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FOREWORD

The establishment of the European Science Foundation (ESF) over 30 years ago was unique. For the first time, research organisations with a national mandate created a common European platform for co-operation across the borders. It was an initiative in the spirit of the European Research Area (ERA) long before that concept was revived by the former European Commissioner Philippe Busquin. ESF is unique even today despite the political changes in Europe that have taken place since 1974 and despite the establishment of new European research organisations, including a substantial EU Framework Programme for research.

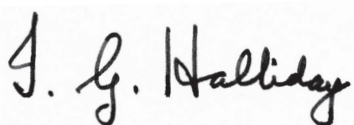
ESF has a unique interface with the European scientific community through its membership, currently 78 different research organisations in 30 countries, extending beyond the present borders of the European Union. ESF provides an independent voice for science and, at the same time, acts at the European level as a catalyst for creating synergy between the vast resources for research that reside within the Member Organisations (MOs). ESF is also unique in that it embraces all areas of science, including the engineering sciences, the social sciences and the humanities. This broad definition of ‘science’ will be used throughout this plan. ESF is the only legal entity at the European level dealing with research defined by researcher needs in all these fields and not primarily by policy or societal needs. At the same time, many of the results of such research are highly relevant to the needs of economy and welfare and ESF should promote the transfer of such results.

ESF, through its Strategic Plan for 2006–2010, wishes to facilitate its MOs’ joint efforts to meet the challenges of European research co-operation in a global context. No European country, and especially the smaller ones, alone can mobilise either the economic or the intellectual resources to keep up with science in the USA or to stay ahead of the rapidly emerging research potential in Asia. It is essential that Europe increases its emphasis on frontier research, promotes funding of risk-taking projects and removes barriers for co-operation across the national borders.

The main pillars in the ESF Strategic Plan 2006–2010 are to promote ‘science strategy’ and ‘science synergy’, paving the way for initiatives across disciplinary and geographic boundaries in the ERA. The Plan provides a systemic approach to ESF’s future activities, while taking into account the often differing views and needs of the MOs as expressed during the extensive consultation process that preceded this Plan. The ESF Strategic Plan is accompanied by a Financial Plan to ensure efficient and high-quality delivery and to provide a long-term financial plan for the MOs.

All of us, who have the privilege to work for ESF, look forward to working together closely with its MOs to assist the European research community in meeting future scientific challenges for the benefit of Europe’s citizens.

“ESF wishes to facilitate its MOs’ joint efforts to meet the challenges of European research co-operation in a global context.”



Professor Ian G. Halliday, *ESF President*



Professor Bertil Andersson, *ESF Chief Executive*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ESF Strategic Plan 2006–2010 covers a particularly dynamic period in European science. Exciting developments in many fields of endeavour will require European co-operation on an increasingly large scale and across a wider scope of disciplines. More interdisciplinary research, a political commitment to increase research spending in Europe, a new Framework Programme (FP7) with more attention to investigator-driven research – in particular the proposals for a European Research Council (ERC) – and increasing co-operation between national research organisations, set the scene for this Plan.

The Strategic Plan starts with a historical perspective on the ESF's first 30 years, its growth and achievements. The results of the previous Strategic Plan are briefly reviewed in Chapter 1. The dynamics of the ERA are analysed in Chapter 2, with a focus on the unique role of the ESF. There is a clear political commitment to enhance innovation through an increase in research and development spending in Europe, as stated in the Lisbon and Barcelona Declarations, though the impact of this commitment still has to be felt. FP7 will create new opportunities. At the same time, developments in science increasingly will benefit from European co-operation. Many research questions are so complex and broad that they cannot be solved by a single brilliant researcher with a team, a single institute or even a single country, because of the need for a critical mass of both competence and resources.

- **Through its relations with MOs and its past experience in catalysing researcher-led co-operation in science in Europe, ESF will engage pro-actively in promoting and fostering co-operation across national boundaries, to ensure Europe is rising to the challenge of increased scale and complexity of the research of the future.**

The ERA is populated by a multitude of organisations, the most important being: the European Commission (EC), through the EU Framework Programmes; intergovernmental research organisations such as CERN, ESO, EMBL/EMBO and ESA; the individual national research organisations, which are the major stakeholders of ESF; and ESF itself with its MOs and through its coordinating and leadership role. In this arena:

- **ESF, together with its MOs, will engage in partnerships with other organisations in Europe and the rest of the world in order to promote co-operation for the benefit of the European scientific community.**
- **ESF, as a Membership Organisation with a wide membership, can play a unique role, with considerable impact at the European level, by working closely with its members.**

An important new player in the ERA will be the European Research Council (ERC). Under FP7 the ERC mission will be limited to the competition between individual research teams to promote European excellence and, in this way, to secure a leadership position for Europe at the frontiers of science. ESF will focus in a complementary way on promoting co-operation and co-ordination between its MOs, which as research-funding or research-performing organisations control the vast majority of frontier research in Europe, in order to ensure researcher-led scale and scope of European science.

The ESF mission should derive from its unique position in the ERA as the only organisation in Europe that brings together nearly all national research organisations, extending beyond the current EU membership. Its statutory role is ‘to promote all branches of science and research in Europe’, which distinguishes ESF from the EU Framework Programmes which are mission-driven. ESF covers all disciplines, natural, medical and engineering sciences, social sciences and humanities. This distinguishes ESF from other European organisations dealing only with disciplinary areas. Through its scientific committee structure and its instruments it has direct access to the wider European research community.

The analysis leads to the following Mission statement.

ESF’s mission is guided by shared values that characterise ESF’s specific organisational culture.

Mission statement

The ESF provides a common platform for its MOs in order to:

- **Advance European research**
- **Explore new directions for research at the European level**

Through its activities, the ESF serves the needs of the European research community in a global context

ESF values

- **Excellence: the gatekeeper criterion for all scientific activities; it will also drive the management philosophy and operating procedures;**
- **Openness: to all scientists and disciplines; no barriers between disciplines; open sharing of results; transparency to stakeholders and partners;**
- **Responsiveness: in its procedures and structure;**
- **Pan-European: rising above national interests to the benefit of science in the whole of Europe;**
- **Ethical awareness and human values: sensitive to societal and ethical considerations in all its activities; attention to gender aspects.**

Conditions for the successful implementation of this mission are:

- A partnership of trust with the ESF MOs based on consultation
- Authority by being able to attract the best scientists in Europe
- Independence in its scientific judgements and by maintaining the focus on its mission
- **ESF aims to be the actor of choice and preferred partner when national research organisations develop joint activities.**
- **ESF aims to be the natural multinational arena when scientists wish to develop high-quality researcher-led co-operation.**

In Chapter 4 the analysis of the needs of MOs and the scientific community and the results of a recent evaluation of the impact of the ESF networking instruments leads to the conclusion that the present portfolio of instruments is largely adequate, provided they are sharpened and partly refocused to address even better the challenges of promoting co-operation in order to create scale and scope in researcher-led science. Based on the consultation process, ESF will add an instrument to directly serve its MOs: Member Organisation Fora.

