

# European Research Council



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**The ERC's quest to support excellent  
researchers all over Europe**

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European Research Council Executive Agency**

**Tbilisi,  
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# ERC Mission & Widening European Participation



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The ERC aims to:

- Support the best of the best in Europe across all fields of science
- Promote wholly investigator-driven, or 'bottom-up' frontier research
- Encourage the work of the established and next generation of top research leaders in Europe
- Reward innovative proposals by placing emphasis on the quality of the idea rather than the research area
- Raise the status and visibility of European frontier research and the very best researchers of today and tomorrow

But also:

- **To capitalise on the full European potential for frontier research without departing from the ERC's principle of excellence.**



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# Geographical Location of Grants

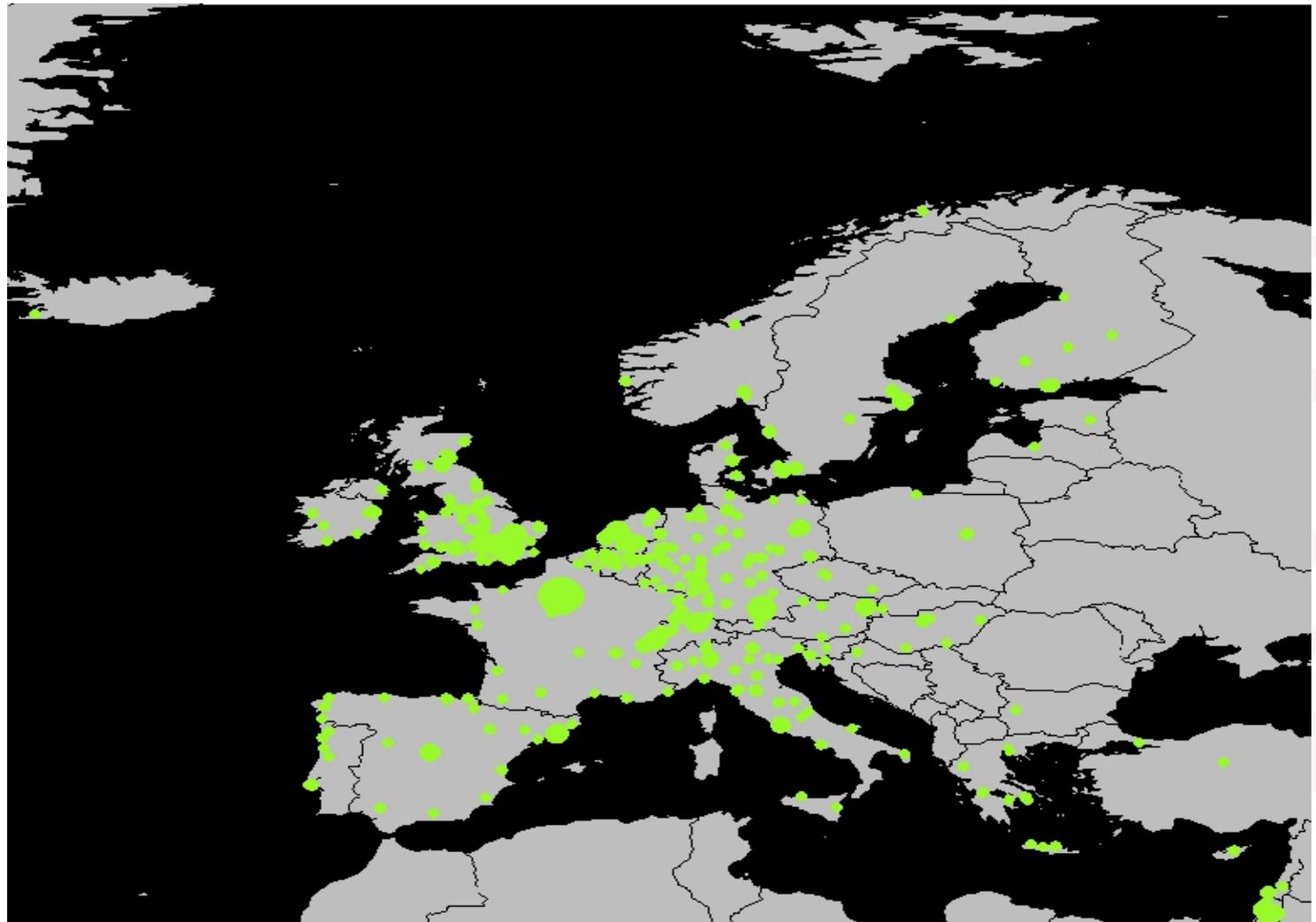
## Talent is everywhere



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Altogether  
ERC grants  
at **670**  
different  
host  
institutions  
in **33**  
countries

