

Understanding and Misunderstanding: Cognition, Communication and Culture (EuroUnderstanding)

Call for Outline Proposals

What is EUROCORES?

The ESF European Collaborative Research (EUROCORES) Programmes offer a flexible framework for researchers in Europe to work on questions which are best addressed in large-scale collaborative research programmes.

The EUROCORES Programmes allow excellent researchers in the various participating countries to collaborate in research projects 'at the bench'. They also allow, when appropriate, colleagues in non-European countries, for example the US, to participate. The Programmes encourage and anticipate networking and collaboration between researchers in order to achieve synthesis of scientific results across the programme, to connect with related programmes, and to disseminate findings.

The EUROCORES Programmes allow national research funding organisations in Europe and beyond to support top-class research in and across all scientific areas, by matching their strategic priorities with the needs articulated by the scientific community.

Final funding decisions on the projects and the research funding remain with the national funding organisations, based on a single international peer review process operated by ESF. Financed by the participating national Funding Organisations, ESF also provides support for networking between the researchers and for the scientific synthesis of research results and their dissemination. In this way, the EUROCORES Scheme complements the EC Framework Programme and other collaborative funding schemes at European level.

For further information see:
<http://www.esf.org/eurocores>

Understanding and Misunderstanding: *Cognition, Communication and Culture* (EuroUnderstanding)

Following agreement with 18 funding organisations in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden and Turkey, the European Science Foundation is launching a Call for Outline Proposals for Collaborative Research Projects (CRPs) to be undertaken within the EUROCORES Programme "Understanding and Misunderstanding: Cognition, Communication and Culture (EuroUnderstanding)". The Programme aims to support high quality multidisciplinary collaborative research in Europe, with involvement of leading scientists from outside Europe when appropriate.

The research phase of EuroUnderstanding will run for three years and includes national research funding as well as support for networking and dissemination activities. The research grants are provided directly to the eligible and successful Principal Investigators by their respective national funding organisations. The networking and dissemination support, also financed by the national organisations, is centrally managed by the ESF.

Outline Proposals are to be submitted by Thursday 8 April 2010, 12:00 PM (noon) CET. It is expected that Full Proposals will be invited in the week of Monday 3 May 2010 with Tuesday 22 June 2010, 12:00 PM (noon) CET as expected deadline for submission.

A Programme-specific website can be consulted for the latest updates at <http://www.esf.org/eurounderstanding>.

Summary

The thematic programme "Understanding and Misunderstanding: Cognition, Communication and Culture (EuroUnderstanding)" addresses a set of inter-related questions of major current theoretical and practical importance, such as: *How do communicative processes give rise to shared understandings, and how do these processes vary between cultures? How do intercultural misunderstandings arise, and what are their consequences? How do cultural and historical processes, and cultural-cognitive models, impinge on individual cognition, cognitive development and the development of personal identity? How can intercultural communication be made more effective in diverse cultural contexts?*

Background and Objectives

The title of the programme reflects its dual focus on mutual understanding, its establishment and maintenance; and those breakdowns of mutual understanding whose negative effects may be manifested at the levels of both individuals and groups. Misunderstandings and miscommunications between individuals, cultures and nations show no sign of diminishing, and may even be augmented in the modern communicative economy, where human interactions are simultaneously globalised and localised. The dangers of escalating misunderstanding are dramatically evidenced in recent clashes and conflicts over symbols of collective identity. To understand the social generation of misunderstandings, we need to analyse the conditions for interpersonal, intra-group and intergroup understanding: the coordination of joint action, the sharing of values, meanings and experiences, and the exchange of information, whether face-to-face or mediated by communication technologies.

Understanding and misunderstanding can and should be investigated at differing levels of analysis, from neural to cultural processes. However, a comprehensive explanatory account of these phenomena requires the integration of the different levels in a non-reductionist framework. The Humanities disciplines, with their focus on meaning, are crucial to this explanatory integration. EuroUnderstanding provides opportunities for Humanities-based researchers to collaborate with each other, and with researchers from life and social science disciplines, in advancing the science and scholarship of understanding and misunderstanding.

The programme has the following characteristics:

Multidisciplinarity. The programme will engage researchers in key Humanities disciplines, including, but not only, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy and psychology, as well as opening avenues for collaborative research with life sciences (e.g., cognitive neuroscience) and social sciences (including law, education, economics, political science and sociology).

