

On The Mission of a European Research Council (ERC)

Manuel Hermenegildo

Professor of Computer Science

Technical University of Madrid

herme@fi.upm.es

<http://www.clip.dia.fi.upm.es/herme>

Towards a European Research Area

Conference: Do we need a European Research Council?

Danish EU Presidency

Copenhagen, October 7–8, 2002

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On The Mission of an ERC Legitimacy

- Political –'founding fathers'. E.g.:
 - All EU member states + Parliament
 - A set of EU countries
+ enlargement procedure
- Scientific:
 - Must reflect consensus among scientists
 - All areas represented
- Legal (treaty?)

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Autonomy

- Publicly funded, non-political
- Governing board of
 - high-quality, active scientists, with
 - adequate representation of all areas
- No 'return on national investment' policies
- Can decide instruments and fund allocation
- Highly accountable

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Clear Objectives

- High-quality, fundamental research in EU
- Improve quality, quantity, and impact
- In all areas of science and technology
- Bottom-up, essentially
- Highest quality ex-ante and ex-post evaluation and benchmarking
- Gather evidence on impact of science

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Adequate Means

- Obviously, a must.
 - EU funds (% FP?) –instrument of ERA
 - (+ possible participation from states)
- Additional/redirection of funds needed for 3%
- Limit duplication: *some* competition. E.g.:
 - LTR at ERC level + some national
 - More applied/locally strategic at Commission (and national/regional?) level
 - Human capital policies can be local 'bets'

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(Some) Advantages

- Catch-up –no European paradox! (e.g., IT, ...)
'The best competing system works that way'
- Innovative firms from HQ academic research
- Sound decisions, less external pressure
- Synergy, efficiency: do more with less
- Motivation for national institutions/programs
- Greater base for peer review
- Easier mobility ('money follows people')
- Easier EU-wide followup and benchmarking
- Etc.

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Final Thoughts

- We already have many instruments: FP, Opening up, EUROCORES, EUROHORCS,...
- We are discussing how to do **more**
- If it is done, it must have ambitious goals
 - Not another partial solution (++ complexity)
 - Achieve commitment **now** on ambitious roadmap, even if some stages take time (but not gradual in the areas –legitimacy)