



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

Press release

15 January 2013

ERC funds its 3000th top scientist

Six years after being set up by the EU, the European Research Council (ERC) has reached a significant milestone with three thousand top scientists funded to pursue excellent frontier research across Europe. To mark the symbolic awarding of this ERC grant, a ceremony took place at the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in Amsterdam today. The three thousandth grantee, Prof. Christian Keysers, won a prestigious ERC Starting Grant that will take his innovative research on empathy and the brain further. The celebration was attended by key personalities from the political and research arenas, including the European Commission's Director-General for Research and Innovation Robert-Jan Smits.

On this occasion Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science Máire Geoghegan-Quinn said: *"I warmly congratulate Prof. Christian Keysers, who is awarded the three thousandth ERC grant today. This is an important milestone of the European Research Council, which has in a very short time proved to be a success story. The ERC is a brand of excellence, recognised both in Europe and further afield. The European Commission has proposed a strong 'Horizon 2020' programme for 2014 – 2020, of which the ERC will be a vital part. We would like to see a significant increase in the ERC budget to enable more researchers to pursue ideas that often spark discoveries and tackle major challenges for our society. Europe needs to keep investing in research in general, and in frontier research in particular, if it is to emerge from the economic crisis."*

The ERC grantee, Prof. Christian Keysers, commented: *"To get an ERC grant is a dream come true and being the three thousandth grantee is very inspiring. I can now devote five years to solving what I think to be the most worthy research question in my field. It allows me to handpick an outstanding multidisciplinary team and gives me the freedom to conduct the best fundamental research. In a climate where the immediate applicability of science is often valued most, the ERC has become the patron for the brightest scientists pursuing curiosity-driven research and the backbone for a Europe of Ideas. It epitomises a Europe of intellectual innovation and excellence that makes me proud to be European."*

Prof. Keysers is the Department Head of the Social Brain Lab at the Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience (NIN), a purely research-based institute of the Royal Netherlands Academy for Arts and Sciences (KNAW). His research project explores our brain to better understand the human capacity to slip into the skin of other people to vicariously experience their actions and share their emotions. Christian Keysers is also Professor at the University Medical Center Groningen (University of Groningen).



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Alongside Director-General Robert-Jan Smits and grantee Christian Keysers, the speakers at the event were Dutch State Secretary of Education, Culture and Science Sander Dekker and President of KNAW Prof. Hans Clevers. Member of the ERC Scientific Council Prof. Sierd Cloetingh also took part in the signing ceremony at the KNAW.

Background

Set up in 2007 by the European Union, the European Research Council aims to stimulate scientific excellence in Europe by encouraging competition for funding between the very best, creative researchers of any nationality and age based in the European Research Area. The ERC operates according to an "investigator-driven", or "bottom-up", approach, allowing researchers to identify new opportunities in all fields of research.

The ERC (or 'Ideas' programme) is part of the EU's Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7) and has a total budget of €7.5 billion from 2007 to 2013. Last year, the European Commission proposed a substantial increase in the ERC's budget for 2014 to 2020 under the new Framework Programme ('Horizon 2020'). Since its launch, it has funded over 3,000 researchers and their frontier research projects and has become a "benchmark" for the competitiveness of national research systems complementing existing funding schemes at national and European levels.

Links

ERC website

<http://erc.europa.eu>

Event programme

<http://erc.europa.eu/celebration-3000th-erc-grantee-amsterdam-open-press>

Horizon 2020

http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index_en.cfm?pg=home&video=none

Christian Keysers' research webpage

<http://www.herseninstituut.knaw.nl/ResearchGroups/KeysersGroup/tabid/413/Default.aspx>

ERC story on Christian Keysers' ERC project (available from 15 Jan 15.00)

<https://erc.europa.eu/projects-figures/stories/vicarious-brain-search-how-your-brain-feels>

Video clip Christian Keysers

<https://vimeo.com/57456364>

KNAW website

<http://www.knaw.nl/>

ERC Press contacts

Madeleine Drielsma, ERC Press adviser

Tel: +32 498 98 43 97

erc-press@ec.europa.eu

Marie Frenay, ERC Press assistant

Tel: +32 497 56 56 54

erc-press@ec.europa.eu