Methodological pluralism. The programme will support research that links different levels of analysis in understanding the relations between cultural and individual processes and dynamics. It may therefore be appropriate to employ diverse methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative. These may be used as converging methodologies in regard to specific research questions and domains, or as parallel

methodologies investigating multi-level phenomena.

Situated, embodied cognition, communication and practice. The cognitive sciences are central to this programme, which will explicitly draw upon leading edge developments in the field. Key theoretical propositions upon which contemporary work draws include:

- *Mind is embodied, both in the organism and in social, cultural and communicative practices and their products;*
- *Cognition, learning and communication are situated in contexts of participation;*
- *Language is both a semiotic mediational means and a species-specific biocultural niche.*

Communication. The study of communication, and the contexts of communication, will be central to the programme. Such contexts, and relevant dimensions for understanding them, include:

- *Intercultural communication, cultural and linguistic hybridization;*
- *Inter-generational communication and cultural transmission;*
- *Mediated communication (by language, technologies and artefacts, including ICT);*
- *Universality, relativity and difference in concepts and contexts;*
- *Argumentation, trust, deception and communicative openness;*
- *Power, inclusion and exclusion in discourse and society.*

Scientific goals

The principal aims of EuroUnderstanding are:

1. Supporting interdisciplinary projects addressing research questions falling under this thematic programme, leading to high quality, high impact scientific outputs.
2. Enabling the building of multidisciplinary teams bridging scientific communities both within and outwith the Humanities, leading to a lasting positive contribution to interdisciplinary theory and method.
3. Contributing to scientific understanding that can support evidence based formulations of policies and practices in areas such as clinical and educational interventions and enhancing community cohesion.
4. Strengthening the European research base relevant for enhanced understanding of recent and contemporary trans- and intra-European cultural, linguistic and historical dynamics.
5. Forging links, where possible, with research communities outside Europe, in the context of Europe in a globalizing culture.

Research topics

A basic requirement of EuroUnderstanding projects is that they must combine interdisciplinary breadth with conceptual coherence. To ensure the latter, the programme defines a trans-disciplinary research space. This space can be defined by two orthogonal dimensions organized by four key conceptual resources. These key concepts are:

- **Intersubjectivity: shared understandings**
- **Artefacts and niches: shared worlds**
- **Cultural and cognitive dynamics**
- **Ideology, identity and belief**

See also Figure 1. Each key concept refers to a particular aspect of the understanding-misunderstanding complex. None of them is tied to a single discipline, theory or research methodology, each spans the cognition-communication-culture interface, and they are all open to a range of different kinds of multi-level investigation.

It should be stressed that there will be no requirement to restrict any specific project proposal to topics falling under any one of these

key concepts. Rather, the key concepts provide guidance as to which sub-themes might inform project proposals.

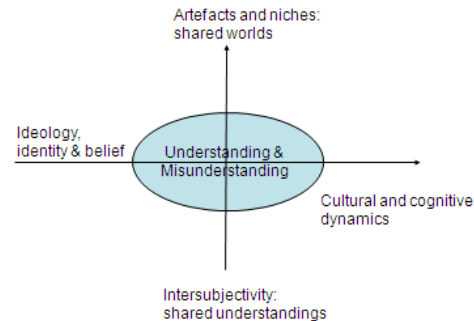


Figure 1.

Key concept 1 - Intersubjectivity: shared understandings

Intersubjectivity as a concept spans disciplines and methods from the phenomenological to the biological. It is arguably the most promising conceptual resource for unifying approaches to cognition, emotion and interaction studies, and it has an important comparative (cross-species and cross-cultural) dimension. It is also becoming increasingly important in the study of interactions between humans and artificial agents. Potential topics include – but are not limited to:

- *'Theory of mind' and 'folk psychology';*
- *Joint attention and action;*
- *Shared knowledge;*
- *Participatory practices and learning;*
- *Empathy, imitation and mimesis;*
- *Trust, distrust and deception;*
- *Game theory, experimental social interaction, neuroeconomics.*

Key concept 2 – Artefacts and niches: shared worlds

An increasing body of research has argued that one of the defining features of human activity is the widespread collaborative construction and use of objects, material as well as virtual. The sharing of meaningful outer worlds, in a physical, mental and semantic sense, appears to allow for coordination of action and establishment of joint understanding, while the inscription of objects in chains of intentionality is one of the defining features of technology. Similarly, situations of misunderstanding may be both caused by and

indexed by 'living in different worlds', in both a literal and a metaphoric sense. An examination of artefacts and niches, that is, of the properties, uses, and limits of shared worlds, objects and technologies, is of crucial importance for the issue at hand. Potential topics include – but are not limited to:

- *Cognitive artefacts and extended embodiment (thinking with and through things);*
- *Language as bio-cultural niche and semiotic mediation;*
- *Normativity in developmental processes;*
- *Linguistic relativity and categorical perception;*
- *Technologically augmented communication and cognition.*

Key concept 3 - Cultural and cognitive dynamics

In the actual world of human interaction, processes of understanding and misunderstanding are deeply embedded in particular cultural contexts, and they play themselves out in a historical perspective. This contextualisation may be difficult to capture in a purely experimental approach, as such factors are typically among those that controlled experiments will attempt to factor out. However, the dynamics of understanding and misunderstanding, as they are enacted and experienced by concrete individuals, are often largely incomprehensible without taking into account cultural and historical contexts. It is therefore crucial to understand how misunderstanding and understanding are related to agreement and disagreement within and between complex multicultural and intercultural settings. Potential topics include – but are not limited to:

- *Adaptation, integration and intergenerational cultural transmission;*
- *Developmental trajectories, intercultural encounters and cultural innovation;*
- *Language change in a changing Europe, in the context of globalization and 'global English';*
- *Discourse and cultural models in intercultural communication, stereotyping and conflict;*
- *Language, culture and cognition: interfacing the social and the individual.*

Key concept 4 - Ideology, identity and belief

Recent political violence in Europe and the rest of the world has clearly demonstrated that processes of understanding and misunderstanding are not just a linguistic, cognitive or psychological issue. At the level of action and interaction, they are major socio-political topics, and they tie in with questions of ideology, identity and belief (including religious faith). The frameworks for understanding understanding and misunderstanding developed in the other key concepts may therefore provide an initial platform for charting dynamic relations between personal and socio-cultural identity. Similarly, the understanding of understanding and misunderstanding produced at this level contextualizes and situates analyses at other levels. Potential topics include – but are not limited to:

- *Multiculturalism: issues of understanding, misunderstanding and conflict resolution;*
- *Dimensions of difference and otherness: religion, ethnicity, nationality, gender;*
- *Comparative study of systems of knowledge and belief (religion, science and magic) in an epoch of globalisation;*
- *Trust, inclusion and exclusion;*
- *Public policy discourses and behavioural change;*
- *Space, place and time: topoi of identity.*

Programme Structure

Applications for funding in the EuroUnderstanding programme will be required to demonstrate not only an international composition but also a multidisciplinary collaborative team with interdisciplinary aims.

Guidelines for applications

(Outline and Full Proposals)

This Call for Proposals is for Outline Proposals for Collaborative Research Projects (CRP). Proposers should be individual scientists (or research groups represented by individual scientists) who are eligible for funding from a national funding organisation participating in the EUROCORES Programme EuroUnderstanding.

Scientists or groups not applying for or not eligible to apply for funding from such an organisation can be associated to a proposal when their scientific added value can be demonstrated. Participation of Associate Partners in a project must be fully self-supporting and will not be financially sponsored by the participating funding organisations.

Proposals are only eligible if they fulfil all of the following **criteria**:

- Proposals must involve, as a minimum, three eligible Principle Investigators (PIs) from **three different countries**.
- A maximum of 50% of the total number of Individual Projects (IPs) in a Collaborative Research Project (CRP) can come from one country.
- Proposals must involve more PIs than Associated Partners (APs).

Applications should envisage three years of research. Taking into account the two-stage proposal selection and approval process (described below), the successful projects are expected to begin their research phase activities in **April 2011**.

Online submission of applications

Outline and Full Proposals will be submitted online. Applicants should follow the proposal structure as indicated in the application template for Outline Proposals available on the Programme website at: <http://www.esf.org/eurounderstanding>.

Links to information on national funding eligibility and requirements as well as to a EUROCORES Glossary and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are available on the Programme website.

Prior to submitting Outline Proposals, all applicants must contact their national funding organisations in order to verify eligibility and

to ensure compliance with their national grant requirements and regulations. The list of participating organisations and their nominated contact persons is included on the last page of this document.

At the time of the online submission of the Outline Proposal, the Project Leader will be asked to confirm on behalf of the consortium that all the Principal Investigators in the CRP have consulted their national funding organisations and are eligible for funding from these organisations.