To promote competition as well as to create possibilities for interdisciplinary actions and to increase transparency and visibility, ESF will announce common or synchronised Calls for its instruments across all domains of science; furthermore ESF will publish a yearly schedule of its Calls with deadlines.

ESF will streamline its instruments and concentrate them in the following three pillars:

- **Science Strategy;**
- **Science Synergy;**
- **Science Management.**

The strategic aim of the instruments in the **Science Strategy** pillar is to provide high level and high quality foresight and advice on science, research infrastructure and science policy issues of European significance to underpin decisions on strategic directions and priorities, or on programmes of researcher-led science.

- **The instruments to promote science strategy – Forward Looks, à la carte Member Organisation Fora, Exploratory Workshops and Expert Boards and Committees – will be focused to better serve ESF’s strategic goals.**
- **To be able to engage the best scientists, a key requirement is that the outputs of these instruments have a visible impact on the funding of research across national boundaries.**

The instruments in the **Science Synergy** pillar aim to stimulate co-operation of researchers and member organisations to explore new directions in research and to plan and implement European-level research (programmes) or actions in researcher-led science and research infrastructure and to involve research organisations in the choice of topics.

- **The ESF instruments to promote science synergy – EUROCORES, ESF Research Networking Programmes and ESF Research Conferences – will be used to bring together excellent scientists at all stages of their careers to advance the frontiers of research.**
- **The instruments will bring together MOs on an à la carte basis for the funding of those activities that fit their strategic priorities and interests.**

The logical extension of the first two pillars is the provision of services to (subsets of) ESF MOs, in particular to the EUROHORCs organisations (European Heads of Research Councils), in the form of (research) programme management. This defines the third pillar: **Science Management**. Current examples of the management of external programmes are the European Young Investigator Awards scheme (EURYI) and COST, and the co-ordinating role in the EC-funded ERA-NETs in the marine – MARINERA – and polar – EUROPOLAR – areas.

- **ESF is open to accept the management of third-party programmes if they strengthen its Mission, fit the expertise of ESF and are fully funded.**

The Strategic Plan addresses the membership of ESF in Chapter 5. Principles are formulated that will be used as an input for a membership Taskforce.

- **In the first year of the Strategic Plan, ESF will set up a Taskforce to develop proposals for strengthening its links with the three main groups of MOs and to review the membership policy and criteria to be presented to the September 2006 Governing Council.**

Also in the first year of the new Strategic Plan, ESF will take a critical look at its governance and science structure. Modernisation and simplification of the decision making processes, recognising the character of ESF as a membership organisation, will be one aspect. Designing the science structure so that interdisciplinary initiatives and emerging areas are promoted and meet the need for an overarching high-level science advisory structure are other aspects which will be addressed by a Taskforce to be set up in the first year of the Strategic Plan.

- **In the first year of the new Strategic Plan, ESF will set up a Taskforce to develop a proposal to the September 2006 Governing Council for:**
 - **Streamlining the present decision-making processes and governance structure;**
 - **Preparing a detailed proposal for the Committee structure, involving the Chairs of the Standing Committees and MOs.**

Chapter 6 addresses the conditions to deliver the Strategic Plan, more detailed plans are necessary to address the implementation aspects. As has been requested by the Assembly, the Strategic Plan is connected to a multi-annual Financial Plan which is a rolling plan, that will be updated on an annual basis within the agreed financial envelope. The Financial Plan will form the basis for the preparation of the Annual Budgets which must be approved by the Assembly.

1 ESF – 30 YEARS OF EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

1.1. Beginnings and Growth

The European Science Foundation (ESF) was established in Strasbourg on 18 November 1974, when 42 research organisations from 15 countries agreed to the proposed Statute at the first General Assembly. From a general budget of € 350,000 and nine staff in 1974, the ESF has grown to a membership of 78 research organisations from 30 countries with a general budget of over € 9 million and nearly 100 staff in 2004. Its total direct budget was close to € 40 million in that year. The scale and scope of the activities networked by ESF's instruments and activities is much greater, a conservative estimate being € 1.3 billion¹, to which could be added the resources leveraged through the COST system, estimated to be € 2 billion/yr.

1.2. ESF Strategic Plans – Roadmaps for Catalysis

The first ESF Plan covered the years 1998–2001, the second the years 2002–2006. The first Plan emphasised scientific directions and, with the exception of proposals for action on Large Research Facilities, relied largely on scientific networking instruments (Conferences, Workshops, Networks and Networking Programmes) for its implementation. The second Plan aimed at achieving ESF's mission by focussing on 'Actions', which were loosely structured into three somewhat interlinked groups: organisational relationships, policy and instruments. The second Plan sought to increase and intensify ESF's organisational relationships, both with its members and externally, recognising the great importance of ESF working with its own stakeholders and with other partners in the increasingly complex science policy and funding landscape in Europe. Since 2002 a number of these relationships have changed considerably. In particular, much more intensive linkages have developed with the group of MOs represented by EUROHORCs and with the EC. The linkages with MOs are highly visible in the two new instruments, the EURYI Scheme and the ESF European Collaborative Research Scheme, EUROCORES. ESF has taken over from the EC the scientific and technical management of COST. This large-scale contract with a value of more than € 20 million per year was accepted because it complements ESF's own networking activities. Also it was felt that this would create possibilities for simplifying life for scientists looking for funds for networking, by creating a 'one-stop' shop. The COST Midterm review expressed satisfaction with ESF's role and recommended that the EC grant the maximum amount of € 80 million foreseen in Framework Programme 6.

1. Direct co-ordination: EURYI: € 10 million/yr rising to € 25 million/yr, EUROCORES € 20 million/yr
Indirect co-ordination: Programmes at least € 250 million/yr; Expert Committees probably influence € 1 billion/yr (NuPECC quotes € 400 million, Marine Board € 100 million)

The traditional scientific networking instruments operated by the Standing Committees and the work of the Expert Committees and Boards have continued to provide valued support to the scientific community and to MOs. Examples include:

- The establishment of the European Social Survey by the Standing Committee for the Social Sciences;
- The development of a European Reference Index for the humanities by the Standing Committee for the Humanities;
- The Nuclear Physics European Collaboration Committee's (NuPECC) Strategic Plan recommendations gaining high profile in the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructure (ESFRI) roadmap;
- The European Polar Board's Research Icebreaker Consortium and the Marine Board's impact on FP6 through the Strategy for Marine Science.

