



## **Impressive demand for first European Research Council grants**

**Brussels, 26 April 2007**

***Europe's research community has responded to the first call for proposals of the newly-established European Research Council (ERC) with huge enthusiasm. A massive 9167 proposals have been submitted by young researchers to this call for ERC Starting Independent Investigator Grants (ERC Starting Grants), which closed yesterday. The ERC Scientific Council also today released the names of the top scientists and scholars who are members of the peer review Panels that will be responsible for evaluating these proposals.***

Prof Fotis Kafatos, ERC President, said today: "We are very pleased with this powerful message of support for the ERC and its strategy. The high response rate is a clear signal of the expectations and interest in the ERC by Europe's young scientists and a measure of the need for grants of this kind in Europe. The peer review Panels will be responsible for the evaluation of proposals. Recognising that this will be a challenging period, we will be working intensively in the coming months with the European Commission's ERC Dedicated Implementation Structure and the Secretary General to ensure a smooth and fair evaluation process. We will also be developing the detailed plans for the second ERC grant scheme, addressed to the very best established investigators working in or moving to Europe (ERC Advanced Grants).

European Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik said "The level of interest in the ERC among researchers at the beginning of their careers is a solid vote of confidence in this new body to support frontier research in Europe. I very much hope that we will see similar levels of interest among established researchers when the next call for proposals is issued later this year."

ERC Starting Grants provide support for researchers who have recently (2-9 years ago) completed their doctoral studies to make the transition to independent research leaders in their own right. The ERC's independent Scientific Council established this grant scheme as the first initiative of the ERC, in view of the limited available funding opportunities for this crucial stage in the careers of young researchers. The budget for the call, which covers all areas of research is approximately €290 m, which should result in around 200-250 substantial grants.

The ERC does not identify research areas or disciplines in advance. A significant proportion of proposals are in fact highly interdisciplinary. However, classifying the proposals broadly according to their main scientific focus, the breakdown of proposals received is approximately as follows:

- Physical sciences and engineering: 46%
- Life science including medicine: 37%
- Social sciences and humanities: 17%



Scientific quality will be the sole basis for selecting proposals for funding, regardless of nationality. The peer review Panels, assisted by additional panel evaluators and referees, will evaluate proposals in two stages. Successful applicants at the first stage, which will be completed by July 2007, will be invited to submit more detailed proposals for the second stage evaluation that will take place in autumn 2007, allowing the first awards to be made before the end of the year.

The Panel members have been selected by the Scientific Council from internationally-recognised researchers across Europe and from other parts of world. Consistent with the rules applying to the ERC, all other panel evaluators and referees will also be selected by the Scientific Council. All details of the peer review panels can be found at: <http://erc.europa.eu>

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