The Evolution of Cooperation and Trading (TECT)
Call for Outline Proposals

Funding initiative for multi-disciplinary research in the Evolution of Cooperation and Trading (TECT)

Following agreement with funding bodies in Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France (CNRS, IRD), Germany (MPIs), Hungary (OTKA), Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom (for special conditions applying to UK applicants for ESRC funds see below)1 and the United States (NSF), the European Science Foundation is launching a first Call for Outline Proposals for collaborative research projects (CRPs) to be undertaken within the EUROCORES Programme “TECT”. The Programme will run for three to four years (2007-2010/11), depending on regulations of the participating funding bodies. It includes national research funding, as well as support for networking and dissemination activities currently provided by the ESF. The Programme aims to support high quality multidisciplinary research.

Outline Proposals are to be submitted by 8 June 2006. Full Proposals will be invited by 10 July 2006, with a deadline 26 September.

What is EUROCORES?
The EUROCORES (European Collaborative Research) Scheme provides a framework for national research funding organisations (research councils, academies, ministries and other funding organisations) to fund multinational and multidisciplinary European collaborative research projects in and across all scientific areas. Participating funding agencies publish a joint Call for Proposals for a specific research programme, define the type of proposals to be submitted and agree on the common peer review procedure to be carried out by ESF. While funding of the research (and travel) in the projects remains with the national research funding organisations, ESF currently provides support for the programme networking of funded scientists and dissemination activities1. Further information on the EUROCORES Scheme can be found at: http://www.esf.org/eurocores

1 This is currently supported through a contract with the European Commission under the Sixth Framework Programme (EC Contract no. ERASCT-2003-980409). Should this support be discontinued under the Seventh Framework Programme, the ESF will request the participating Funding Agencies to provide support for management and networking costs.

TECT aims to build a multidisciplinary research framework taking advantage of recent convergent developments in several disciplines:

- a number of disciplines have adopted a common theoretical framework for explaining biological and cultural evolution that emphasizes the properties of interacting, goal-directed agents, e.g. behavioural economics, evolutionary game theory in political science and economics, evolutionary approaches in cognitive and social psychology and neuroscience, replicator chemistry, population dynamic accounts of cultural evolution within anthropology, and the continued importance of evolution in our understanding of cooperative relationships between all kinds of organisms.

- Methodological advances in several disciplines provide crucial new information about the properties of agents and their interactions. Examples include new tools from molecular

For an overview over procedures and the documentation required and national contact points, see below and, in greater detail, http://www.esf.org/TECT

The overall goal of TECT is to build a multidisciplinary research framework that encourages collaborative research into the evolution of cooperation and trading both within and between human, social, life and natural sciences. A preference will be given to proposals that explicitly address the idea that cooperative phenomena at widely different levels of organisation have their roots in similar evolutionary processes, be they genetic or cultural.

Background and Objectives

The phenomenon of cooperation is a puzzle in many areas of research. It can be observed in organisms from bacteria to multinational alliances in human societies, but in many cases science has as yet failed to explain what it is and why it exists.

Co-operators invest in order to obtain a benefit, but risk being exploited by free-riders who take the benefit without paying the cost. Likewise, traders may reap gains, but expose themselves to the risk that the gains are monopolized by their partner. The scientific puzzle is to identify the mechanisms that allow co-operators to reap the benefits of cooperation without being exploited.

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UK researchers eligible for funding from ESRC, which is participating in “TECT” with associate status, and which offers funding for applications associated with the Call, can apply as “Associate Partners” if they bring added value to a CRP. They should visit the ESRC website for details, and the “TECT” site http://www.esf.org/TECT for updates
Scientists from different disciplinary backgrounds design and conduct studies on cooperation phenomena ranging across different organisms, societies, or systems (or the same entities in different environments). The goal may be to obtain information about the nature of underlying mechanisms, to do independent tests of the same hypothesis or model, or to trace the phylogeny of mechanisms. A further goal may be to design artificial cooperative systems.

