



ERC Statement on the 2007 Starting Grant competition

04 June 2007

The European Research Council (ERC) intends to provide public information concerning its activities in a transparent and timely manner. This interim announcement concerns the first round of applications for ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grants (Starting Grants, StG), which, as announced shortly after the 25 April submission deadline, attracted an impressive number of first-stage applications (9167 in total). The ERC Scientific Council deeply appreciates the engagement and response of all the applicants, as well as the heavy commitment assumed by very high quality expert panels which are charged with selecting the best amongst these proposals.

StG will provide significant financial support for selected projects at the frontier of science and scholarship, which are proposed by outstanding Principal Investigators (PIs) at an early stage of their independent career. Like the applicants and the panels, the ERC Scientific Council is keenly aware that the available budget is not sufficient to fund all the deserving applications. We can only reiterate our commitment that excellence will be the sole criterion: for selecting the first-stage applications whose PIs will be invited to submit full (stage 2) proposals, and for selecting the full proposals that will be funded later in the year.

The PIs can be of any nationality or current location, but must apply in conjunction with an institution ("host institution") in an EU Member State or associated country, where he/she will be based at least for the period of the grant. The very large number of applications demonstrates that the StG scheme addresses a keenly felt need of the scientific community. A first analysis of the current residence of the PIs and their intended destination (location of host institutions) indicates that aspirations for StG are shared widely in all fields of research and all regions of Europe. Further, a significant number of PI applicants are currently residing overseas. This suggests that, over time, ERC grants can enhance the competitiveness of Europe by recruiting overseas research talent.

Distribution of applications by domain and field

The ERC has pre-allocated most of the 2007 StG funds to three broad domains, based on the pattern of allocations in research-intensive countries throughout the world: 15% for Social Sciences and Humanities (SH), 40% for Life Sciences including Medicine (LS) and 45% for Physical, Mathematical and Engineering Sciences (PE). Large numbers of applications were



submitted in all three domains in a rough approximation to the allocations (14.9%, 37.0% and 48.1%, respectively). Multidisciplinary evaluation panels (5 in SH, 7 in LS and 8 in PE) were constituted to cover all fields. Each panel has attracted numerous applications. Five panels (3 in PE and 2 in LS) were very heavily subscribed, with 672-768 applications each. The other 15 panels (5 in each domain) averaged 273 applications each (in SH), 402 (in LS) and 450 (in PE), respectively. The current statistics of stage 1 applications (before assessment whether the eligibility requirements are met) are presented in the attached Table 1.

Further information will be provided after completion of the stage 1 evaluations, and also after stage 2 when the full applications that were selected for funding will be announced. It is hoped that the present and future analysis by scientific domain and field, current residence of the applicants and location of the host institutions may prove helpful for the respective communities to assess their standing. These statistics will not affect the ERC funding decisions, which will be based solely on quality.

Table 1

**Geographic distribution of applications
by current PI residence and location of host institution**

Countries are listed below in alphabetized clusters, four of which are constructed according to the dates of national accession to EU membership or the current level of EU association. Clusters 5 and 6 represent non-associated countries at two broad levels of development.

Cluster 1 (EEC6): BE, DE, FR, IT, LU, NL

Cluster 2 (Next 9 members of EU 15): AT, DK, EL, ES, FI, IE, PT, SE, UK

Cluster 3 (Next 12 members of EU 27): BG, CY, CZ, EE, HU, LT, LV, MT, PL, RO, SI, SK

Cluster 4 (7 EU-associated or candidates countries): CH, HR, IL, IS, NO, RS, TR

Cluster 5 (6 Overseas highly developed countries): AU, CA, JP, NZ, TW, USA

Cluster 6 (19 Overseas developing or emergent developed countries):

AL, AR, BR, BF, CN, EG, IN, IR, KH, ME, MX, SN, TN, RU, SG, UA, UZ, ZA, ZW.

<u>Cluster #</u>	<u>PI residence %</u>	<u>Host Institution location %</u>
1	44.8	46.2
2	35.5	37.2
3	8.6	8.8
4	7.9	7.8
5	2.8	0
6	0.4	0
	100	100