The EUROCORES Scheme was identified in the second Plan as the ESF instrument for co-ordinating national funding of research requiring European co-operation in topics defined by the scientific community. By the end of 2005, 17 EUROCORES Calls had been published. The first six EUROCORES programmes have generated well over € 40 million of national research funds. A total of 57 agencies from 27 different European countries are currently participating in the Scheme, with an average of 15 organisations per programme. The USA's National Science Foundation and the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council intend to commit funding, demonstrating that the EUROCORES Scheme appeals outside Europe. These longer-term research programmes have still to demonstrate their full scientific impact, but their vigour is evident in that the first three programmes (Origin of Man, Language and Languages (OMLL), Self-Organised NanoStructures (SONS) and EUROMARGINS (on ocean margin research) have already given rise to almost 400 publications and 500 conference presentations, whilst the Pan-European Clinical Trials programme has spearheaded the concept of non-commercial clinical trials using a rationale now being taken up both at the national and at the European level. The EUROCORES Scheme has also been a learning environment for European co-ordination of national research funding, which has led to agreement among the participating national research organisations on substantial improvements in the decision procedures and throughput time. The EC presently funds the co-ordination and scientific networking of EUROCORES Programmes through FP6 with a contract having a total value of € 20 million.

The EURYI Scheme was developed by EUROHORCs who, in 2002, asked ESF to manage, on their behalf a five-year scheme for selecting the most excellent young researchers to work in Europe and administering research awards of up to € 1.25 million. The handling of the high quality international peer review and prioritisation exercise is funded from the Commission's ERA-NET Scheme. In 2004 and 2005, EURYI awarded 25 of these prestigious grants in each year, with a total award value of € 50 million.

ESF Forward Looks

One of the challenges facing European science is the efficient and aggressive use of scarce resources. There are natural tensions between the desires of the scientists to be both funded well and be left in peace and the pressures on the funding agencies to raise standards and attack big, central problems. Europe also faces the inefficiencies of fragmented funding systems operating within the confines of less competitive national systems. A very useful intermediate step to increasing the European efficiency is for the Funding Agencies to demand from the scientific community a vision, road-map or Forward Look for their field. Such a Forward Look would have to be authoritative and credible. It would also have to speak to politicians and funders about what could be delivered and how in a European context. In other words the vision would have to address explicitly European realities and inefficiencies. Such documents would provide a core of reality, subject by subject, to the often somewhat vague European coherence case.

ESF will set up a programme of Forward Looks to develop visions for the research agenda and priorities in its various science domains.

This Strategic Plan presents, as illustrations only, some snapshot visions of new challenges for the science domains, coming from the Standing Committees. The next Strategic Plan will have a more comprehensive vision of scientific developments in the various domains, derived among others from Forward Looks.

2 DYNAMICS IN THE ERA OF KNOWLEDGE – THE ROLE OF ESF

2.1. Europe needs science

The 25 countries belonging to the European Union have recognised that research and innovation are major strategic tools for promoting competitiveness in a globalising world. This is manifest in the ambitious political Declarations of Lisbon (2000) and Barcelona (2002), which state that by the year 2010, Europe should have become the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world and should be spending 3% of its GDP on research and development.

These Declarations reflect the political awareness that new knowledge is a key to economic progress and social welfare. They also reflect that European science has lost in strength to the USA and that it is now being challenged by rapidly growing economies in Asia and elsewhere. FP7 is a major development, which includes a proposal for a substantial increase in the annual research budget of the European Union and a stronger emphasis on frontier research.

European citizens are generally aware of the potential contributions of new knowledge to innovation and economic growth, as well as for its contributions to societal needs, not the least in the health sector. This positive attitude is, at the same time, counterbalanced by perceptions that research creates rather than solve problems. In this context, the dialogue between science and society on genuine ethical concerns must be intensified. The success of such a dialogue will ultimately be a crucial factor in the political willingness to support and fund research. It will also influence the willingness of young people to enter into science areas and, hence, affect the future recruitment of young researchers.

It is re-emphasised here that, in this Plan, ‘science’ includes all areas of research and scholarship in the natural, engineering and social sciences and in the humanities. Also, a broad definition of ‘interdisciplinarity’ is used in this Plan, covering interdisciplinarity in sensu strictu (new disciplines emerging from classical disciplines), as well as multidisciplinary research bringing together several disciplines to address common research questions.

2.2. Science needs Europe

Science is by its nature dynamic and progress is often made in an unpredictable and non-linear fashion. Single brilliant researchers are instrumental to scientific progress, but in many domains their role is evolving due to changes in the scale and scope of modern science. Many research questions are so complex or so broad that they cannot be solved by a single brilliant researcher with a team, a single institute or even a single country, because of the need for a critical mass of both competences and resources. The critical mass of competences may be disciplinary in nature but the requirement for interdisciplinarity in modern research is increasing.

The creation of research consortia is needed in order to address global grand challenges, such as sequencing and mapping the human genome, research into combating new infectious diseases or solving problems related to climate change and sustainability. Space and security could be added to this list. New world-wide endeavours will emerge in biomedicine and health in the footsteps of the human genome project, some under the conceptual umbrella of systems biology. Migration, integration and ethnic relations are growing interdisciplinary areas of research in the humanities. Bringing together researchers from the molecular and neurosciences, psychology, learning, logic, philosophy and computer sciences is creating conditions for new frontier research in the cognitive sciences. The humanities and social sciences break new grounds by taking on new research questions of a European nature.

The developments in these fields are paralleled by demands to invest in new research infrastructure in all areas of research, including the humanities and social sciences, as has always been the case in physics and astronomy.

Other developments also point to a need for more co-operation in Europe, beyond the purely scientific ones. European universities and research institutions experience an increasing political and financial pressure to concentrate activities on their particular research strengths to better use scarce public resources. As a result of the scientific need for scale and scope, this development will likely lead to an increased demand for co-operation both at the national and European levels.

Better use of scarce resources is assisted by well argued priority setting. Foresight, if performed with high quality and authority, is a powerful tool to underpin decisions on priorities. The evolution of science as sketched above, provides strong arguments for European foresight exercises.

National boundaries present barriers to advancing scientific frontiers. At the European level, the Framework Programmes have done a lot to bring about larger-scale co-operation, but more is needed. Increasingly, in many fields, such co-operation should be at a global level. Well-organised European efforts are a necessary starting point for such wider co-operation.