- Empirical scientists and theoreticians working in different fields, but focusing on the same basic phenomena, design and conduct a research project with strong feedback between the two components, such that theoretical (incl.: modelling) and empirical work evolve together over the course of the programme.
- Senior researchers working in at least two different fields share their roots in similar evolutionary and developmental processes, be they genetic or cultural.

Multidisciplinary research into “cooperation” has become both possible and potentially profitable for the first time. The theoretical convergence allows researchers from a wide range of disciplines to discuss cooperation in a common scientific idiom. This is a crucial development since in order to appreciate the complexity of cooperation, input is required from beyond biology and economics, from fields such as anthropology, history, sociology, cognitive science, religious studies and psychology. Methodological innovation is also essential since progress depends not only on the profitable exchanges of models and theory among disciplines, but also on the transfer of empirical methods and results from one discipline to another.

Disciplines more closely related to the scope of TECT include in alphabetical order: anthropology (biological, physical, social); biology (behavioural and evolutionary ecology, endocrinology, ethology, palaeontology, physiology; theoretical biology); chemistry (autocatalytic chemistry, replicator and systems chemistry); cognitive sciences (artificial intelligence, evolutionary robotics, embodiment, philosophy of mind); economics (microeconomics, neuro- & endocrino-economics, game theory); history (social and cultural history); linguistics; mathematics (dynamic systems theory; game theory); neurosciences; philosophy of science; political sciences (comparative politics, political theory; law); psychology (economic, social and developmental and evolutionary psychology); and sociology (economic sociology; management studies; theory of organisation).

Scientific Goals

TECT encourages proposals for Collaborative Research Projects (CRPs) that do not fit easily within existing funding structures due to their multidisciplinary nature. Proposals should aim to initiate or strengthen collaborative ties both within and between the social and natural sciences and the humanities. A preference will be given to proposals that explicitly address the idea that cooperative phenomena at widely different levels of organization have their roots in similar evolutionary and developmental processes, be they genetic or cultural.

At the programme-level, the multi-disciplinary character of TECT will be guaranteed through ESF supported networking activities (science meetings; summer schools; possibly joint publications).

In order to develop the potential for multidisciplinary research through the internal structure of the Collaborative Research Project, CRPs could be organised in the following ways:

- Scientists from different disciplinary backgrounds design and conduct studies on cooperation phenomena ranging across different organisms, societies, or systems (or the same entities in different environments). The goal may be to obtain information about the nature of underlying mechanisms, to do independent tests of the same hypothesis or model, or to trace the phylogeny of mechanisms. A further goal may be to design artificial cooperative systems.
- Empirical scientists and theoreticians working in different fields, but focusing on the same basic phenomena, design and conduct a research project with strong feedback between the two components, such that theoretical (incl.: modelling) and empirical work evolve together over the course of the programme.
- Senior researchers working in at least two different fields share their roots in similar evolutionary and developmental processes, be they genetic or cultural.

TECT welcomes research which may illuminate the challenges facing human society today, for example in the medical, social, environmental fields. The outcome of projects may provide a better understanding of cooperation, thus contributing to effective strategies such as controlling epidemic spread of disease, more efficient organization of joint endeavours and reduction of intolerance and social conflicts.

Research Topics

The Programme revolves around a number of interrelated themes and specific research areas, which may all benefit from coordinated input from bio-, human and social sciences:

1. Integrating Methods and Disciplines

Within the broad theoretical consensus, a number of competing approaches have been used to explain the occurrence of cooperative behaviour, but none is fully supported by observational and experimental data. Consequently, there is a great deal of controversy over which models are most appropriate, whether the assumptions on which these models rest are accurate, and whether the right kinds of empirical tests are being performed.

TECT encourages theoretical and empirical scientists to work closely together in order to

(a) improve the fit between theory and data,
(b) generate new theoretical insights based on sound empirically-demonstrated assumptions,
(c) expand the range of empirical observations on which such theoretical models can be tested.
For example, does the spatial structure of a population influence patterns of cooperation and competition in the real world in the same way that it does in computer simulations? Does the exercise of power by one or more individuals influence how the gains from trade and from other forms of cooperation are distributed among the participants? Is human prosocial behaviour driven by adaptive emotional mechanisms, does it reflect a concern for the actor’s reputation in his community or is it all a ‘big mistake’ caused by the faltering of ancient psychological adaptations in the artificial atmosphere of the laboratory?

