

Highlight:

Demand for ERC Starting Grants increases by over 50%

23 October 2012

A total of 3329 proposals were submitted for the European Research Council's (ERC) sixth Starting Grant competition. This is an over 50% increase in demand compared to the corresponding group in last year's Starting Grant call (2169 proposals).

ERC President Professor Helga Nowotny said: "For the third successive year, we see a tremendous increase in demand for ERC Starting Grants. This is very telling. With the current decrease in research funding in Europe, we risk ignoring the wealth of young top talent that Europe has instead of cultivating it. It is more imperative than ever to invest in Europe's future - bright young people."

The distribution by the three ERC domains was as follows: 1502 proposals in 'Physical Sciences and Engineering', 1057 in 'Life Sciences' and 770 in 'Social Sciences and Humanities'.

These submitted proposals will now be assessed by the ERC's peer review evaluation and the results of this call will be published next year.

Note to the editors

Set up in 2007 by the EU, the **European Research Council** 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.

Since its launch, the ERC has funded over 3,000 top researchers across Europe with substantial grants for up to 5 years. The funding is awarded based on peer review evaluation and excellence is the sole criterion. The ERC operates according to an "investigator-driven", or "bottom-up", approach, allowing researchers to identify new opportunities in any field of research.

The ERC has three core grant schemes:

- '**ERC Starting Grants**', for early-career, emerging top researchers (with 2-7 years of experience after the PhD), is worth up to up to €2 Mio;
- '**ERC Consolidator Grants**', for already independent excellent researchers (with 7-12 years of experience after the PhD), is worth up to up to €2.75 Mio;
- '**ERC Advanced Grants**', for senior established research leaders, and is worth up to €3.5 Mio.

The original 'ERC Starting Grant' scheme was for the first time split into two separate calls this year: the "ERC Starting Grant" and the "ERC Consolidator Grant". Previously, the 'Starting Grant' scheme had two streams (for starters and consolidators) within one single call. This year's increase in demand (described above) is based on a comparison with the stream for starters. In the previous two 'Starting Grant' calls, the number of applications rose by 42% and 16% respectively.

Two additional funding initiatives with a very limited budget exist since 2011: (i) For exceptional proposals, the 'ERC Synergy Grants' were introduced on a pilot basis to support a few small groups of researchers working together on the same project; (ii) 'ERC Proof of Concept' funding is open only to ERC grantees in order for them to establish the innovation potential of ideas arising from their ERC-funded frontier research projects.

The ERC, which is the newest component of the EU's Seventh Research Framework Programme ('Ideas' Specific Programme), has a total budget of €7.5 billion from 2007 to 2013. The European Commission has proposed a significant boost of the ERC budget to over € 13 billion in the new framework programme "Horizon 2020" (2014-2020).

The ERC is led by the ERC Scientific Council, composed of 22 top scientists and scholars and the ERC President is Prof. Helga Nowotny. The ERC Executive Agency implements the "Ideas" Specific Programme and is led by Director Pablo Amor.

Upcoming ERC calls:

Advanced Grant (ERC-2013-AdG), deadline or applications: 22 November 2012

Synergy Grant (ERC-2013-SyG), deadline or applications: 10 January 2013

Consolidator Grant (ERC-2013-CoG), opening of call: 7 November 2012; and deadline for applications: 21 February 2013

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Links

ERC website

<http://erc.europa.eu>

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