Better Analyses Based on Endangered Languages (EuroBABEL)

DRAFT Call for Outline Proposals

What is EUROCORES?

The ESF European Collaborative Research (EUROCORES) Programmes offer a flexible framework for researchers from Europe to work on questions which are best addressed in larger scale collaborative research programmes. The EUROCORES Programmes allow excellent researchers from different participating countries to collaborate in research projects 'at the bench'. They also allow, when appropriate, colleagues from non-European countries, for example the US, to participate. The Programmes encourage and foresee networking and collaboration of researchers to achieve synthesis of scientific results across the programme, to link to related programmes, and to disseminate results.
EUROCORES Programmes allow national research funding organisations in Europe and beyond to support top class research in and across all scientific areas, by matching the needs articulated by the scientific community with their strategic priorities.
Funding decisions on the projects and the research funding remain with the national research funding organisations, based on international peer review operated by ESF. ESF also provides support for networking the researchers and for the scientific synthesis of research results and their dissemination[1]. 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

[1] Currently supported through a contract with the European Commission under the Sixth Framework Programme (EC Contract no. ERAS-CT-2003-980409).

Better Analyses Based on Endangered Languages (EuroBABEL)

Following agreement with funding organisations in # *countries,* the European Science Foundation is launching a Call for Outline Proposals for Collaborative Research Projects (CRPs) to be undertaken within the EUROCORES Programme EuroBABEL: *Better Analyses Based on Endangered Languages*. EuroBABEL will run for 3-4 years and it includes national research funding, as well as support for networking and dissemination activities provided by the ESF. The Programme aims to support high quality multidisciplinary research.

The main purpose of the theme is to promote empirical research on underdescribed endangered languages, both spoken and signed, that aims at changing and refining our ideas about linguistic structure in general and about language in relation to cognition, social and cultural organization and related issues in a trans-/multidisciplinary perspective.

Outline Proposals are to be submitted by 12 May 2008, 12:00 PM. It is expected that Full Proposals will be invited by 30 June 2008 with 8 September 2008, 12:00 PM as expected deadline for submission.

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

Background and objectives

The diversity of the world's languages is on the verge of becoming dramatically reduced in the decades to come. Partly due to the attention that has been drawn to this problem, the field of linguistics has been moving towards taking the diversity of languages more fully into account. The dramatic change in the amount and the nature of primary data that is being collected and analyzed has proven to have, and will continue to have, a profound influence on our insights into the human language faculty. The EUROCORES programme EuroBABEL: *Better Analyses Based on Endangered Languages* will solidify this development and strengthen the impact of European research on linguistics as a whole. By conducting the research in close cooperation with researchers in the countries where endangered languages are spoken, the process of linguistic description, documentation and analysis of underdescribed languages will be accelerated.

The proposal is crucially different from and complements existing documentation initiatives in that our emphasis lies on bringing the newly gathered data to bear on the development of linguistic theory and all areas concerned with the study of language. The proposal is to cover a number of projects that will work on primary data, both newly collected and archival material, in order to concentrate on the analysis and the use of the results to expand and correct our insights into the structure and nature of human language.

Background

Every culture represents a unique and viable alternative way of life. Loss of cultural diversity is a loss of experience and knowledge that has proven its potential usefulness for mankind in general. Languages, besides being part of people's cultural heritage, constitute a complete and complex reflection of a culture. The loss of a language thus entails the irretrievable loss of cultural heritage. The documentation of languages is a vital instrument in preserving cultural heritage and safeguarding knowledge systems.

Only a small proportion of the world's roughly 6000 known languages has been properly documented. Moreover, the majority of these 6000 languages is seriously endangered and this imminent loss of diversity is being vastly accelerated under the influence of globalization tendencies and the spread of languages of wider communication into the geographical areas and cultural domains of the endangered languages. As a consequence of this influence, features of the languages of wider communication are carried over into minority languages, reducing the linguistic diversity even more. In this light, the sense of urgency to to work on and with these languages now is ever-increasing.

Linguistics is at a crucial moment in its history. Research focus on minority languages has increased dramatically over the last decades and the insights from this research are changing our view on language. Furthermore, the growing interest in language documentation and the concern about the imminent threat to language diversity has revolutionized the research on undocumented languages in a number of ways: firstly, the need to store data for generations to come has triggered a reflection on data collection and storage; secondly, there is a shift towards collection of natural discourse and text data and away from the exclusive use of questionnaires and elicitation lists. This in itself has strengthened the bottom-up approach to generalizations about linguistic behaviour and is forcing linguists to let the data speak. Categories that are unknown or not encoded grammatically in our Western languages turn out to be quite widespread in the rest of the world. The wealth of new data is changing linguistics and related disciplines and will continue to change them in the coming decade.

