoral researcher at Northwestern University

Virginie Papadopoulou, Research assistant professor at UNC Chapel Hill

Jessica Sapsford, Postgraduate student at University of the Witwatersrand

Thomas König, Researcher at Institute for Advanced Studies of Vienna (IHS)

Paola Perucchini, Professor at Roma Tre University  
Andrea Salanti, Professor at University of Bergamo  
Antonio Banfi, Dean at University of Bergamo  
Alberto Baccini, Professor at University of Siena  
Binh Ngoc Nguyen, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Angela Cavazzini, Administrative staff at University of Rome Sapienza  
Ines Ciolli, Associate professor at University of Rome Sapienza  
Silvia Toscano, Researcher at University of Rome Sapienza  
Paola Buzi, Professor at University of Rome Sapienza  
Roberta Gemmiti, Professor at University of Rome Sapienza  
Francesca Masella, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Carla Simone, Librarian at University of Rome Sapienza  
Vera Ortega, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Gianluca Passerelli, Associate professor at University of Rome Sapienza  
Michela Cavagnuolo, Researcher at University of Rome Sapienza  
Marco Marchesini, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Stefano Asperti, Professor at University of Rome Sapienza  
Camilla Miglio, Professor at University of Rome Sapienza  
Gabriella Rusch, Administrative staff at University of Rome Sapienza  
Alessandro Guerra, Researcher at University of Rome Sapienza  
Amira Salama, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Andrea Luciani, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Angelo Bardelloni, Library manager at University of Rome Sapienza  
Cecilia Conati Barbaro, Researcher at University of Rome Sapienza  
Cirone Benedetta, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Federica Carlomagno, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Federico Palmieri Di Pietro, Postgraduate student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Claudia Carlucci, PhD researcher at University of Rome Sapienza



Giulia Lucchesi, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Giuseppe Fiorenza, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Giulia Zacchia, Research fellow at University of Rome Sapienza  
Lavinia Messina, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Ludovica Casarino, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Marcella Corsi, Professor at University of Rome Sapienza  
Maria Christina Marcuzzo, Professor at University of Rome Sapienza  
Maria Grazia Bellano, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Matteo Lombardi, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Mireille Al Rahi, PhD researcher at University of Rome Sapienza  
Nerio Naldi, Associate professor at University of Rome Sapienza  
Paola Conigliaro, PhD researcher at University of Rome Sapienza  
Antonucci Fabrizio, Staff member at University of Rome Sapienza  
Maria Cristina Marchetti, Associate professor at University of Rome Sapienza  
Ilaria Lavorato, PhD researcher at University of Rome Sapienza  
Marco Antonutti, PhD researcher at University of Rome Sapienza  
Laura Ronchi De Michelis, Associated professor at University of Rome Sapienza  
Valerio Martello, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Maria Laura Foglia, Staff member at University of Rome Sapienza  
Valentina Faloni, PhD researcher at University of Rome Sapienza  
Francesca Romana Berno, Associate professor at University of Rome Sapienza  
Fabiana Bartorilla, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Debora Esposto, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Massimiliano Rosati, Student at University of Rome Sapienza  
Luana Dipino, Scientific manager at University of Rome Sapienza  
Claudia Sunna, Researcher at Università del Salento  
Marcella Milana, Associate professor at University of Verona  
Elena Grandi, Research facilitator at Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Claudia Antonetti, Professor at Ca' Foscari University of Venice  
Arianna Traviglia, Research fellow at Ca' Foscari University of Venice  
Lorenzo Calvelli, Senior Lecturer at Ca' Foscari University of Venice  
Chiara Piva, Professor at Ca' Foscari University of Venice  
Lorenzo Calvelli, Research co-ordinator at Ca' Foscari University of Venice  
Giovanni Bernardini, Research fellow at Ca' Foscari University of Venice  
Mercedes Huertas, PhD researcher at University of Trento  
Teresa Caltabiano, Head of the International Research Department of University of Catania  
All members of Dipartimento di Scienze Umanistiche of University of Catania  
Cettina Rizzo, Associate professor at University of Catania  
Carmelo Crimi, Professor at University of Catania  
Graziella Seminara, Researcher at University of Catania  
Manuela D'Amore, Lecturer at University of Catania  
Alessandro Lutri, Senior lecturer at University of Catania  
Marco Mazzone, Associate Professor at University of Catania  
Maria Rizzarelli, Associate Professor at University of Catania  
Rosario Castelli, Associate Professor at University of Catania  
Mirella Cassarino, Associate Professor at University of Catania  
Maria Carreras i Goicoechea, Researcher at University of Catania  
Paolo Biagio Cipolla, Associate Professor at University of Catania  
Souadou Lagdaf, Tenure track professor at University of Catania  
Salvatore Cannizzaro, Professor at University of Catania  
Renata Giuseppa Gambino, Associate Professor at University of Catania  
Ariana Rotondo, Researcher at University of Catania  
Iride Valenti, Associate Professor at University of Catania  
Giovanna Rita Giardina, Professor at University of Catania  
Gemma Persico, Professor at University of Catania  
Luigi Caranti, Associate professor at University of Catania

