

# **ERC Scientific Council Identification Committee**

## **Final Report**

19 January 2009

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## **Report of the ERC Scientific Council Identification Committee**

The ERC Scientific Council Identification Committee is an independent, high level committee, established by the Commission to carry through an independent process for the identification of three new members of the ERC Scientific Council. These new members will be appointed by the Commission to fill seats vacated by the resignation of founding Scientific Council members, in accordance with the provisions set out in the FP7 "Ideas" specific programme and the Commission Decision setting up the ERC<sup>1</sup>.

The Committee was also asked to provide suggestions on the approach to be adopted for future renewal of Scientific Council members, for example at the end of their term or on retirement.

The Committee started its work on 13 October 2008 and held four meetings in Brussels in the period to 15 January 2009. It carried out a consultation of the scientific community on possible candidates for Scientific Council membership, on the basis of an initial statement of methodology (Annex 1), which was sent to the main representative organisations of the scientific community in Europe, published on the ERC web-site and announced via a news release inviting suggestions of candidates from other representative organisations.

The ERC Scientific Council was consulted on the establishment of the Identification Committee and its methodology. To assist the Identification Committee's work, it prepared a short memorandum which, taking account of the collective profile of existing Scientific Council members, set out the fields of competence and other factors which should be considered in identifying new members.

In response to the Committee's invitation, a total of 42 organisations sent nominations, as listed in Annex 2. The Committee has greatly appreciated the efforts of the nominating organisations and the high quality of the persons nominated. These nominations have provided the main source of candidates considered by the Committee, alongside a number of candidates identified by the Committee itself to ensure appropriate candidates with competence in particular areas suggested by the Scientific Council.

The Committee separately prepared a report setting out its recommendations on the approach to be followed for the staged renewal of Scientific Council members in the future (Annex 3). The Scientific Council has been consulted and expressed its approval of the approach suggested.

The quality of the renewal process is a critical element in ensuring that the Scientific Council is able to represent, through its membership, the European research community in all its breadth and depth. However, with 22 members, the Council cannot directly represent all scientific disciplines and all parts of the European Research Area at any one time. Important elements in the Committee's proposals include the suggestion that staged renewal should take place on a regular cycle of two years, and the establishment of a Standing Identification Committee. With approximately 8 members turning over at each cycle, it should be possible to ensure that the appropriate balance of membership is preserved while allowing the

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<sup>1</sup> Commission Decision of 2 February 2007 establishing the European Research Council OJ L 57, p 14. The relevant provisions are set out in Article 4.

inclusion, over time, of a broader spectrum of membership in the Scientific Council. This can best be achieved through the stability and professional engagement of a Standing Identification Committee, which will be well placed to conduct the necessary, in-depth consultation of the European research community. Such a Committee should of course be composed of persons of high standing and integrity, so that its independence and dispassionate judgement are irreproachable.

The Committee presented its proposals and recommendations to the Commission on 19 January 2009.

# ERC Identification Committee

## Initial statement on methodology

13 October 2008

### 1. Introduction

The ERC Scientific Council Identification Committee has a two-fold mandate, first to identify three Scientific Council members to fill the seats vacated by resignations in 2008, second to provide suggestions on the approach to be adopted for future renewal of Scientific Council members, for example at the end of their term on retirement.

Scientific Council members are appointed according to the provisions of the European Commission's Decision establishing the ERC.<sup>2</sup> The Committee will thereby carry out its work independently and transparently, including a consultation of the scientific community. The Committee started its work on 9 October 2009 and agreed on the methodology it will adopt for this consultation, which follows closely the successful approach followed by the earlier Identification Committee which identified the founding members of the Scientific Council.

### 2. Consultation of the research community

The Committee intends to create a list of possible candidates for Scientific Council membership covering all fields of science and scholarship. This list will be used in the first instance as the basis on which the three vacant seats on the Scientific Council will be filled. It is envisaged that the list, updated from time to time could also serve to provide candidates for future renewal of the Scientific Council, pending the Committee's suggestions on the approach to be adopted in this respect.

The Committee considered it should consult the main organisations representative of the various segments of the research community at European level, rather than sectorial or national bodies (see below). The consultation will be done by means of a letter from the Chairman of the Committee to the President of each organisation.

The consultation will not necessarily be the exclusive source of candidates; it will be open to other representative organisations, and the members of the Committee themselves, to suggest other possible candidates.