Sign languages are explicitly included in EuroBABEL because we see a radical reduction in the diversity in sign languages due to several external causes while sign linguistics is crucial for our understanding of the human language capacity.

Scientific goals

The aim of the EUROCORES programme EuroBABEL: *Better Analyses Based on Endangered Languages* is to highlight and incorporate new insights and unexpected results from the study of endangered languages into the wider field of linguistics and related disciplines.

Research on lesser known languages shows that there are important grammatical categories such as evidentiality that are not expressed systematically in major European languages. It also shows that the grammatical relations of subject and object which are so fundamental to the dominant view of grammar play a less central role in many other languages. This research not only provides us with new sounds, new conceptual structures, new categories and counter-examples to hypothesized universals, it also shifts the balance of what we see as common or rare in the languages of the world. It has the potential for still broader impact on all disciplines concerned with the study of language structure and use, including formal grammatical theory, typology, historical linguistics, psycholinguistics and the study of language, culture and society. The choice for endangered languages among the underdescribed languages is not an inherent scientific one but a strategic one given the imminent danger of loss of diversity.

Research topics

To address the objectives outlined above, the programme invites projects on topics that are likely to change our ideas about the structure of language and the role of language in human society and history. These projects can belong to any one of the following three broad categories:

I.   Linguistic theory and endangered languages
II. Innovative approaches to creating descriptive resources for endangered languages
III. Language, cognition and social organisation in a cross-linguistic perspective

Ideally, projects will build upon existing data sets, which may include archival material, combined with new fieldwork on the language(s) in question.

Many of the endangered languages which have new insights to offer are to be found in Africa, the Americas and the Asia-Pacific region. The number of endangered languages in Europe is relatively low, but the programme pays due attention to these as well, emphasizing the global nature of the loss of linguistic diversity. There is an urgent need to describe it now and in detail, in line with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Within the EuroBABEL context the political status of a language or dialect is not of importance. Whether a certain variety is a dialect of another language is immaterial, as long as the phenomena attested in the variety (or varieties) at hand promise to further our understanding of language in general. Relevant phenomena do not have to pertain to linguistic structure narrowly defined, but may also pertain to the overall sociolinguistic constellation or language-related cultural practices.

I. Linguistic theories and endangered languages

The goal here is to bring insights from endangered language research into linguistic theorizing, broadly conceived, i.e., including not only grammatical theory but also linguistic typology, historical reconstruction, psycholinguistics, etc.

The main requirement is that the project proposal should include a clearly delimited theoretical research topic and a set of data from endangered languages which challenge received wisdom in the area in question and thus may lead to major revisions in current theories. Projects that explore new methods (such as, for example, new statistical methods in phylogenetics of langua) or new fields of research (such as, for example, universals of lexical structure) are equally invited. Examples of possible projects include, but are not restricted to:

➢ The challenge of polysynthetic languages for theories of lexical organization, both linguistic and cognitive/psycholinguistic.

➢ Challenges for prosodic typology from endangered languages.

➢ Testing psycholinguistic parsing theories on endangered languages.

➢ Refining theories of language death.

➢ Exploring grammatical categories not well attested in major European and Asian languages such as mirativity, switch reference, evidentiality or noun classification systems.

II. Innovative approaches to creating descriptive resources for endangered languages

Traditional descriptive resources for endangered languages are grammars, dictionaries (including comparative dictionaries) and text collections. These resources are usually created by one or two authors and cast in formats heavily influenced by disciplinary and national traditions.

EuroBABEL invites projects that take an innovative approach to grammar and dictionary writing. Such innovation could consist in forming teams from different research traditions and including, if possible, local researchers from the country where the endangered language(s) are spoken. Other innovative approaches might involve extending research on:

➢ grammars and dictionaries in multimedia format.

➢ grammars and dictionaries created by interdisciplinary teams of authors, i.e. including linguists, anthropologists, ethnobotanists, archeologists, native speakers, etc.

➢ grammars and dictionaries created by teams of authors with different areal specializations, e.g. two Africanists collaborating with an Austronesianist in writing a grammar of an endangered Nilotic language.