TECT aims at exploring the degree to which cooperative behaviours across species reflect the operation of the same underlying strategies, and, by the same token, to test whether superficially similar strategies actually share the same underlying deep structure.

For example, bacteria and plants have been shown to cooperate, but do the same evolutionary processes explain the cooperative behaviour of cleaner fish, capuchin monkeys and humans? How does a species’ history determine the form of cooperation observed, and how robust are cooperative mechanisms across organismic groups? To what degree do species other than our own have roles, norms and institutions? Does the structure of social relationships allow policing to develop as a stabilising factor? Does interspecific cooperation differ in essence from intraspecific cooperation? To what degree do co-evolutionary and niche-constructing processes drive the patterns we see in nature?

TECT will bring together descriptive empirical work with theoretical models, will test and refine the assumptions on which these models are based. Where the fit between theory and data cannot be improved, TECT can open new theoretical directions to be pursued, informed by real world patterns and aimed at providing testable hypotheses and predictions.

2. The evolutionary, historical and developmental origins of cooperation and trading

Tracing the roots of cooperation and trading is one of the keys to understanding the mechanisms by which they operate. TECT aims at gaining a better understanding of the phylogenetic pathways that cooperation has followed over evolutionary time, the ontogenetic pathways by which cooperative behaviour develops over the course of individual lifespan, and the historical pathways by which different patterns of cooperation and trade emerge within and across cultures.

For example, how do oxytocin titres influence the degree of trust between cooperating partners? Are such mechanisms operating in other animals? Can we trace these mechanisms back to a common ancestral function (e.g., the promotion of parent-offspring bonds)? How does an organism’s evolutionary history constrain and enhance the mechanisms that can evolve? How does an organism’s developmental history link to these evolutionary and/or historical processes? Are there ‘scale-free’ patterns discernible in these data where we can identify similar processes operating at, for example, the microscopic scale of interacting molecules as well as the political interactions of nation states?

TECT encourages the adoption of an explicit multi-level approach to these issues, where evolutionary, developmental and historical processes are investigated as issues in their own right, but with the explicit aim of linking them together in coherent evolutionary-historical sequences.

3. Mechanisms of cooperation

Investigating patterns of cooperation at various scales will allow to identify its origins and to track both evolutionary and historical lineages. However, to understand it fully, more detail is needed on the proximate mechanisms by which organisms implement cooperative strategies.

TECT invites investigations of the morphological, physiological, neurological and cognitive basis of cooperation in specific systems (e.g. symbiosis; mycorrhiza markets; cooperative hunting etc.), in order to identify these mechanisms and link them to the processes and patterns identified by other TECT themes.

Among the research areas presenting major problems for comparability of non-human and human organisms, the nature and function of emotions involved in decision-making has long remained understudied: e.g. fear of deception, anger after being cheated, envy of a partner’s payoff, jealousy of a partner’s social relationships. Another such emotional complex is formed by the mechanisms underlying choice, which can be separated in ‘liking’ (learning preferences) and ‘wanting’ (implementing preferences).

Are these emotional mechanisms designed specifically for cooperation, or have they been co-opted from other functions? Conversely, are mechanisms evolved for cooperation generalised to other domains, and how effective are they? Do hormonal influences on cooperation serve a different function to those governed by neuronal processes? How does the time-scale of interaction affect the likelihood that physiological versus cognitive mechanisms will be engaged? Brain-scanning techniques (PET, fMRI) can monitor the brain activities of individuals while they engage in cooperation and trading, and may enable an assessment of the cognitive demands of such tasks, and the degree to which emotional and cognitive responses are integrated.