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<sup>2</sup> Commission Decision of 2 February 2007 establishing the European Research Council (2007/134/EC) OJ L 57/14 24.2.2007

### **3. Factors and criteria to be taken into account**

The factors and criteria for identification of Scientific Council members are set out in the Commission's Decision establishing the ERC as follows:

The composition of the Scientific Council must demonstrate that the Council can exercise scientific leadership which is authoritative and absolutely independent, combining wisdom and experience with vision and imagination. The credibility of the Scientific Council will be built on the balance of qualities amongst the men and women who make it up, and they should collectively reflect the full breadth of the research community across Europe. Members of the Scientific Council must individually have an undisputed reputation as research leaders and for their independence and commitment to research. Generally, they must be current or recent research practitioners, as well as those who have exercised scientific leadership at European or world level. Consideration should also be given to younger next-generation leaders.

Members must reflect the broad disciplinary scope of research, embracing the exact sciences and engineering, as well as the social sciences and the humanities. However, they should not be considered as representatives of a discipline or of a particular line of research and should not perceive themselves as such; they should have a broad vision which collectively reflects an understanding of important developments in research, including inter- and multi-disciplinary research, and the needs for research at European level.

Beyond their proven reputation as scientists and researchers, the membership should collectively bring a broader range of experience, acquired not only across Europe but also in other research-intensive parts of the world. This could include experience in areas such as the support and promotion of basic research, organisation and management of research and knowledge transfer in universities, academies and industry, an understanding of national and international research activities, relevant research funding schemes and the wider political context in which the European Research Council is situated.

The membership should reflect the various components of the research community and the range of scientific institutions which carry out research; it should include those with experience in universities, research institutes, academies, funding bodies, research in business and industry, for example. Members should include those who have experience in more than one country, and some should be drawn from the research community outside Europe.

### **4. Methodology**

To draw up the list of candidates, the organisations consulted will be asked to provide suggestions of persons who in their estimation:

- have the highest eminence as research leaders and the qualifications and experience reflecting the criteria set out above;
- are available and willing to work as a member of the ERC Scientific Council independently of any other interest, and
- would be expected to have the trust and confidence of the scientific community.

The Committee will regard the names and personal details of candidates as confidential.

The Committee will require a short statement of the qualifications and broader profile of each candidate, adequate for it to make an informed judgement. This would be expected to include, for example:

- A synopsis of the candidate's background and curriculum vitae;
- Relevant professional experience (e.g. universities, scientific institutions, business, government, etc., indicating also any administrative or science policy experience);
- Research interests and experience (indicating the major research projects in which the candidate has been involved);
- Major publications and other significant works and Prizes;
- Broader aspects of the candidate as appropriate (e.g. nationality, age, experience abroad).

The Committee recognises that the availability of persons to participate in the Scientific Council will be affected by the precise duties of the latter. It should be noted that the Scientific Council currently meets approximately 6 times per year for 2 day meetings which are held normally in Brussels or other European capital cities and are conducted in the English language.

While nominations of individual candidates would not be any guarantee of selection, the Committee would expect that the nominating bodies would establish the willingness of candidates to serve before their names were forwarded to it.

## **5. Main representative organisations to be consulted**

- EUROHORCs (European Heads of Research Councils)
- ESF (European Science Foundation)
- EUA (European University Association)
- EASAC (European Academies' Science Advisory Council)
- ALLEA (All European Academies)
- Academia Europaea (organisation representing individual scientists and scholars)
- Business Europe (Formerly UNICE - Union des industries de la Communauté européenne)
- EARTO (European Association of Research and Technology Organisations)
- EIRMA (European Industrial Research Management Association).

## **6. Provisional timetable for the further work of the Committee**

The provisional schedule for the next stages of the Committee's work is as follows:

***Mid- October 2008*** – consultation letters sent to representative organisations

***Mid November 2008*** – receipt of proposed candidates and relevant information

***November-December*** - evaluation of candidates

***December 2008*** – three Scientific Council members identified

***January 2009*** - final report of the Identification Committee

## ORGANISATIONS RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION

### Directly Consulted Organisations

- Academia Europaea
- ALLEA
- BUSINESSEUROPE
- EASAC
- EARTO
- EIRMA
- ESF
- EUA
- EUROHORCS