Claudia Olivieri, Researcher at University of Catania  
Gabriella Alfieri, Professor at University of Catania  
Teresa Maria Letizia Russo, Researcher at University of Catania  
Giovanna Alfonzetti, Professor at University of Catania  
Grazia A. Di Pietro, Researcher at University of Naples 'L'Orientale'  
Elena Carrelli, Assistant Librarian at National Library of Naples  
Francesca de Riso, Librarian at The British School in Rome  
Michael Nones, Researcher at University of Bologna  
Antonella Venturi, Student at University of Bologna  
Enrico Bellino, Professor at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore  
Caterina Lupo, Senior technologist at National Institute for Statistics (Istat)  
Vasiliki Tzevelekou, Undergraduate student at Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences  
Ester Oras, Senior researcher at University of Tartu  
Olena Nedozhogina, Project Manager at University of Tartu  
Brian Cahill, Chair of the German Chapter of Marie Curie Alumni Association  
Gisela Hagmair, Assistant project coordinator at Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt  
Sebastian Dehling, PhD researcher at Karlstad University  
Nicolas Lainé, Researcher at University of Strasbourg  
Frauke Kersten, Scientific manager at University of Bonn  
Amber Jones, Graduate student at HU Berlin  
Helen Dawson, Postdoctoral fellow at Freie Universität Berlin  
Ursula Schlichter, EU liaison office at University of Mannheim  
Katja Moehring, Professor at University of Mannheim  
Christian Fäth, Research Support Staff at University of Mannheim  
Isabell Ludewig, Staff member research services at University of Mannheim  
Julia Uhlik, Scientific advisor at Danube University Krems, University for Further Education  
Christian Veldman, EU Research Officer at Justus-Liebig University Giessen

Catarina Campos Ferreira, Postdoctoral researcher at Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ

Andrea Böhrmann, Director at Göttingen Diversity Research Institute

Julia Dräber, Professor at Pädagogische Hochschule Ludwigsburg

Alessandro Testa, Researcher at University of Vienna

Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann, Head of Seminar für Griechische und Lateinische Philologie at Universität Zürich

René Levy, Emeritus professor at University of Lausanne

Irene Maffi, Professor at University of Lausanne

Sabine Kradolfer, Researcher at University of Lausanne

Mislava Bertoša, Associate professor at University of Zagreb

Vasiliki Nikolakopoulou, PhD researcher at University of the Aegean

Miha Kozorog, Assistant professor at University of Ljubljana

KC Ashik, Research fellow at University of Warsaw

Przemyslaw Urbanczyk, Professor at Polish Academy of Sciences

Georgiana Turculet, PhD researcher at the Central European University

Dragoş Sdrobis, Researcher at New Europe College

Violeta Greciuhin, Project Consultant at Technical University Gheorghe Asachi (Romania)

Maria Bostenaru Dan, Researcher at Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism

