

DESCRIPT Programme

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PROGRAMME DESCRIPT

<https://www.inalco.fr/en/decript>

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CALL – INTERNATIONAL VISITING SCHOLARS PROGRAMME

2025 Edition

Publication date: 1 December 2025

Application deadline: 28 February 2026, 6:00 pm (GMT+1)

Before submitting an application to the international visiting scholars programme, applicants are required to read this document carefully in its entirety.

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1. Background and Partners

The DECRIPPT programme (Dispositif d'Études des Crises et Récits civilisationnels par la Pluridisciplinarité et les Terrains – Framework for the Study of Crises and Civilizational Narratives through Multidisciplinarity and Fieldwork), funded under the “Research Programmes in the Social Sciences and Humanities” call for Expressions of Interest, an initiative of France 2030, is a multidisciplinary scientific programme at the intersection of area studies and global studies.

Focusing on the analysis of the relationship between civilizational narratives, universalism, and conflict dynamics at the global level and across four key regions (Indo-Pacific, Africa, Europe–Eurasia, Near and Middle East), DECRIPPT aims to develop original research as well as research tools and mechanisms for transferring research outcomes to society and public policy. The programme approaches civilizational narratives as socially, strategically, and ideologically constructed discourses, articulating specific interpretations of historical trajectories, cultural values, and collective roles within the world order.

Led by Inalco, DECRIPPT is based on a consortium of universities (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Université Paris Panthéon-Assas, Université Paris Sciences & Lettres (PSL), Université Sorbonne Nouvelle (USN), Université Paris 8, Université Bordeaux Montaigne (UBM), Université de Strasbourg (UNISTRA), Sciences Po Paris, Sciences Po Bordeaux, Sciences Po Lille), research organisations (CNRS, IRD), and leading institutions in the field of international relations practice and research-to-policy transfer (AFD, IFRI).

DECRIPPT also relies on a network of more than 50 stakeholders, including international actors selected to strengthen the programme’s scientific excellence and regional grounding, as well as actors aimed at facilitating its impact and the transfer of its results to public policy and society.

The list of programme partners is provided on the following page:
<https://www.inalco.fr/consortium-et-parties-prenantes>

2. Objectives and Characteristics of the Visiting Scholars Programme

DECRIPPT will fund up to 20 international research stays per year, each lasting one month, to conduct research related to the programme’s theme, in collaboration with programme teams and consortium member institutions, and to participate in exchanges with its partners.

International visiting scholars must propose to carry out or complete, during their stay, a research project aligned with the programme’s scientific focus on civilizational narratives and/or civilizationism, in connection with one of its five thematic axes or its methodological axis (see description below). During their stay, participants will contribute to the programme’s publications, conferences, or public events.

Residency Conditions

- **Duration of stays:** 1 month
- **Stipend:** €3,400 (covering travel and living expenses)
- **Eligibility:** researchers and faculty members employed at a non-French university; applications from members of the DECIPT network will be given priority, but the call is open to all scholars employed at universities outside France
- **Residency locations:** Paris, Bordeaux, Lille
- **Organisation:** the programme will provide an official invitation letter to facilitate visa applications for candidates residing outside the Schengen area. In collaboration with its partners, the programme may also assist in identifying possible accommodation solutions. However, scholars remain responsible for arranging and managing their own accommodation.

Expected Contributions

- One article or research note to be published in one of the DECIPT programme's publication series
 - One public lecture and/or Chatham House-style seminar during the stay
 - One podcast episode or thematic video module presenting the research conducted during the stay (to be defined in coordination with programme coordinators)
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3. Application File

Applications must be submitted no later than 28 February 2026 at 6:00 pm (GMT+1) via the following online form:

<https://framaforms.org/programme-decrypt-programme-dinvitation-de-chercheurs-internationaux-decrypt-program-call-for>

Applications must include:

- A cover letter specifying the objectives of the stay
 - A two-page scientific statement describing the topic, methodology, and how the proposed research project aligns with the programme
 - An academic CV
 - A letter of approval from the applicant's employer, specifying, where applicable, which additional costs may be covered
 - A copy of an identity document
 - Contact details of two academic referees
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4. Selection Criteria

- Relevance to DECIPT's thematic focus and scientific objectives
- Academic excellence and originality of the project
- Commitment to knowledge dissemination and collaborative research

5. Timeline

- Call opening: 1 December 2025
- Application deadline: 30 February 2026, 5:00 pm (Paris time)
- Review of applications: March 2026
- Announcement of results: late March 2026
- Start of residencies: from April 2026

For any questions: decript@inalco.fr

6. Description of the Programme's Thematic Axes

Cross-Cutting Axis – Civilizational Narratives, Universalisms, and Multilateral Governance

At the core of DECRYPT, the cross-cutting axis examines transformations of the international system and compares the political and institutional effects of specific civilizational narratives on the global stage. Led by Inalco in collaboration with Paris Panthéon-Assas and Sciences Po Paris, this axis brings together researchers from political science, international relations, law, history, economics, and information and communication sciences.