### Other Organisations

- Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic
- Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK)
- Austrian Science Foundation-Der Wissenschaftsfonds-FWF (AT)
- Bulgarian Academy of Science
- Centre national de la recherche scientifique-CNRS (FR)
- Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas-CSIC (ES)
- European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management-EIASM (BE)
- European Platform of Women Scientist-EPWS
- Flanders Institute for Biotechnology-VIB (BE)
- Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek -FWO (NL)

- Government of Romania
- GPPQ - Gabinete de Promocao do 7º Programa Quadro de I&DT (PT)
- Hungarian Rectors' Conference
- Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale- INSERM (FR)
- Institut Pasteur (FR)
- Istituto Nazionale di Fisica Nucleare (IT)
- Max Planck Society (DE)
- Microsoft Corporation
- Natural Environment Research Council-NERC (UK)
- Onassis Foundation (GR)
- Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg (DE)
- Royal Irish Academy
- Science Foundation Ireland
- Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts
- Slovenian Research Agency
- Stockholm University (SE)
- The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft-DFG (DE)
- The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
- The League of European Research Universities-LERU
- The Research Council of Norway
- The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey-TUBITAK
- The Swiss National Research Council
- Università degli Studi di Firenze (IT)



## ERC Identification Committee

### An approach for the future renewal of ERC Scientific Council members

15 January 2009

#### Introduction

The ERC Scientific Council Identification Committee has been asked, as part of its mandate, to provide suggestions on the approach to be adopted for future staged renewal of ERC Scientific Council members, for example at the end of their term or on retirement.

This report sets out the Committee's views on the subject. It addresses the general considerations which apply, defines some key principles and sets out a practical methodology for their implementation.

Certain aspects of the renewal process are laid down in the legislation<sup>3</sup>, notably that:

- Scientific Council members are appointed by the Commission following an independent and transparent process for their identification;
- Their term of office is four years, renewable once; on the basis of a rotating system, to ensure the continuity of the Scientific Council's work;
- A member may be appointed for a period of less than the maximum term to allow a staged rotation of membership.

The Committee believes these requirements are an appropriate basis for the establishment and renewal of the Scientific Council.

Since the process of staged renewal involves a relatively long term perspective (the term of office of Scientific Council members being 4 years, renewable once), it is necessary for the Committee to assume, in making its recommendations, that the ERC and the Scientific Council will continue to operate indefinitely according to the present legislation and arrangements.

#### General considerations

The arrangements for staged renewal should take account of the following general considerations.

*First, the need to combine effectiveness and continuity of the Scientific Council.* A high level body of this kind depends for its effectiveness on the cohesion and *esprit de corps* of its members, who come from different fields of science and different parts of Europe, as well as

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<sup>3</sup> Commission Decision of 2 February 2007 establishing the European Research Council, OJ L57/14 (24/02/2007)

overseas, and are unlikely to know one another well beforehand. Some time will be needed for new members to become acquainted with one another and with pre-existing members, and to accommodate to the Scientific Council's culture and working methods. Continuity, on the other hand, demands that the replenishment of members is done on a rotating system so that there remains always a critical mass of members to retain the institutional memory. Nevertheless, the Scientific Council should be a dynamic body of individuals, who can accommodate fresh thinking, and the need for continuity should not be emphasised to the point that it leads to inertia.

In this context, it is to be noted that the renewal of the Scientific Council members, and the basis on which this is done, may have an influence on the continuity of leadership of the Council. It may therefore be appropriate for the Scientific Council to review its own procedures, including those for the election of Chair and Vice-Chairs, and the appointment of its Secretary General, in the light of the approach to renewal adopted.

*Second, the demands made on its members*, who are scientists and scholars of the highest repute. It must be assumed that Scientific Council members would normally serve for at least four years (one term) but, given their seniority and credentials, not all members would be ready to serve for a second full term.

*Third, the fact that any general rules adopted for staged renewal will need to accommodate variations and uncertainties.* Whatever approach is adopted, it cannot be applied in an entirely rigid manner. Occasional resignations will occur at unpredictable times, for personal and professional reasons. It should be possible therefore to appoint new members independently of any process of staged renewal of membership, and moreover, to accommodate variations in the numbers of persons (or percentage of members) to be replaced at any given time.