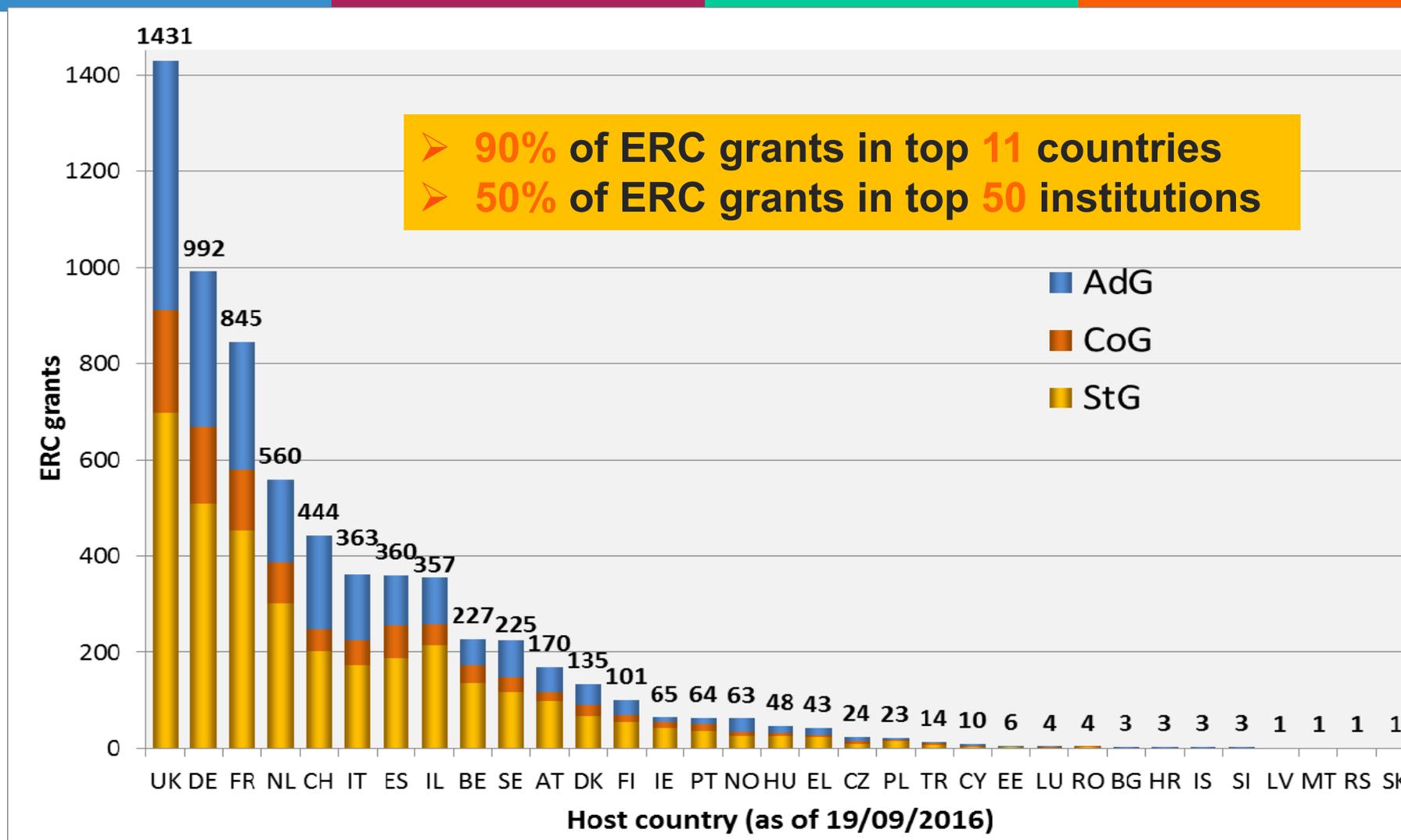


# Concentration of ERC grants in research intensive countries and top HIs



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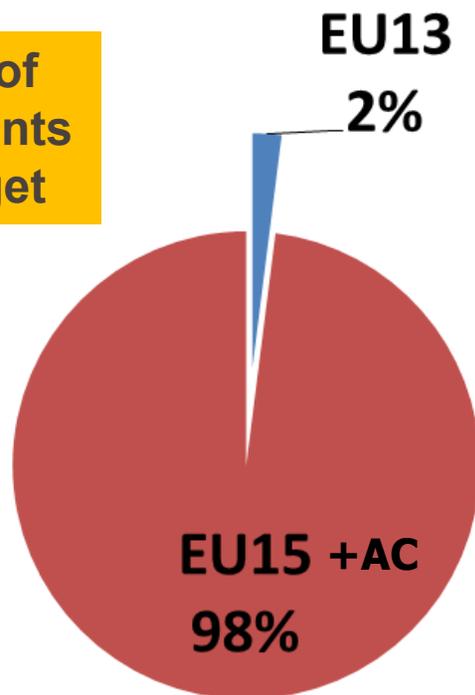


# The research potential in certain countries seems to be above their current performance



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Share of  
ERC grants  
& budget



- Share of EU13 public researchers in EU&AC = 16%
- Share of EU13 highly cited publications in EU&AC = 5%
- Share of EU13 research investment (GERD) in EU&AC = 3%

# Widening European Participation ERC Working Group



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Identify possible actions that could be taken by the ERC to support the best scientists from weak participating European countries and encourage them to apply to the ERC.

# Conclusions: Bottlenecks for higher inclusiveness in ERC competitions



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## 2014: ERC Widening participation survey [n=788]

- **Low international profile of research:** lack of international dynamics and mobility
- **Unattractiveness of research environment:** scientific isolation, missing culture of scientific excellence, lack of open and merit based reward system
- **Poor career prospective:** lack of science career building programmes and long-term research career prospective, non-merit based recruitment practices
- **Low levels of research investment:** low salaries for top scientists, lack of additional and sustainable funding: ERC top-up, ERC runners-up, ERC exit programmes
- **Inadequate research funding systems:** not appropriate for pursuing ambitious projects
- **Lack of institutional support to ERC applicants and grantees provided locally:** administration of HI, NCPs, colleagues and peers, personal coaching

**National, institutional conditions matter!**



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# Actions to be taken at national level

