

Position statement of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) on the creation of an European Research Council

The FWF agrees with the arguments driving the European discussion on the idea of creating an "European Research Council" (ERC) recognizing that

- only a continued improvement of science in Europe can lead to an increase of its competitiveness and that high-quality scientific research represents a significant contribution to society, culture and the economy.
- Education and training through research represent important investments in the future, and an improvement of the qualification and career opportunities of young scientists can only be efficiently tackled as a joint European effort.
- Strengthening the awareness that science represents a significant aspect of the European culture goes with an increase in the European political commitment to all branches of basic science including the humanities. The recognition of the contribution of basic research to knowledge transfer and the establishment of a science-friendly culture via an exchange between science and other areas of society can be more rapidly achieved within the European context.

The FWF states that an ERC, if created, should be an autonomous funding organisation managed by scientists and oriented towards basic research. If created, the ERC should have a definitive funding philosophy, which differs from national endeavours and concentrates on European dimension, European added value and takes into account subsidiarity. In order to fulfil these tasks, independent funding from the European Union (e.g. through the allocation of funds from the Framework Programmes) has to be obtained.

Moreover the working basis of such an ERC should rely on the following values:

- Concentrating funding on internationally recognized excellence assessed solely by means of international standards and treating all scientific disciplines equally.
- Transparency and fairness in the working procedures and in the criteria on which funding decisions are based safeguarding independence from the direct influence of politics and vested interests, and paying attention to the compliance with the rules of good scientific practice and of internationally accepted ethical standards.
- The ERC should consider itself to be part of the international / European scientific community and its work as directed to helping science in Europe. An adequate range of different funding instruments designed to take into account European dimension and the requirements of European basic research and facilitate international / European cooperation should be implemented.
- The ERC should continuously monitor its operating procedures, instruments and their developments and handling the finances entrusted to it efficiently.
It should hold an open dialogue with all interested groups and support cooperation and network between different branches of society.

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