Similarly, at the time of a prospective renewal of members, *specific circumstances* may exist which would affect the renewal process. For example, it may be that a higher-than-normal percentage of replacement is needed, as a result of personal preference of existing members. However, decisions at each renewal stage should aim to secure continuity in the future as well as the short term. Since any renewal decision has implications for future decisions (since it determines how many members' terms end at particular times in the future), variations in the number of members renewed during any defined period of time should be kept minimal to avoid causing future instabilities.

Fourth, the need to ensure that the staged renewal can be done in a way that *allows the overall breadth of competence and balance of perspectives of the Scientific Council* (scientific and scholarly competences, institutional backgrounds, gender, breadth of knowledge over the European space etc.) to be maintained. Given the very high credentials required of members, this will be easier to achieve in proportion to the number of members renewed at any particular time.

Fifth, *included in the process must be a consultation of the Scientific Council.* On one hand, the preferences of members, for example, as to whether they would stand down after a period of office or be prepared, if reappointed, to serve for a second term should be taken into account. On the other, the views of the Scientific Council leadership should be sought on the implications of renewal of particular members on the cohesion and continuity of the Council and need to ensure, with the new intake the appropriate balance and breadth of expertise.

However, whatever the input from the Scientific Council, the identification process should nevertheless be independent and members are subject to Commission nomination.

## **Principles**

With the above considerations in mind, the Committee suggests that the following principles should apply:

1. As a general rule, approximately 8 members should be renewed every two years. This implies that every two years the Scientific Council would need to accommodate a new intake of roughly a third of its members.
2. As regards the need to fill vacant seats on the Scientific Council that will arise from time to time, for example due to unforeseen resignations of individual members, a new member or members should be appointed as soon as possible, unless the vacancy arises less than one year before an anticipated staged renewal. New members appointed at a time other than that of the staged renewal should normally be appointed such that their term of office is synchronous with other Scientific Council members. These renewals should be counted as part of the total renewal of approximately 8 members every two years.
3. As regards the renewal of the term of office, the above arrangements imply that members would, on average, serve for approximately 6 years. In practical terms, taking account of unforeseeable resignations, this means that most members would be reappointed after their first term for a full second term.
4. Given the foundation date of the Scientific Council (2 February 2007), this approach to staged renewal should be fully in place, operating in the "steady state" at the beginning of 2013.<sup>4</sup> In order to arrive at the steady state, there will need to be variations in the above assumptions in the intervening period (in particular a somewhat lower length of service of at least some members, in comparison with the average cited above).

## **Process**

In keeping with the provisions of the legislation and the above considerations and principles, the Committee suggests that the following operational methodology should be followed.

- An independent, high level standing committee should be established by the Commission to carry through the independent and transparent identification process. The Standing Identification Committee should be small enough to be efficient but of sufficient size (maximally 6 people) to reflect the breadth and diversity of the European research community. Its Chairperson and other members should be nominated by the Commission and should be appointed in the first instance for a four year term, renewable once.

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<sup>4</sup> Assuming, as noted above, that the ERC, and Scientific Council, will continue to operate on the same basis as today.

- The Committee should be charged with maintaining an ongoing consultation with the research community on candidates for membership of the Scientific Council. It should maintain a pool of candidates, willing to serve, which is constantly replenished including but not exclusively by periodic (e.g. annual) consultation exercises, along the lines of those already conducted.
- Resources for the operation of the Committee, including travel and subsistence expenses and secretariat, should be provided by the ERC and it should conduct its business in an efficient manner, using remote meeting facilities (e.g. teleconferences) as well as physical meetings in Brussels. Its internal discussions, and the above-mentioned pool of candidates, should be strictly confidential; its methodology and its consultation activities should however be transparent to the research community and other stakeholders, in particular by means of information releases and postings on the ERC web-site.
- As and when the need for renewal of Scientific Council members falls due – either staged renewal or due to the resignation of individual members – the Commission should ask the Chairperson to convene the Committee in order to provide an appropriate list of members for future appointment or, in relevant cases, re-appointment.
- As an input to its deliberations, the Committee should ask for advice from the Scientific Council and in particular its Chair, as regards the profile of members to be appointed and any other factors relevant to the Committee's work. In particular, for the staged renewal, it will need to be established by the Scientific Council, and with due regard to the needs of the staged renewal process, which existing members of the Scientific Council, coming to the end of their first term, will have their term renewed, either for a full or shorter (i.e. 2 year) second term, and which members will stand down.
- Under normal circumstances, the Committee should provide its recommendations within 3 months of the request from the Commission.