Alketa Marku, Head of Scientific Research Office at Albanian University

Adi Frimark,

Rita Faria, Assistant professor at University of Porto

Maria Helena Maia, Assistant professor at Escola Superior Arística do Porto

Henrique Muga, Professor at Escola Superior Arística do Porto

Joana Mateus, Investigator at Escola Superior Arística do Porto

Ana Nunes de Almeida, Research professor at Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa

Domingos Barbosa, Senior researcher at Instituto de Telecomunicações Aveiro

Liliana Fonseca, Researcher at Universidade de Aveiro

Maria Antónia Pedroso de Lima, Professor at ISCTE-IUL (Portugal)

Natália Silva, Project manager at Regional Fund for Science and Technology (Azores Regional Government)

Ivan Briz i Godino, Professor at UNTDF

Sara Ricardo, Career track fellow at CSIS

Tiago Luis de Noronha Lopes Dias, Associate professor at Polytechnic University of Catalonia

Eduard J. Alvarez-Palau, Senior Lecturer at Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

Julia Olmos Peñuela, PhD researcher at Universitat de Valencia

María Castrillo, Director at Instituto universitario de Urbanística of University of Valladolid

Asunción López-Calderón Barreda, Associate profesor at Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Manuel Izquierdo Carrasco, Professor at Universidad de Córdoba

Anabelàn Casares, Professor at University of León

Koldo Trápaga, Postdoctoral researcher at Universidad Rey Juan Carlos

Maria Cristina Manzanares Céspedes, Professor at University of Barcelona

Joseph M. Fullola, Professor at University of Barcelona

Natalia Moragas, Associate professor at University of Barcelona

Sergio Manrique, PhD fellow at Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona

Gian Maria Greco, MSCA fellow at Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona

Ainoa Castro, Postdoctoral fellow at Universidad de Salamanca

Iñaki Martín-Viso, Senior lecturer at Universidad de Salamanca

Charlotte Marchina, Researcher at Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO)

Jon Marco Church, Associate professor at University of Reims

Perinne Delettre, Director of Development at University of Reims

Fabrice Thuriot, Director of development of SSH at University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne

Paola Ranzini, Professor at Université d'Avignon

Aurelia Barrière, Ingenieure chargée de médiation scientifique at Université d'Avignon

Patricia Heiniger Casteret, MCC at Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour

Miguel Angel Ayllon, Ingénieur projects Européens at Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour

Fatiha Idmhand, Professor at University of Poitiers

Wioletta Miskiewicz, Researcher at CNRS/ Archive Poincaré/Université de Lorraine

Szostak Berangere, Professor at Université de Lorraine

Véronique Lagae, Professor at Université de Valenciennes

Saïda El Boudouhi, Professor at Université de Valenciennes

Emanuelle Giordano, Research fellow at Université Côte d'Azur

Cathérine Pellini, Staff member at CREDO

Nina Kancewicz-Hoffman, Consultant at HE&R Consulting

Evelyne Micollier, Research scholar at IRD

Pierre-Yves Le Meur, Research director at IRD – UMR GRED

Didier Aubert, Professor at Sorbonne Nouvelle

Alizé Berthier, PhD researcher at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University

Isabelle Fernandes, Senior Lecturer at Université Blaise Pascal (Clermont Auvergne)

Raphaele Espiet-Kilty, Senior Lecturer at Université Blaise Pascal (Clermont Auvergne)

Alix Desnain, PhD researcher at Université Blaise Pascal (Clermont Auvergne)

Aurélie Desplain, Ingénieure de recherche at Université Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines

Alexis Gallice, PhD researcher at University Bordeaux Montaigne

Olivier Le Deuff, Maître des conférences at University Bordeaux Montaigne

Félix Dusseau, Student at University of Bordeaux

Dana Markovová, PhD researcher at University of Bordeaux

Christophe Parisse, Researcher at INSERM/Modyco, Université Paris Nanterre

Jorge Fins, Ingénieur d'étude at Université de Tours/Université d'Orléans/CNRS

Catherine Mariette, Directrice du centre de recherches "Charnières" (UMR Litt&Arts), Université Grenoble-Alpes

Julien Blanc, Associate professor at Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle

