Preamble

The following recommendations aim to support researchers who have reached the career stage “Established Researcher, R3” according to the European Framework for Research Careers and who find themselves between the stage of a postdoc (Recognized Researcher, R2) and that of a scientific leadership position (Leading Researcher, R4).

In the Max Planck Society (MPS) there are several groups who meet the criteria for this career stage. These include Max Planck Research Group Leaders (W2). They are selected for the programme through a competitive and quality-oriented recruitment process, and they are provided with excellent support and facilities and a clearly-defined tenure period. In addition, there are other researchers in the facilities of the MPS who fulfil the EU criteria for “Established Researcher” but whose status is not consistently regulated. In particular, these include group leaders, researchers undertaking a ‘habilitation’ (a procedure for obtaining a degree conferred by a university, which formally qualifies for a professorship), project leaders and researchers with comparable qualifications.

For MPG researchers at the R3 level who are particularly highly-qualified, the Committee recommends creating the status “Max Planck Established Researcher (MPER)”. In addition to Max Planck Research Group Leaders (MPRGL) who are automatically awarded this status as a result of their recruitment process, this status can be awarded to researchers at R3 level who satisfy high criteria for scientific excellence and who have established themselves as high performers in the MPS.

For achieving the status of a MPER, it is recommended to develop a transparent access and selection procedure, which allows for comparative assessment and which is carried out under the guidance of the Sections.

During the transition to the career stage of “Established Researcher” (i.e. from R2 to R3), significantly more women than men choose to leave academic science. It is the aim of the MPS to facilitate the career paths of more highly-qualified women towards scientific leadership positions. As a result, the Committee has placed specific emphasis on ensuring that the recommended access and selection procedure for the status of a MPER ensures equal opportunities for female scientists. In addition, particular efforts must be made in order to encourage qualified women to pursue a scientific career and to aim for scientific leadership positions. The Sections responsible for the selection process not only need to guarantee that uniform quality standards are applied. In addition, they should also develop procedures ensuring that the proportion of women among the group of Established Researchers reaches at least the proportion of women at the R2 career stage in the corresponding disciplines.

Furthermore, the Committee recommends offering an attractive career development programme. In particular, it should support those among the MPERs who aim for reaching a scientific leadership position (R4).

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1 Most are employed on TVöD (Collective Wage Agreement for the Civil Service) contracts
Qualification criteria for Max Planck Established Researcher

For achieving the status of “Max Planck Established Researcher” research achievements are required that are scientifically distinguished in relation to the individual’s career status and his/her ‘academic age’\(^2\). In addition, these researchers should have demonstrated a high degree of independence and the ability to lead scientific projects. Differences between individual disciplines are taken into account.

The status of “Max Planck Established Researcher” is defined by criteria for scientific qualifications and research activities. In this regard, the status of MPER differs from the degree of a ‘habilitation’, which is exclusively awarded by universities and their faculties and which, alongside the scientific qualification, also includes a formal qualification for academic teaching.

Access and selection process for Max Planck Established Researchers

The status of “Max Planck Established Researcher” may be awarded to all full-time employees at MPS facilities who have obtained their doctorate and who fulfil the qualification criteria. The selection procedure for “Max Planck Established Researchers” must be transparent and verifiable. It must involve several independent evaluators and requires the participation of external expertise.

In order to ensure that women are represented at this level according to their qualifications and achievements, the Institutes are encouraged to exercise their right to nominate candidates in particular for the benefit of qualified female researchers. The MPG strives to ensure that the proportion of female researchers not only reaches the levels in comparable domestic and international institutions, but actually exceeds them. Financial contributions may support these efforts.

The details of the process must be defined by the respective Sections and may contain subject-specific or Institute-specific components. However, the Committee recommends that the Sections use the process described below as a guide:

- An application for conferral of the status of “Max Planck Established Researcher” may be filed by the researchers themselves, by their superiors, or by their Institutes. All applications must contain: a résumé, a publication list, a short summary of scientific achievements to date and a statement from their superior or Director. All applications are forwarded to the Section by the Managing Director of the respective institute.

