

GARNET Work Package 3
Regional Integration Processes – Databases and Indicators

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Research visit at the United Nations University – Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS)

Starting date: 28 August 2006

Period of Mobility: 1 month

Objectives and activities

My research visit aims mainly at contributing to GARNET Work Package 3 (Regional Integration Processes – Databases and Indicators).

More precisely, I will co-operate with Philippe De Lombaerde in co-ordinating the group of GARNET scholars working on indicators and methodological tools for the analysis of the economic aspects of regional integration. This will be one of the groups contributing to the publication of a Toolbox/Manual for Assessing Regional Integration Processes (deliverable 3), for which I will serve as co-editor together with Paolo Foradori.

This is considered as an important deliverable, not only because of the perceived need for such a toolbox in academia and regional organizations, but also as the conceptual and technical support for the other deliverables of the work package.

In fact, while working for the publication of the Manual, I will co-operate with other participants in the work package to design and produce the first version of the web-based Regional Integration Information System (deliverable 1), as well as of the Annual Report on Regional Integration (deliverable 2). In both cases, I will concentrate my contribution on the analysis of the economic aspects of regional integration, with particular reference to trade, investment, and the movement of workers.

One of my responsibilities will be to develop the contacts I have already established with the OECD, in order to ensure the participation of our group in the activities for the next edition of the World Forum on Key Indicators.

The crucial importance of Work Package 3 for the entire set of activities envisaged by GARNET cannot be overemphasized. A flexible and user-friendly system of data and indicators on regional integration is an essential input not only for research, but also for capacity building, dissemination, and policy advocacy. Its potential interest goes well beyond the GARNET community, extending to a wide range of possible external users in the European Research Area and in other institutions.

In addition to the above activities for GARNET Work Package 3, I will use this visit to UNU-CRIS in order to explore the feasibility of a possible new jointly executed research project on the relationship between cultural plurality and regional economic integration. This problem is often analysed at global level, stressing the jurisdictional

overlap between the WTO system and other multilateral regimes, such as the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity. The tension is particularly strong in the audiovisual sector, where technological and economic forces leading towards a higher degree of international integration seem to conflict with the need to preserve and develop a plurality of cultural identities. Similar problems arise at regional level, and particularly in the context of preferential integration agreements in the services sector.