Interfacial friction is one of the oldest problems in physics and chemistry, and certainly one of the most important from a practical point of view. Everyday operations on a broad range of scales, from nanometer and up, depend upon the smooth and satisfactory functioning of countless tribological systems. Friction is intimately related to both adhesion and wear, and all three require an understanding of highly non-equilibrium processes occurring at the molecular level to determine what happens at the macroscopic level.

The aim of the FANAS EUROCORES programme is to gain a better insight into the origins of friction and adhesion and to learn how to control them. In particular:

• understanding relationships between adhesion and friction at the nano and micro scales and mechanisms of energy dissipation in tribological systems,
• bridging the gap between the nano, micro and macro scales in friction, lubrication and adhesion, control and modification of frictional properties,
• nanomanipulations at interfaces,
• studies of biomimetic tribological systems and tribochemistry.

To meet these goals, FANAS brings together theoretical and experimental tools, as well as engineering approaches which help transfer the basic understanding gained to questions of practical relevance. For this type of research a strong interdisciplinary collaboration is required that covers physical, chemical and material science aspects of tribology over a broad range of time and length scales.
An Integrated Framework for Engineering Bio-Mimetic Adhesive Interface (EBioAdI)
(CNR, CNRS, DFG, FNRS, SNF, TÜBITAK)

The main objective of the EBioAdl Collaborative Research Project (CRP) is the development of an integrated framework for the engineering of bio-mimetic surfaces with superior adhesive and friction performances through (i) the development of predictive theoretical models (heterogeneous multi-scale models), (ii) the fabrication of artificial bio-mimetic prototypes (hierarchically structured surfaces and surfaces with a controlled roughness over multiple scales) and (iii) the testing of natural systems as well as artificial bio-mimetic prototypes against their friction and adhesive performances. These surfaces will have applications in different fields spanning from the automotive to the biomedical industry, from micro/nano-technology to robotics and print industry. The present CRP involves partners with different scientific backgrounds spanning from biology to applied and theoretical physics, from biomedical to electrical and mechanical engineering, with specific research expertise in friction and adhesion.

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Nanomanipulation of Metallic Clusters on Insulating Substrates (NOMCIS)
(AKA, CNR, DFG)

Nanoclusters have become a focal system in nano-scale research due to their far-reaching applications and flexibility for studying different areas of science. The ability to tune the properties of the nanoclusters by controlling the number of atoms they contain remains a powerful investigative tool, but this has been recently coupled with the ability to modify the nanocluster’s physical properties via adsorption to a surface. NOMCIS will use Scanning Probe Microscopy (SPM) manipulation to study the lateral mobility and dissipation of nanoclusters adsorbed on surfaces as a function of nanocluster size and charge, ambient environment, temperature, adsorption site and surface material. The NOMCIS project brings together a fully multidisciplinary consortium including groups specialised in physics and chemistry, with a complementary contribution from theory and experiment.

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**Atomic Friction (AFRI)**  
(AKA, CNR, DFG, IRCSET, MCI, SNF, TÜBITAK)

The aim of AFRI is to understand friction and wear properties in the extreme case of atomic scale friction, where only a few atoms constitute the tip-sample contact. Despite recent successes in the understanding of atomic friction processes, where the velocity dependence, load dependence and new effects like superlubricity (structural and externally induced) have been targeted, many phenomena are still under dispute. AFRI will investigate atomic friction in the vicinity of defects under ultrahigh vacuum conditions and compare it with theoretical studies. Non-contact Atomic Force Microscopy (nc-AFM) experiments with small amplitudes will be performed and directly compared with simulations as well as experiments as a function of load and speed and to extend contact areas with the use of a UHV-microtribometer to explore the behaviour of multi-asperity contacts.