Language, history, cognition and social organisation from a cross-linguistic perspective

Detailed and interdisciplinary studies are needed to explore the influence of culture on language. EuroBABEL welcomes project proposals that employ a comparative and cross-linguistic methodology to the exploration of the relationships between language, culture and social structure. Project proposals in this topic

3

area would be expected to involve an interdisciplinary component. Examples of possible projects include, but are not restricted to:

> the conceptualization and compartmentalization of space and time.

> a comparative study of language change under comparable sociolinguistic constellations.

> the investigation of disappearing contact constellations (e.g. multi-register, multi-lingual) which could lead to further refinements of current ideas about language contact and linguistic areas.

> a multi-disciplinary approach to the origins and formation of a linguistic and cultural area. Real progress in sorting out what has happened in such a region can only be made through the coordinated effort of a number of specialists such as linguists, archaeologists,(social) anthropologists and geneticists. The results of such a joint effort would hopefully add to our knowledge of the dynamics of the formation of linguistic areas, especially in areas of lesser known languages.

> language acquisition of an endangered language in a multilingual setting.

Project Design

The research groups will concentrate on one or more endangered language(s) for which some knowledge is already available, enough to establish what kind of interesting features are likely to be found. At the same time, the research will involve the collection of new data to enable an in-depth study of these features.

The research groups are encouraged to involve researchers from the region where the languages under investigation are spoken. The goal here is to increase the capacity of these researchers to carry out similar work in the future and to participate in general linguistic discussion. Some but not yet all national funding organisations offer the opportunity to let researchers from non-OECD countries lacking an adequate funding infrastructure to profit from their funding. As a consequence these remarks should be read as stimulation to do what is possible and not as a restricting condition.

Research groups are also encouraged to find ways to broaden the community of linguists working on underdescribed languages. In particular, researchers from countries with a strong philological and typological tradition but little opportunity for fieldwork in the past are invited to join the EuroBABEL initiative.

Dissemination into all areas of linguistics and related disciplines is encouraged. This might best be achieved by organizing special sessions at general conferences such as the conference of the Association of Linguistic Typology, the International Pragmatics Association, GLOW, etc. rather than at endangered-languages or regional conferences.

EuroBABEL projects are expected to be output-oriented and proposals should include details about publication plans. Publications should be targeted at mainstream audiences and disseminated through widely accessible channels.On the other hand, the expected output of the projects should not be restricted to publications alone but may also include e.g., database resources.

There are legal and ethical issues involved such as research permission by the local government, consent and cooperation of the language community, and intellectual and cultural property rights. The various existing endangered languages programs have acquired ample

experience in these issues including ethics guidelines to adhere to. EuroBABEL project proposals should be specific about how they intend to deal with these issues.

Likewise, project proposals should clearly specify how they intend to ensure proper storage and access of newly gathered data. Standards, methods and plans for sustainable data storage need to be spelled out in the applications. The various existing endangered languages programmes also provide guidelines for good practice in this area.

The CLARIN (Common Language Resources and Technology Infrastructure) project provides a perfect parallel initiative to EuroBABEL allowing for research (computational and otherwise) of the stored data and offering a proper environment for access to EuroBABEL's results, see www.clarin.eu.

Project applications should specify how the variety or varieties under study are endangered. The major diagnostic for endangerment are significant reductions in the number and quality of the usage domains of a given variety. The fact that children do not acquire the variety anymore may be considered the clearest indication of lack of vitality.

Building Coherence through Networking

Since it is EuroBABEL's goal to strengthen linguistic theory, there is a need for creating models and organisational processes that result in stronger and more direct interactions between empirical research and theoretical debate. This can be achieved in several ways:

➢ interaction and cross-fertilization between EuroBABEL projects. Cross-project common interest working groups such as a semantics working group could be developed.

➢ ensuring the dissemination of Euro BABEL results at existing conferences and workshops.

➢ organizing a number of "summer" schools which would offer courses on major topics of current theoretical debate as well as new techniques of data collection and processing. These "summer" schools will be open for all, specifically including colleagues in the countries of the endangered languages. They need not be only in the summer since for some regions this is the time to do fieldwork.

Guidelines for applications

(Outline and Full Proposals)

Collaborative Research Project (CRP) proposals from individual scientists or research groups eligible for funding by the organisations participating in the Programme will be accepted for consideration in the EUROCORES Programme EuroBABEL.

Scientists or groups not applying for or not eligible to apply for funding from these organisations (including applicants from industry), can be associated with a proposal where their added scientific value is demonstrated. Their participation as Associate Partners in a project must be fully self-supporting and will not be financially supported by the participating funding organisations.