- **Through its relations with MOs and its past experience in catalysing researcher-led co-operation in science in Europe, ESF will engage pro-actively in promoting and fostering co-operation across national boundaries to ensure Europe is rising to the challenge of increased scale and complexity of the research of the future.**

Life, earth and environmental sciences

The 21st century will undoubtedly witness a growing impact of the biosciences as a major contributor to the sustainable development of our world. Insights into genomics and other “omics” are accelerating at a very impressive rate. The new opportunities that these tools provide for medicine, food production, and management of natural resources, including genetic resources, have grown and will continue to expand.

Our planet has benefited from the increase in technology, but some of the negative impacts may be irreversible. Fortunately, our efforts to understand the terrestrial, aquatic and atmospheric components of our planet have also advanced at an unprecedented pace. The geosciences will undoubtedly continue to play a crucial role in the understanding of critical environmental issues such as the global circulation of carbon, nitrogen and water, climate change, soil erosion, geological resources including energy, and not forgetting the natural cycles of the planet that can have a catastrophic effect on the lives of many.

2.3. A pluralistic ERA

The concept of the ERA has created a common arena for science, science policy and research funding in Europe. A major goal of the ESF Strategic Plan 2006–2010 is to develop ESF's optimal role and unique place in the ERA.

Today there is a multitude of organisations with a broad or specialised mandate in research, among which a few main actors can be identified.

The largest single actor in the ERA is the EC with its EU Framework Programmes, representing a considerable source of competence, financial strength and political influence. The mission of the Framework Programmes is to enhance European competitiveness and to support the policy goals of the Union, hence, their major emphasis is on 'top-down' defined and mission-driven research. The ERA-NET instrument was introduced in FP6 as a mechanism for co-ordinating national programmes also in researcher-led science. Many MOs and ESF are active in ERA-NETs covering different topics and specific domains. In FP7, the ERA-NET instrument is proposed to be expanded to include funding contribution to co-operative research. The establishment of the ERC, focusing on competitive research grants for excellent researchers, will further broaden the scope of the EC's involvement in the ERA.

A second group of actors in Europe is that of the several intergovernmental research organisations with a defined disciplinary focus including CERN in high energy physics, EMBL/EMBO in the life sciences, ESO in astronomy and ESA in space science. Their impact on European science and science policy within their areas of expertise has been profound and they have acquired a strong position in the scientific communities concerned. Despite the growth in the EC-funded research, the major source of funding for researcher-led science in Europe will continue to reside with the national research organisations, which form the third group of actors. The pan-European impact of these funds has so far been limited because of a strong national emphasis of that funding. Support for the EUROCORES Scheme shows that this attitude is changing. In particular, the relation between ESF and the EUROHORCs, who control a substantial part of the national resources, must be considered in this context. In recent years the EUROHORCs have developed a more mission-oriented approach to deal with the heterogeneous and fragmented European scene. In doing so, they are trying to create pan-European research funding that complements the EC's activities. The EUROHORCs agreement on 'Money Follows Researcher' is a good example. A strong link between the ESF and the EUROHORCs should be maintained and developed further. The EURYI scheme is a current example of their willingness to engage in joint activities with a role for ESF. The impact of individual national research organisations at the European level can be enhanced through co-operation in ESF, as ESF is, in the first place, a membership organisation, with a wide membership. The strength and effectiveness of ESF depends, at least in part, on the ambitions of its MOs and on the quality of ESF's connections with them. They should use ESF as their platform of choice when they want to interact on European research (policy) issues. ESF will actively work through its MOs, serving them and, with them, the research community in Europe. ESF will also offer its MOs a platform for developing and streamlining their interactions with international and non-European research organisations into a gateway to Europe for research co-operation and science policy.

In such a complex arena, ESF can only achieve its goals together with its MOs and by engaging in partnerships.

During recent years, ESF has developed several project-oriented partnerships with the EC. The scientific and technical management of the COST Office has been taken over from the Commission because the networking activities of COST complement strengths of ESF and thus create the possibilities for better service to the scientific community.

The EC has also given support for joint projects between ESF and its MOs

(EUROCORES, EURYI). In this case, ESF took advantage of the financial possibilities offered by the EC to implement its own mission.

Whenever it is seen as beneficial for European research, ESF will establish new partnerships, which may include universities and their organisations, private foundations and, when appropriate, industry.

The role of the universities in many countries is crucial for European research as they form the basic platform for a large number of researchers. The universities, in contrast to several other national research performing organisations, are not members of ESF. Therefore, interactions between ESF and the universities should be developed and will include a dialogue with the European University Association (EUA).

The relationship between ESF and industry will principally be through involving excellent researchers in industry in ESF's activities. Private foundations and industry are already contributing to specific actions, for example the co-funding of conferences. A condition for accepting such contributions will always be that they support the mission of ESF.

This section has sketched the context for identifying the unique role of ESF and its mission, which will be developed in Chapter 5.

- **ESF, together with its MOs, will engage in partnerships with other organisations in Europe and the rest of the world in order to promote co-operation for the benefit of the European scientific community;**
- **ESF, as a Membership Organisation with a wide membership, can play a unique role with considerable impact at the European level by working closely with its members.**

2.4. The coexistence of ESF and ERC

ESF was one of the initiators of the debate which led to the proposal for an ERC. In April 2003, the report on 'New structures for the support of high-quality research in Europe' was presented by an ESF committee under the chairmanship of Sir Richard Sykes. The conclusion of this report was that Europe needs a new structure for the support of high-quality research with the dual role of promoting pan-European competition and dealing with the problem of scale and scope in researcher-led science.

Despite initial scepticism, the ERC concept is now widely supported by the scientific and political communities and is one of the four pillars in the EC's proposal for FP7. The ERC will be under the responsibility of and financed by the EC and will be limited to just one of the missions from the Sykes report – competition between individual research teams to promote European excellence and thus to secure a position for Europe at the frontiers of science.

Throughout the process of establishing the ERC, ESF has provided advice to the EC, for example on the membership of the ERC Scientific Council and on the modalities of the ERC operations, and will continue to offer its advice once the ERC is established. ESF's role will be clearly complementary to the ERC mission: during the period of this Strategic Plan, ESF will focus on co-operation and co-ordination between its MOs to promote researcher-led scale and scope of European science. As ESF MOs are responsible for the major part of funding for frontier research in Europe, ESF will continue to deal with those needs presented in the Sykes report that are not covered by the ERC.

- **ESF will play a clearly complementary role to the ERC by focussing on co-operation and co-ordination between its MOs to promote researcher-led science in Europe.**

Physical and engineering sciences

Physical and Engineering Sciences are key drivers of Research and Innovation, providing fundamental insights and creating new applications.

