



6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme  
Anticipating scientific and technological needs

## **NEST**

New and Emerging Science and Technology

REFERENCE DOCUMENT ON

### **“Cultural dynamics: from transmission and change to innovation”**

**2005-NEST-PATHFINDER INITIATIVES**

**24 October 2005**

This document complements the NEST 2005 work programme, by providing more detailed guidance to proposers on the above PATHFINDER initiative.

**This is a version of the reference document referring to the call FP6-NEST-2005-Path-CUL topic ref. “Cultural Dynamics”, with the call deadline on 15 February 2006.**

**This call is open for STREPS, CAs and SSAs.**

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**Please note that there is a National Contact Point (NCP) for NEST in your country who can offer personalized services. The mission of NEST NCPs is to inform, advice and support potential applicants in the preparation, submission and follow-up of NEST proposals.**

**For contact details: <http://www.cordis.lu/nest/ncp.htm>**

## 1. RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

This NEST-PATHFINDER initiative is intended to promote research aimed at bringing together from different fields of science, technology and the humanities, concepts, data and analytical methods, to promote a better understanding and predictive capacity relating to transmission, change and innovation in human culture.

The development of culture is not only an important achievement of mankind, culture also impacts all sectors of human life. Understanding culture, its continuities and discontinuities should, therefore, be a major concern of scientific analyses. The central issues facing societies everywhere regarding the quality of life (poverty, development, global change, education, innovation, criminality and terrorism, immigration, urban regeneration...) have a significant cultural dimension.

At the same time, as levels of affluence rise, the economy and business depend increasingly on developments and/or factors that are essentially cultural in nature (markets for culture, entertainment, education; cultural determinants of fashion, consumer trends and purchasing patterns etc.). Knowledge about the ways in which culture and cultural traits are transmitted, and the possibilities these processes allow for influencing cultural developments and cultural change will be critical components of strategies to address these issues.

There are also increasingly strong interactions between culture and technology. Developments in technology not only bring new cultural phenomena or opportunities that can bring huge challenges to society (e.g. the “clash of civilisations” mediated by global communication networks), but also increase the speed of development of new cultural forms.

These interests in culture and cultural phenomena run in parallel with significant opportunities for new perspectives and approaches, and related methods and tools, for better cross-disciplinary understanding of cultural dynamics. In parallel with advances in social science and anthropology – the fields traditionally most concerned with analysing human culture - other research developments open prospects for insights in areas such as:

- Cognitive science, e.g. the study of the cognitive correlates of cultural phenomena, and the cognitive and developmental constraints/controls mediating culture acquisition and cultural change.
- Evolutionary models, such as neo-darwinian models of co-evolution of cultural and biological traits.
- Network analysis and related fields, linking the understanding of very diverse phenomena such as virus epidemiology, social networks, citation systems and the structure of the worldwide web.
- Mathematical and economic theories, such as game theory, contemporary computer power and the massive and detailed data (genetic, geographical and language data) for the *simulation* of cultural dynamics to understand for example consumer behaviour, educational and market development, and problems such as criminality.

More than figures, research should provide meanings to facilitate understanding. More than collecting data on social behaviour, it should emphasize the search for understanding the meaning and/or impact of culturally perceived values and practices on individual and group decisions.

The opportunity now presents itself to develop more precise and useful concepts and better understanding of processes involved in culture transmission, by bringing together research across disciplines. Such research is likely to be particularly useful if it transcends the

current barriers in the study of culture by identifying cultural items independently of the cultural values that define the normative standards in a society or if it helps to overcome the related distinction between, broadly, the “science of understanding” culture, and the “technology” of cultural monitoring and intervention (i.e. such things as data mining, media and group working technologies, etc.).

