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## New head for European Science Foundation

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Bertil Andersson has been announced as the new secretary general of the [European Science Foundation](#) (ESF). Andersson told us that, when he takes over the position in November this year, his main aim will be to campaign for a switch in pan-European science funding so that it leans more toward basic research than at present. He also sees [a proposed European Research Council](#) as the best way to manage the resulting increase in basic research funding.

Currently, the ESF is a modestly funded body—its budget this year is €12 million—but it is intellectually influential in basic science circles because of its network of connections to national academies and scientific organizations around Europe. In the future, if Andersson has his way, the ESF will turn its influence into substantial economic muscle and will play a significant part in directing the proposed European Research Council.

The idea for such a council has been around for several years, and in April this year an ESF working group chaired by Richard Sykes, rector of Imperial College London, [released a report](#) suggesting how such a council could be introduced. Andersson was a member of the working group.

In the group's vision, existing pan-European research funds for basic research would be transferred to the council. After 5 years, the council would have achieved a funding stream equivalent to that of a research council in one of the major member states. None of the details on how this is to be achieved are clear.

Such a pot of money is needed, Andersson said, because although scientists in different countries know their peers, it is not easy to find funding that also crosses national boundaries.

Andersson's ideas for the ESF and his aspiration that it play a significant part in a European Research Council are bold, but they are a sign of the times. The European Council of Ministers said at a meeting in Barcelona in March 2002 that by 2010, it wanted to see [3% of gross domestic product spent on research](#), development, and innovation, compared with 1.9% now. And the European Commission is pushing for the establishment of a European Research Area that would cooperate on projects too large for one country.

Andersson, a professor of biochemistry, is the president of Linköping University in Sweden. ESF's Governing Council [has recommended](#) that he take over the organization when Enric Banda's term of office comes to an end later this year.

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