Fundamental topics include dark energy and dark matter in our universe, Quantum Entanglement, processes in biological cells and modelling large biological systems.

Engineering is particularly pioneering new information technologies, new materials and intelligent systems.

Nanosciences and technologies are converging physical sciences with medical research and cognitive sciences. Refinement of methods will increase applications in areas like food sciences, earth and space sciences, energy and engineering.

Scientific research at future Research Infrastructures (RIs) imply a similar trans-disciplinary convergence.

Increased computational power is effecting all scientific communities. Computational sciences provide new methods in ever-more fields. More coordination efforts are needed.

The scientific community is aware that innovation in the 21st century must also address the societal issues to be effective and sustainable.

3 THE ESF CORE MISSION – CO-OPERATION TO PROMOTE RESEARCHER-LED SCALE AND SCOPE IN EUROPEAN SCIENCE

The ESF mission should derive from its unique position in the ERA, which was sketched in Chapter 2. ESF's unique position in this arena is that it is the only organisation in Europe that brings together nearly all national research organisations, extending beyond the current EU membership. It is a unique platform for these organisations to meet and discuss strategic developments and issues of common concern. Its Statutory role is 'to promote all branches of science and research in Europe', which distinguishes ESF from the EU Framework Programme which is mission-driven. ESF covers all disciplines, natural and engineering sciences, medical sciences, social sciences and humanities. This distinguishes ESF from other European organisations dealing only with disciplinary areas. Through its scientific committee structure, its instruments as well as its MOs, it has direct access to the wider European research community.

As the European platform for its MOs – funding and research performing organisations, be they research councils, institute organisations or academies – ESF can act as a catalyst to create the scale and scope that is needed to increase the quality, speed and effectiveness of the scientific community's response to global challenges in science, thus contributing to increasing the competitiveness of European research.

Analysis of the evolution of the frontiers of science and the development of future European research agendas, paving the way for priority setting and co-operation to create disciplinary or interdisciplinary critical mass beyond the national levels, are key aspects of this catalytic role. It will include facilitating and adding synergy to the co-operation between national research organisations. Such co-operation must have a defined scientific 'added value' and should not be just politically motivated.

Mission statement

The analysis presented before leads to the following new Mission Statement:

The ESF provides a common platform for its Member Organisations in order to:

- Advance European research
- Explore new directions for research at the European level

Through its activities, the ESF serves the needs of the European research community in a global context

ESF values

ESF's mission is guided by shared values that characterise ESF's specific organisational culture. These values are:

- **Excellence: the gatekeeper criterion for all scientific activities; it will also drive the management philosophy and operating procedures;**
- **Openness: to all scientists and disciplines; no barriers between disciplines; open sharing of results; transparency to stakeholders and partners;**
- **Responsiveness: in its procedures and structure;**
- **Pan-European: rising above national interests to the benefit of science in the whole of Europe;**
- **Ethical awareness and human values: sensitive to societal and ethical considerations in all its activities; attention to gender aspects.**

Conditions for the successful implementation of the mission

The mission, taking account of the values, will be translated into instruments in the next chapter. Hereafter, some important conditions will be listed which determine the choice and use of the instruments. These are derived from what has been stated so far in Chapters 2 and 3.

Partnership of trust

The first condition is a close partnership with the ESF MOs. ESF as a membership-based organisation will work in close association with its MOs and will consult them on strategic decisions concerning ESF. ESF will provide a platform for the MOs to develop research strategies, funding policies, best practices etc. ESF will aim to provide impartial and balanced information to help underpin MO strategic decisions with a European dimension. Evidently, the quality of this partnership would be further enhanced if MOs (all, or subgroups like research funding organisations, research performing organisations or academies) undertake to actively use ESF for their joint needs.

Authority

ESF needs to attract the best researchers in all fields to give their time to and to use ESF. Only then can ESF speak with authority. This is also required if ESF is to contribute to the creation of the next generation of leading researchers. Attracting the best scientists will depend on the quality of ESF's actions, but also on the effectiveness of the partnership of ESF with its MOs, which is an important factor in the outreach of ESF's actions. Top-level scientists should see that by bringing together its MOs, ESF is able to influence the direction of research funding in Europe.

Independence

The third condition is that ESF should ensure that its scientific judgements are independent, unbiased and devoid of lobbying. At the same time, ESF is a platform for its MOs whereby ESF and its MO's work together and scientific judgement is to be built up jointly.

Also, ESF should stick to its mission and maintain its independence when engaging in partnerships with organisations outside its membership. "Mission drift" will create confusion and loss of identity. This applies when ESF engages with science organisations in Europe and the rest of the world. It applies equally when ESF engages in partnerships with the EC. ESF will not and should not aspire to be 'an implementing agent' of the EC. There are mutually beneficial partnerships such as the support of the Commission for managing EURYI and for the scientific co-ordination and management of EUROCORES.

Medical sciences

Main scientific developments that we expect to become important for innovative medical research towards improved human health in the coming years include a better understanding of the causes and essential pathways responsible for the manifestation of complex diseases. This should be achieved through Molecular Medicine, which is the integration of the knowledge produced by Systems Biology to the level of the whole body through comparative phenotypes studies. Pro-active risk management at the earliest stage of new Nanomedicines discovery and modelling of human diseases are mandatory steps in the discovery and development of innovative medicines. Likewise, the development of the Personalised diagnosis, treatment and monitoring of diseases in a patient centred process will be at the forefront of medical developments. This should be achieved with an interdisciplinary team made of researchers, care providers and actors of the social security and solidarity system. It will be mandatory to investigate the ethical and legal implications underlying these scientific developments.

This applies also, on a different scale, to ESF's relationship with the EC in the COST contract. In this case, there is also a balance to strike between the management role of ESF and the governance role of the COST Committee of Senior Officials. The condition for accepting contracts with the EC, now and in the future, is that the relationship between ESF and the EC is one of normal accountability with no interference in the contents.

In summary, ESF's position with regard to its independence is that:

- ESF is a membership organisation;
 - ESF works with its MOs to deliver their strategic objectives;
 - ESF makes independent scientific judgements.
-
- **ESF aims to be the actor of choice and preferred partner when national research organisations develop joint activities.**
 - **ESF aims to be the natural multinational arena when scientists wish to develop high-quality researcher-led co-operation.**

4 INSTRUMENTS FOR ESF'S MISSION

ESF will implement its mission through a set of instruments, taking account of the ESF values. What instruments are needed? In the first place, ESF must play a role for its MOs. Their most important need is to have platforms to address issues of common concern in strategic and operational science policy: issues like creating the scientific basis for priority setting and addressing common problems in peer review and proposal handling. This requires instruments for foresight to establish priorities and fora to discuss joint science policy development. MOs increasingly wish to undertake joint actions at the European level to promote, for instance, research co-operation and research careers. This requires a professional organisation with accumulated experience in handling a range of European level joint actions.

