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## Press release

### ERC to re-launch Synergy Grants in 2018

6 December 2016

**The ERC Scientific Council decided to take the preliminary steps to reinstate the Synergy Grant funding scheme in 2018. This comes after a thorough assessment of the ongoing projects funded through the pilot calls in 2012 and 2013. Synergy Grants can bring together top researchers with complementary skills and knowledge and enable them to jointly address a commonly chosen challenging research problem in unconventional ways, potentially leading to major breakthroughs that scientists would not be able to achieve working alone.**

ERC President Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon welcomes the reintroduction: *"The Synergy Grants awarded so far have shown that this funding fosters interdisciplinary research and can trigger unconventional collaborations, allowing for the emergence of new fields of study. These grants help to put European science at the global forefront. They will contribute significantly to fill a gap in the EU funding for frontier research."*

In 2012 and 2013, the ERC opened two competitions for Synergy Grants on a pilot basis. An assessment of the 24 projects funded in these calls, including visits to the research teams by Scientific Council members, came to the conclusion that such grants would be a valuable addition to the main ERC funding schemes - part of the EU's Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation - which are targeted at individual researchers.

The ERC Scientific Council agreed to re-introduce the scheme in the beginning of October at its plenary session in Dublin, Ireland. The decision was officially confirmed today. The future Synergy Grant call for proposals, including its budget, dates and eligibility criteria, should be published in the 2018 ERC Work Programme to be adopted by the European Commission in 2017.

#### Background

The objective of the Synergy Grant is to enable a small group of principal investigators and their teams to bring together complementary skills, knowledge and resources in new ways, in order to jointly address research problems. The funding scheme intends to promote substantial advances at the frontiers of knowledge, and to encourage new productive lines of enquiry and new methods and techniques, including unconventional approaches and investigations at the crossroads of established disciplines.



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The demand for Synergy Grants in the previous two competitions exceeded by far the resources allocated to the scheme (€150 million per year). In 2012 and 2013, the ERC received 697 and 427 proposals respectively. Only 1.5 % of proposals were selected in the first year and 3 % in the second year. In total 24 projects involving 83 principal investigators have been funded for five to six years. The projects covered different research disciplines: 11 in physical science and engineering, 9 in life sciences, and 4 in social science and humanities.

In 2014, the Scientific Council established an ad hoc group tasked to assess the outcomes of the two pilot calls. After a year the group reported back to the Scientific Council, recommending reinstatement of the grant scheme and allocating to it at least €250 million annually.

The ERC, set up by the European Commission in 2007, is the first programme funding frontier research projects submitted by individual researchers. Every year, it selects and funds creative researchers of any nationality and age to run ambitious projects based in Europe. The ERC has three core grant schemes: Starting Grants, Consolidator Grants and Advanced Grants. The ERC has an annual budget of €1.7 billion for the year 2016. The ERC strives to attract top researchers from anywhere in the world to come to Europe. To date, the ERC, a part of “Excellent Science” pillar of Horizon 2020 for which the European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science Carlos Moedas is responsible, has funded some 6,500 top researchers at various stages of their careers with a high priority given to researchers in the early part of their career. The ERC is led by an independent governing body, its Scientific Council, chaired by Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon since January 2014.

[Synergy Grants – ERC announcement in 2012](#)

[ERC website](#)

[Horizon 2020](#)

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