



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

ideas

#1
MARCH 2015

Newsletter of the European Research Council

Going global

In pursuit of top talent worldwide

Focus on

Latvia

In the spotlight

Global outreach of ERC science



To subscribe please click [here](#).



In this issue, the ERC invited President Dr Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga to write the editorial. In addition to a scientist, a visionary leader and a fervent believer in the European project, she has been a great supporter of the ERC over the years and an advocate for excellent basic research.



© www.vf.lv

At a time when Latvia assumes the Presidency of the European Union, it is a pleasure to greet the whole European research community and to offer it my very best wishes for a continued string of brilliant achievements in the future.

While every country is justifiably proud of the sons and daughters whose discoveries and innovations have spread its fame beyond its frontiers, the pursuit of knowledge has always been a transnational process and the best scholars and scientists have always engaged in a search for truth without borders.

With the founding of the European Research Council, EU leaders have created an instrument that allows the whole of Europe to be greater than the sum of its parts with respect to cutting-edge scientific research, discovery and innovation. After all, the scientific method, its epistemology as well as its empiricism, constitute one of the major contributions of Europe to the common fund of human civilization. It is only fitting that the ERC should now play a serious role in keeping the best scientific minds in Europe, as well as offering attractive working conditions to scientists from outside.

European science owes a debt of gratitude to all who have contributed to making the ERC a successful reality. Most of all, it must be grateful for the countless hours of expert opinion and advice that distinguished scientists invest in ensuring that intellectual rigour, originality and excellence remain the main criteria for evaluating the projects that compete for ERC funding.

As the EU enters a new phase of activity under new leadership and a new Commission, my plea to all concerned would be to keep high the goals formulated in Horizon 2020, to ensure their effective and efficient implementation and to maintain the course in support of truly independent, investigator-driven research. Under the rallying cry of support for excellence, I would only add the caveat that excellence is measured by human peer evaluation and that humans are not immune to the perils of subjectivity or even prejudice. The scientific community thus needs to remain vigilant about their criteria for excellence, and to continue being open and transparent about their evaluation procedures. I personally wish to thank all those countless scientists and scholars who have faithfully given of their valuable time, so as to bring the peer evaluation system of the ERC to the highest possible level.

Vivat, crescat, floreat scientia in aeternum!

Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Ph.D.,
President of the Republic of Latvia (1999-2007)
President, World Leadership Alliance/ Club de Madrid



Editorial President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga	2
Focus on Latvia	4
Interview with Prof. Andris Ambainis	6
What's new Meet the renewed Scientific Council	7
Going global In pursuit of top talent worldwide	8
Research in the spotlight Global outreach of ERC science	10
What's on Benelux grantees meet at the ERC	12
Did you miss this?	14
Calendar of ERC calls	15

Editorial Board:

Massimo Gaudina, Madeleine Drielsma, Magdalena Kufrej
Noémie Auvergne, Samantha Christey

Scientific Council members: Prof. Dame Athene Donald, Prof. Martin Stokhof

Thanks to:

ERC grantees Prof. Andris Ambainis, Prof. David Mattingly, Prof. Tania Singer
Alexis Chiblis, Charlotte Kok, David Millingen, Laura Ruiz Trullols,
Edward Smith, Dr Arnolds Ubelis

For comments: erc-info@ec.europa.eu

European Research Council Executive Agency
16 Place Charles Rogier • BE-1210 Brussels • Belgium

ideas is a quarterly electronic newsletter published by
the European Research Council.

Latvia



From January to June 2015, Latvia is holding the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU. We take this opportunity to look at the country's performance in the field of research.

In terms of being at the forefront of innovation, Latvian research has recently recorded some successes. For example, scientists have developed Belinostat, a new drug against cancer based on active substances, and Aerodium, a vertical wind tunnel that allows people to fly in the open air, providing as real a feeling of flight as possible.

Nevertheless, the country is still lagging behind. Latvia's gross R&D expenditure in 2013 was EUR 139.5 million, representing no more than 0.66% of the country's GDP; one of the lowest rates amongst the EU member states. Although the number of researchers in Latvia has been relatively low (3,625 in 2013), there has recently been a sharp increase in the number of PhDs awarded in the country. It went from 132 in 2010 to 315 in 2013, partly thanks to increased investment of the European Regional Development Fund. Per capita, however, the number of PhDs in Latvia has remained below the EU average. Therefore, boosting the number of PhD graduates in the country is still an urgent need.