The consultation of the scientific community clearly identified the need for instruments to promote goal-oriented co-operation (for identifying new directions in science, for exchanging results and for developing new initiatives) and for science-driven research programmes. The consultation also demonstrated a need for putting European co-operation in a global context. The Standing Committees and Expert Boards are ESF's principal interface with the European scientific community, with strong links to the MOs. The analysis of the needs of MOs and the scientific community, and the results of a recent evaluation of the impact of the ESF networking instruments, indicate that the present portfolio of instruments is largely adequate, provided they are sharpened and partly refocused to address even better the challenges of promoting co-operation in order to create scale and scope in researcher-led science.

There are two exceptions. First, in 2004, the Governing Council agreed to the discontinuation of the Networks instrument because of the overlap between Networks, ESF Research Networking Programmes and COST Actions. Second, based on the consultation process, ESF will add an instrument to directly serve its MOs: Member Organisation Fora.

To promote competition, as well as to create possibilities for interdisciplinary actions and to increase transparency and visibility, ESF will announce common Calls for all its instruments across all domains of science; furthermore ESF will publish an annual schedule of its Calls and deadlines. To enhance the reach and impact of its instruments, ESF will develop a Communication Plan, including full exploitation of the potential of the Internet. This plan will address, among other things, external communication about science and science policy, as well as communication about ESF as an organisation and its instruments. In the implementation of its mission, ESF will make a special effort to involve women and scientists from 'new and candidate EU countries', who are currently underrepresented in the activities.

ESF will streamline its instruments and concentrate them in the following three areas:

- **Science Strategy;**
- **Science Synergy;**
- **Science Management.**

Social sciences

Social sciences examine the rich manifestations of what is meant to be a social being, ranging from the minutiae of human behaviour and brain functions, to large scale social movements, demographics, economics and politics. An example of the diverse research activities is the research on the dynamics of social action systems. This field constitutes an example of the potential for novel work on a European scale. The 'science of networks' aims to study interactions across domains and levels of complexity. Phenomena such as economic organisation, vocabularies of languages, the spread of epidemics and the metabolism of the living cells may all be governed by a limited set of simple laws (e.g. the 'small worlds' network; power laws for the distribution of entities and events; the 'strength of weak ties'). Studying the dynamics of complex systems of social actions unfolding in material and symbolic environments requires complex research and data-collection designs with multi-level units and methods of analysis.

4.1. ESF Science Strategy

The strategic objective of the instruments under Science Strategy is to provide high-level and high-quality foresight and advice on science, research infrastructure and science policy issues of European significance to underpin decisions on strategic directions and priorities, or on programmes of science-driven research. In the application of these instruments special attention will be paid to promoting Europe's ability to open up new research areas in order to be a leader rather than a follower.

The instruments in Science Strategy can only have a real impact if the experts involved are of the highest quality and authority. High quality output requires a critical awareness of the need for an impartial balance of interests, and guarding against lobbying.

Instruments:

• Forward Looks

Building on the experiences gained in the six Forward Looks conducted so far, ESF will turn Forward Looks for domains of science or research infrastructure into a central instrument. Forward Looks will be used to develop high-level authoritative visions on the direction of science and on priorities, for MOs, for the scientific community and for partners. A programme of Forward Looks will be built from:

- Responses to Calls among the scientific community and MOs
- Dedicated requests from MOs or commissioned by external bodies, for example the EC or – on research infrastructure – by ESFRI, in the context of setting research priorities
- Strategic requests from ESF bodies or ESF-COST.

With its Forward Looks, ESF aims to make an impact which is similar to that of the foresights of the USA's National Academies of Science. Therefore, Forward Looks will involve eminent European scientists as well as policy makers in discussions about where broad areas of science could and should go. Input from the wider research community in Europe will be sought in this process. The discussion will be placed in the global context of the research domain concerned.

It is important to turn Forward Looks into action. With the input from Forward Looks, ESF will aim to provide authoritative, trustworthy advice on specific science issues, on research infrastructure or on issues of science policy, at its own initiative or at the request of others. Recipients of such advice will be identified in advance and could be science organisations (e.g. EUROHORCs or other MOs), the EC and other European institutions, groups of universities, regional or national authorities. ESF Policy Briefings will be developed into a powerful tool for the rapid communication of new science and science policy findings. At five-yearly intervals, ESF will develop strategic visions for its five science domains and for the domains of its Expert Boards.

• Member Organisation Fora

In response to clearly expressed needs from MOs in the consultations, ESF will develop a new à la carte instrument: Member Organisation Fora. These will be output-oriented, issue-related venues for MOs, involving others as appropriate, to develop joint actions.

The Fora will be time-limited activities, bringing together interested MO representatives at the leadership or operational level as appropriate, and will not play a role in the governance. Issues for discussion and the agenda of Forum meetings will be determined

on the basis of needs expressed in consultations with MOs, among others, through Calls for ideas. ESF will provide the secretarial and logistic support. Needs that were expressed during the consultations and that could be topics for MO Fora are for example:

- Joint strategy development and strategic co-operation with regard to research issues of a European nature;
- Development of best practice for proposal handling, including peer review processes;
- Exchange of practice for science management, in particular benefiting the new and candidate European Union countries or newly established research organisations;
- Development of funding mechanisms for medium-sized research infrastructures;
- The creation of ‘windows for collaboration’ between European and non-European research organisations;
- Harmonisation of co-ordination by MOs of national programmes in a European context, for example, in relation to ERA-NETs.

The development of best practice for peer review will be programmed for 2006.

• Exploratory Workshops

Exploratory Workshops will be focused on examining frontier areas of science or research infrastructure, with the aim of exploring the usefulness of setting up Forward Looks, developing new programmes or initiating other implementation actions within or outside ESF, including the publication of Policy Briefings.

• Expert Boards and Committees

The Expert Boards, in particular those in marine, polar, space and nuclear science, play a key role in the strategy development for broad domains of science with a strong infrastructural component. They bring together institutional leadership in those domains, which creates a powerful mechanism for turning strategic advice into action. Their importance can be illustrated by the impact on FP6 research of the Marine Board document ‘Integrating Marine Science in Europe’; the key role of the Polar Board in the International Polar Year; the influence of the European Space Science Committee on the scientific content of Europe’s space policy as proposed by the EC and ESA; and the impact of the NuPECC priorities on the ESFRI list of priorities for research infrastructure investments in Europe. Therefore, ESF will maintain the Expert Boards as Strategic Science Policy bodies for selected multidisciplinary domains.