Nina Díaz Fernández, Assistant researcher, Marie Curie Alumni Association

Vinay Ambedkar, Assistant professor at CRS/SLL&CS/JNU

Monica Zanardo, MSCA fellow at CNRS

Yves Luginbühl, Emeritus director of research at CNRS



Patrick Deshayes, Professor at CNRS (LESC)

Jean-Christophe Mayer, Research Professor at CNRS

Valentina Vapnarsky, Director at CNRS

Edouard Gardella, Chargé de recherches at CNRS (Centre Max Weber)

Pascale Pichon, Professor at Centre Max Weber

Marta Segarra, Director of Research at CNRS

Antoinette Molinié, Director of Research at CNRS

Anne-Marie Peatrik, Emeritus professor at CNRS

Anne de Sales, Director of Research at CNRS

Milo Villain, PhD researcher at CNRS (UPPA)

Andrea Ceriana Mayneri, Researcher at CNRS

Matilde Accattoli, PhD Researcher at Paris 8 University

Timothée Premat, PhD Researcher at Paris 8 University / CNRS

Nathalie Lemarchand, Professor at Paris 8 University

Vincent Godard, Director at Paris 8 University

Hélène Nicolas, Maître de conférences at Paris 8 University

Clelia Bilodeau, Professor at Paris 7 University

André Moulin, Associated researcher at Paris Saclay Evry

Stephanie Crabeck, Professor at La Haute Ecole Provinciale de Hainaut - Condorcet

Marcos García de Teresa, PhD Researcher at EHESS / IRIS

Jean-Emmanuelle Barbier, Maître assistant at EHESS

Norah Dei Cas Giraldi, Professor Emeritus, Université de Lille

Chiara Lastraioli, Professor at Université de Tours (MSH Val de Loire)

Romeo Carabelli, Researcher at Université de Tours

Chayma Dellagi, PhD researcher at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Florent Goiffon, EU Projects Officer at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Patricia Touboul, Maître des conférences at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Jean-Daniel Causse, Professor at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Monica Michlin, Professor at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Christine Reynier, Professor at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Carmen Alen-Garabato, Professor at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Agnes Steuckardt, Director of Laboratory at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Bénédicte Pivot, Maître des conférences at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Paula Dolci, PhD researcher at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Marie Blaise, Associate professor at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Didier Plassard, Professor at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Yves Carlet, Emeritus professor at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Madeleine Voga, Maître des conférences at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Cécile Poussard, Senior lecturer at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Gérard Gouiran, Emeritus professor at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Vérine Bertrand, MFC retraité at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Itane Lacrampe-Camus, PhD researcher at Université Paul Valéry (Montpellier 3)

Miren Lacassagne, Maître de conférences at Université Reims

Sebastien Deregnaucourt, Professor at Université Paris Nanterre

Antoine Gallay, PhD researcher at Université Paris Nanterre

Anne Emmanuelle Berger, Director of Laboratoire d'études de genre et de sexualité at Université Paris Nanterre

Philippe Erikson, Director of Laboratoire d'ethnologie et de sociologie comparative at Université Paris Nanterre

François Regourd, Adjunct director of ESNA at Université Paris Nanterre

William Marx, Professor at Université Paris Nanterre

Brett Le Saint, PhD researcher at Université Paris Nanterre

Jean-Michel Beaudet, Professor at Université Paris Nanterre

Olivier Herrenschmidt, Emeritus professor at Université Paris Nanterre

Lucia Romo, Director of Laboratory of Clinical Psychology at Université Paris Nanterre