**Project Leader:**  
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**Active Control of Friction (ACOF)**  
(CNRS, DFG, ISF, MNISW, SNF)

The ability to control and manipulate frictional forces is extremely important for a variety of applications. Controlling frictional forces has been traditionally approached by chemical means, usually by supplementing base lubricants with friction modifying additives. Standard lubrication techniques, however, are expected to be less effective in the micro- and nano-world. Novel methods for control and manipulation are therefore needed. ACOF is a joint experimental, theoretical and computational project aimed at designing methods and algorithms to control friction by both mechanical means (via externally imposed vibrations of small amplitude and energy) and surface modification. To accomplish these goals, it is essential to understand the internal dynamics, i.e. the internal rates of structural rearrangement of confined systems under shear. In this project new advances in experimental and theoretical techniques will be used to both acquire a detailed understanding of fundamental frictional processes and manipulate them. The interrelation between friction at the nano-, micro- and macroscopic scales will be explored.
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Water-Based Lubricants: theory and experiment (AQUALUBE) (IRCSET, ISF, SNF)

It is clearly of importance to reduce friction to the lowest possible levels in lubricated machines, since frictional losses constitute a major cause of energy wastage. Examples of very low friction are to be found among the lubrication mechanisms of nature, which are exclusively based on water, involving complex biomolecules (e.g. mucins) that appear to generate brush-like structures on surfaces, and which impart highly lubricious properties. Attempts to imitate this have been quite successful, both on the nano and the macro scales, although the reasons for the low-friction behaviour are not completely understood. The objectives of the AQUALUBE project are to synthesize novel, brush-forming molecules, which closely mimic those found in nature; to investigate their properties as lubricant additives; to investigate the properties of the water in and around the brush systems, in the presence and absence of charge, and to model the tribological behaviour of the brush systems, with and without shear.

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Nanoparticle Manipulation with Atomic Force Microscopy Techniques (NANOPARMA) (DFG, ETF, FCT, APVV)

Atomic force microscopy (AFM) has proven to be a powerful tool to investigate frictional forces of nano-scale contacts. Unfortunately, this technique reveals some drawbacks when applied to study chemical and structural properties of two rubbing surfaces. Questions concern the contact area dependence as well as the influence of the material on tribological properties. The contact area dependence of friction is crucial in bridging the gap between nano-scale and micro-scale friction, which eventually will allow to understand and control macroscopic friction. The right choice of materials, on the other hand, is expected
to lead to new friction effects, like, e.g.,
superlubricity. In this Collaborative Research
Project AFM will be used to investigate
nanoparticles with different sizes, shapes
and functional groups on their surfaces, as
well as substrates with different roughness,
structure and chemical composition in different
environments, from liquids to ultrahigh vacuum.
The experimental studies are harmonised
with theoretical investigations concerning the
manipulation process itself, as well as the
interfacial atomic processes during particle translation.

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Fundamentals of Tribology
– Correlation between Wear Characteristics and Material Properties of Polymers Ranged from Sub-Micro to Macro Scale (FUNDTRIBO)
(DFG, FWO, MCI)

The investigation about the fundamentals of
tribology deals with three different effects
regarding wear and friction phenomena. In
wear experiments on large, macro and nano
scales, the differences and similarities between
the wear mechanisms of different scales will
be examined and compared. The nano-scale
tests are carried out with an atomic force
microscope (AFM) in order to find basics about
the wear characteristics. The stress and energy
dissipating factors inside the polymer material
are investigated by FEM simulations. An
artificial neural network (ANN) based software
tool correlates wear results and materials’
properties. The overall aim of this project is the
prediction of the wear behaviour of different
nano-particle reinforced polyetheretherketone
(PEEK) composite materials based on the
gained experimental results on large, macro
and nano scales.

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The aim of the European Collaborative Research (EUROCORES) Scheme is to enable researchers in different European countries to develop collaboration and scientific synergy in areas where European scale and scope are required to reach the critical mass necessary for top class science in a global context.

The scheme provides a flexible framework which allows national basic research funding and performing organisations to join forces to support excellent European research in and across all scientific areas.

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www.esf.org/eurocores

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*National Centre for Scientific Research, France*

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*German Research Foundation, Germany*

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The understanding of friction by atomistic simulations.

Groups of Profs J. Klafter and M. Urbakh,
School of Chemistry, Tel Aviv University,
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