



Press release

Millions for research on Dress and Identity

The Royal Institute of Cultural Heritage — in collaboration with six European research institutions — has received financial support from the European Union to conduct a research project concerning *Clothing and Identities — New Perspectives on Textiles in the Roman Empire (DressID)*.



The partners involved in the project comprise universities and research institutions from all over the European Union, and directed by the Curt-Engelhorn-Stiftung of the Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen in Mannheim, Germany.

The project has a budget of € 4.9 million. From 2008 through 2013, research, publications, conferences and a touring exhibition will be the outcome of the collective focus on the interrelations between dress and identity within and beyond the Roman Empire.

A grant from the European Union's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency has provided this unique opportunity to gather experts from all over Europe in a joint research effort.

The Roman Empire forms the frame of the project. With its richness in diverse sources — archaeological finds, images and texts — the Roman Empire provides a perfect opportunity for investigations of cultural uniformity and diversity. Its pervading political and administrative structures present an excellent platform for identity studies on all levels, from individuals to ethnic, social, religious and political groups.

As is true today, dress was used — consciously or unconsciously — to express identity, and it carried information about the ethnic, social or religious affiliation as well as the profession, gender and age of the wearer.

The Vestal virgins, the priestesses who guarded the sacred flame of the city of Rome (by that ensuring the existence of the Roman Empire), wore a special yellow garment. The political meaning of the purple toga is well-known from historical sources; and the Romans themselves called their neighbours in the north the Gauls, *gens bracata*, the people wearing trousers.

Interdisciplinary expertise merge in the DressID project

The ability to combine the natural sciences, experimental archaeology and cultural history is the core of the research to be conducted in the joint project. DressID is the umbrella for highly specialised experts, who deal with all aspects of textile research: costume and design, technology and production, language and



communication. This knowledge is essential to our understanding and interpretation of societies in the past and present.

Co-ordinator of the research programme

- The Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen, Mannheim, Germany, represented by Dr. Michael Tellenbach

Co-operators in the research programme

- The Danish National Research Foundation's Centre of Textile Research, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- The Royal Institute of Cultural Heritage KIK / IRPA, Research Institute at Brussels, Belgium
- The Department of History and Archaeology, University of Crete, Rethymnon, Greece
- The Department of Ancient History and Culture, University of Valencia, Spain
- The Department of Archaeology, University of Sheffield, Great Britain
- The Department of Prehistory at the Museum of Natural History, Vienna, Austria

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Illustrations:



Naturhistorisches Museum Wien



Curt-Engelhorn-Stiftung für
die Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen

All threads reassemble in Rome

Clothing and Identities in the Roman Empire



Education and Culture DG

Culture Programme

