

# **European Research Council**

## **Identification Committee**

### **Interim Report**

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# **Interim report of the ERC Identification Committee**

## **1. Introduction**

Support to frontier research will form an important component of the Commission's forthcoming proposal for the 7<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Programme. A European Research Council (ERC) with an independent Governing Council of scientists will provide a distinctive and autonomous mechanism for the implementation of this frontier research programme.

To ensure that the scientific Governing Council will be completely independent, the Commission has established an Identification Committee ("the Committee") mandated to identify members of the Council.

## **2. Methodology**

The Committee started its work on 25 January 2005. It considered first the broad parameters of the Governing Council, taking into account the experience of other organisations devoted to basic research funding in European countries and the United States, as well as the particular circumstances of the ERC as a European body. In particular to ensure manageability and the need to avoid any tendency towards a "juste retour" mentality, it took the view that the size of the ERC Governing Council should be limited to around 20 persons, including some members drawn from outside Europe.

Thereafter, the Committee decided to work in two stages, the first to establish the main factors and criteria to be taken into account in the identification of members of the scientific Governing Council, the second comprising the identification process itself. Both stages would involve consultation of the scientific community.

This interim report provides a review of the Committee's work after completion of the first stage. It briefly describes the findings to date and the outlook for the next stage.

## **3. First stage: factors and criteria to be taken into account**

### *Consultation*

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 Annex 1.A.). The consultation was done by means of a letter from the Chairman of the Committee to the President of each organisation. All of these organisations responded.

At the same time the Committee announced publicly by press release that it would welcome the views of other representative bodies. A small number of organisations responded (see Annex 1.B.).

The responses received by the Committee were extremely constructive and indicated a strong convergence in views on the questions posed.

### *Outcome of the consultation*

The results of the consultation indicate there would be broad consensus on the following factors and criteria:

- The Governing Council must demonstrate that it can exercise scientific leadership which is authoritative and absolutely independent, combining wisdom and experience with vision and imagination. The credibility of the Governing 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 Governing Council should individually have an undisputed reputation as research leaders and for their independence and commitment to research. Generally, they should 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 ERC 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, 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.
- Members should participate in the Governing Council in their personal capacity, working to meet the objectives of the ERC and representing science and research, independently from any political, governmental, industrial or other interest. Avoiding conflicts of interest may require limits on the extent to which members of the Governing Council can concurrently hold other national or international institutional positions in research funding.

The Committee intends to adopt the above factors and criteria as the basis for its further work.

#### **4. Second stage: identification process**

The Committee intends to arrive at a final list of individuals to be proposed as members of the Governing Council, by creating a list of possible candidates and selecting from this list.

To draw up the list of candidates, the organisations consulted in the first phase of the Committee's work will be asked, by means of further written consultation, to provide suggestions of persons who in their estimation:

- have the appropriate qualifications and experience (reflecting the criteria set above);
- are available and willing to work as a member of the ERC Governing Council independently of any other interest, and
- would be expected to have the trust and confidence of the scientific community.

This 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.

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

##### *Information required to assess candidates*

##### Profile

To carry out its work 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 vita;
- 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).

##### Availability

The Committee recognises that the availability of persons to participate in the Governing Council will be affected by the precise duties of the latter. Annex 2 provides an indication of the expected duties of the Governing Council and the expected time commitments which will be necessary for its members.

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.

### *Process of selecting candidates*

The Committee intends to conduct the identification process in two phases, as follows.

First, a short list of candidates will be drawn up on the basis of their qualities and experience as individuals.

Second, a proposed final list, (including possibly “reserve” candidates) will be drawn up based on an analysis of the collective attributes of the candidates, in order to achieve the best balance of requirements (reflecting the factors and criteria set out in section 3), and given in confidence to the Commission.

### **5. Timetable for the further work of the Committee**

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

***End March 2005*** – consultation letters sent to representative organisations

***End April 2005*** – receipt of proposed candidates and relevant information

***May 2005*** - evaluation of candidates

***June 2005*** - final report of the Identification Committee

## **Annex 1**

### **A. Organisations consulted by the Identification Committee**

- 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)
- UNICE (Union des industries de la Communauté européenne) – working group “*Research and Innovation*”
- EARTO (European Association of Research and Technology Organisations)
- EIRMA (European Industrial Research Management Association).

