Garnet Overview

Institutional and political crises in the governance and regulation of the world order under conditions of globalisation are strong. They are exacerbated by the renewed salience of the security agenda and subsequent tensions that have emerged in inter-regional relations (especially across the Atlantic post September 11, 2003) since that time. Thus there is need for European analysts and practitioners undertaking scholarly and policy-oriented research on the theory and practice of global regulation across the economic and security domains to come together in a coordinated and systemic process of dialogue. The EU is the most institutionalised regional policy community and complex system of governance beyond the territorial state, but research on regulation and multi-level governance, although sophisticated, is fragmented, weakly coordinated, and often detached from wider questions of an extra-European nature.

GARNET’s aim is to combat this fragmentation and weak coordination by developing a multi-dimensional, multi-disciplinary network of scientific excellence of researchers, analysts and practitioners with expertise in key issues and themes in global and regional governance. Particular focus will be on those elements of the global regulatory framework (trade, finance, security) that (to a greater or lesser extent) structure the modern world system. At the very least, GARNET will create a critical mass of European researchers able to interact on more equal terms and in wider global contexts, with the erstwhile dominant research communities in the USA. In sum, GARNET will create a European research area on governance, regulation and the relationship between multilateralism and regionalism.

Four themes will guide GARNET’s integrating activities:

1. The theory and practice of regionalism and regionalisation;
2. The identification of key elements in the regulatory framework of governance, especially how best to enhance collective action problem solving at regional and global levels; and
3. Policy issues in global governance: notably those concerned with overcoming problems in the governance of trade, finance, security, environment, technology, development, social production and gender inequality, and disease;
4. The role of the EU in the advancement of research and policy in themes (i)-(iii).

These tasks will be undertaken via the development of a virtual network, the development of a series of common databases, an annual international conference, a program of scholarly mobility; a network of PhD schools, capacity building, the dissemination of excellence in its areas of expertise and the development of a series of jointly executed research activities around its themes.

Unlike the United States, which operates in international policy arenas as a unitary actor, Europe has yet to find common supra-national form. Moreover the US scholarly community exhibits a methodological and philosophical coherence not to be found in Europe. Europe speaks with pluralist voices on issues of governance and regulation and even lacks a forum in which such voices might mix. GARNET aspires to harness and consolidate this pluralist vitality of voices on a Europe-wide scale. It will build a stronger, more self-consciously European research community on global governance as a precursor to improving both scholarly presentation and representation, with all the attendant downstream implications for the coherence of policy-making that such improvement in the communication and interaction of knowledge would imply.