Outline Proposals

Outline Proposals are invited by Thursday 8 April 2010, 12:00 PM (noon) CET.

Outline Proposals will be examined by the participating funding organisations for formal eligibility. Therefore, it is crucial that all applicants requesting funding contact their national funding organisation prior to submitting their proposals.

In compliance with the rules and regulations of the participating national funding organisations, the requested funds under the EUROCORES Programme EuroUnderstanding may include salaries for scientific and technical staff, equipment, travel costs and consumables within the project. The amounts requested from each funding organisation participating in the call must be clearly specified. National policies may also require the proposal to contain specific additional information. Applicants should be aware that the participating funding organisations can make adjustments to the requested funds in order to bring these in line with their normal grant regulations and standards.

As described below, applications will be reviewed according to specific assessment criteria in a two-stage procedure. The goal is to select scientifically excellent proposals which fit well within the scope of the programme and have significant potential to add value to its achievements.

At the outline stage, the Review Panel will select proposals based on the following criteria:

- Relevance to the Call for Proposals
- Novelty and originality
- European added value (scientific)
- Qualifications of the applicants

An Outline Proposal must comprise:

- A short description of the CRP (max. 1200 words, including objectives, milestones, methodologies (e.g. experiments and fieldwork);
 - Short description of how (and why) the partners contributing to the CRP will work together and how their contributions will be integrated;
 - How the project contributes to the interdisciplinary goals of EuroUnderstanding.
- Short CVs of Project Leader (PL), all PIs and Associate Partners, including five most relevant publications (max. one page each);
- Estimated budget (consistent with the rules of relevant national funding organisation), tabulated according to a provided template.

Associated Partners (APs) are also considered part of a CRP and will be assessed as such at both the Outline and Full Proposal stage.

It will be assumed that arrangements for the handling of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) will be in place within projects, following the applicable national legislation and national funding organisation's regulations. Applicants are strongly urged to have such arrangements in place, covering all research groups (including any associated groups) before the start of the projects. It is expected that the results obtained by the projects supported under this EUROCORES Programme will be placed in the public domain, through standard scientific dissemination activities.

It is also expected that compliance with all other relevant national or international regulations on research (for example ethics) will have been affirmed before funding is granted. It is the responsibility of applicants to clarify any such matters (if applicable) with their national contact points.

Full Proposals

Full Proposals will be invited following the recommendations of the Review Panel. The deadline for Full Proposals will be announced later, but is expected to be around Tuesday 22 June 2010, 12:00 (noon) CET.

Please note that only applicants who have submitted an Outline Proposal can submit a Full Proposal.

For the Full Collaborative Research Project (CRP) Proposals, the most important selection criterion is "scientific quality". Other criteria include interdisciplinarity (according to the scope of the call), qualifications of the applicants, level of integration and collaboration, feasibility and appropriateness of methodologies, European added value, relation to other projects (complementarities versus risk of overlaps and double-funding) and suitability of the requested budget.

The Full Proposals will be assessed by at least three independent external expert referees selected by the ESF. The expert referees are selected from a pool of scientists suggested by the participating funding organisations, the Review Panel and the ESF office. The names of all referees used in the international peer review of EUROCORES programmes, together with the names of those who have contributed to the peer review process in other ESF instruments, will be published on the ESF website once in a given year.

The referee reports will be made available (anonymously) to the applicants for their information and if necessary for their comments and clarifications. The Review Panel will rank all Full Proposals based on the assessment of the Full Proposal, the anonymous referee reports and the applicant's responses to these.

The Review Panel will create a rank-ordered list of the strongest Full Proposals and will subsequently make recommendations to the Management Committee for the funding of these proposals. The Management Committee assigned to each programme comprises representatives of all the participating funding organisations.

The actual granting of the funds to the Individual Projects will be based on the Review Panel's ranked list. The funding cut-off will be determined based on the total amount of funds available in each participating Funding Organisation and how the Individual Projects figure on the list. The use of funds in a project will be subject to the national requirements and regulations of each participating Funding Organisation.

Full proposals must include sound and well-argued scientific cases both at the level of the consortium's collective objectives and in terms of the expected contributions of each of the

Individual Projects in the consortium. Full Proposals must also include a list of all participants and their contact information and short CVs, detailed tabulated budgets for the whole CRP and for each project within it. Full Proposals could include other necessary supporting information. A coherent and common scientific case must be made throughout the proposal to demonstrate a collective and collaborative aim and for scientific synergy and integration of multinational expertise. In addition, the amount requested from each national funding organisation has to be clearly and separately specified. Detailed instructions on requirements and how to complete the application forms will be made available when inviting Full Proposals.