Latvia and the ERC

So far, one excellent scientist based in Latvia, Prof. Andris Ambainis (interviewed on p. 6), was successful in obtaining an ERC grant. One of Latvia's next moves will be to attract researchers from abroad with the aim of increasing Latvian participation in the ERC calls. The Latvian National Contact Point is taking an active role in this process, by assisting leading national research teams in search of potential applicants, and by communicating with the research community abroad.

One Latvian top researcher has also served as an ERC panel member, and four have been remote referees. They have participated in eleven ERC peer review evaluation sessions altogether. Additionally, some 32 Latvian nationals are ERC team members, including around 16 postdocs and 4 PhD students.

Latvia is also linked to the ERC in other ways. Prof. Vaira Viķe-Freiberga, former President of Latvia (1999-2007) and a renowned researcher herself, has strongly supported the ERC. In 2009, she chaired a review panel of the ERC, which assessed the performance of the ERC in its first years of existence (see her editorial, p.2).





A few questions to

Dr Arnolds Ubelis, the Latvian National Contact Point

How would you describe the Latvian research landscape?

According to statistics, the number of researchers in Latvia is rather small both in absolute numbers and per capita. Only from 2012 to 2013, the number of scientists has decreased by over 9.3%. The same tendency is expected for 2014 and 2015. Out of a bit over 3,600 scientists based in the country, only about 600 are employed by industry. Moreover, no more than 17% of Latvian research budget is institutional funding, which makes Latvia's one of the most competitive systems in the world.

This unfavourable situation has been analysed in a peer review [report](#), which described in detail the Latvian research landscape. It revealed serious problems Latvia is going to face in the near future, such as the country's weak contribution to the goals of the Innovation Union 2020. The reasons for that are, for example, the difficult financial climate in Latvia, insufficient administrative capacity and the low political priority of innovation and research in a heavily bureaucratic environment.

How is Latvia doing in the ERC calls?

Until now, only one Latvian researcher has been successful in the competition for ERC grants, but this was in the very challenging field of quantum computing. Prof. Andris Ambainis from the Faculty of Computer Sciences at the University of Latvia is one of the youngest holders of an ERC Advanced Grant. His success came only 13 years after his PhD degree. His brilliant career is, unfortunately, a unique case in Latvia so far, but it can hopefully inspire others. Immediate radical changes are needed to keep the best scientists

and young talent in the country, to ensure the highest quality of professorships and to satisfy the demand of industry for well-trained researchers.

It is a pity, but Latvian authorities do not consider for the moment introducing a national funding scheme which would support the researchers who have received high scores in ERC calls, but were not selected for funding due to ERC's budgetary constraints. Therefore, Latvian scientists need to be very pragmatic when deciding whether they want to invest private time and resources in an ERC application, knowing that the chance to win an ERC grant is typically just 10% to 15%.

As the NCP, how do you encourage Latvian researchers to apply in ERC calls?

The awareness of the ERC in Latvia amongst candidates eligible for Advanced Grants is rather high. Although special information days are organised no more than once a year, I am steadily trying to highlight the ERC funding as an excellent opportunity to carry out research with maximum academic freedom.

I am an active researcher myself, with multidisciplinary experience, and knowing the research circles in Latvia gives me an advantage when communicating with potential ERC candidates. Basically, I advise fellow scientists to practice writing ERC project proposals, keeping in mind that the form should be very simple, with short text written in a highly scientific style. I also encourage them to become members of ERC research teams abroad, to gain experience before applying for ERC funding themselves.





© Prof. A. Ambainis

Prof. Andris Ambainis

The ERC presents Prof. Andris Ambainis, one of the youngest ERC Advanced Grant winners, and the only Latvian so far to have received ERC funding. He tells us about the impact of the ERC grant on his research, and his plans for the future.

Can you tell us about your ERC project?