Laure Carbonnel, Researcher at Université Paris Nanterre

Silvia Contarini, Professor at Université Paris Nanterre

Hélène Aji, Professor at Université Paris Nanterre  
Zoé Vaillant, Assistant professor at Université Paris Nanterre  
Andras Zemleni, Honorary director of Research at LESC of Université Nanterre  
Cyrille Bouvet, Professor at Université Paris Nanterre  
Julia Vogel, PhD researcher at Université Paris Nanterre  
Rémi Labrusse, Director of Laboratoire HAR at Université Paris Nanterre  
Marie-Claire Gay, Professor at Université Paris Nanterre  
Claire Vidal, Researcher at Université Paris Nanterre  
Elena Bertuzzi, Lecturer at Université Paris Nanterre  
Laure Rakez, PhD researcher at Université Paris Nanterre  
Soazick Kerneis, Director at Université Paris Nanterre  
Corinne Alexandre-Garner, Emeritus professor at Université Paris Nanterre  
Gilles Raveneau, Assistant professor at Université Paris Nanterre  
Marine Cordier, Maître de conférences at Université Paris Nanterre  
Dalla Pria, Maître de conférences at Université Paris Nanterre  
Marta Severo, Associate professor at Université Paris Nanterre  
Pierre Ragon, Professor at Université Paris Nanterre  
Alain Vaillant, Director at Université Paris Nanterre  
Claire Vincent-Mory, PhD researcher at Université Paris Nanterre  
Pierre Sauvetre, Maître de conférences at Université Paris Nanterre  
Christian Berner, Professor at Université Paris Nanterre  
Claire Charrier, Researcher at Université Paris Nanterre  
Chiara Certomà, MSCA researcher at Université Paris Nanterre  
Coralie Morand, PhD researcher at Université Paris Nanterre  
Martine de Gaudemar, Emeritus professor at Université Paris Nanterre  
Juan Ledesma, Assistant professor at Université Paris Nanterre  
Laurence Vanoflen, Maître de conférences at Université Paris Nanterre  
Muriel Champy, Assistant lecturer at Université Paris Nanterre

Zacharias Zoubir, PhD researcher at Université Paris Nanterre

Olivier Le Noe, Professor at Université Paris Nanterre

Caroline Rolland-Diamond, Professor at Université Paris Nanterre

Eric Millard, Professor at CNRS / Université Paris Nanterre

Larissa Kojoué, Postdoctoral researcher at Université Aix Marseille

Patricia Lamarche De Largentaye, Researcher at Université Aix Marseille

Marie-Laure Basilien-Gainche, Professor at University Jean Moulin Lyon 3

Frédérique Ferrand, Professor at University Jean Moulin Lyon 3

Caroline Chamard-Heim, Professor at University Jean Moulin Lyon 3

Daniël Urrutiaguer, Professor at Université Lumière Lyon 2

Sylvie Müller Celka, Researcher at Université Lumière Lyon 2

Nicolas Jacob, Assistant professor at Université Lumière Lyon 2

Marine Huet, PhD researcher at Université Lumière Lyon 2

Nikos Kalampalikis, Professor at Université Lumière Lyon 2

Aurélie Léon, PhD researcher at Université Lumière Lyon 2

Manuel Appert, Associate professor at Université Lumière Lyon 2

Denis Cercllet, Senior lecturer at Université Lumière Lyon 2

Isabelle Prim-Allaz, Research director at Coactis Université Lumière Lyon 2

Axel Guioux, PhD researcher at Université Lumière Lyon 2

Cathérine Psilakis, Teaching fellow at Université Lyon 1

Eric Charmes, Research director at Université de Lyon

Françoise Lafaye, Researcher at Université de Lyon

Yannick Hascoet, Researcher at Université de Lyon

Victor Villain, PhD researcher at Université de Lyon

Maryame Amarouche, PhD researcher at Université de Lyon

Lisa Marx, Postdoctoral researcher, École normale supérieure de Lyon

Esther Heboyan, Associate professor at University of Artois

Nathalie Ortar, Senior research fellow at École Nationale des Travaux Publics de l'État

Cathérine Roby, Valorisation de la recherche at Université Rennes 2

Samuel Costantin, European project officer at Université Paris-Saclay

Eve Bureau, Postdoctoral fellow at University of Toulouse-Jean Jaurès

Yorgos Rizopoulos, Professor at Université Paris Diderot

Justine Ballon, PhD researcher at Université Paris Diderot

Thomas Lamarche, Professor at Université Paris Diderot

Véronique Geffroy, Teacher at L'Institut national supérieur de formation et de recherche pour l'éducation des jeunes handicapés et les enseignements adaptés (INS HEA)

