

The formative years (1992-2005)

The Gothenburg legacy

Given Gothenburg's history of being an extremely outward-oriented city, characterized by close relations to English, Dutch, German, Scottish and overseas merchants and trading-houses, since it was established in the early 17th century as the main gateway of the Kingdom of Sweden to the rest of the world, it was natural also to stimulate studies of political, economic and social processes in neighbouring European countries when the University of Gothenburg was set up, initially as a private college, in 1891. This tradition to look beyond the Swedish borders has continued in modern times, and European integration studies became popular within both arts and social sciences, particularly after the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community as well as of the EEC. There were, though, few examples of truly interdisciplinary approaches in these attempts, and the various active research groups with a focus on European issues, representing e.g. political science, history, economic history, economic geography, languages, ethnology, religion, and history of ideas, existed with only limited contacts over the disciplinary boundaries

Establishment of an informal interdisciplinary network in the late 1980s

However, in the end of the 1980s, the idea was raised to organize an interdisciplinary forum for research collaboration and debate around European integration issues. This initiative was further stimulated by the rapid change of Sweden's political relations towards membership in the European Communities and the public debate on the Treaty of the European Union.

The Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences decided therefore in 1992, as a result of this initiative, to allocate a modest budget to stimulate the establishment of an informal network in cross-disciplinary European research, by appointing a special working-group with the assignment to suggest a suitable institutional form for such a network.¹ One of the first actions by this group was to carry out a detailed inventory of past, present and planned research activities within the broad field of 'European Studies' in all parts of the university. The result of this investigation was presented in December 1992, and laid the foundation of the decision by the Faculty Board to continue its ambitions to strengthen its research profile within the theme of 'Europe'. A regular series of interdisciplinary research seminars commenced in 1993 in order to stimulate active communication and collaboration around European-related issues, and in the same year the first issue of the series 'Forskning om Europafrågor' (Proceedings in European Research) was published. This booklet was built on presentations given at a special 'Europaforskardag' within the Faculty of Social Sciences. It contained contributions from ten faculty members representing

eight different departments, and this special 'Day of European Research' with a following Yearbook has since then been a tradition in the activities of what later became 'CERGU'. The next step in the formation process was to organize a special course in 1 The members of the group were: Rutger Lindahl (political science - coordinator), Claes G. Alvstam (economic geography), Per Cramér (law), Martin Fritz (economic history) and Lars Nordström (human geography). 2 interdisciplinary approaches to European studies within the framework of postgraduate education. The first course was offered to Ph.D. students during the Spring term 1994, and was jointly run by faculty members representing the faculties of social sciences, humanities as well as the School of Business and Commercial Law. An additional example of the intention to strengthen research related to Europe during these years was the appointment in 1991 of the Library of Economics and Law within the University Library to become the first Swedish scientific library to qualify for the status of a European Documentation Centre (EDC), under the supervision of the Department of Law. This appointment was followed up by ambitious efforts to create a substantial collection of scientific literature related to European integration, supported by central funding from the University as well as from the private Richard C. Malmsten Memorial Foundation.

[The formal establishment of CERGU in 1995](#)

Through a decision by the Faculty Board of Social Sciences in 1995, the informal working-group was given a stronger financial and administrative base by the establishment of a 'Centre for European Research at Gothenburg University' (CERGU). This Centre was operated directly by the Faculty Board, while the current activities were run by a Director with some limited administrative support and assisted by an academic advisory committee. 2 Professor Rutger Lindahl, previously Director of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (Utrikespolitiska Institutet), was appointed the first Director of CERGU.

The activities around European research now became more formally established, and expanded rapidly during the following years through the development of externally financed research projects, national and international conferences, workshops and seminars, joint scientific publications and active participation in debates, lectures, media performances and courses outside the university (The 'Third Objective'). CERGU was during many years also formally responsible to organize external courses in 'EU-kunskap' (General knowledge about EU), offered to the general public and to students in other fields of science, and sponsored by The Association of Municipalities in the Gothenburg Region (Göteborgsregionens Kommunalförbund), Chalmers University of Technology and others.

The urgent need to strengthen the academic basic education in European issues gave rise to a special task given in 1998 to CERGU by the Vice-Chancellor's Office to develop and to organize a four-year interdisciplinary Bachelor's Programme in European Studies (Europaprogrammet). The first admission of students was made in 1999, and it immediately became one of the most popular and sought-after bachelor's programmes within the entire university. Since CERGU, according to its mission, should not take responsibility for educational programmes, the administrative responsibility and programme management was assigned to the Department of Political Science. At the same time, on the other hand, it was decided by the University to give CERGU the temporary responsibility to manage courses given by the Centre for Russian and Eastern European Studies (CREES). This task was later transferred to a newly established Centre for European Studies (CES), which today 2 The first advisory committee consisted of Claes G. Alvstam (economic geography), Per Cramér (law), Per Månson (sociology) and Clas Wihlborg (economics). 3 organizes all courses and programmes in European studies, in close academic collaboration with CERGU.