The cognitive processes underlying cooperative strategies had been neglected until recently. Theoreticians focused on functional fitness-based explanations for cooperative strategies, which are necessarily silent on how organisms actually implement the strategies they use. However, since organisms are constrained by both task demands and time available, mechanism and function are linked fundamentally. Recent work points to the need to study the “fast and frugal heuristics” of bounded rationality.
4. Biological model systems of human cooperation and trading

TECT invites studies of biological systems that can be manipulated easily, either in the laboratory or in the field. These can serve as model systems and alternatives to computer simulations, notably for the understanding of human behaviour in the context of markets and situations of collective action and the production of common goods.

While theoretical model systems risk overlooking essential elements and building on unrealistic assumptions, experiments with real-life agents rely on strategies and mechanisms tested over the millennia by natural selection. Despite the great heuristic value such model systems provide, only very few studies have adopted this perspective.

The nature and scope of the issues that can be investigated include:

- Inter-specific mutualisms, in which nutrients are traded against nutrients, can be compared to markets in which tangible goods are traded against common currencies (e.g.: Ricardo’s principle of comparative advantage applying to the trading between plants and mycorrhizal fungi and rhizobia under experimental conditions).
- Biological systems in which nutrients are traded against protection (e.g. ants interacting with either plants or various other insect species) or against parasite removal (e.g. cleaning mutualisms) can be considered as models for markets in which tangible goods are traded against services.
- Collective action problems can be investigated using the formation of fruiting bodies in micro-organisms: under specific circumstances, individual bacteria invest in the production of this common good in the absence of any direct returns.
- The conditions under which cooperation emerges in non-cooperative species can be explored using micro-organisms or, indeed, any species with a fast generation time.

TECT aims at bringing together an inventory of promising systems developed for other purposes to be tested for their potential, rather than devise new systems from scratch. A major outcome would be a model system that can easily be kept and manipulated in the laboratory and be used to answer many of the questions suggested above.

Examples for transversal themes between the major research areas forming alternative connections between subject areas and disciplines, e.g.:

- Reproductive behaviour as special form of dyadic cooperation (e.g.: male-female couples producing offspring together). Such relationships are well described in several disciplines and represent a fruitful terrain for broad comparative studies.
- Reproductive levelling and the evolution of cooperation. Common human practices such as monogamy and the within-group sharing of food, information and other valued resources, may reduce the fitness costs of engaging in costly behaviours on behalf of others. Similarly, in many species, the stakes of within group competition are attenuated by policing and other practices. These practices reduce the variance of reproductive success within groups; possibly allowing for the emergence of cooperative behaviours by giving greater relative weight to between group differences in reproductive success. Cross species comparative studies by biologists and anthropologists in this area would be valuable, as would studies by historians, political scientists and sociologists of the emergence of human cooperation at the level of firms, nation states, and other large entities.
- The role of communication in cooperation. Understanding the co-evolution of cooperation and language is fundamental to the understanding of human nature. Could sophisticated forms of cooperation typical for humans have only emerged after the evolution of language, or has the evolution of such forms of cooperation driven the evolution of more complex language?
- Collective action and the management of public goods. Research to date has largely been based on the belief that the absence of binding contracts and effective policing precludes collective action in other organisms. Sociologists and political scientists could, however, work with biologists to identify cases of collective action that occur in nature, in particular, those cases where the reinforcement of collective action fails. On the other hand, laboratory experiments by economists and political scientists show that people often do more for the common good than can be explained by factors like policing. Is collective action without external reinforcement governed by the same mechanisms in human and non-human subjects?
- The exercise of power in trade and cooperation. Trading and cooperation is often based on asymmetric relations of power among the participants, ranging from male lazuli buntings and their juvenile helpers, to dominance relationships in female spotted hyenas, to dispute resolution by dominant males and non dominant coalition formation in some non human primates, to authority relationships in modern firms. Collaboration of biologists, political scientists, economists and anthropologists would be essential to understanding the common and disparate aspects of these and similar cases.
Programme Structure and Management

Programme Structure
The research funding period under the EUROCORES Programme “TECT” is expected to start in 2007 and will run for three to four years, depending on the funding rules and regulations of participating funding agencies. The overall responsibility for the governance of the programme lies with a Management Committee, whose membership is formed by one representative from each participating funding agency (usually a senior science manager) together with an ESF representative (usually the EUROCORES Programme Coordinator). Proposal assessment and selection are the responsibility of an international, independent Review Panel. The members of this panel are leading scientists, appointed by ESF following suggestions from participating funding agencies. The Review Panel is also expected to monitor the overall scientific progress of the programme.

