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# The European Union should create EU Chairs for world-class scholars

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The AERG (Association of ERC Grantees) strongly supports the Draghi report's proposal to create EU Chairs, managed by the ERC, to attract world-class scholars to Europe (Proposal 3c).<sup>1</sup> In view of the international situation, the timing could not be more opportune, and action should urgently be taken to implement the proposal.

As the Draghi report states, although the ERC currently funds frontier research projects led by top researchers, EU Chairs additionally aim at transforming institutions. This will require “a policy specifically designed to attract world-leading researchers” who can “help to build these institutions and act as a magnet for other top talent.”

International instability is such that many world-class scholars might be motivated to establish themselves in Europe. Europe would make important contributions to science and advance its own strategic autonomy by giving these scholars the ability to apply for EU Chairs.

The Draghi report explicitly proposes that EU Chairs should be managed by the ERC. We strongly endorse this view, which we see as the key guarantee of scientific quality for the EU Chair programme. EU Chairs should also adhere to the ERC's general philosophy and procedures, which involve bottom-up calls open to all fields, with excellence as the sole criterion.

We recommend that the implementation of EU Chairs build on past experience obtained in related schemes. Several European countries have run Excellence Chair programmes with

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<sup>1</sup> *The Draghi report: In-depth analysis and recommendations (Part B)*, Proposal 3c, p. 252.  
[https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/draghi-report\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/draghi-report_en)

similar goals for many years.<sup>2</sup> The experiences of the chair holders and of the research agencies that select them are valuable resources that should be used in developing the operational model for EU Chairs.

With appropriate implementation, the creation of EU Chairs will be an extraordinary contribution to European scholarship and society. It will also extend and reinforce the EU's research, education, and innovation systems. AERG welcomes the proposed role of the ERC in the EU Chairs. The excellence-based philosophy and the bottom-up approach that have become a hallmark of the ERC will be key components in the success of the EU Chair programme.

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<sup>2</sup> As an example, Germany's "Humboldt Professorships", which have similar goals as EU Chairs, have existed since 2008. See: <https://www.humboldt-foundation.de/en/apply/sponsorship-programmes/alexander-von-humboldt-professorship>