Proposals are only eligible, if they fulfil the following **criteria**:
- Proposals must involve, as a minimum, three eligible Principal Investigators (PIs) from **three different countries.**
- A maximum of 50 % of the Individual Projects (IPs) in a Collaborative Research Project (CRP) can come from one country.
- Proposals must involve more PIs than Associated Partners

Applications should normally be for three years although applications for shorter or longer time periods may be considered depending on the rules of the participating funding organisations. Taking into account the selection and approval processes, the successful projects are expected to begin their activities in **March 2009**.

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/eurobabel**

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

Prior to submitting Outline Proposals, all applicants <u>have to</u> contact their national funding organisations in order to verify

eligibility and to ensure compliance with their relevant organisations' granting rules and regulations (see contact persons listed on page 8).
At the time of online submission of the Outline Proposals, the Project Leader is asked to confirm this on behalf of all the participants in the CRP.

Outline Proposals

Outline Proposals are invited by 12th May 2008.
Outline Proposals will be examined by the participating funding organisations for formal eligibility. Therefore, it is crucial that all applicants 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 EuroBABEL 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 Organisation. National policies may also require the proposal to contain additional specific information. Applicants should be aware that the participating funding organisations 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, including objectives, milestones, methodologies (for example experiments and fieldwork);
    - o 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. one page each, including five most relevant publications);

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- 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 IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) will be in place within projects, following the applicable national legislation and national funding organisation 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 (for example 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

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 8th September 2008.

Please note that only applicants who 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), qualification of applicants, level of integration and collaboration, feasibility and appropriateness of methodologies, 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 expert referees who are selected by the ESF from a pool of scientists suggested by the participating funding organisations and the Review Panel. A list of all referee names used for the international peer review will be published once the selection process is complete.

After receiving all referee reports, they will be made available (anonymous) to the applicants for their information and for commenting (optional). 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 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 Individual projects on the ranked list will depend on the total amount of funds available in each country by the participating Funding Organisations. The use of funds in a project will be subject to the rules and regulations of each participating Funding Organisation as well as to the national laws of those countries.

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. A single, common scientific case must be made throughout the proposal to demonstrate an aim 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 once Full Proposals are being invited.

The **Project Leader** will be the main CRP proposal contact point for ESF for the duration of the project. He/she will be responsible for representing the Collaborative Research Project, for its participation in programme activities, and for any reporting requirements placed on the project as a whole.

All **Principal Investigators** will be responsible for dealing with the requirements attached to the contributions of their own funding organisation.

Guidelines for applications

(Outline and Full Proposals)

Programme Structure and Management

Programme Structure
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 organisation (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 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 which is formed by the Project Leaders of all funded CRPs will be responsible for proposing networking activities for scientific synergy in the EUROCORES Programme. They will also advise and support the EUROCORES Programme Coordinator in the coordination of networking activities.

Programme Networking

Networking activities are designed to strengthen the science objectives of this EUROCORES Programme by promoting coherence in the activities of the science community involved. This will provide the European added-value which is the central objective of any EUROCORES Programme.

Networking and collaboration within EUROCORES Programmes takes place at two levels:
1. between the various Individual Projects within each Collaborative Research Project (CRP) and
2. between the funded CRPs within the programme as a whole.

The intra-CRP activities are supported through the research grants each participant receives from the participating funding organisations in the given CRP. The cross-CRP activities are funded through contributions 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 stirred by the aims and the nature of the particular EUROCORES Programme. The theme which was the basis of this EUROCORES Programme has been selected for its clear need of collaboration in the proposed field. The funded CRPs will collectively set up and further 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:

- 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 schemes;
- 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 existing collaborations are enhanced but new and strategic partnership opportunities are also identified.
Furthermore, these activities may provide opportunities to explore aspects of the programme which are not covered by the funded research projects.

The integrative activities between the CRPs will help to strengthen the field by building coherence within this emerging research community and will serve as a platform for the research work which is done 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 budgeted for in your proposal. Funds for networking between the CRPs will be centrally managed by the ESF through contributions from the participating funding organisations.

Guidelines for applications

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Programme evaluation

A Mid-Term evaluation, conducted by the Review Panel, will evaluate 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 whole EUROCORES Programme.

As it is currently not known which Funding Organisations will support this programme, please contact your National Funding Organisation or Research Council to inquire about this programme.

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