My project is about quantum computing, a very new technology which combines quantum physics with computers. Quantum physics studies laws of physics on the level of individual atoms and molecules, and physics on the level of atoms and molecules is quite different from what we see in our everyday life. Quantum computing tries to make use of quantum effects for the purposes of computing, for example, designing quantum computers that solve certain problems much faster than conventional computers.

What kind of impact may your research have?

One implication is that quantum computing could be a technology which would replace, to a certain degree, supercomputing. Right now, super computers are used for simulating quantum processes - modelling chemical reactions, for example. Quantum computers would be able to do that much faster. Quantum technologies would also grant more secure data transmission to ordinary computer users.

You won your ERC grant in 2012. How has it contributed to your research?

It has enabled me to build a larger research team here at the University of Latvia – right now I have a group of 15 researchers working under my guidance. This includes several scientists whom I have attracted from abroad with the help of the ERC funding. One of my postdocs comes from the United States and the other from India. I also have several very talented PhD students working with me. In short, the role of the ERC grant has been to help me build the team consisting of the best people possible. Since the grant started, I have also been able to pursue a number

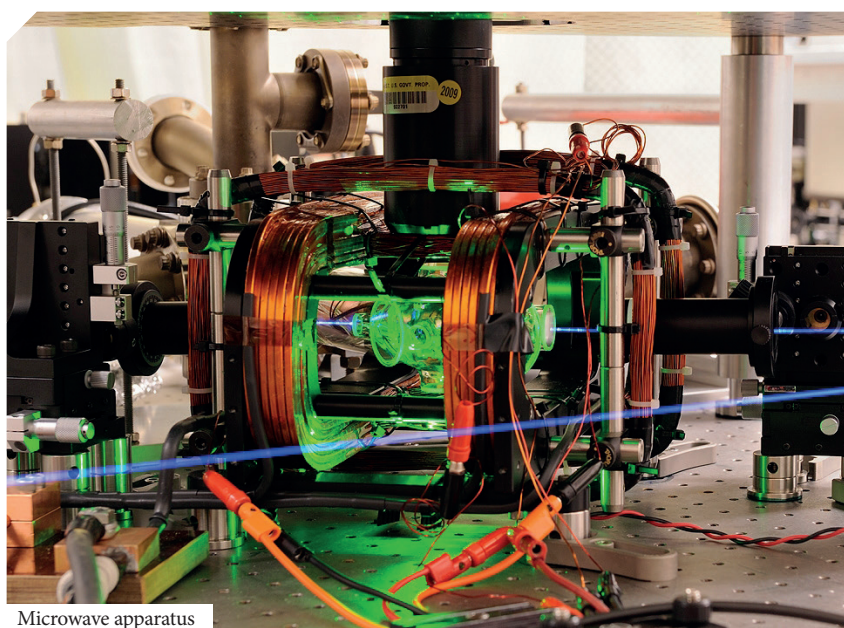
of new directions, some of which were not originally envisioned in the ERC proposal.

Why do you think Latvia hasn't been so successful in ERC calls so far?

The main reason is that our research is not very well integrated into the larger European research networks. If one wants to do cutting-edge research, one needs to be in contact with other people who do cutting-edge research elsewhere – to have access to the newest ideas. At the moment, only a relatively small number of Latvian researchers are well connected enough to do work that would be really innovative on the global scale. Latvia needs to attract more people able to do this type of work. Though I am quite happy with the ERC reviewing process, which is free from any bias, I think it would be good to help scientists from the new EU countries to grow and be able to meet the ERC criteria, and I think the ERC is probably the institution in the best position to do this.

Where do you think your research project may lead you afterwards?

I certainly plan to continue my work in the field of quantum information. It combines two disciplines - quantum physics and computer science – in a way not previously explored. There are many new directions in the field, but I am particularly interested in quantum cryptography. Cryptography is the science that studies encryption and secure data transmission and there are many angles which have not yet been explored. For example, how might quantum computers help us improve the security of information? This is one direction I would like to take. I would also like to research more into the quantum physics side of quantum information. Right now we see a new direction emerging, in which researchers are starting to apply ideas of information and computer science to study physical systems.