## 2. ORGANISATION OF THE INITIATIVE

NEST has limited resources, dedicated to early stage funding of emerging research areas. The organization of this initiative reflects these parameters. It will involve:

- A series of research projects (using the STREP instrument – specific targeted research projects), aiming to promote highly interdisciplinary research that addresses questions and challenges in understanding and predicting cultural dynamics.
- Networking actions (using the CA instrument - co-ordination action), the function of which will be to develop a wider “community of knowledge” across Europe, to exchange knowledge and experience and promote a wider understanding of the implications of research across the various relevant disciplines, as regards “*cultural dynamics: from transmission and change to innovation*”.
- Support actions (using the SSA instrument – specific support action), focusing on the conceptual and practical questions associated specifically with the PATHFINDER topic “*cultural dynamics: from transmission and change to innovation*”.

In its management role, the Commission, for its part, will work to build links between this initiative and other research programmes and associated activities, at national, European and international levels.

## 3. WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH WILL BE PURSUED?

The work programme specifies that projects should bring different disciplines and levels of analysis to bear in novel combinations, to address specific questions which have high scientific interest in the context of the quest for an *integrated* understanding of how cultural environments impact individual minds and how individual minds impact cultural environments.

The research supported by this initiative through **Specific Targeted Research Projects** will be aimed at bringing together research across disciplines, to promote a better understanding and predictive capacity relating to transmission, change and innovation in human culture. The aim is to create a portfolio of ambitious “beacon projects” addressing questions and challenges in understanding “*Cultural dynamics: from transmission and change to innovation*”.

The research supported should address research questions which involve a conceptual negotiation across disciplinary boundaries at the current state of the art, which are potentially tractable, and which bring the possibility of a high impact. The research may focus on specific issues across a very broad range (organisational culture, social questions, cultural bases of terrorism, etc). However it should not be solely empirical; it should aim to make conceptual and analytical advances which also have the potential for generalisation, in relation to broader questions such as, for example:

- Conditions of continuity and or discontinuity of culture and/or cultural change and loss. For example, what are the factors that determine resistance or foster or inhibit cultural penetration/invasion? How do these factors depend on, or interact with historical and evolutionary processes involved.
- Cultural invasion, interpenetration and fragmentation: why are certain cultures successful and others not? How and when can different cultures co-exist? What factors underlie extreme divergence from societal norms?
- How culture influences or determines beliefs of individuals or groups. Understanding culture in relation to: individual versus group behaviour, local versus global contexts, diversity versus uniformity.
- How power is exercised or controlled through culture; influences of public policy and marketing on culture and cultural traits. The interactions between "cultural" markets (media, leisure goods, entertainment) and the dynamics of culture.
- The role and influence of, and resistances to, technology and the media and in particular the internet on cultural dynamics.

The development of new mechanisms and assessment methodologies to predict cultural dynamics more effectively in multi lateral cross cultural research is encouraged.

The selection criteria (see below) are intended to ensure that proposals selected will be those considered to have the highest overall "value-added" in terms of advancing science and long term impact.

International co-operation (partners outside the EU and associated states) are welcomed. However, it should be noted that partners from countries with highly developed Science/Technology capabilities (US, Japan, Canada, Australia...) will normally not be able to receive funds from NEST.

#### **4. WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH WILL NOT BE PURSUED?**

The following activities will not be funded under this initiative:

- Research focussed essentially on data gathering, although empirical *transdisciplinary* research and new approaches to using existing data are highly encouraged.
- Single component data collections e.g. social behaviour on its own with no extended analysis in the context of the call.
- Classical (disciplinary) research on cognition and cognitive systems more generally.
- Development of new infrastructure or major equipment and facilities for investigation.
- Research which could be carried out under the thematic priorities of the 6<sup>th</sup> framework programme (see below).

- Research which is mono-disciplinary, or where there is no substantial inter-disciplinary dialogue across conceptual boundaries.

## 5. WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THE OTHER INSTRUMENTS?

Proposals for the **Co-ordination Action(s) (CA)**<sup>1</sup> supporting this PATHFINDER initiative should *help to co-ordinate existing and future research projects*. They should aim to network European activities in relevant fields around the theme of “*Cultural dynamics: from transmission and change to innovation*”, in order to develop a “community of knowledge” with a common perspective on the development and goals of the discipline.

Creating a European forum for the development and exchange of ideas, on a cross-disciplinary basis, is core to the networking approach. Proposals for the Co-ordination Action(s) associated with this PATHFINDER initiative should stimulate the collaboration between different disciplines.

