



**Description of the participant:  
ZEFIR Zentrum für interdisziplinäre  
Ruhrgebietsforschung**

ZEFIR is a central academic institution of the Ruhr University of Bochum (RUB) founded in accordance with § 31 of the North Rhine-Westphalian university law. More than 40 academics from various faculties belong to RUB. In addition, employees (the managing director and a secretary as well as the academic staff and students working on specific projects) are members of the institute. ZEFIR is controlled by an elected management committee, which is aided by a managing director, in close cooperation with the board of directors and the general meeting of members. The ZEFIR members who are not employees of the institute are also members of their respective faculties and are active in research and teaching and also in self-administration bodies. ZEFIR is thus not a substitute for membership in a faculty but is an additional offer that is used by its members with various levels of intensity. This structure necessitates a task definition that must differentiate between the central level and the entirety of all (individual) members.

Its aims are to coordinate research on the Ruhr region within the university, to give new impetus and to cooperate with institutions outside the RUB. ZEFIR coordinates the exchange of ideas and information between its members and other interested persons involved with the Ruhr region in their work. Of course, members in our institute initiate and look after cross-discipline qualification work. Furthermore, funds are collected centrally for projects, and the persons involved participate in the discussions of the members. There are also joint interdisciplinary projects between individual members and groups. The results of these and other research projects are made accessible to interested persons in the region through workshops and small publications. Moreover, interdisciplinary research projects of individual members are introduced into ZEFIR's discussion framework. Currently, a study is being carried out on elite research which, apart from research on the communal elite, includes a project on the semantics of the industrial elite, which is financed by the Thyssen donation fund. Further areas of study include the use of multimedia, higher education and culture. ZEFIR is coordinating a project on middle-class society in the Ruhr region. This is financed by funds from the *Land* (state) and is being run by the four universities in the Ruhr region. New fields of study focus on projects on (comparative) social reporting, including projects for the *Land* government and the WHO and on job market policies. RUB has already completed the empirical part of the first social report for the *Land* government of North Rhine-Westphalia. ZEFIR represents the Ruhr region as a city region in a global network of mega-cities in an international comparative project on Determinants and Indicators of Urban Health. As transfer activities ZEFIR organises lectures, symposiums, colloquiums and small workshops. Here, small groups of experts, including decision-makers from the region, take up current problems in the Ruhr region and discuss them together with an interested (multiplier) audience. With ZEFIR, the RUB thus provides a forum for the region and underlines its practical approach. Services, similar to transfer activities, also show how ZEFIR differs from other research institutes. The Ruhr region is not exclusively an object but also an addressee for research and other activities. Apart from making attempts to bring the results of research into public discussion or to receive suggestions from those responsible within the region - attempts that have been well-accepted in the region - ZEFIR is also a contact partner for issues concerning the region. This ranges from finding experts and knowledgeable contact partners, to coordinating projects within the region (cooperation with national organisations, NGOs and other universities in the Ruhr region), to answering queries, mainly concerning information on careers and private matters from different interest groups (media, external researchers, visiting groups, etc.). A committee first called together in 1992 helped to underpin this practical approach to the region. In the meantime, ZEFIR has become a recognised contact and cooperation partner in the region - both with regard to acceptance by responsible persons in politics, industry and administration in the region as well as to fellow academics inside and outside the region.

Since 1999 ZEFIR runs a Graduate School titled: "Industrial Conurbations in International Comparison." Every year three PhD-grants are given to scholars for a maximum period of three years. This Graduate School is exclusively sponsored by private firms.