### **B. Other organisations that contacted the Identification Committee**

- EMBO (European Molecular Biology Organization)
- EUROSCIENCE (European Association for Promotion of Science and Technology)
- EMS (European Mathematical Society)
- EATCS (European Association for Theoretical Computer Science)
- ERCIM (European Research Consortium for Informatics and Mathematics)
- UKCRC (UK Computer Research Committee).

In addition, the Chairman and Members of the Committee have been contacted by a number of organisations and individuals - not listed here - acting on their own initiative.

## **Annex 2: Role and working methods of the ERC Governing Council**

This Annex presents an outline of what the Committee anticipates will be the role and working methods of the ERC Governing Council, on the basis of the discussion to date. The Committee, however, recognises that these matters cannot be precisely defined until the legislative decisions are made by the European Parliament, Council of Ministers, and Commission.

### **Main principles**

The ERC will be an independent body whose role is to *assure the implementation of the frontier research programme in accordance with the principles of autonomy and transparency.*

Members of the ERC will be nominated by the Commission following the independent procedure for their identification carried through by the Identification Committee. They will be eligible to serve for a specific term (of the order 3-5 years) which will be specified in the legislation. The Committee will recommend in its final report how members of the Governing Council should be chosen in future.

The ERC Governing Council will be accountable for its actions to the Commission. It will carry out its mandate by means of an agreed programme of work, and will report regularly and publicly to the Commission. It is envisaged that a periodic review of its activities will be foreseen in the legislation.

The Decisions on the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme and its specific programme for frontier research will formally establish the existence and the mandate for the Governing Council. In advance of those decisions the Governing Council will be set up in the form of an independent advisory body to the Commission, to help guide the initial design and early implementation of the frontier research programme in the period prior to its formal constitution.

### **Detailed mandate of the Governing Council**

Once formally established, the tasks of the ERC are expected to cover the following main areas:

#### *1. Scientific strategy*

- Establish the overall scientific strategy for the programme, in the light of scientific opportunities and European scientific needs.
- On a permanent basis, in accordance with the scientific strategy, prepare drafts for the annual scientific work programme, and necessary modifications, including calls for proposals, and criteria and, as may be required, the definition of specific topics or target groups (e.g. young/emerging teams).

#### *2. Scientific management, monitoring and quality control of programme implementation*

- Establish principles for implementation, structures and management of calls for proposals, peer review processes, evaluation criteria, project management, scientific reporting, dissemination, etc., including those necessary to accommodate disciplinary and inter-disciplinary research.

- Monitor quality of operations in general, including membership and operation of peer review panels, proposal evaluation; develop recommendations for refinement and adaptation of programme implementation methodology as appropriate.
- Evaluate programme implementation and achievements and make recommendations for corrective or future actions.

### 3. *Communication and dissemination*

- Assure communication with the scientific community and key stakeholders on the activities and achievements of the programme and the deliberations of the ERC.
- Regularly report to the Commission on its activities.

## **The Governing Council's mandate during the initial phase**

Prior to the formal establishment of the ERC, the Governing Council will advise the Commission on the main aspects of programme strategy and implementation which must be determined in advance of the programme Decision. These could include, inter alia, organisational structures, management of peer review processes, management of potential over-subscription, design of the grant.

During this phase the Commission will provide secretarial assistance to the Governing Council.

## **Working methods and time commitments**

The Governing Council will appoint its own chair, vice-chairs and any other internal structures (e.g. management committee) that it deems necessary for the conduct of its work

Equally, it will be at the discretion of the Governing Council to establish any other necessary arrangements for it to draw on additional expertise, for example, to maximise its disciplinary coverage.

Meetings of the Governing Council are expected to take place at an interval of approximately 2 months. Currently, it is expected that the duties of individual members will require a time commitment of approximately 2 days per month on average and the chair/vice chair perhaps 4 days per month. In the initial phase the burden on individual members may be somewhat greater.

No specific payment for participation in the Governing Council is foreseen. Members will be reimbursed their travel and subsistence expenses for meetings and will receive a per diem payment for meetings.