For the purposes described above the CA instrument may involve various different types of activity, e.g. exchanges of personnel, feasibility studies, interdisciplinary dialogue and interchange, seminar series on key topics, etc. Thus, depending on the proposals submitted, the strategy adopted and the specific work it carries out could be configured in a number of different ways.

The CA also provides the research community with a means to generate ideas for further development of cultural dynamics within the institutional environment of the European Research Area, including European and other programmes for training, mobility, infrastructure development, etc.

Proposals for **Specific Support Actions (SSAs)**, which are linked to the development and implementation of existing PATHFINDER initiatives, are also encouraged. These may include for example, activities to assist in the mapping and developing more detailed definition of the fields in question, assessing future development prospects and trends in the fields.

A high level of public interest might be expected in this field of research, and this suggests that it will be important to involve a wider range of actors than those involved in the research projects, or indeed the research community more broadly.

Specific Support Actions do *not support research and technological development per se*. They differ from co-ordination actions in that they may involve a single participant and tend to be ‘*one shot*’ actions of relatively limited duration.

Activities that do not serve the NEST objectives and the “*Cultural dynamics*” topic in particular, or that would take place anyway without Commission support will not be supported.

## 6. LINKS WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES AND EXPLANATION OF THE RESULTS

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<sup>1</sup> The possibility of more than one Co-ordination Action might be considered if there are compelling reasons for this.

Proposers should be aware of other activities in the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework programme that bear on cultural dynamics and cognitive sciences, including research under the Thematic Priority 7 (Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge Based Society), Thematic Priority 2 (Information Society Technologies, under the heading “Future and Emerging Technologies”) and Thematic Priority 6 (Sustainable development, environment and cultural heritage).

It should, however be understood that the objectives of this NEST PATHFINDER initiative are distinct and clearly differentiated in their form and content from these other FP6 activities.

## 7. PRESENTATION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals will be presented as individual FULL PROPOSALS for research projects (STREPs) or co-ordination actions (CAs), to meet the deadline 15 February 2006. They will be evaluated individually, according to the standard FP6 evaluation criteria for these instruments. A guide for proposers, and guidance notes for proposal evaluation will be published on the NEST web-site.

A pre-proposal check service will be provided up to three weeks before the deadline. This will enable brief feedback to be given to proposers, in order to help them assure the eligibility and judge the relevance of their proposals. This service is to assist proposers; it does not contribute to the official independent evaluation (peer review) of proposals, once they are submitted.

Proposers are encouraged to be concise and address the specific evaluation criteria in their proposals:

- **Relevance:** The specific objectives of the proposal and the cross-disciplinary dimension should be clearly set out. It should be shown how the proposal meets the requirements set out above, including ambitious goals and the broader spirit of the PATHFINDER initiative on “*Cultural dynamics.*”
- **Excellence:** The research should be presented in the context of an assessment of the current state of the art in the relevant fields, demonstrating the specific advances that are to be sought and how these derive from advances in the various disciplines and from the cross-disciplinary work involved. The feasibility of the methodology should be clearly demonstrated.
- **Impact:** The specific impact of the work in terms of scientific advance (empirical and theoretical) should be stated and justified, broader potential impacts and applicability in the short or long term should be set out.
- **Consortium:** The required full range of competences necessary to perform and integrate the proposed research should be demonstrated. For STREPs and CAs the consortium has to consist of at least three independent participants from three different member states or associated states with at least two member states or associated candidate countries.
- **Financial aspects:** The requirements for, and the use of, funds should be sufficiently detailed for the independent evaluators to assess the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of the use of resources (personnel and equipment). Project lifespan for STREPs and CAs should not exceed three years. The indicative Community contribution for CAs and STREPs is normally 2.0 M€. The maximum EC contribution for SSAs is normally 250.000 € with a timescale up to 2 years.

- **Management:** The organisation of the work, including the ways in which cross-disciplinary effort will be achieved, should be set out. Any relevant ethical considerations should be stated, as well as the ways these will be addressed in the course of the project.