

**EUROPEAN SCIENCE FOUNDATION**  
Standing Committee for the Humanities

EUROCORES Programme on  
*The Origin of Man, Language and Languages*  
(OMLL)

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

The EUROCORES (ESF Collaborative Research Programmes) is a new instrument of the European Science Foundation, which is designed to provide an effective and efficient collaboration mechanism at a multinational level within Europe and to mobilise national funding in basic research to tackle issues that have European-wide relevance and are, preferably, multi-disciplinary. Participating ESF Member Organisations jointly agree on a research programme, specify the Call for Proposals and peer review the applications, with funding decisions residing with participating national bodies. ESF acts as a catalyst by offering its administrative support and project management by networking scientists involved in the programmes [<http://www.esf.org/about/eurocores.htm>].

Following agreement with FNRS-CFB and FWO (Belgium), SHF (Denmark), ETA (Estonia), SA (Finland), CNRS (France), DFG and MPG (Germany), CNR (Italy), NWO (the Netherlands), FCT (Portugal), CSIC and OCYT (Spain), HSFR and KVHAA (Sweden), BA (UK) - hereinafter called 'the Agencies' -, the European Science Foundation is launching a first Call for Proposals for research projects to be executed under the EUROCORES programme on *The Origin of Man, Language and Languages*. A complete description of this programme is available on the ESF web-site [<http://www.esf.org/human/he/OMLL.htm>]. Further calls may follow dependent on the progress of the programme.

This multi-disciplinary programme will focus on the question of the co-evolution of modern humans and language through research at the European level. Until recently, the study of the origin of language was considered too speculative and insufficiently anchored in empirically based studies to merit serious scientific attention. However, in recent years new data have been collected in several disciplines, which have led to interpretations yielding new insight into the emergence of anatomically modern humans and the related issue of language origin. The collaborative synthesis of this recently accumulated knowledge across disciplines will create a scientific momentum capable of significantly improving our knowledge of an issue central to the understanding of the roots of our species. Many significant contributions have already been obtained through the collaboration between experts in such fields as genetics, archaeology, paleo-anthropology and linguistics. Many more can be expected by the continuing support for co-operation between these disciplines as well as by encouraging interaction with others, such as neurosciences, ethology and artificial intelligence.

To this aim, proposals are invited on the following topics and sub-themes:

- 1. Language and Archaeology
  - (1a.) Comparison between the complexity of communication systems and cognitive complexity inferred from archeological findings,
  - (1b.) Comparison between linguistic and archeological data for periods between 15,000 and 5,000 BP (especially in the Indo-European domain),
  - (1c.) Evaluation of Neanderthal communication system and cognitive abilities,
- 2. Language and Brain
  - (2a.) Evolution of cortical regions involved in language production and perception,
  - (2b.) Study of the neurophysiology of mimesis and its role in the emergence of the language faculty,
- 3. Language and Genes
  - (3a) Comparison between genetic classification of today's world populations and language families,
- 4. Language acquisition and Language universals
  - (4a.) Comparison between processes involved in language acquisition vs. language emergence/evolution,
  - (4b.) Language universals and brain architecture (and processes),
- 5. Language and Animal Communication
- 6. Language evolution and Computer modeling
  - (6a.) Social impetus for the emergence of language,
  - (6b.) Use of self-organization concepts in the study of language evolution,
  - (6c.) Polygenesis vs. monogenesis of language origin,
  - (6d.) Evaluation of population size between 100.000 years and 10.000 years ago.

Preference will be given to trans-national collaborative and multi-disciplinary proposals.

The programme will be overseen by an international Management Committee formed by one science manager from each participating Agency. The Senior Scientific Secretary of the ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities will represent the Committee.

Applications will be internationally peer-reviewed through written review and by an International Expert Review Panel, run by the ESF in conjunction with the Management Committee. The Expert Review Panel will recommend and prioritise the best applications for funding by the national participating Agencies.

The actual funding of the applications recommended by the International Review Panel will depend on the total amount of money made available in each country by the Agencies supporting the programme. The use of funds will be subject to the national laws of each country as well as to the internal rules of each Agency.

Applications will usually be for up to three year research projects in the various topics of the programme. Applications will be eligible for consideration only from scholars or scientists who can refer to at least one of the above national Agencies for funding.

Application forms (to be filled in English) are available on the ESF web-site [<http://www.esf.org/human/he/OMLL.htm>]. Only applications from research groups will be accepted. Priority will be given to applications from groups working in close relationship with other teams at an international level. Joint applications from groups in different countries,

wishing to make co-operative research, will also take priority. In the latter case, separate research projects and budgets are anyway requested from each research group.

Research groups will work under the responsibility of a Principal Investigator, who will act as a scientific co-ordinator. When recommending applications for funding, the International Expert Review Panel may ask that Principal Investigators co-ordinate the activity of their research group with that planned and accepted by other groups in that field.

Once the programme is launched, the ESF will support successful applicant teams scholars involved in this EUROCORES by networking them, in order to facilitate the exchange of information, the communication and the discussion of the results. To this aim, at least two conferences will be organised during the programme's lifetime. Web facilities will be made available and/or supported.

The deadline for applications is 15 May 2001. The results of the evaluation procedure will be available by 15 November 2001.

***Criteria to be used in the evaluation:***

Qualifications of the principal investigator(s) and research teams  
 Relevance to the EUROCORES Project specification  
 Overall scientific quality of the proposal  
 Originality and feasibility  
 Level of trans-national collaboration and multi-disciplinarity

***LIST OF PARTICIPATING MEMBER ORGANISATIONS***

FNRS-CFB, Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique (Belgium)  
 FWO, Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek – Vlaanderen (Belgium)  
 SHF, Statens Humanistiske Forskningsråd (Denmark)  
 ETA , Eesti Teaduste Akadeemia (Estonia)  
 SA, Suomen Akatemia (Finland)  
 CNRS, Centre national de la Recherche Scientifique (France)  
 DFG, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Germany)  
 MPG, Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (Germany)  
 CNR, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (Italy)  
 NWO, Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (the Netherlands)  
 FCT, Fundação para e Ciência e a Tecnologia (Portugal)  
 CSIC, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Spain)  
 OCYT, Oficina de Ciencia y Tecnología (Spain)  
 SRC, Vetenskapsrådet (Sweden)  
 KVHAA, Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien (Sweden)  
 BA, The British Academy (UK)\*

\*Applications from British scholars will be accepted subject to final confirmation of the financial details. British scholars are advised to contact: [secretary@britac.ac.uk](mailto:secretary@britac.ac.uk)