



PRESS RELEASE

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Public thematic report

ÉTABLISSEMENT PUBLIC CAMPUS CONDORCET

A great ambition for humanities and social sciences at risk of failure

Announced in September 2009, the project to create a campus dedicated to Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) was intended to drive the revival of this discipline in France. Établissement Public Condorcet Campus (EPCC), often lauded as the counterpart of the Paris-Saclay operation, is the result of a partnership project bringing together eleven institutions including “grandes écoles”, universities and research bodies. The *Grand Équipement Documentaire* (GED) was designed as a shared international documentary and digital platform, the purpose of which was to bring everything together. However, the Court notes that the start-up of this public agency is currently facing major difficulties: its working methods (involving cooperation, pooling and coordination) have not been precisely defined, and its ability to support researchers in their work – in addition to the access to equipment it offers them – is still to be developed. There is a significant risk that this establishment, which has fallen far short of initial expectations, will be reduced to the role of manager of a real estate project that has not yet been completed.

A project born from a need for space and of financial and real estate opportunities

The Condorcet Campus, initially born of the need for space of several Parisian institutions, has been constructed gradually, with the participation of many stakeholders, and the initial decisions are now weighing on its implementation. The splitting of the project into two phases, a decision made in 2011 when there was a lack of visibility of the available funding, has notably led to its non-completion. In addition, decisions concerning the distribution of operations have led to operations on the Aubervilliers site being split into two: a public-private partnership (PPP) agreement and a public project contract (MOP). The first resulted in the delivery of nine buildings that were brought into service in September 2019, while the second resulted in a delayed delivery – in spring 2021. Given this fragmentation, phase 1, which includes the Aubervilliers campus and the La Chapelle university centre, will have cost around €515 million.



The cost of phase 2, which has not yet been defined, is estimated at €201 million, although this estimate is already out of date.

Opening of the GED under tough conditions, unclear scientific expectations

Établissement Public Condorcet Campus is experiencing major operating difficulties. This is illustrated by the opening, under tough conditions, of the *Grand Équipement Documentaire* (GED) documentary facility – an unacceptable situation given the ambition of the project and the resources invested. The establishment, with its unusual status, brings together institutions with diverse interests, which have not been able or willing to coordinate around a common project. Recent progress in this area did not prevent the EPCC from failing in the first wave of the “Excellence in all its forms” call for projects of the Future Investment Programme (PIA 4). In the absence of a dynamic specific to the public agency, which has not managed to increase cooperation between the various members of the campus, the State, due to a lack of anticipation and steering, has allowed the project which it initiated to evolve without precisely defining its target, its institutional organisation or its way of operating.

Relations with the State and member institutions to be rebuilt on the basis of the new multiyear contract


In short, the Condorcet Campus project is flawed by the lack of definition of its objectives from the outset. At this stage, it is up to the Ministry to define the State’s expectations of this establishment in terms of scientific ambition, and to specify its *modus operandi* in line with this. The new multiyear contract, provided for in the Research Programming Law, is thus an opportunity to formalise the reciprocal commitments of the State, the EPCC and its member institutions. For the Court, it is important to seize this opportunity and breathe new life into this project. Its failure would be a severe blow to the Humanities and Social Sciences sector given the resources mobilised.

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