

**Report**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Interim Workshop of the European Sociological Association**  
**Research Network “Sociology of Professions“**  
**“Professions, Globalization and the European Project:  
Shifting Spheres of Opportunity”**  
**29 March to 1 April 2006, Bremen, Germany**

Within a globalized Europe the spheres of opportunity for the professions are transformed and rearranged in various ways. These developments place new challenges on the study of professions and call for expanded empirical investigation that includes the variety of geopolitical perspectives and diversity of professional and public interests in different occupational fields. New theoretical approaches and a broader scope of empirical research are needed to unravel the social and cultural processes underway in different societies and professional fields.

The workshop was a stepping stone in this direction (grant from the ‘Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft’ and further support from ESA and the University of Bremen). It brought together researchers from different countries and fields in the sociology of professions: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Hungary, Russia and Canada, Australia and Mexico; 31 papers were presented. Although the inclusion of eastern and southern European approaches has still to be improved, an impressive range of countries are proof of an ongoing expansion of the Research Network that stretches even beyond Europe. With a limited number of about 40 participants the meeting provided much opportunity for discussion in a collaborative working atmosphere as well as for dining and wining together.

Starting with more theoretical approaches on the changes and shifts in the professions in western and eastern European countries the papers linked changes in societies – including gender arrangements – regulatory frameworks and policies to changes within the various professions and occupational fields, such as health and social care, the educational sector, legal professions, media/culture professions, and architects. The increasing significance of migration and mobility was also discussed.

Taken together, we can observe an increase in comparative studies and approaches – between countries as well as between occupational groups and different patterns of professionalism. Furthermore, the study of professions is extended to new occupational groups, and research focuses on occupational fields and areas of the service sector rather than a single profession; this tendency was already observed in the previous conference in 2005 in Poland. A further sign of exiting developments in the sociology of professions is an increasing complexity of theoretical approaches and empirical research. Many papers linked macro and micro-political developments; shifts in the structure and culture of societies; policy changes and actors and identity; and changing gender arrangements and societal and occupational changes. A programme and the abstracts can be found here.

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