



**Report of the ERC Scientific Council
on the occasion of its formal establishment
(2 February 2007)**

1. The 22 founding members of the ERC Scientific Council (ScC) were nominated in their personal capacity by Commissioner Potočnik in July 2005, following an independent procedure for their identification by the Patten Committee.
2. Their 4-year term begins today, with the formal establishment of the ScC. However, they have worked informally but intensively since their first meeting in October 2005, with the invaluable assistance of a Secretariat and ERC Preparation Unit of exceptional quality, provided by the Commission Services. As a result, the ERC strategy and operational programme are now in place, and the ERC can now begin operations immediately, pending the commission's decisions on the appropriate implementation structure, which will then be incorporated in an ERC specific Executive Agency.
3. The ScC has the duty to report regularly on the functioning of the ERC. In view of the fact that it has already been working diligently for more than one year in a preparatory effort which will have determining influence on the ERC's subsequent operations, the ScC believes it is appropriate to submit this Report as soon as it is officially brought into existence.
4. The ScC asks the Commission to transmit the Report both to the Parliament and to the Council of Ministers. The Chairman, as promised, is prepared to report in person if invited.
5. The ScC wishes to record its appreciation of the commitment and efforts of the Commission, European Parliament and Council to establish an autonomous and integral ERC with substantial funding. The start of the ERC's operations will represent a historic development for European science, in which the ScC is proud to be a full partner.
6. All members of the ScC wish to record their full support for the ScC leadership: its Chair (and ERC President) Prof. Kafatos and the Vice-Chairs (and ERC Vice-Presidents) Profs. Nowotny and Estève. These officers have devoted a very substantial effort to the organisation and conduct of the ScC's work. Their election for a 4-year term co-terminous with that of the ScC, carried out in November 2005, was confirmed formally by the ScC upon its formal establishment, in unanimity.

7. The ScC has worked to prepare the ERC strategy and operational methods, to be fully in place for the formal establishment, start-up and implementation of the ERC, without any loss of time as soon as the 7th Framework Programme came into being. The ScC highly appreciates the strong cooperation and assistance of Commissioner Potočnik and the Commission Services, and their determination to respect the political vision of an ambitious and autonomous ERC, as well as providing practical and operational support to the ScC in the joint pursuit of this objective.

8. Key achievements include, to date:
 - Selection, by means of an open and rigorous procedure, of an experienced Secretary General to ensure close interaction between the ScC and the ERC implementation structure. This was achieved by the appointment of Prof. Ernst-Ludwig Winnacker for 2 ½ years, followed by Prof. Andreu Mas-Colell for the next 2 ½ years.

 - Establishment of an ERC Board consisting of the President and Vice Presidents, the Director of the Implementation Structure and the Secretary General, which will ensure the integrated as well as autonomous operation of the ERC. The Board has been put in place informally after the arrival of Prof. Winnacker, and has already proven helpful for the smooth operation of the ERC; it will be formalized as soon as the ERC is officially in place.

 - Development of an overall strategy for the ERC that presents a clear and compelling vision for this new, pan-European funding agency, directed towards efficiently meeting the key objectives of supporting outstanding investigators with excellence as the sole criterion, at the frontier of knowledge; both at the starting phase of their career and when they have advanced and become recognised as leading researchers.

 - A finalised Work Programme enabling the imminent first ERC call for proposals under the ERC Starting Grant scheme, which creates new opportunities to attract, establish, and retain talented young investigators of any nationality, to make or consolidate the transition towards becoming independent research leaders in Europe.

 - The outline of an amendment to the Work Programme, providing for the second call for proposals under the ERC Advanced Grant scheme.

 - A forward-looking peer review process that is designed to accommodate Starting Grant proposals for all fields of science, including social sciences and the humanities, and which will give proper consideration to high quality proposals crossing the boundaries between disciplines. The agreed evaluation

structure consists of a set of 20 peer review panels covering all disciplines, and encompassing scientists, engineers and scholars of the very highest reputation.

9. The ERC's strategy and the achievements indicated above have been developed with appropriate consultation and widely disseminated and presented in person, largely by the President and Vice-Presidents. The ScC is pleased to note that they have been strongly appreciated by the political leadership in Europe and have received widespread support within the European scientific community. One clear illustration of the enthusiasm amongst Europe's scientists towards the ERC and the strategy of the ScC is the unprecedented acceptance rate approaching 95 % of the persons invited to participate in the peer review evaluation panels for Starting Grants.

10. In recording these achievements, which contribute to a favourable outlook for the future, the ScC is conscious of the momentous work that lies ahead both in the programmatic and the implementation domains:
 - On the programmatic side, the ScC pledges to commit the same dedication and effort as in the past, to develop fully the Advanced Grant scheme in time for a call for proposals to be issued before the end of 2007.

 - While underscoring the excellent cooperation of the Commission and the Commission Services from the start of the development of the ERC, the ScC must also emphasize the necessity of quick action on several items that are of utmost importance for sustained progress:
 - The formal decision on the Work Program and all subsequent programmatic or implementation decisions, in light of the very tight timetable for the first call.

 - Development of the ERC's Dedicated Implementation Structure as a matter of priority, and its rapid incorporation in an ERC-specific dedicated Executive Agency, which must also establish a clear record before the planned review that is foreseen in the legislative decision.

 - Adequate support for the activities of the ScC including the necessary advisors and other staff for the Chair and Vice-Chairs to continue delivering on their tasks optimally, while located primarily in their home institutions.

This report has been unanimously agreed by the Scientific Council who has asked the President to transmit it as appropriate.

The ERC Scientific Council,

F.C. Kafatos, Chairman

C. Nüsslein-Volhard, Member

H. Nowotny, Vice Chair

L. Peltonen-Palotie, Member

D. Estève, Vice Chair

A. Peyraube, Member

C. Bordinon, Member

J. Rostrup-Nielsen, Member

M. Castells, Member

S. Settis, Member

P. Crutzen, Member

R. Zinkernagel, Member

M. Dewatripont, Member

P. Exner, Member

H.J. Freund, Member

W. Hall, Member

C. Heldin, Member

M. Kleiber, Member

N. Kroò, Member

T. Lago, Member

O. Marin Parra, Member

R. May, Member