



**European Research Council**

Established by the European Commission

**Highlight:**

**ERC encourages Croatian top talent to compete for attractive funding**

22 October 2014

**The European Research Council (ERC) is currently visiting Zagreb. Invited by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, it is the first time this pan-European funding body for excellent frontier research gathers in Croatia.**

During the visit, the ERC and its President, Prof. Jean-Pierre Bourguignon, are meeting with the Croatian Minister of Science, Education and Sports, Prof. Vedran Mornar, and national stakeholders. Today, an information event will also take place, at which the ERC delegation will engage with the research community and raise awareness about the substantial funding offered by the ERC.

In addition to these activities, the three-day visit (20-22 October) includes the plenary meeting of the ERC's governing body, the Scientific Council.

On this occasion, ERC President Jean-Pierre Bourguignon said: *"We are delighted to be in Croatia and are very much looking forward to engaging with both the scientific community and policy makers here. It is also my hope that our presence can inspire more Croatian top researchers – not least the younger generation – to consider competing for ERC grants, which are significant. The ERC funding is uniquely positioned in terms of duration, scientific freedom and trust."*

Minister of Science, Education and Sports Vedran Mornar commented: *"We are honoured to host the ERC Scientific Council in Zagreb. I sincerely hope and believe that we, with joined forces, could improve the quality of applications from the Croatian scientific community and increase its participation in the ERC grant competitions. This should also raise the visibility of the Croatian scientific community in Europe, as well as of the ERC amongst Croatian scientific talent."*

The meetings in Zagreb are part of the ERC's campaign to encourage more excellent researchers in Central and Eastern Europe to participate in ERC grant competitions.

The public information event for researchers will be held today from 15.00 to 17.30 at the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in Zagreb. During the session, ERC representatives will present the ERC's funding schemes and explain the steps of the ERC selection process. Furthermore, the two Croatian ERC scientists who have been awarded funding so far – Prof Stipan Jonjić and Dr Vernesa Smolčić - will give their testimonies.



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This afternoon, members of the ERC Scientific Council will also hold a meeting with stakeholders and policy makers from Croatia and the region to discuss their participation in ERC competitions.

### ERC grantees based in Croatia:

**ERC grantee: Prof. Stipan Jonjić**

**Host institution:** Faculty of medicine, University of Rijeka

**ERC project:** Strengthening adaptive immunity via innate immunity: enhancing the CD8 T-cell response by using the NKG2D ligand expressed in a herpes virus vector (STADVINN)

**Funding:** €1.8 million for five years

**ERC grant:** Advanced Grant 2012

**Project's summary:** Although vaccination has achieved huge success in controlling many devastating infectious diseases, there are still many illnesses against which we cannot generate life-long protective immunity. Prof. Jonjić is looking into new vaccines to help human body acquire immunity to specific pathogens. See also an [ERC story](#).

**ERC grantee: Dr Vernesa Smolčić**

**Host institution:** Faculty of science, University of Zagreb

**ERC project:** Constraining Stellar Mass and Supermassive Black Hole Growth through Cosmic Times: Paving the Way for the next generation sky surveys

**Funding:** €1.5 million for five years

**ERC grant:** Starting Grant 2013

**Project's summary:** Understanding how galaxies have formed and evolved in the early universe is one of the major goals of modern astrophysics. In her ERC-funded project, Dr Smolčić is investigating the mechanisms that shaped galaxies over cosmic time. In particular, she is exploring the role of supermassive black holes, i.e. the largest type of black holes, in galaxy evolution. Dr Smolčić is also planning to create a census of all galaxies hosting supermassive black holes, and the first census of starburst galaxies.

### Note to the editors

Set up in 2007 by the EU, the **European Research Council** ([ERC](#)) is the first pan-European funding organisation for frontier research. It aims to stimulate scientific excellence in Europe by encouraging competition for funding between the very best, creative researchers of any nationality and age. The ERC also strives to attract top researchers from anywhere in the world to come to Europe.

Under the new EU research and innovation programme, *Horizon 2020*, the ERC has a substantially increased budget of over €13 billion.

The ERC consists of an independent Scientific Council and an Executive Agency. The Scientific Council, the ERC's governing body, is composed of 22 distinguished scientists and scholars who define the scientific funding strategy and methodologies, and act on behalf of the scientific community to promote creativity and innovative research in Europe. Prof. Jean-Pierre Bourguignon is the ERC President since 1 January 2014. The ERC Executive Agency implements the ERC component of *Horizon 2020* and is led by Director Pablo Amor.



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### Links

ERC website

<http://erc.europa.eu>

More information on the ERC event in Croatia

<http://www.obzor2020.hr/obzor2020-novosti-pregled/ercinfodan>

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