

ERC Scientific Council - Press statement, 19 Oct 2005

The ERC Scientific Council met for the first time on 18 -19 October 2005. The Council is composed of 22 researchers at the very highest level, representative of a large range of disciplines and institutional backgrounds. It recognized that bringing the ERC into operation with a significant operating budget under the 7th framework programme will be a historic step forward in European research, stimulating the very best research by means of a pan-European competition between teams. The Council acknowledged the very high expectations of the research community for the ERC and the critical role of the Scientific Council as an autonomous and independent body. By starting its work early, before a legislative decision on the ERC, the Council will be in a position to develop a imaginative and well thought out strategy for the ERC in advance of its operations and enable a rapid and efficient start -up.

The first meeting provided an opportunity for an open exchange of views in the Council on the basic principles of operation of the ERC. The members agreed that research across all fields should be pursued, with lean and non-bureaucratic procedures and flexible grants, and via a peer review process of the very highest quality standard. They also engaged in a detailed discussion of the organization of the Council and the management of its work, setting a short-term agenda to elect a Chair and two Vice-Chairs and prepare for an efficient schedule of work. In this connection the Scientific Council endorses the establishment of an Executive Agency for the implementation of ERC activities. Further, the Scientific Council intends to appoint a scientist, experienced in management, as Secretary General to ensure the effective operation of the ERC system as a whole.

A preliminary discussion took place on the strategy and implementation mechanisms for the ERC, focusing on the importance of adopting an investigator-driven approach, encouraging excellent and innovative frontier research, and giving a real opportunity to young researchers and new teams, by means of competition at a European scale. It was agreed that the ERC should establish itself as a dynamic new entity, with real added value, and properly distinguished from existing funding schemes within the EU. The next meeting of the Council, in late January 2006, will be organized to allow a broader and deeper discussion of the key questions of strategy and operations for the ERC.