

Additional Funding for the National Foundation in 2010

Background

Following a promise of additional funding from the Austrian National Bank (OeNB) for the National Foundation, the Foundation Board decided in 2010 to approve funding of between ten and twelve million euros for suitable projects, whereby the OeNB has an endowment of up to 25 million euros. In principle, funding should be awarded to applications which were submitted during the award procedures for 2010 but which could not be funded, or only in part. In accordance with § 11 section 1.1. of the RTD National Foundation Act, the Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development was asked to make a recommendation to this effect.

Recommendation

Following in-depth consultations, the Austrian Council for RTD recommends that the additional funds be distributed as follows (amounts in million euros):

Institution	Released for 2010 (Status: Dec. 2009) in € mn.	Project, programme or initiative	Released in 2010 in € mn.	Credit 2011 in € mn.	Total in € mn.
FFG	17.9	■ FFG Headquarters ■ Bridging programme (Bridge)	5.0	4.0	9.0
FWF	14.0	Priority research programmes: ■ SFB ■ NFN ■ Translational Research	3.5	2.9	6.4
CDG	2.5	■ CD Laboratory PMU	1.0	1.1	2.1
LBG	3.5	■ LBI Health Promotion Research	1.0	3.5	4.5
ÖAW	8.8	■ "New Worlds" programmes	1.5	1.5	3.0
Total			12.0	13.0	25.0

Statement of Reasons

The Austrian Council notes that all relevant applications are consistent with both the key thematic areas defined in Strategy 2020 and with the Council Recommendation of 5 June 2009 regarding the priorities of the National Foundation and are therefore eligible for funding. In this context, attention is drawn to the recommendation for the use of funds dated 1 December 2009, which contains more detailed explanations regarding the individual projects. Furthermore, the Austrian Council also emphasises that in light of the difficult financial situation at present, it is essential to use the full 25 million euros in additional funds and to make corresponding financial commitments in the given year. The applications from the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) and Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft (LBG) have not been changed since the recommendation made on 1 December 2009. In the case of the ÖAW, the Austrian Council supports the award of funding to the “New Worlds” project.

Within the framework of the LBG the Austrian Council also advocates funding the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Health Promotion Research. With regard to the application from the Christian Doppler Research Association (CDG) for 2010, the Austrian Council recommends that the special request for funding for a CD laboratory at a private university (PMU) be evaluated accordingly. The Austrian Council considers that funding by the National Foundation will have a positive impact provided that the additional comments from the statement made by Department C1/9 of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Family and Youth (BMWFJ) and the Accreditation Council are taken into consideration.

Due to the limited volume of the additional funding and the increased requirement from the FWF and FFG, it will not be possible to provide all projects with full funding. If the CD laboratory PMU project is not realised, the promised sum of 1.5 million euros should be used to finance a CD laboratory. The remaining 0.6 million euros should be divided up between applications from the FFG and FWF.

The Austrian Council points out that in the interests of a focused strategic approach the FWF programme of Translational Research (2.4 million euros) may be given appropriate funding in combination with the FFG Bridge programme. This programme has already received funding from the National Foundation in the past.

It should also be pointed out that allocations of additional funding from the National Foundation must not be neutralised by proportionate cuts to the budgets of the FWF (and if relevant, the budgets of the Ludwig-Boltzmann Gesellschaft and the Austrian Academy of Sciences too) by the Ministry of Science and Research (BMWF).

If the promise of funding from the National Foundation merely leads to funds from the ministries being squeezed, and not to a budget increase, the funds which are freed up are to be allocated to the remaining beneficiaries on a pro rata basis.

Although this additional funding should on the whole be viewed as a positive sign, it will have to be ensured that in future an adequate volume of funding is provided, in the region of 125 million euros as set out in the recommendation of 1 December 2009. In this regard, particular attention should be given to the proportion of funding from the ERP fund. It is absolutely essential to prevent a decline in the volume of funding as occurred in 2008.