Microwave apparatus

© Y. Colombe/NIST



Meet the renewed Scientific Council

As 2014 came to an end, two ERC Vice Presidents, Professors Pavel Exner and Carl-Henrik Heldin, handed over their responsibilities to Professors Sierd Cloetingh and Mart Saarma, who have already served on the ERC Scientific Council. At the same time, this ERC governing body welcomed three new members.

[Sierd Cloetingh](#), who is also the President of Academia Europaea, is a professor of Earth Sciences and Tectonics at the Utrecht University, the Netherlands. He has been an ERC Scientific Council member since 2009 and, since 2013, the chairman of the ERC Working Group on [Innovation and Relations with Industry](#) and a member of the Working Group on [Widening European Participation](#). As an ERC Vice President, he supervises ERC activities in the domain of Physical Sciences and Engineering, taking over from Prof. Pavel Exner.

[Mart Saarma](#), originally from Estonia, is a professor of Biotechnology and a director of the Laboratory of Molecular Neuroscience at the Institute of Biotechnology, University of Helsinki. He joined the ERC Scientific Council in 2011 and is a member of the ERC Working Groups on Innovation and Relations with Industry, Widening European Participation and [Strengthening International Participation](#). In his new role as Vice President, Prof. Saarma is in charge of the ERC activities in the Life Sciences domain, previously under the responsibility of Prof. Carl-Henrik Heldin. The new ERC Vice Presidents were elected by the members of the ERC Scientific Council.

[Prof. Núria Sebastián Gallés](#) remains Vice President overseeing the Social Science and Humanities domain.

ERC welcomes new members

These two nominations are not the only changes in the ERC since the beginning of the year. In February, the European Commission appointed three new members of the Scientific Council, consisting of 22 renowned scientists representing the European scientific community at large. Professors [Tomáš Jungwirth](#) (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and University of Nottingham, UK), [Dame Janet Thornton](#) (European Molecular Biology Laboratory - European Bioinformatics Institute, UK) and [Fabio Zwirner](#) (University of Padua, Italy) were recommended to the Commission by the independent [Identification Committee](#), made up of seven highly respected scientific personalities. The selection of candidates was carried out in consultation with scientific organisations at European and national levels. Further appointments are expected in the first half of the year.

The ERC would like to thank the Scientific Council members who have recently left the ERC for their commitment over the past years: Professors Danny Dolev, Tomasz Dietl, Pavel Exner, Carl-Henrik Heldin and Ana Tramontano.

Read also the ERC [press release](#).



In pursuit of top talent worldwide

In its quest to attract more talent overseas, the ERC has visited four continents since January, including South America, where a cooperation agreement was signed with Argentina.

The first stop was in the southern corner of Africa. ERC President Prof. Jean-Pierre Bourguignon visited **Pretoria** to meet with the Minister of Science and Technology, Naledi Pandor, and senior officials of the Department of Science and Technology to, among other things, prepare the ground for a future agreement to encourage young South African researchers to become part of ERC research teams.

Two weeks later, the ERC headed for Europe's highest-altitude city, **Davos**, Switzerland, to take part in another very international event, the World Economic Forum (WEF). Leaders from some 100 countries gathered there with the aim to "improve the state of the world" and it was a chance for the ERC to bring in science into the debate (read more on p. 10).

After Europe, the next continent on the route was Asia. In February, the President gave a public lecture in **Singapore** at the prestigious graduate business school INSEAD, an event organised by the President of Nanyang Technological University, Prof. Bertil Andersson. President Bourguignon highlighted the ERC's ambition to increase the number of non-European candidates in its grant schemes.

Some 15,500 km away and two days later, Prof. Bourguignon arrived in **San Jose**, California, to take part in the annual conference of the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) (AAAS), where he engaged with top scientists, policy maker and the press. Eight ERC grantees presented their groundbreaking research at this meeting in Silicon Valley (see p. 10). The ERC also went to the [Destination Europe](#) events on the West and East coasts of the US, in **San Jose** and **Boston**. The Commission's Deputy Director General of Research and Innovation, Wolfgang Bartscher, as well as speakers from Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions and some national funding bodies conveyed a message that Europe is open for talent from around the world. Along with an ERC grantee, Prof. Jean-Pierre Bourguignon, Dr Jose Labastida and Dr Alejandro Martin-Hobdey from the ERC promoted its funding for excellent scientists with creative ideas.

