

Regarding the use of funding from the National Foundation for Research, Technology and Development for 2013

Preamble

Based on the resolution adopted by the Board of Trustees on 25 September 2012, the Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development has been invited by the head of the National Foundation for RTD (in accordance with § 11 para. 1 subpara 1 of the Austrian act governing the National Foundation for RTD) to put forward a recommendation regarding the use of foundation funding for the year 2013 based on the applications submitted by the beneficiaries. In times of tight public-sector budgets, the National Foundation acquires special significance, which finds expression in the provision of support for long-term, interdisciplinary research (cf § 2 National Foundation for Research, Technology and Development Act). The Austrian Council thus reiterates the need for a funding volume of EUR 125 million, the sum that was originally intended when the foundation was set up.

The allocation of funding was carried out according to the strategic significance and socio-political relevance of the projects submitted and their categorisation in the global context of Austrian research promotion. The Austrian Council additionally laid down the following key areas for 2013:

- strengthening of the national human potential basis
- strengthening the research infrastructure by focusing on initiatives with relevant critical mass and risk potential
- co-ordination and alignment of regional and federal RTI activities
- strengthening venture capital
- excellence in basic research
- measures to strengthen Austria as a location for companies actively engaged in research

Given the considerable disparity between the total funding volume applied for and foundation resources likely to be available, the

beneficiaries were asked to prioritise the projects and programmes submitted.

Recommendation regarding the National Foundation for RTD for 2013

The Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development has discussed the pending applications at length and taking into account the list of the priorities drawn up by the beneficiaries and the defined priorities, has allocated the funds for 2013 as follows:

Institution	Amount in EUR mn.	Programme or Initiative
FFG	24	BRIDGE and Competence Headquarters
FWF	18.19	Priority Research Programmes (SFB, DK)
CDG	4.5	CD Laboratories
LBG	5.62	LB Institute for Health Technology Assessment LB Institute for Clinical Forensic Imaging
ÖAW	8	Frontier Groups
aws	10	Venture Capital Initiative
Total	70.31	

This Austrian Council recommendation is explained in further detail below:

In the Council's view one central, long-term strategic concern of Austrian research policy is to improve the interface between science and industry in order to translate research results into marketable products with an economic and socio-political significance. For this reason, it recommends supporting the **FFG's** BRIDGE programme with the full EUR 20 million requested. In view of the BVMIT's regrettable decision to discontinue the partner programme Translational Research, the Austrian Council urgently suggests retaining the advisory board with the FWF to ensure the interface function. To safeguard Austria's future through research, technological development and innovation the programme line Competence Headquarters should receive funding amounting to EUR 4 million. In view of the strategic processes now getting underway, the biotech initiative, for which an application was also submitted, was deferred and therefore not recommended, although the Austrian Council considers that it addresses an important topic.

With the aim of supporting the development of areas of excellence for research and teaching at Austria's universities and non-university-based research institutes, the priority programmes of the **FWF** are making a special contribution to ensuring excellence in the field of basic research and to strengthening the national human potential base. To safeguard

this function, the Austrian Council thus recommends endowing the FWF with EUR 18.19 million. This should finance two new SFBs to the tune of EUR 7.32 million and two new doctoral programmes to the tune of EUR 8.36 million as well as prolong the current doctoral programmes. The Austrian Council would like to take this opportunity to state its opinion that the FWF should be provided with more additional funding in concert with the core funding for universities as with its international evaluation standards and procedures it is particularly well-suited for ensuring competitive third-party financing for the universities.

The Austrian Council attaches great importance to initiatives and programmes which reinforce the link between higher education, non-university-based research and private enterprise. For this reason, the prioritised funding requirements for seven Christian Doppler Laboratories¹ is set to receive funding of EUR 4.5 million within the framework of the **CDG** .

Life Sciences is a field of research with great social significance and major potential for development. The Austrian Council therefore recommends allocating EUR 5.62 million to **LBG** to fund the LB Institute for Health Technology Assessment and the Institute for Clinical Forensic Imaging for four of the seven years of the contractual term originally applied for. If the evaluation is positive, the objective will be to provide full funding for the remaining period.

Qualitative and quantitative expansion of the human capital base is an essential prerequisite for ensuring excellence in research and innovation in Austria on a long-term basis. The development and availability of well-trained research staff has thus always been a concern of the Council. The New Frontier Groups initiative applied for by the Austrian Academy of Sciences (**ÖAW**) is particularly aimed at ensuring long-term funding for junior researchers in Austria and excellence in basic research. The Austrian Council therefore recommends providing financing of EUR 8 million for a period of five years for the establishment of several New Frontiers Groups.

Compared with other countries, Austria's below-average availability of venture capital for new, innovative companies is one of the main reasons that Austria remains in the position of an innovation follower. The Austrian Council has therefore already spoken out several times in the past for the national venture capital (VC) structures to be

¹ CD Laboratory for Optimisation and Biomass Utilisation in Heavy Metal Recycling, CD Laboratory for Cardio-Metabolic Immunotherapy, CD Laboratory for Application-Oriented Coating Development, CD Laboratory for Mycotoxin Metabolism, CD Laboratory for Advanced Process Simulation of Solidification and Melting, CD Laboratory for Bioactive Aroma Compounds, CD Laboratory for Restoration of Extremity Function

strengthened and supported the VC initiative of aws for 2010 and 2012. In view of Austria's known structural weakness in this regard, it should be made clear that in future even greater support must be given to this initiative. The Austrian Council therefore recommends financing a VC fund of EUR 10 million.

Should the National Foundation have more or less than the forecast EUR 70 million available for 2013, a request has been made for a renewed referral to the Austrian Council as a changed financing situation will make it necessary to carry out another overall evaluation of all projects.