[Jean Monnet Chairs and the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence](#)

The even stronger position of European research at the University of Gothenburg was further confirmed by the appointment of Rutger Lindahl to a tenured position as professor of European politics at the Department of Political Science in 1996. Lindahl was at the same time awarded a Jean Monnet Chair in European political integration. Four years later, in 2000, Professor Per Cramér at the Department of Law, was awarded another Jean Monnet Chair in European Integration Law. These promotions opened further opportunities for the strengthening of the international network, in addition to the financial support from the European Commission to the academic activities within CERGU. During the following years, several faculty members received a number of specific grants in different disciplines from the Jean Monnet Programme of the European Commission for developing courses within higher education.

After an application based on the activities that had so far been developed within CERGU, the University of Gothenburg was in 1998 awarded the prestigious status as a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence (JMECE) as one of 25 European universities. In order to further consolidate CERGU's position in this larger network, the Vice-Chancellor decided to appoint a particular Steering Committee for CERGU with representatives from all faculties within the university. This committee was given the sole responsibility for an independent CERGU budget, which opened the opportunities for even more expanded activities, including initiatives to a larger number of international conferences and seed-money support to prepare new

research projects. Several of the projects that were given support in their initial formation later became successful in gaining full external financial support, often in severe competition. During the first three years of JMECE, the grants from the European Commission were matched by an equivalent sum allocated through the central strategic resource at the university level. During the next four years, the activities continued with internal support only. The Director of CERGU was also chairman of the steering group of JMECE, which facilitated a close cooperation in further development of research, where CERGU took an executive role.

Common multidisciplinary research 1998-2005

The first larger multidisciplinary research project, directly connected to CERGU, 'The Eastward Enlargement and the Transition to Democratic Market Economies in the Baltic Sea Region', commenced in 1998 and was financed by Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation with 6 million SEK in total during three years. The project resulted in more than thirty publications, including eight Ph.D. theses³. A concluding anthology, 'Transition and EU Enlargement' (ed. by Rutger Lindahl), was published in 2005. The number of other CERGU-connected research projects continued to grow during the first years of the 2000s. Those projects which received external financial support represented a wide range of different disciplines and topics, e.g. voter opinions in European issues, legal and political responsibility for final³ Two each in economic geography, economics and political science; one each in law and sociology. 4 storage of nuclear waste, the adaptation of Lithuania and Romania to the European Union, the relation of Swedish regional and local governments to the EU, alliance patterns in sub-committees to the Council of Ministers, and EU lobbying.

Also the conference activities organized by CERGU continued to expand during the first years of the 2000s. Four main international conferences were arranged in 2000-2003, and were financed by external resources in combination with JMECE support⁴. Three of these conferences also resulted in published proceedings.

The expansion of conference activities also resulted in an intensive growth of national, as well as international research networks, and facilitated contacts with several other research centres in European countries. Examples of these efforts are the cooperation with the University of Riga, Latvia (Prof. Tatjana Muravska), and the University of Oslo, Norway (Prof. Janne Haaland Matlary).

The conferences also paved the way for initiatives to new research projects. One typical example was the conference on The Asylum-Seeking Child in Europe that resulted in a large multidisciplinary research programme which later was financed by the European Refugee Fund.

It should finally also be noted that since the mid 1990s CERGU has developed to become a national competence centre for research related to European integration, which led to numerous commissioned reports and oral presentations for the Swedish Government, various public institutions, organizations and interest groups at the central, regional and local level⁵. The rapid expansion of the research and conference activities called, however, for a more permanent organization with larger administrative resources; a task which became the next challenge.

Reform of the administrative organization

The issue of CERGU's internal organization as well as its formal position in the administrative organization of the university as a whole called for a thorough study in 2002 to suggest a long-term solution regarding the financial base and its academic platform for multidisciplinary studies and research. A special working group was assigned by the deans of those faculties which were represented in CERGU to suggest a suitable organizational framework. The resulting report called for an expanded administrative base, and a permanent financial support scheme from the four faculties concerned. This proposal was discussed during several occasions with representatives from the faculties, and in 2005 a new decision regarding CERGU's general assignment, administrative organization and financial base was settled by the faculties and sanctioned by the Vice-Chancellor. In this decision the main responsibility for the activities was taken by the Faculty of Social Sciences and the School of Business, Economics and Law, with the administrative affiliation to the Faculty of Social Sciences. The existing multidisciplinary informal network structure was kept intact, but supported by a common administrative platform in order to provide for better stability and continuity in the daily work.