It aims to develop a typology of challenges to the international system and universal norms that goes beyond simplistic categorizations such as “Global South” versus “West”; to assess the evolution of civilizational narratives within various international arenas (UN system institutions, OIC, BRICS, etc.) in order to observe how challenges to universalism weigh on or reinvent collective efforts to address transnational or global challenges such as conflict resolution, arms control, development, climate change, natural resource management, or migration; and to examine changes in the value systems projected by Western actors, the criticisms they face—particularly in terms of neo-imperialism—and the ways in which their relationship to global norms increasingly dissociates their own civilizational narratives from references to the universal and its institutional embodiments.

Indo-Pacific Axis – Focus on China

The Indo-Pacific axis examines the region as a crucible of worldviews and competing universalisms. It explores the spectrum of civilizational narratives underpinning the geopolitical agendas of regional actors, presented as compatible with—or even as improving—the current world order, while drawing on reinvented “local” references (e.g., India’s incorporation of Hindu concepts into foreign policy) as well as more differentialist perspectives (e.g., China’s use of historical references to justify its regional and global claims).

The programme studies how these narratives legitimize emerging nations' reformist claims regarding global governance structures, regional actors' geopolitical objectives, and the political or economic models they promote and seek to project. Particular emphasis is placed on China as a key actor in the formation of civilizational narratives with global reach, progressively evolving from a differentialist and regional perspective toward a universal ambition.

Africa Axis – Focus on the Sahel

The Africa axis explores how civilizational narratives reactivate postcolonial disputes in contemporary political discourse by analysing their interaction with renewed sovereignty claims within African societies and in their international relations, the dynamics of local conflicts, and regional governance models and their articulation with the global international system.

The programme pays particular attention to the role of religious beliefs and local institutions in shaping these narratives, and to how they are also fuelled by alliances between local and external actors—particularly China and Russia—seeking to challenge Western-led development models and to legitimize non-democratic governance practices. The programme focuses especially on the Sahel region, a focal point of competing narratives and external influences, while examining their broader continental and international implications.

Middle East – Near East Axis

The Middle East axis studies the region as a crossroads of multi-scalar tensions, mobilising civilizational narratives that have also historically shaped global imaginaries. It examines the changing and contested nature of civilizational and identity politics in the region—from pan-Arabism and (neo-)Ottomanism to pan-Islamist perspectives.

The Israeli–Arab conflict and its regional ramifications, particularly in Lebanon, serve as a focal point. The programme examines how this conflict has generated transnational solidarities, shaped discourses of justice and legitimacy, and influenced mobilization practices beyond the region.

Europe–Eurasia Axis

This axis focuses on a region shaped by a shared history of multinational empires, socialist experimentation, and contested integration into the liberal international order. It examines the development of contrasting civilizational narratives, ranging from the adoption of European identity and political liberalism (the Baltic states, Ukraine) to a broad spectrum of anti-liberal positions (Hungary, Poland, Russia, Serbia). The programme explores how civilizationism has been instrumentalized in the context of regional conflicts, notably during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but also in conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Georgia and Russia, and Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania. With a particular emphasis on Ukraine, the programme also examines how these narratives form a bridge between challenges to the liberal world order articulated by many actors in the Global South and the internal challenges facing liberal democracies in Western societies, blending left- and right-wing anticolonial traditions.

Methodologies, Research Tools, and Training Axis

DECRIFT brings together a range of qualitative and mixed methods commonly used in the social sciences, including discourse analysis, lexicometry, conceptual genealogy, ethnographic fieldwork, and semi-structured interviews. In a context of growing constraints on data collection and management across many regions covered by the project, DECRIFT seeks to develop capacities for analysing data from regions that have become inaccessible or difficult to access. This approach draws in particular on a combination of expertise in the automatic processing of written and spoken language, enabling the analysis of discourse and emotions; on the geopolitics of cyber data flows; on the use of databases combined with the storage of essential or sensitive digital data; and on the development of data visualization skills in order to map the worldviews conveyed by the various civilizational narratives studied within the programme.