- **Increase research investment**
- **Research capacity building and strengthening of local research infrastructure:** use of EU structural funds
- **Reform of national/local research systems along best practices for nurturing scientific excellence:** competition based research funding, open merit based recruitment, performance based salaries,...
- **Internationalisation of research:** fostering international mobility and cross-border scientific exchange, raising attractiveness of research environment
- **Strengthening local support to ERC applicants and grantees:** financial support for ERC runners-up, training days, workshops, seminars, and coaching for ERC candidates, but also their supporting services
- **Bring back the most talented scientists from abroad** with attractive research funding and salaries (for 5 years) that are prospective candidates for ERC grants

**Encourage talented scientists to apply with strong, well prepared proposals: international mobility/ training before applying (ERC visiting fellowship), personal encouragement and support from the best scientists,...**

# How can ERC help: ERC Widening Participation Actions



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## ERC EVALUATION PROCEDURE

- Awareness raising of ERC panel chairs to unequal conditions of applicants allowing to pass more excellent/promising projects for detailed Step 2 evaluation

## INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY TRAINING

- Promotion of visiting research fellowships to ERC grantees

## SUPPORTING CAPACITY BUILDING

- Supporting promising unfunded ERC applications through EEA&Norway Grants

## POLICY SUPPORT with RECOMMENDATIONS

- Organisation of regional ERC widening participation events: open forum with all relevant national stakeholders to identify actions/strategies for higher success rate in ERC calls.