Next, the ERC will attend two events in May: the [International Conference on Robotics and Automation](#), **Seattle**, and the 4th Annual Meeting of the [Global Research Council](#), **Tokyo**. A month later, at the [World Conference of Science Journalists](#) in **Seoul**, Prof. Sir Tim Hunt, ERC Scientific Council member and Nobel laureate and ERC grantees will speak about how the ERC can address the needs of science journalists in an increasingly connected world.

ERC and Argentina seal deal

One of the cornerstones of the ERC strategy to boost "brain circulation" is based on cooperation initiatives with non-European partners. Argentina is the third country, after the US and South Korea, to sign an agreement to help its top researchers, supported at the national level, to become part of ERC-funded teams in Europe for up to twelve months. The agreement was officially signed by the Argentinian Minister of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation, Lino Barañao, and the Director for International Cooperation of the Commission's Research and Innovation DG, Maria Cristina Russo, on 13 March in **Buenos Aires** ([read more](#)).



Director Russo and Minister Barañao sign the agreement

© EU Delegation in Argentina



NORTH AMERICA:

[Annual Meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research](#)
Philadelphia, USA – 18-22 April

[International Conference on Robotics and Automation](#)
Seattle, USA – 26-30 May

EUROPE:

[Society of Experimental Biology Annual meeting](#)
Prague, Czech Republic – 30 June-3 July

ASIA:

[4th Annual Meeting of Global Research Council](#)
Tokyo, Japan – 26-28 May

[International Congress on Industrial and Applied Mathematics](#)
Beijing, China – 10-14 August

[International Congress of Historical Sciences](#)
Jinan, China – 23-28 August

[World Conference of Science Journalists](#)
Seoul, South Korea – 8-12 December

The global outreach of ERC science

The year kicked off with two flagship conferences at global level: the summit of the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). The ERC took part to talk about the importance of research, nurture relations and raise awareness of its funding opportunities. While ERC President Prof. Jean-Pierre Bourguignon advocated frontier research, ERC grantees presented their ground-breaking research.



In January, 2,500 participants including business leaders, political personalities, civil society organisations and renowned researchers from around the world met in Davos at the WEF. Under this year's forum theme, "The New Global Context", the ERC took part in 15 sessions with the ERC President and eleven ERC grantees. EU Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science Carlos Moedas, President Jean-Pierre Bourguignon and Nobel laureate Sir Christopher Pissarides, who is also an ERC grantee, gave a press conference to explain how science helps Europe remain competitive ([watch online](#)).

Three weeks later, an ERC delegation crossed the Atlantic to join the ERC President at the AAAS meeting in San Jose, the world's largest general scientific event, which each year gathers thousands of leading scientists, engineers, educators, policy-makers and journalists. At the event, eight ERC grant winners took part in three scientific sessions focusing on cancer research, new information technologies and building design.

Below, you will learn more about the cutting-edge research of two excellent researchers who attended the events.

Can our brain be trained to become more "social"?

Can we enhance our ability to understand our own and others' feelings and show more compassion? Prof. Tania Singer was one of ERC grantees at the World Economic Forum in Davos to discuss the nature of human compassion and social behaviour.

At the frontiers of neuroscience, psychology and economics, Prof. Singer investigates whether mental training in general, and empathy and compassion training in particular, could make a lasting impact on our brain structure, our health and everyday behaviour.

Empathy (the ability to understand and share the feelings of others) and compassion (the concern for the welfare of other people) are crucial for successful social interactions and cooperation. Yet little is known about the potential of these social emotions and

motivations to change our brain structure and by consequence our social cognition and behaviour.

In her ERC Starting Grant project, Prof. Singer has examined changes in the brain, physiological markers such as immune and stress parameters, and pro-social as well as economic behaviour of participants in a year-long mental training study. Using structural and functional imaging, virtual reality paradigms and computer tasks among other techniques, she has observed changes in the brain as well as in the behaviour of research subjects while they engaged in various mental training techniques to enhance

their socio-affective skills, attention, empathy, compassion and cognitive perspective taking skills.