- The Sections shall appoint a (Core) Committee that defines the process and decides on applications. The Committee may delegate decisions to subcommittees responsible for certain disciplines and/or Institutes. The Presidential Committee recommends that Max Planck Established Researchers are involved in the process.

- The Sections will be informed of the results of the selection process, in particular on how the selection facilitates the progression of female researchers towards scientific leadership positions.

\(^2\) The term ‘academic age’ describes the length of time that a person has actually spent in research. Generally, this calculation includes the work experience in years since conferral of a doctorate, calculated on a pro-rata basis for part-time employees, with (professional) activities outside of research and private or other ‘downtimes’ taken into account if more than 6 months’ downtime has been taken. For female researchers in Germany, a period of two years is generally subtracted for each child. For men, the actual parental leave taken is used in calculations. A calculation model can be found at: http://research-acumen.eu/wp-content/uploads/Blank_AcumenPortfolio.v13x.pdf.
For researchers who have successfully passed external evaluation procedures with comparable quality standards, the Committees may forego external expertise (e.g. obtaining letters of reference). This group may include, amongst others, holders of ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants, Emmy Noether Group Leaders, and prize winners of the Sofja Kovalevskaja Programme.

Rules for the status of “Max Planck Established Researcher”

The conferral of the status requires the Institute or Department to comply with certain general rules that regulate the status of an “Established Researcher”. These include a high degree of, or complete, scientific independence, the right to submit own research proposals independently, the right to carry out the projects independently (in mutual agreement with the Department/Institute), and the authority to independently manage an own budget (if available) provided by the Department/Institute. This does not exclude binding commitments of the MPERs to contribute to activities of the Department/Institutes with a certain amount of their time. This may include contributions to research projects, supervision of instrumentation or of central facilities, teaching, support of junior scientists, public relations, advice, and evaluations. If necessary, amendments must be made to MPERs’ employment contracts.

The status of Max Planck Established Researcher is awarded for a period of seven years. The Sections decide whether, and under which conditions, an extension for seven additional years may be granted. Extensions must be awarded according to transparent criteria defined by the individual Sections.

Max Planck Established Researchers should be listed separately on the homepage of their respective Institute, and they should also be granted the right to set up an own homepage in order to enhance their visibility.

It should be emphasised that the award of the status “Max Planck Established Researcher” should not be linked to a specific TVöD salary scale, to time-unlimited contracts or to a certain remaining minimal contract duration, or to a specific allocation of resources. However, it is recommended that “Max Planck Established Researchers” are not employed below the salary level of TVöD E14. Moreover, institutes and Sections are encouraged to particularly support researchers who plan to use the career phase of “Max Planck Established Researcher” for qualifying for a future leadership position. These researchers should be offered contracts of a duration sufficient for achieving this goal.

Naturally, this status is also awarded irrespective of race, ethnic background, gender, religion or ideology, disability, age or sexual orientation.

It is suggested that the President creates a specific fund from which the Max Planck Established Researchers can be supported in their research as required for further qualifications. The Committee recommends that “Max Planck Established Researchers” are evaluated during the regular visits by the Scientific Advisory Boards, in particular if the award of MPER status is associated with the allocation of personal resources. Furthermore, Institutes and Sections are requested to track the career paths of “Max Planck Established Researchers” after leaving the MPG in a systematic manner (career trackings). Appropriate logistic support from the Administrative Headquarters is recommended. Such tracking is needed to allow for drawing conclusions on the success or failure of the programme in the future.

The programme should be evaluated five years after its introduction.
Measures for further qualification of “Max Planck Established Researchers”

The Committee recommends to develop a “Max Planck Leaders in Science (working title)” programme that promotes further qualifications of “Max Planck Established Researchers”. It should assist in acquiring experience and capabilities required for leadership positions, which is expected to increase the prospects for achieving R4 positions in the future. In particular, such qualification goals include achieving an internationally-recognized reputation based on scientific excellence, gaining experience in supervising personnel and in the training of junior researchers, getting involved in the organization of scientific conferences and successfully applying for external funding.