



**BIENNIAL REPORT of RN03 “BIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EUROPEAN SOCIETIES”
of the European Sociological Association**

October 2017

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and board members (past term):

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Activities:

1. **“[Biographical Research: Inequality and Innovation](#)”, 22-23 September 2016** The mid-term conference of RN03 “Biographical Perspectives on European Societies” was hosted by the University of Latvia and the Advanced Social and Political Research Institute, organized by RN03 Board member Baiba Bela. The topic “Biographical Research: Inequality and Innovation” had attracted more than 30 applications from scholars throughout Europe and beyond. The conference received funding from ESA as well as due to a successful application from the Baltic-German University Liaison Office was also supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) with funds from the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic Germany. Our budget also allowed us to sponsor some of the PhD students. As administrative regulations does not allow us to cover travel costs, we were able to offer free accommodation in the dormitory at the University of Latvia for 4 PhD students and we could cover the conference registration fee for 3 PhD students. Keynote speaker Prof. Vieda Skultans (Latvia/GB) opened the conference with a moving paper on “Narratives of Despair and Hopelessness in Post-Soviet Latvia”. Due to late cancellations

we were able to integrate all papers in concurrent sessions instead of splitting presentations into parallel sessions. The first day was dedicated to social innovation and social work, methodological questions and later with memories of World War II. The last session was the cultural event with the film-maker and artist Bettina Henkel (Vienna). She introduced her preliminary documentary about her own family of the Baltic Germans and the biographical impact of transgenerational transmittance of trauma. The lecture-performance led to vivid discussions and touched also many biographical issues of the participants. The second day was opened by keynote speaker Prof. Ursula Apitzsch, who has been a member of ESA RN03 for a long time. She focused on generational experiences and biographical differences among migrant workers and their children in Germany. The subsequent sessions were focused on European migration, silenced voices and stories as well as divisions and unity of Europe.

2. **13th ESA conference (Un) Making Europe: [Capitalism, Solidarities, Subjectivities](#)** - Athens, Greece, 29 August to 1 September 2017. The Research Network 03 “Biographical Perspectives on European Societies” selected papers from 42 applications via the conference tool. Unfortunately, not everybody whose papers were accepted could come to present their papers, but in total we had 28 presentations by scholars from different countries and on a wide range of topics. Organized in 7 sessions they addressed issues of creative applications of biographical methods, transformation in Eastern Europe from an everyday perspective, marginality and social exclusion and new marginalities in Europe, glocalisation in Europe, biographical perspectives on “Otherness”, biographies of work and working lives, cultural diversity, – just to name a few general themes of the sessions. This time we had fewer sessions than at the previous conferences, but much bigger audiences than at previous ESA conferences. Some of our sessions were attended by up to 30 listeners, including scholars who were not members of the RN03.
3. Newsletter of RN 03 is published and it is placed on the ESA RN website.
4. PhD students are encouraged to take part in RN03 meetings, they can present their papers and some of them received financial support when they took part in the conferences. All PhD conference participants pay a reduced conference fee.
5. **Social media:** The events are announced on a [Facebook page](#) for the network members.
6. During the business meeting in Athens we discussed a theme, an outline and a place for the next mid-term conference in September 2018 which was drafted and presented by Lyudmila Nurse. Unfortunately due to unforeseen changes, the conference could not be organized in the UK at the time suitable for the RN03 and at reasonable costs to individual members. Consequently, the Chair, the Vice-Chair and an outgoing Vice-Chair explored alternative options to host the mid-term conference. After consultations with Board members, who approved the new venue for the Conference, it was agreed that it will take place in Łódź, Poland and be hosted by the University of Łódź in September 17-18, 2018. One of the significantly decisive factors to host the next mid-term conference in Poland was that the 2018 year is a centenary since the publication of one of the most significant works in European biographical research of a book by William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki’s “The Polish Peasant in Europe and America”, one of the classics of sociology.