Furthermore, she has studied brain differences between individuals with high and low levels of compassion, including people with autistic disorders associated with socio-affective deficits and, on the other end, meditation experts, such as Buddhist monks who have cultivated compassion for many years.

The outcome of Prof. Singer's project could help determine whether mental training programmes can improve pro-social behaviours, enhance the sense of wellbeing, increase health or help cope better with stress. They could also lead to new treatments for patients with socio-affective and cognitive deficits.

Researcher: **Tania Singer**

Host institution: **Max Planck Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften e.V. (Germany)**

ERC project: **Plasticity of the Empathic Brain: Structural and Functional MRI Studies on the Effect of Empathy Training on the Human Brain and Prosocial Behaviour**

ERC call: **Starting Grant 2007**

ERC funding: **EUR 1.5 million for five years**



© Sven Doering for Max Planck Society

Fascinating mysteries of a lost civilization

Prof. David Mattingly attended AAAS in San Jose to present his research into the Garamantes, an ancient Saharan population dating back to the period from 500 BC to 600 AD. His archaeological findings in southern Libya have shed light on this scarcely-known civilization and the history of pre-Islamic Africa.

Contemporaries of the Roman Empire, the Garamantes have previously been depicted as a nomadic tribe living in scattered camps in a remote area of the central Sahara. Recent research has suggested, however, that they were a remarkably advanced people, living in permanent villages and urban settlements, who practised oasis agriculture and developed advanced irrigation and manufacturing technologies. According to Prof. David Mattingly, a recognised leader of Saharan archaeology, the Garamantes traded with both the Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan zones, playing an important role in developing the earliest trans-Saharan trading network.

In 2010, Prof. Mattingly received an ERC Advanced Grant to broaden our understanding of the Garamantes, their impact on trans-Saharan trade and migration flows, and their connections with the neighbouring peoples. Prof. Mattingly and his team have carried

out extensive research work using aerial photography and satellite imagery. Thanks to these sophisticated investigation tools, they have unfolded the outstanding archaeological heritage of the Sahara desert, including hundreds of previously unknown fortified oasis settlements, with advanced water-extraction and irrigation systems, which were exceptionally preserved by their remote setting. The Sahara now emerges as a much more populous place in the pre-Islamic era than previously believed and, rather than being a barrier, the desert appears to have been a much more connected space that put Mediterranean civilisation in regular contact with Sub-Saharan societies from the late first millennium BC onwards.

After less than four years, the project has achieved significant results that have profound implications for the scholars' understanding of the historic relationships between the Mediterranean world and the Sub-Saharan area, reshaping the history of the African continent.

Researcher: **Prof. David Mattingly**

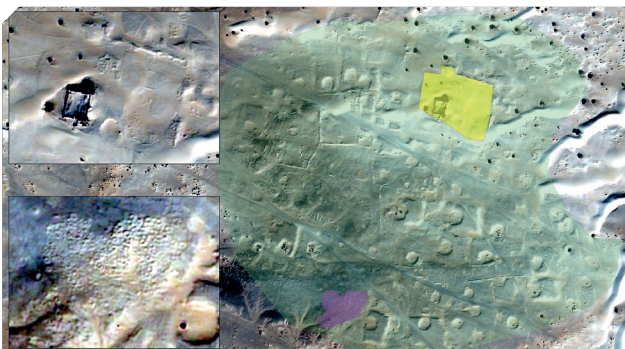
Host institution: **University of Leicester (United Kingdom)**

ERC project: **State Formation, Migration and Trade in the Central Sahara (1000 BC - AD 1500)**