Zagreb (2014), Tallinn (2015), Budapest (2015), Krakow (2016), Wroczlaw (Nov. 2016), **Ljubljana (Dec 2016)**



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# Fellowship to visit ERC grantee – ERC guidelines



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**Scheme:** Short term research visit (a min 3 to max 6 months) in an ERC team: international exposure, grant application coaching

**Funding:** by a national research-funding organization of a country in the European Research Area, no additional funding is provided by ERC.

**Eligibility:** Open to all excellent researchers working in ERA, through public, open competitions through evaluation panels composed by researchers of high reputation and based on excellence and potential for an ERC grant application.

**Condition:** A letter of support signed by an ERC grantee and his/her Host Institution stating that in case the applicant is selected he/she will be hosted as member of the research team of the PI (facilitated by the ERC via Call for expression of interest)

**Successful applicants must sign a letter of commitment to apply for an ERC grant no later than one/two year(s) after the end of the visit.**



# Fellowship to visit ERC grantee – Results of the first call (Sept 2016)



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Participating countries/regions:

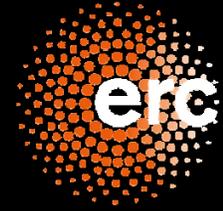
- Czech Republic
- Hungary
- Estonia
- Poland
- Slovenia
- Belgium (Flanders region)

All PIs (~2800) of the main grants who have at least 18 months until the end of the project were invited to express their interest to host a visiting fellow through these 6 national programmes.

**Positive response from 724 (26%) PIs, with good and balanced geographic (29 countries) and thematic (all ERC panels) coverage.**

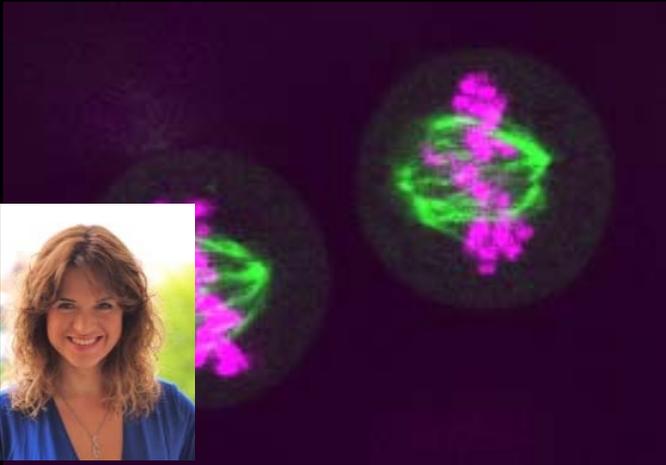
**Next ERC Call in May 2017 for national/regional fellowship programmes launched in 2017/2018.**

# ERC Repatriation success story: The driving forces of cell division Croatia



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Microtubules in action during chromosome division © Iva Tolić



## ERC Project: **NEWSPINDLEFORCE**

**Iva Tolić**

Ruđer Bošković Institute (Croatia)  
ERC Consolidator Grant €2.1 mil.

### Background

Our body is constantly producing new cells to replace old or damaged ones, at the rate of millions per second. During cell division, cells pass on their genetic material from one generation to the other: chromosomes are replicated, the cell separates in two and an identical set of chromosomes is inherited by each daughter cell.

### Research

Dr Tolić wants to map out the forces acting on the chromosomes during cell division, understand how they are generated and how they act. She is interested in particular in a new class of microtubules.

### Importance

Results could be critical for the development of new therapies against cancer, as this disease results from a cell duplication process that, for some reason, is not regulated correctly.

*A leading cell biophysicist, Dr Tolić is the ERC 5000<sup>th</sup> grantee. She has established her new lab in Croatia.*



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# The European Research Council



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