



# Sibiu Declaration on Interdisciplinarity

This declaration has been created as a result of the HERODOT thematic network for Geography in higher education meeting in Sibiu, Romania, October 25-28 October 2007

We believe:

- Many issues are too complex to be dealt with without an interdisciplinary approach, for example climatic change, nature conservation, demography and disaster relief
- Integration is the only way to deal with such complex problems. However, in a scientific community where every discipline raises protective boundaries, Geography offers an interdisciplinary base to address such issues and concerns that are being faced.
- Education for interdisciplinarity is vital if people are to understand the world in which they live and the impacts they have on it.

We recommend that:

- Interdisciplinarity needs to play a major role in education and training in preparing our scientists to work together and for decision makers to understand the implications of our actions.
- We need to focus on the types of education and research environments that promote and support interdisciplinarity.
- We must not be afraid to establish courses and programmes that meet interdisciplinary issues through integrated thinking, thereby transforming the learning and education process.

## **Geography and interdisciplinarity**

Geography is concerned with human-environment issues and the relationships between them. Geography considers geo-space while providing an understanding of scale and location. Geography therefore complements other disciplines. In a society that continuously demands increasing speciality, the science of Geography offers intellectual integration. We are concerned that many disciplines are not aware of the contribution that geographers can and do make to interdisciplinary activities.

Geographers, though they already contribute a lot to understanding the issues facing European society, can contribute in many other ways in dealing with them. We recognise the need to work together with other experts in order to provide powerful tools for intensive studies of these issues. These tools include mapping, spatial awareness, geoinformation interpretation and analysis.

We confirm:

- the relevance of study that provides geographical skills and expertise as scalable commodities
- that field study is of paramount importance
- the significance of (postgraduate) study in Geography to produce graduates with expertise as well as specialist skills, knowledge, experience and understanding.
- that dealing with complex issues requires a balance of perspectives, by establishing a broader vision coupled with suitable specialisations.



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## Annex:

Interdisciplinarity is defined as:

- Situations where disciplines collaborate in an integrated way in the research and learning process
- Circumstances when an integration of knowledge from the disciplines is brought to bear on an issue
- Disciplinary knowledge, concepts, tools, and rules of investigation are considered, contrasted, and then INTEGRATED in such a way that the resulting understanding is greater than simply the sum of its disciplinary parts.
- In this way interdisciplinary integration transcends the disciplines, converting fragmented research and learning into integrated research and learning.