Mélissa Arneton, Researcher at L'Institut national supérieur de formation et de recherche pour l'éducation des jeunes handicapés et les enseignements adaptés (INS HEA)

Chiara Bortolotto, Research associate at École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)

Sabine Guez, Researcher at École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)

Marie-Barbara Le Gonidec, Chargé de recherche at École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)

Maria Sancho, Postdoctoral fellow at Institut de Physique du Globe de Paris

Sophie Chevalier, Professor at University of Picardie Jules Verne

Isabelle Philippe, Research funding officer at CEA

Pierre Chavel, Scientist at Institut d'Optique

Séverine Bouard, Research fellow at Institut Agronomique néo-Calédonien

Caroline Lejars, PhD researcher at CIRAD

Sergio Magnani, Chargé de programme at IRAM

Christiane Abele, Project manager Fundit, Réseau français des instituts d'études avancées / NCP SC6 France

Darko Darovec, Director at Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and Environment

Séverine Gojard, Research director at INRA

Pierre Simay, EU Affairs Manager at IMT

S.L.Sangam, Professor at Karnatak University (India)

Emilie Guitard, Deputy director at IFRA Nigeria

Abdellatif Nassib, Professor at Institut supérieur des métiers de l'audiovisuel et du cinéma  
Rabat

Vanda Baloh, Deputy Director of ZRC SAZU

Jerneja Fridl, Assistant Director of ZRC SAZU

Nataša Gliha Komac, Assistant professor at ZRC SAZU Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian  
Language

Kosma Ahačič, Assistant professor at ZRC SAZU Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian  
Language

Tadej Slabe, Head of ZRC SAZU Karst Research Institute

Drago Perko, Director of Anton Melik Geographical Institute at ZRC SAZU

David Bole, Senior research associate at ZRC SAZU Anton Melik Geographical Institute

Mateja Šmid Hribar, research fellow at ZRC SAZU Anton Melik Geographical Institute

Ales Smrekar, Head of Department at ZRC SAZU

Ivan Šprajc, Researcher at ZRC SAZU

Mateja Jemec Tomazin, Research fellow at ZRC SAZU

Jani Kozina, Research fellow at ZRC SAZU

Mojca Kovačič, Researcher at ZRC SAZU

Andrej Pleterski, Professor at ZRC SAZU

Žiga Kokalj, Head of Remote Sensing Department at ZRC SAZU

Peter Kumer, Research Assistant at ZRC SAZU

Helena Dobrovoljc, Assistant professor at ZRC SAZU

Marko Juvan, Head of Institute at ZRC SAZU

Marina Lukšič Hacin, Head of Institute at ZRC SAZU

Jozica Skofic, Scientific Advisor at ZRC SAZU

Jernej Tiran, Research fellow at ZRC SAZU

Gregor Pobezin, Research Associate at ZRC SAZU

Boštjan Nedoh, Research Assistant at ZRC SAZU

Lucija Grahek, Researcher at ZRC SAZU

Alenka Koron, Researcher at ZRC SAZU



Renata Komić Marn, Research Assistant at ZRC SAZU  
Marjetka Golež Kaučič, Research Advisor at ZRC SAZU  
Sneža Tecco Hvala, Senior Research fellow at ZRC SAZU  
Mojca Kumin Horvat, Research fellow at ZRC SAZU  
Ursa Kanjir, Senior Researcher at ZRC SAZU  
Dan Podjed, Research fellow at ZRC SAZU  
Miha Seručnik, Research fellow at ZRC SAZU  
Majda Černič Istenič, Associate professor at ZRC SAZU  
Duška Knežević Hočevar, Research fellow at ZRC SAZU  
Matjaž Geršič, Researcher at ZRC SAZU  
Janez Nared, Researcher at ZRC SAZU  
Borut Telban, Professor at ZRC SAZU  
Katarina Polajnar Horvat, Research fellow at ZRC SAZU  
Jure Tičar, Research assistant at ZRC SAZU  
Barbara Vodopivec, PhD researchers at ZRC SAZU  
Primož Gašperič, Research fellow at ZRC SAZU  
Miha Pavsek, Researcher at ZRC SAZU  
Primoz Pipan, Researcher at ZRC SAZU  
Natasa Gregoric Bon, Assistant professor at Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA)  
Daniel Diaz Fernandez, Postdoctoral fellow at Jozef Stefan Institute  
Wim Schreurs, European Liaison Office Coordinator at Vrije Universiteit Brussel  
David Haljan, Researcher at KU Leuven / UHasselt  
Ansar Yasar, Professor at UHasselt  
Geert Molenberghs, Professor at UHasselt  
Johan Ackaert, Dean at UHasselt  
Luk Knapen, Researcher at UHasselt  
Maarten Wijnants, Senior researcher at UHasselt  
Oswald Devisch, Associate professor at UHasselt

