



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

Press release

**ERC at the 2014 Davos meeting:
Belgian Prime Minister Di Rupo praises the European Research Council**

22 January 2014

The European Research Council (ERC) is attending the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, which starts today, to bring science into the debate with political and business leaders from around the world. At this year's meeting, the ERC - Europe's first funding body for excellent frontier research - is represented by Sir Tim Hunt, Nobel Laureate and ERC Scientific Council member, and Prof. Helga Nowotny, ERC President until the end of 2013, as well as two leading scientists. Also attending, Belgian Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo today applauded the ERC for its landmark role in science and innovation in Europe. Under this year's Davos theme, *"The Reshaping of the World: Consequences for Society, Politics and Business"*, the ERC takes part in six sessions.

In a joint press conference today at the world-renowned Alpine meeting, Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo declared that *"Some European Member States have reduced their research funding, under the pretext of austerity. Clearly, that is a mistake. Belgium continues to invest in fundamental research and research excellence."* He also stressed the importance of the ERC, which *"plays a major role in guaranteeing that Europe's research will be competitive and of great quality."*

Sir Tim Hunt also shared his views: *"Davos is a unique platform that offers a rare opportunity for the ERC to emphasise the importance of curiosity-driven research to an unusually important audience. The one message I'd like to pass on here is the crucial importance of letting scientific creativity and curiosity loose; giving researchers the freedom to explore new avenues and follow their noses beyond conventional wisdom. That's how real discoveries are made that enrich our understanding of the world, helping both society and the economy. That's why I see the European Research Council as central for European growth and development."*

The ERC delegation in Davos also includes two outstanding scientists - ERC Advanced Grant winner **Prof. Wolfgang Lutz**, Founding Director of the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital, and Nobel Laureate for Physiology or Medicine (2009) **Prof. Dr Elizabeth Blackburn**, Morris Herzstein Professor in Biology & Physiology, at the University of California in San Francisco.

Sir Tim Hunt and Prof. Helga Nowotny represent the ERC's newly appointed President, **Prof. Jean-Pierre Bourguignon**, who is unable to travel this week due to a fractured arm.



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ERC programme at Davos 2014

The ERC takes part in seven sessions and one press conference in this annual meeting.

Press conference organised by the ERC:

(Re)search for growth
Wednesday 22 January 2014 at 14.45 - 15.15
(Press conference room, Congress Centre)

Investing in R&D and the most creative ideas in and beyond times of budgetary restraint

Speakers:

Elio Di Rupo, Prime Minister of Belgium

Sir Tim Hunt, Nobel Prize laureate, ERC Scientific Council member

Prof. Helga Nowotny, ERC President from 2010 to 2013

Interview opportunity - All ERC delegates are available for media interviews (including TV and radio) throughout the Davos meeting.

Sessions with ERC participation:

"The impact of a warmer world" Wed 22 January 2014, 13:45-15:45 (*Wisshorn Work Studio, Congress Centre*) with ERC grantee **Prof. Wolfgang Lutz** (alongside speakers such as Al Gore and Lord Stern)

"One to one: A journey of discovery" Wed 22 January 2014, 15:00-15:30 (*Studio, Congress Centre*) with Nobel Laureate **Prof. Dr Elizabeth Blackburn**. (On-the-record session)

Open Forum: "Immigration – Welcome or Not?" Thu 23 January 2014, 12:30-14:00 (*Open Forum – Swiss Alpine School (SAMD), Auditorium*) with ERC grantee **Prof. Wolfgang Lutz** (along speakers such as Kofi Annan and Martin Schulz)
(Session open to reporting press - broadcast live [here](#))

"State of the World" Thu 23 January 2014, 20:00 – 22:00 (*Sheraton Waldhuus, Sertig / Dischma*) with Nobel Prize winners **Prof. Dr Elizabeth Blackburn** and **Sir Tim Hunt**, under the moderation of **Prof. Helga Nowotny**.

"Cancer: The Promise of Personalized Medicine" Fri 24 January 2014, 20:00-22:00 (*Hotel Seehof, Ferdmann*) with Nobel Laureate **Sir Tim Hunt**.

"Extreme Science" Fri 24 January 2014, 20:00-22:00 (*Turmhotel Victoria, La Terrasse*) with Nobel Laureate **Prof. Dr Elizabeth Blackburn**.



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Background

The World Economic Forum (WEF), which takes place annually since 1971, is one of the most well-known platforms for leaders from governments, business, civil society and academia to discuss pressing global issues. With the overarching goal to “improve the state of the world”, the forum this year gathers over 2,500 participants bringing together political and business leaders, including over 40 heads of state or government, from around the world.

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.

From 2007 to 2013 under the seventh EU Research Framework Programme (FP7), the ERC's budget was €7.5 billion. Under the new Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020), Horizon 2020, the ERC has a substantially increased budget of over €13 billion. Since its launch, the ERC has funded around 4 000 researchers and their frontier research projects.

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, including the ERC President, who define the scientific funding strategy and methodologies. They act on behalf of the scientific community in Europe to promote creativity and innovative research. Since 1 January 2014, Prof. Jean-Pierre Bourguignon is the ERC President. Prof. Helga Nowotny was the ERC President from 2010 to 2013. The ERC Executive Agency implements the ERC component of the EU Programme Horizon 2020 and is led by Director Pablo Amor.

Links

[ERC programme in Davos 2014](#)

[ERC Delegation's biographies](#)

[Recording of the ERC press conference](#)

[Full WEF 2014 programme](#)

[ERC website](#)

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