Two stage selection procedure
The selection of proposals follows a rigorous two-stage evaluation procedure, namely an Outline Proposal stage followed by a Full Proposal stage. All proposals are assessed according to a set of criteria concerning the overall scientific quality and relevance of the proposals to the call. It is compulsory to submit an Outline-Proposal in order to participate in the Full-Proposal stage.

At the outline stage, the Review Panel will select Outline Proposals with potential for scientific excellence, by applying the criteria mentioned below. Successful applicants will then be invited to submit Full Proposals which will go through an international peer review and a Review Panel meeting. International referees are selected by the ESF, principally using a pool of scientists suggested by the participating funding agencies and the Review Panel. A list of all the names of referees used for the international peer review will be published once the selection process is complete.

The Review Panel will create a ranked list consisting of the best Full Proposals and will subsequently make recommendations to the Management Committee for the funding of these proposals. The actual granting of the funds to the projects on the ranked list will depend on the total amount of funds available in each country by the participating Funding Agencies. The use of funds in a project will be subject to the rules and regulations of each participating Funding Agency as well as to the national laws of those countries.

Programme management & networking
While funding of the research, incl. travel, within in the projects remains with the national research funding organisations, ESF currently provides support for the programme networking of funded scientists across projects and dissemination activities (EC Contract no. ERAS-CT-2003-980409 under FP 6). Networking among the funded Collaborative Research Projects (CRPs) is an essential and highly valued element of the EUROCORES Programmes. To this end, scientific workshops, summer schools, conference panels and conferences, web facilities, publications and other similar activities will be organised. Such activities will be coordinated by a Programme Coordinator, appointed by ESF, and advised by the Project Leaders of the CRPs, who together form the Scientific Committee.

An Interim Evaluation, conducted by the Review Panel, will assess the overall progress of the Programme, based on the progress of the funded CRPs. Here, the Review Panel has a steering function and can comment on the CRPs’ work plan in relation to the objectives of the overall Programme. A final evaluation will assess the achievements of the Programme.
Proposals from individual scientists or research groups eligible for funding by the agencies participating in the programme will be accepted for consideration in the EUROCORES Programme “TECT”. Proposals must, as a minimum, involve 3 eligible Principle Investigators (PIs) from 3 different countries. Scientists or groups not applying for or not eligible to apply for funding from these agencies (including applicants from industry), can be associated with a proposal where their added scientific value can be demonstrated. Their participation as Associate Partners in a project must be fully self-supporting and will not be financially supported by the participating funding agencies, although they may be eligible for supported participation in cross-programme networking activities. Applications should normally be for three years although applications for shorter or longer time periods may be considered depending on the particular rules of the participating funding agencies. Taking into account the international selection and approval processes, requested project start dates should not be before 1 June 2007.

Outline Proposals

Outline Proposals will be examined by the participating funding agencies for formal eligibility according to their applicable national requirements. This is why all applicants are requested to contact their national points of contact for the Programme. In compliance with the rules and regulations of the participating national funding agencies, the requested funds under EUROCORES Programme “TECT” can include salaries for scientific and technical staff, equipment as well as travel costs and consumables within the project, specifying the amount requested from each Funding Agency. National policies may also require the proposal to contain additional specific information (for special conditions applying to UK applicants for ESRC funds see below). Applicants should be aware that the participating funding agencies can make significant adjustments to the requested funds in order to bring these in line with their rules and regulations.

