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**Sveriges ordförandeskap
i Europeiska unionen**

Forskningspolitiska enheten

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**Underlag för inledningsanförande vid invigning av ERCs kontor i
Bryssel 24 september 2009**

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It's really is an honour for me to participate in the opening of the offices for the European Research council. An office is, essentially, just a room and some furniture – but for me today represents new opportunities and a fresh start for the ERC.

Through the introduction of a research council on the European level, an important element for the creation of the European research area was put in place.

As you know this development had a strong support from Sweden at the very start. A research policy where the research councils play an important role has been a fundamental part of Swedish research policy for a long time.

The principle of selecting research projects only on the basis of excellence is a strong driver for developing new knowledge. This is fundamental for the advancement of science and for our ability to meet future challenges.

The response from the research community has been almost above expectations. This has meant that competition for the grants has been fierce. In several member states including Sweden, the quality of the researchers also on the reserve list has been so high that national grants have been made available. In an academic sense the ERC has so far been a success.

Combining academic freedom and the request for accountability for the use of funds is not always an easy task. Here it is important to strike a balance. Having been in operation only since 2007 we are still in a learning phase on how a research council should be operated on the European level. In my view it is essential that we make the European Research Council operate efficiently. It is an essential part in building a strong research Europe and we cannot fail in this task. In this development we must all take our responsibility, Commission, Parliament and Member states.

But standing here today in these new offices gives me confidence that we will succeed. I want to end my intervention here by saying that we wish you the best of luck. You will always have a strong supporter in Sweden, be it as President of the Union or not.