The **Project Leader** (PL) will be the main point of contact between the ESF and the CRP for the whole duration of the project. He/she will be responsible for the flow of information and communication between the ESF and all the participants in the CRP. The PL will represent the Collaborative Research Project in relation to its participation in programme activities and for the fulfilment of reporting requirements for the CRP as a whole and for the contributions of the individual Principal Investigators in the CRP.

In addition to their normal scientific and collaborative activities within the CRP, all **Principal Investigators** will be responsible for dealing with the requirements concerning the contributions of their national funding organisation, and for supporting the Project Leader in the overall progress of the CRP, including organising and participating in networking activities and in the fulfilment of reporting requirements.

Programme Structure and Management

Programme Structure

The overall responsibility for the governance of each individual EUROCORES programme lies with a *Management Committee*, whose members include one representative from each participating funding organisation in the programme (usually a senior science manager), together with an ESF representative.

Proposal assessment and selection are the responsibility of an international, independent *Review Panel*. The members of this panel are

leading scientists, appointed by the ESF following suggestions from participating Funding Organisations. The membership of the Review Panel will be available on the Programme website for information. The Review Panel is also expected to monitor the overall scientific progress of the programme.

The Scientific Committee is formed by the Project Leaders of all funded CRPs and will be responsible for the overall scientific progress of the programme, including for the preparation of a work plan for the overall programme activities, including networking and dissemination. The Scientific Committee will also advise and support the EUROCORES Programme Coordinator in the coordination of the programme.

Programme Networking

Networking activities are designed to strengthen the scientific objectives of the EUROCORES Programme by promoting coherence and synergy in the activities of the scientific community involved. This will help to produce the European added value which is a main objective of all EUROCORES Programmes.

Networking and collaboration within EUROCORES Programmes take place at two levels:

1. Between the various Individual Projects within each Collaborative Research Project (CRP) (intra-CRP activities), and;
2. Between the funded CRPs in the programme (cross-CRP activities).

The intra-CRP activities must be supported through the individual research grants the participants receive from the national funding organisations in the given CRP.

The cross-CRP activities are centrally funded by the ESF through contributions from the participating organisations to the EUROCORES Programme.

The intra-CRP collaboration is motivated by the nature of the CRP's research objectives, i.e. by the scope and the complexity of the questions it deals with. In a CRP, the participating groups have the opportunity to gather the required critical mass to successfully address the objectives and challenges of their project.

The cross-CRP networking and collaboration is inspired by the aims and the nature of the EUROCORES Programme as a whole. The

themes of EUROCORES Programmes are selected because they demonstrate a clear need for collaboration in the proposed field. The funded CRPs will collectively establish and streamline this new collaboration. To this end, the CRPs will engage the programme participants and, when of clear benefit, colleagues from outside the programme in joint activities such as:

- Programme-wide meetings or conferences;
- Working group meetings for the exchange of information and results across the CRPs;
- Joint scientific meetings or summer schools;
- Short term visits;
- Development and delivery of joint training programmes;
- Seminars, workshops, symposia, invited sessions either stand-alone or as part of other larger events;
- Common web-facilities and publications.

Through active participation of scientists in the above mentioned activities, not only can existing collaborations be enhanced, but new and strategic partnership opportunities may also be identified.

Furthermore, these activities may provide opportunities to explore aspects of the programme which are not covered by the funded research projects.

The integrating activities between the CRPs should help to strengthen the field by building coherence within the existing and emerging research communities and will serve as platforms for the dissemination and outreach of the research conducted in the programme.

Project members are expected to participate annually in at least one cross-CRP activity.

When submitting your proposal, please note that the costs for networking within your CRP should be included in your proposal as part of the costs of meetings, travel and subsistence. Funds for networking between the CRPs will be centrally managed by the ESF through contributions from the participating funding organisations.

comment on the CRPs' work plan in relation to the objectives of the overall Programme. A final evaluation at the end of the Programme will assess the overall achievements of the whole EUROCORES Programme.

Programme evaluation

A mid-term evaluation involving the Review Panel will assess the overall progress of the Programme. The Review Panel may also

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