Applications will be assessed according to a set of criteria in a two-stage procedure, as to ensure a thorough selection of scientifically excellent proposals. At the outline stage, the Review Panel will select proposals with potential for scientific excellence, by applying the following criteria:

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

An Outline Proposal submitted must comprise:

- A short description of the CRP (max. 1200 words, incl. objectives, milestones, methodologies (e.g.: experiments, fieldwork etc);
- Short description of how (and why) the partners contributing to the CRP will work together;
- Short CVs of Project Leader (PL), all PIs and Associate Partners (max. 1 page each, incl. 5 most relevant publications);
- Estimated budget (consistent with the rules of relevant national funding agency) 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 IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) will be in place within projects, following the applicable national legislation and national funding agency rules. 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.

It is also expected that all relevant clearance of other national or international committees (e.g.: ethics) has been obtained before funding is granted. It is the responsibility of applicants to clarify any such matters (if applicable) with their national contact points.
**Full Proposals**

Following the recommendations of the Review Panel, Full Proposals will be invited. The deadline for full proposals is expected to be **26 September 2006**. For the Full Proposals, the most important selection criterion is “Scientific quality”. Other criteria include interdisciplinarity (according to the scope of the call), qualification of applicants, level of integration and collaboration, feasibility, European added value and relation to other projects (risk of double-funding and track record for collaboration).

The Full Proposals will be assessed by at least three independent external experts. After receiving all referee reports, they will be made anonymous and then sent to the applicants for their information and to give them an opportunity to comment on the referee report by means of a response letter. The Review Panel will rank all the Full Proposals based on the evaluation of the Full Proposal, the anonymous referee reports and the applicant’s responses to these.

Full proposals must include a well-argued scientific case (both for the collaboration envisaged and for the individual contributions), a list of participants, a detailed tabulated budget and other supporting information. Aiming for scientific synergy and to integrate multinational expertise, a single, common scientific case must be made throughout the proposal; however, the amount requested from each national funding agency has to be clearly and separately specified. **Detailed instructions on requirements and how to complete the application forms will be made available once Full Proposals are being invited.**

The Project Leader will act as ESF’s principal contact for the proposal, and for the duration any subsequent project. He/she will be responsible for representing the project, for its participation in programme activities, and for any reporting requirements placed on the project as a whole as part of the programme. All Principal Investigators will be responsible for dealing with the requirements attached to the contributions of their own funding agencies.

Principal Investigators from countries where research staff costs and major equipments are normally provided by means other than research grants/contracts should clarify their eligible costs under the EUROCORES Programme TECT with their agency before submission. The relationship with existing national or international research financial support should be clearly explained. Major items of expenditure will require justification in the proposal. Full instructions and application forms will be available on the Programme websites.

**Programme Terminology**

**Collaborative Research Projects (CRPs)** are the international research activities that make up a EUROCORES programme. A CRP consists of a number of **Individual Projects (IPs)**, each led by a **Principal Investigator (PI)**. Each CRP is represented by a Principal Investigator who is designated **Project Leader (PL)**.

**Associated Partners (APs)** are Principal Investigators of research teams participating in a CRP but not supported by a Participating EUROCORES Funding Agency (EFA). The APs will be members of a CRP and will be assessed as such, but cannot be Project Leaders.
Germany

Mrs. Angelika Lange-Gao
Max-Planck-Gesellschaft / Max Planck Society
Generalverwaltung
80539 München
Tel: +49 89 2108 1265
Fax: +49 89 2108 1451
E-mail: langegao@gv.mpg.de

Max Planck Institutes only

Max Planck Institutes are provided with funds to support their own international projects. If an MPI wishes to take part in a EUROCORES Programme which does not fall within the DFG funding scope, the institute will cover costs with its own budget.

