GHENT UNIVERSITY’S INTERDISCIPLINARY SSH-CONSORTIA

– A TOOL TO ENHANCE THE SOCIETAL IMPACT OF RESEARCH

Austrian EU Council Presidency Conference on Impact of Social Sciences and Humanities for a European Research Agenda

Noël Klima, Ghent University, Vienna, 28/29 November 2018
GHENT UNIVERSITY

- **UGent** is one of the biggest Universities in Belgium
- 11 faculties, 117 departments, 650 research institutes
- Large research community: 6500
- 42,000 students
- Shanghai ranking 2018: 61 > best ranked Belgian University
UGENT STIMULATES COOPERATION IN SSH

UGent SSH experience: high individuality of researchers, less “big” funding due to smaller groups, lack of (focused) societal value creation, …

> New research policy framework in 2012

➢ Competitive call for consortia to strategically support several SSH disciplines

Aim: support for **bottom-up cooperation** towards research excellence through interdisciplinarity & impact
PILOT FASE SSH-CONSORTIA

- Pilot funding 5 years for 5 consortia + coordinator
- “Carte blanche” to develop the consortium and to define and focus on relevant priorities
- Operate from scratch and define own mission, goals and outputs (bottom-up)
- Phase 1 (value creation) > evaluation > Phase 2 (pathways to impact – impact planning) > evaluation
EVALUATION ON DIFFERENT LEVELS

External peer evaluation > discipline-specific

Stakeholder evaluation > consortium-specific

Internal evaluation > coordinator-specific
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS SSH-CONSORTIA

Critical mass of engaged principal professors
Dedicated research coordinator as knowledge broker
Sharing of knowledge and resources
Collaboration with Research Department and EU Office
COORDINATOR WITH A PERMANENT ASSIGNMENT

Business development managers

human hubs

SSH research coordinators

Generic expertise in research areas
Expert on research policy, interdisciplinarity & societal impact
Pivot point between research, research policy, funding, outreach and management
Stakeholder network
Own budget
JOINT CONSORTIA PATHWAYS TO IMPACT – AN EXTRA DIMENSION

Workload: 70-80% thematic consortium + 20-30% cross-consortium activities and generic Ghent University relevant work

- Extra dimension of interdisciplinarity, knowledge & information exchange

Joint pathways to impact

- Central UGent WGs
- Writing of position papers
- Organizing joint workshops, information sessions, lectures
- Joint projects
- Planning of joint interdisciplinary impact award
- …
LESSONS LEARNED (1)

Provide incentives for researchers to ensure dedication and commitment within the consortium.

Ensure that researchers engage in information and data exchange within the consortium.

Avoid heavy administrative burden for the member researchers.
LESSONS LEARNED (2)

Provide **enough time** during the process to build trust, dedication and commitment of all members as well as mutual recognition and understanding between coordinators, researchers and central university research (policy) departments.

Make the consortia a **complementary structure** intertwined with all other structures.
Take the **diversity of the consortia** (bottom-up approach) into account during their evaluation.
LESSONS LEARNED (4)

Provide be a **safe position** with autonomous budget for the Coordinator.
LESSONS LEARNED (5)

Exchange and **engage with STEMM** disciplines from the start (where thematically relevant)
FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

– 4 SSH-consortia continue on permanent basis embedded in the research policy structure of Ghent University
– Where relevant exchange and cooperation with STEMM researchers will be further stimulated
– Enhancement of impact literacy among researchers and informing research policy at university and EU level
– Enlargement to 10 consortia
– Consortia and Research Department will continue to exchange and develop knowledge on impact measurement