



Press release

20 July 2011

**New funding for early-career top researchers from anywhere in the world:
€730 million for new "ERC Starting Grant" call**

The European Research Council (ERC) today opens its fifth call for proposals for the "ERC Starting Grants", targeted at early-career top researchers of any nationality, working - or moving to work - in host institutions in Europe. Open to all fields of research, including Social Sciences and Humanities, it will help emerging talent to pursue innovative ideas at the frontiers of knowledge. The total budget for this call amounts to €730 million, which is an increase of just over 10% from last year. The call will fund 500 to 600 talented researchers.

The ERC Starting Grant scheme helps filling Europe's funding deficit for the best up-and-coming researchers and enables them to get early scientific and professional independence. With up to €2 million per grant for up to five years, the scheme targets researchers having between two to twelve years of post-doctoral experience. The only selection criterion is scientific excellence. To date, 1 300 scientists have been awarded Starting Grants, including some coming from outside Europe. ERC grants are indeed one of the main EU instruments to address the "brain drain" and to attract and retain the best researchers of any nationality.

Proposals have to be submitted via a Host Institution (university, public or private research centre), based in one of the 27 EU Members State or one of the 13 countries associated to the seventh EU Framework Programme for Research¹. The selection of proposals is performed by highly recognised international peer review panels, including scientists from all over the world. Last year, the success rate of Starting Grants proposals was around 15%.

¹ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Iceland, Israel, Faroe Islands, Liechtenstein, FYR of Macedonia, Norway, Republic of Montenegro, Serbia, Switzerland, and Turkey



More information of the "ERC Starting Grant" call (2012)

The three domain deadlines:

Physical Sciences and Engineering: 12 October 2011

Life Sciences: 9 November 2011

Social Sciences and Humanities: 24 November 2011

- Call for proposals: [Participant portal](#)

- [More on the ERC Grants](#)

Background

Set up in 2007, the **European Research Council** (ERC) aims to stimulate scientific excellence in Europe by supporting the very best, creative researchers. The ERC funds both top senior scientists ("ERC Advanced Grants") and younger, early-career research leaders ("ERC Starting Grants"). Scientific excellence is the only selection criterion in the ERC's peer reviewed grant competitions. The ERC operates according to an "investigator-driven", or "bottom-up", approach and there are no thematic priorities.

The ERC's overall budget is €7.5 billion from 2007 till 2013, with a steady yearly increase of the annual budget. To date the ERC has funded over 1800 top researchers to pursue their innovative, "blue-sky" research throughout Europe.

The current "Starting Grant" call is part of the ERC funding opportunities for 2012, which totals €1.6 billion and also comprises:

- The fourth "Advanced Grant" call of €680 million for senior top researchers (call publication in November 2011)
- The new scheme "ERC Synergy", to be launched on a pilot basis to fund 10 to 15 exceptional projects. Gathering complementary skills, knowledge and resources, it will support small groups of researchers working jointly on a project. For this initiative a limited part of the ERC budget, €150 million, will be used. (call publication in October 2011)
- The recently introduced small-scale "Proof of Concept" scheme (totally €10 million), open to ERC grantees (call publication in February 2012, in addition to the currently ongoing call with a 8 November deadline)

These new ERC calls are part of the €7 billion package of the seventh Framework programme (FP7) for 2012. This is the biggest ever funding package under the FP7 and aims to kick-start innovation through research. [European Commission Press Release \(19.07.2011\)](#)

Links

[ERC website](#)

[ERC Striking projects](#)

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