At the same time, ESF will create Expert Committees with a time-limited mandate in areas cutting across domains of Standing Committees, whenever rapid developments require focused strategic thinking and action.

- **The instruments to promote Science Strategy – Forward Looks, à la carte Member Organisation Fora, Exploratory Workshops and Expert Boards and Committees – will be focused to better serve ESF’s strategic goals.**
- **To engage the best scientists, the outputs of the strategic instruments have a visible impact on the funding of research across national boundaries.**

Humanities

Humanities explore the origins and products of the human capacity for creativity and communication.

Transdisciplinary research programmes will generate new knowledge, in fields such as consciousness research/ cognitive sciences, human dignity/ health and disease, cultural diversity/ technological innovation and sustainability.

Comparative studies of transcultural issues such as science, values and religion or migration, integration and identity will shed light on the complex inner workings of past and contemporary societies.

Transnational research infrastructures will facilitate the exchange between distinct traditions of European Humanities research and will stimulate new questions.

Humanities will engage with society’s needs for targeted foresight activities: better methodologies and practices will allow the integration of Humanities research into such future-oriented exercises.

4.2. ESF Science Synergy

The instruments in Science Synergy aim to stimulate co-operation between researchers and MOs to explore new directions in research, to plan and implement European-level research (programmes) or actions in researcher-led science and research infrastructures, and to involve research organisations in the choice of topics.

These instruments are all supported by MOs on an à la carte basis, allowing them to select topics that fit their interests and priorities. In selecting the topics to be proposed for such funding, scientific quality of the activities and of the participants will be the first criterion, followed by the demonstrated need for European co-operation. Activities will only be undertaken if ESF's intervention is likely to make a substantial difference. Participation in the instruments will normally be open to the whole research and MO community.

Instruments:

• ESF European Collaborative Research (EUROCORES) Programmes

ESF created the EUROCORES Scheme as an instrument for European research co-operation with the goals of addressing researcher-led scale and scope in scientific questions, to appeal to the best scientists in Europe and to bring together national research organisations in a cost-effective, concerted approach to national funding of European co-operative research. EUROCORES programmes incorporate a Call for multinational project proposals, single European peer review with high-level panels, which forms the basis for national decisions on the funding of projects, in addition to funding for scientific networking and science synthesis. Following an internal analysis of the operation of the EUROCORES Scheme, ESF has consulted Member Organisations participating in the scheme, and has developed new streamlined decision-making procedures and high-quality peer review. In this way EUROCORES is now ideally positioned to develop into a role model for high-quality co-operation in research in Europe, with decentralised funding of the research projects. The scheme is being expanded to include non-European partners under appropriate conditions and wherever scientifically relevant. ESF will propose further improvements in the procedures and the timeline of the decision process.

Themes for EUROCORES Programmes will be selected on quality, their specific European scientific 'added value' and their unique character compared to themes supported under other schemes, for example, those funded under the Framework Programme.

• ESF Research Networking Programmes

ESF Research Networking Programmes are a strategic instrument for bringing together leading scientists and young promising researchers around frontline research themes in which co-operation creates demonstrably better science. They allow scientists whose research is fully funded elsewhere to share results and explore possibilities for developing new co-operative research projects. The longer-term co-operation in Programmes, usually of five years, in combination with the variety of activities that can be funded, makes them an excellent mechanism for building new interdisciplinary research communities. Such interdisciplinarity will be specifically encouraged.

- **ESF Research Conferences**

ESF will develop ESF Research Conferences as a high-level, high-profile scheme addressing state-of-the-art science in all disciplines, including interdisciplinarity where appropriate. The Research Conferences could also pave the way for collaborative efforts. Topics will come from 'top down' initiatives but will mainly be selected from responses to 'bottom up' annual calls. Participation will be by up to 150 high-ranked scientists and promising young researchers. Conferences will generally include foresight sessions to complement the strategic intelligence of ESF. Emphasis will be on a limited number of venues linked to science domains in order to promote 'branding'. In the organisation and funding, ESF will follow a partnership approach with MOs or other European and international organisations or local hosts. The new ESF Research Conferences are already attracting high-level partners and funding from MOs and organisations such as EMBO and the Wellcome Trust.

- **The ESF instruments to promote science synergy – EUROCORES, ESF Research Networking Programmes and ESF Research Conferences – will be used to bring together excellent scientists at all stages of their careers, to advance the frontiers of research.**
- **The instruments will bring together MOs on an à la carte basis to fund those activities that fit their strategic priorities and interests.**

4.3. ESF Science Management

The logical extension of the instruments described so far is the provision of services to (subsets of) ESF MOs, in particular to the EUROHORCs, in the form of (research) programme management. In this way, ESF serves the scientific community in strengthening the position of ‘cutting-edge’ science in Europe in a more cost-effective manner by creating synergies between funding sources and by assisting in the breaking down of barriers to cross boundary co-operation.

Instrument:

• Scientific management of third-party programmes

Over the years ESF has built up considerable experience in the management of various programmes at the European level, both ESF’s own programmes and programmes funded by third parties. The experience which has been accumulated in this way will be put at the disposal of MOs. Such management tasks will only be accepted if they enhance the ESF Mission and if they are fully funded by sources outside the ESF. The ESF General Budget is not for supporting the activities of third parties and ESF is not a consultant offering management services just to increase its budget.

Together with the MOs involved, ESF will make use of the possibilities offered by the EC to fund activities in this area, provided such funding does not involve control over the contents of those activities. Other conditions that will have to be fulfilled are open access for the scientific community, with excellence as a gatekeeper criterion, and that the number of MOs requesting an ESF role should be significant. The boundary conditions and rules for participation should naturally be determined by the funding agency, but scientific quality control should be the responsibility of ESF.

Current examples of such third-party programmes are EURYI and COST, as well as the engagement of ESF as a co-ordinator in the EC-funded research organisation networks in the marine – MARINERA – and polar – EUROPOLAR – areas.

– European Young Investigator Awards (EURYI)

Together with EUROHORCs, ESF will aim to further shape EURYI into a highly visible and prestigious Award scheme, enabling the very best young researchers to establish themselves in Europe after working abroad. ESF will work with EUROHORCs to explore the possibility of expanding the scheme.

