

Prof. Joep Leerssen (12 June 1955)
European Studies

Current position

Professor of European Studies at the University of Amsterdam

Professor Joep Leerssen has been awarded an Academy Professorship for his unique contribution to the field of European Studies. He investigates concepts of national identity as they are reflected and expressed in European literature from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. This work has earned him an international reputation in three different fields of scholarship – Irish studies, Cultural nationalism and imagology – and he is considered an authority in all three.

His monographs (1986 and 1996) on Irish cultural history have been foundational for the academic discipline of Irish Studies. He examines Irish cultural history as a pattern of cross-cultural negotiations by means of a comparative analysis of its various languages and traditions (English and Gaelic). He is very active as a referee and committee member for the Irish Humanities Research Council, as a co-supervisor for Irish PhD students, has given many ‘named lectures’ on Irish studies and has been elected Honorary Member of the Royal Irish Academy.

Professor Leerssen has made imagology, formerly a somewhat abstract study, the core component of European Studies. Imagology is the analysis of stereotyping and national (self)characterization. Leerssen has brought together hitherto compartmentalised worldwide research in the field of imagology by, among other activities, setting up the website ‘Images’ and establishing the ‘Studia Imagologica’ book series. In the study of 19th-century cultural nationalism Leerssen has directed the field by highlighting the notion that cultural expressions are a central and guiding aspect of political nationalism. Before Leerssen’s contributions, cultural expression was seen as a mere by-product. The groundbreaking article in the leading journal ‘*Nations and Nationalism*’ and his book ‘*National Thought in Europe*’ are considered as the most innovative publications to appear in the field in the past thirty years. Leerssen is taking this line of research forward by his initiative for an extensive European collaboration in the interdisciplinary and cross-national comparative history of cultural nationalism.

In the Netherlands, he has played a key role in setting up the European Studies programme at the University of Amsterdam. This is now a successful interdisciplinary BA/MA programme in a highly productive field of research, one in which he plays a major role. He is an inspiring leader and graduate student supervisor, and a popular speaker at conferences. He is the author of an impressive list of publications, not least *National Thought in Europe*.

He has used the Spinoza Prize, awarded to him in 2008, to set up a new research network, the Study Platform on Interlocking Nationalisms (SPIN). The network brings together the most important scholars in the field and has already resulted in partnerships between various research institutes.

Joep Leerssen is expected to continue playing a significant role in all three fields of scholarship. He plans to develop an approach that links imagology and nationalism studies, and his appointment as an Academy Professor is expected to help him in this endeavour.