Czech Republic

Dr. Veronika Palečková
Grantová agentura České republiky/ Czech Science Foundation (GACR)
Department of International Relations
Narodní 3
110 00 Prague 1
Tel: +420 224 240 594
Fax: +420 224 240 598
E-mail: paleckova@kav.cas.cz

France

Mr. Carlos de Oliveira
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique / National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS)
Suivi des Conventions et Relations Internationales
Département des Sciences de l’Homme et de la Société
3, rue Michel-Ange
75794 Paris Cedex 16
Tel: +33 (0) 1 44 96 53 02
Fax: +33 (0) 1 44 96 49 59
E-mail: carlos.deoliveira@cnrs-dir.fr
(tentative)

CNRs proposers should liaise with the CNRS contact person for application procedures at least 3 weeks before the submission of the CEP proposal.

And

Dr. Patrice Cayré
Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)
Département des Ressources Vivantes
213, rue La Fayette
75480 Paris Cedex 10
Tel: +33 (0) 1 48 03 76 72
Fax: +33 (0) 1 48 03 78 12
E-mail: drv@paris.ird.fr

Netherlands

Drs. Maarjke Kreuzen
Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek / Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)
Social Science Research Council (MaGW)
300 Laan van Nieuw Oost Indië
PO Box 93461
2509 AL The Hague
Tel: +31 70 344 09 39
Fax: +31 70 383 28 41
E-mail: kreuzen@nwo.nl

List of contact persons at participating organisations
Portugal

Mrs. Maria José Camecelha de Abreu
Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia / Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT)
Av. Dom Carlos I, 126-2º
1249-074 Lisboa
Tel: +351 21 3924467
Fax: +351 21 3924498
E-mail: maria.jose.ca@fct.mctes.pt

Romania

Prof. Maria-Luiza Flonta
Consiliul National al Cercetarii Stiintifice din
Invatamantul Superior / National University Research Council (NURC)
Department of Physiology and Biophysics
Faculty of Biology
University of Bucharest
Spl. Independentei 91-95, Sect.5
050095 Bucharest
Tel: +40 21 318 15 74
Fax: +40 21 318 15 73
E-mail: flonta@biologie.kappa.ro

Spain

Dr. Javier Moscoso Sarabia
Dirección General de Investigación Ministerio de Ciencia y Tecnología / Interministerial Commission for Science and Technology (MCYT)
and also for
Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas / Council for Scientific Research (CSIC)
Paseo de la Castellana 160
28071 Madrid
Tel: +34 91 349 41 54
Fax: +34 91 349 42 24
E-mail: javier.moscoso@mec.es

Sweden

Dr. Marianne Wikgren
Vetenskapsrådet / Swedish Research Council (VR)
and also for
Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities (KVHAA)
Division of Humanities and Social Sciences
Regeringsgatan 56
103 78 Stockholm
Tel: +46 8 546 44 207
E-mail: marianne.wikgren@vr.se

Turkey

Dr. Ferdan ERGUT
Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknik Arastirma Kurumu / Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey (TÜBITAK)
Middle East Technical University (METU)
Department of History
06531 Balgat-Ankara
Tel : +90 312 210 50 34
E-mail: fergut@metu.edu.tr

United States

Dr. Kaye Husbands Fealing
Program Director Economics
National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Room 995 N
Arlington, Virginia 22230
Tel: +1 703 292 7267
Fax: +1 703 292 9068
E-mail: khusband@nsf.gov

Associate status:

Associate status also applies to researchers funded through other funding agencies, offering funding under schemes other than this Call for projects associated to the CRPs.

United Kingdom

Mr. Chris Godwin
Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC)
Policy & Resources
Polaris House
North Star Avenue
Swindon SN2 1UJ
Tel: +44 1793 413055
Fax: +44 1793 413010
E-mail: chris.godwin@esrc.ac.uk

UK researchers eligible for funding from ESRC, which is participating in "TECT" with associate status, and which offers funding for applications associated with the Call, can apply as «Associate Partners» if they bring added value to a CRP. They should visit the ESRC website for details, and the “TECT” site http://www.esf.org/tect for updates.

European Science Foundation

Dr. Rüdiger Klein
EUROCORES Programme Coordinator
1 quai Lezay-Marmiésia
BP 90015
67080 Strasbourg
France
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 76 71 04
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 37 05 32
E-mail: tect@esf.org

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