– COST

COST has a long history of European networking that involves leveraging national research funds. It complements ESF activities by having a more objective-driven profile in its Actions. Therefore, assuming that the contract with the Commission is continued under FP7, ESF is ready to continue the scientific and technical management of COST with the ambition of deepening Actions and further increasing the synergy with ESF Standing Committees and Expert Boards and ESF instruments. The ultimate goal is to put in place a ‘one-stop’ shop of programmes for co-operation between scientists whose research is funded from other sources: this means putting ESF Research Networking Programmes and COST Actions on a common denominator, whilst maintaining their specific character, with open Calls, rigorous international Peer Review and high scientific quality-management of the activities. A restructuring of the scientific domains of COST is currently in progress.

- **ESF is open to accept the management of third-party programmes if they strengthen its Mission, fit the expertise of ESF and they are fully funded.**

4.4. Increasing the impact of the instruments

ESF will aim to create maximum synergy in the use of its instruments in order to make optimum use of its intellectual and financial resources and of those of its stakeholders.

Synergy can be achieved by better use of the outcomes of the various instruments.

For example, Exploratory Workshops, ESF Research Networking Programmes and ESF Research Conferences will be required to address foresight as part of their activities.

The outcome of that foresight will be used in the general strategy development for the science domains of ESF. Ideally, the outcome of Forward Looks should lead to the development of themes for EUROCORES. ESF will develop policies to promote such synergies as much as possible.

Although ESF instruments focus on researcher-led science, it should be realised that many of the results of such research are highly relevant to the needs of economy and society.

At the same time, the classical innovation model of basic research leading to applied research, leading to innovations in a linear manner is increasingly becoming falsified.

In the interest of promoting science, these considerations should influence the way ESF implements its strategy. By communicating and stimulating dialogue with society about the results of science and science policy, ESF will ensure that the impact of its actions on society is maximised. Other means to this end include encouraging scientists participating in ESF actions to interact with society about the results of their science, and promoting links between ESF activities and society where a potential is seen to exist, for example, by involving excellent researchers working in society or the private sector in Forward Looks.

5 MEMBERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND THE SCIENCE STRUCTURE OF ESF

5.1. Membership

ESF is an organisation in which the members determine the direction in which the organisation evolves. There are three main categories of members:

- Research-Funding Organisations;
- Research-Performing Organisations; and
- Academies.

ESF is unique because it is the only meeting place in Europe where these three groups can come together. With currently 78 members in 30 countries, questions arise about, for example, how many (more) members (countries) ESF should aim for; how best to deal with the diversity of members. In 2004, ESF decided to focus its membership on organisations that fund research (such as research councils), on research-performing organisations and on academies with research institutes. ALLEA, as the umbrella for Learned Societies, was given observer status in ESF. In close collaboration with each of these three groups, ESF will develop a better understanding of their expectations and needs in order to provide a better service to each of these constituencies and mechanisms for strengthening the links with them. This discussion will also include developing a new policy on the membership strategy. Following this, there should be an open discussion on whether or not to change the membership criteria. The Governing Council has placed a moratorium on new membership applications until the membership issue has been resolved.

- **In the first year of the Strategic Plan, ESF will set up a Taskforce to develop proposals for strengthening its links with the various groups of MOs and to review the membership policy and criteria. The proposals will be presented to the September 2006 Governing Council.**

5.2. Governance and the science structure

At the moment, ESF has three levels of governance. At the highest level, the Assembly is responsible for the general policy and procedures of the Foundation. The Governing Council approves and monitors the overall strategic direction of ESF. The Executive Board has, within the overall policy directions set by the Governing Council, the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the strategy and policy. The CEO and his office are responsible for the actual implementation. Rapid developments in modern science and dynamic changes in the European science policy landscape require responsive and efficient decision-making processes. At the same time, involving the ESF membership closely in the strategic directions of ESF is becoming increasingly important. In the first year of the Strategic Plan, a Taskforce involving MOs will be created to address these issues of decision-making and governance and to prepare proposals for the Governing Council and Assembly.

The present science structure of ESF consists of Standing Committees for five broad domains. Changes in the way research is done and developments in the various scientific domains, including the demands for more interdisciplinarity, call for new approaches to co-operation that should be facilitated by an appropriate Committee structure. Given the dynamic character of such changes, the science structure of ESF should facilitate lateral communication to promote interdisciplinary initiatives and identification of emerging areas. At the same time, it should be adaptable. Many MOs express a need for a high-level meeting place in ESF for their disciplinary science leadership. The present Standing Committees have to fulfil four widely different tasks: high-level, trustworthy scientific advice; science policy and strategy development; review of proposals, and providing links to the disciplinary divisions of MOs. Ideally, these tasks require different types of the Committee membership. Furthermore, due to the growth in ESF membership, the size of Standing Committees has increased, leading to large plenary meetings, further enlarged by the valuable addition of observers from other bodies. This has decreased the efficiency and reduced the involvement of members: operational emphasis has been shifted to the Core Groups.

At the same time ESF, as an organisation dealing with science across all disciplines, lacks an overarching high-level science advisory body with responsibilities cutting across all disciplines. The tasks of such a body should be developed in the context of the changes in decision making and governance, on the one hand, and the future of the scientific committee structure on the other hand.

The Taskforce addressing the governance will also address the science structure of ESF.

In the first year of the new Strategic Plan, ESF will set up a Taskforce involving MOs and Chairs of Standing Committees to develop proposals for:

- **Streamlining the present decision-making processes and simplifying the governance structure;**
- **Preparing a proposal for the Committee structure, involving the Chairs of the Standing Committees and MOs.**

The Taskforce will report to the September 2006 Governing Council.

6 MAKING IT HAPPEN

To deliver the Strategic Plan, more detailed plans are necessary that address the implementation aspects. Also, as has been requested by the Assembly, the Strategic Plan is connected to a multi-annual Financial Plan as a frame for the preparation of the Annual Budgets, which must be approved by the Assembly. The Financial Plan is a rolling plan, which will be updated on a yearly basis within the agreed financial envelope. The details of the operationalisation of the Strategic Plan will be developed in the Implementation Plan, which is an operational plan for the ESF management and the Executive Board, and will address among others the following issues:

- **The details of review of the Membership, Governance and Committee structure;**
- **An ESF Communication Plan;**
- **Quality assurance of the ESF's operations;**
- **Optimum use of human and physical resources to ensure delivery.**

ESF will develop during 2006 a Plan for the structure, management and Office operations of the ESF. This Plan will address issues related to efficiency and quality of delivery, improved cost efficiency and client orientation. It will also address the shift in emphasis in staffing towards more science and science policy competence.

The Financial Plan for the period 2006–2010 will address the following issues:

- **Main working hypotheses for the financial plan;**
- **The main components of a consolidated ESF budget;**
- **Quantitative goals for 2010 for the ESF instruments;**
- **Funding requirements for the General Budget and a simulated projection of the 2010 Call for MO contributions.**