Paul Dendale, Professor at UHasselt

Sebastien Lizin, Assistant professor at UHasselt

Patricia Zanoni, Professor at UHasselt

Griet Verbeeck, Professor at UHasselt

Sandra Streukens, Associate professor at UHasselt

Kim Janssens, Researcher at UHasselt

Allard van Riel, Professor at UHasselt

Bart Vermang, Professor at UHasselt / Imec

Cynthia Marchal, Scientific advisor- Knowledge transfer officer at UMONS

Isolde Buysse, Representative Researchers SSH Academic Council at KULeuven

Catherine Bolly, Knowledge Transfer Officer at Synergie entre les Hautes Écoles et les Entreprises pour la Recherche Appliquée (SynHERA)

Christine Deom, Scientific Advisor at Synergie entre les Hautes Écoles et les Entreprises pour la Recherche Appliquée (SynHERA)

Cédric Bister, International Relations officer at Synergie entre les Hautes Écoles et les Entreprises pour la Recherche Appliquée (SynHERA)

Alain Finet, Professor at UMONS

Julien Lefèvre, Communication advisor at UMONS

Christine Michaux, Professor at UMONS

Kathy Huet, Professor at UMONS

Giuseppe Pagano, Vice-rector at UMONS

Marc Labie, Professor at UMONS

Bernard Harmegnies, Vice-rector at UMONS

Hugues Delforge, Professor at HE2B – URIAS Center

Roland Pollefait, Researcher at HE2B

Marie Gribomont, Assistant professor at ISFSC (Brussels) and HE Albert Jacquard (Namur)

Stéphane Collignon, Maître-assistant at HE Albert Jacquard

Isabelle Rivart, Research co-ordinator at HE Albert Jacquard

Francine Kinet, Maître-assistant at Haute Ecole de la Province de Liège

Anna Melice, Professor at Haute Ecole Bruxelles-Brabant et Haute Ecole de la Province de Liège

François Gillet, International co-ordinator at Haute Ecole Bruxelles-Brabant

Natacha Wallez, Maître de formation pratique at Haute Ecole Bruxelles-Brabant

Charlotte Mikolajczak, Teacher at Haute École Économique et Technique

Christophe Laduron, Researcher at Université de Liège

Louis Carré, Research associate at UNamur

Bruno Seutin, visiting professor at Ghent University

Liselotte Hudders, assistant professor at Ghent University

Klaas Mulier, assistant professor at Ghent University

Sophie Manigart, full professor at Ghent University

Michel De Dobbeleer, postdoctoral researcher at Ghent University

Maggie Geuens, full professor at Ghent University

Claire Dupont, Assistant professor at Ghent University

Lode Goukens, student at Ghent University

Iris Vermeir, associate professor at Ghent University

Karel Van den Berghe, Researcher at Ghent University

Stef Craps, Associate professor at Ghent University

Luc Nijs, Postdoctoral researcher at Ghent University

Lieve Van Hoof, Professor at Ghent University

Thomas Jacobs, PhD Researcher at Ghent University

Koen Inghelbrecht, Associate professor at Ghent University

Bart Cockx, Professor at Ghent University

Renata Petrevska Nechkoska, Assistant professor at Ghent University

Thérèse de Hemptinne, Emeritus professor at Ghent University

Evy Johanne Håland, Independent researcher