ERC call: **Advanced Grant 2010**

ERC funding: **EUR 2.4 million for five years**

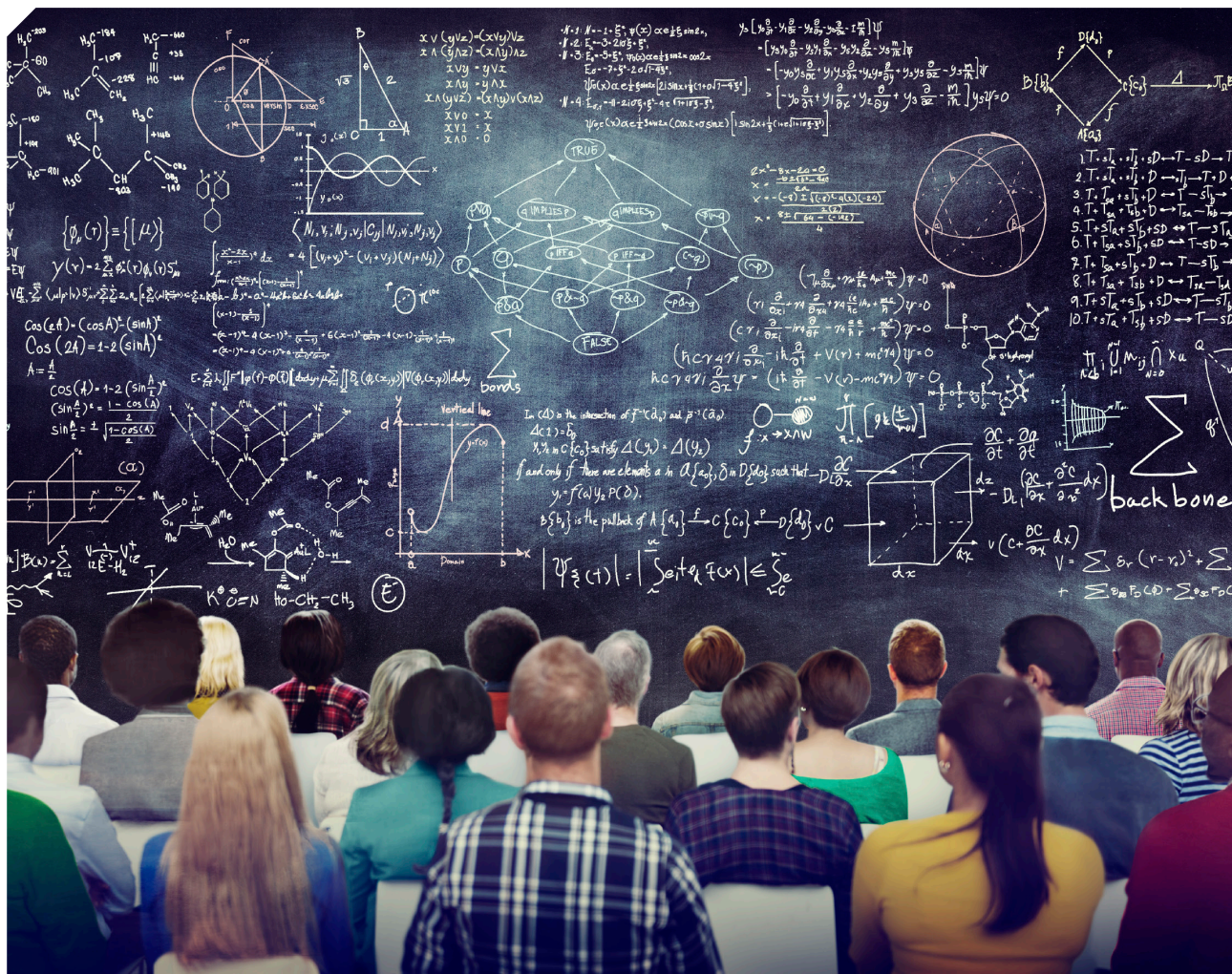
Project's [webpage](#)



© Trans-SAHARA project

Benelux grantees meet at the ERC

What are the rights and obligations of an ERC grant holder? How to involve researchers from overseas in ERC projects? These and many more questions were discussed during a workshop organised in the ERC's premises in Brussels for grant holders based in the Benelux.



The goals of the meeting were to provide beneficiaries with guidance on how to manage their ERC grants, to exchange good practices and to give feedback on ERC funding procedures. In total, around 90 participants attended the conference.

ERC Executive Agency Director Pablo Amor opened the event by briefly introducing the ERC and its future challenges. The presentation that followed explained how the ERC performed in the first eight years of its existence. The ERC was established to give excellent researchers freedom to carry out innovative and creative projects of their own choice. By allowing scientists to focus entirely on their research, the ERC helps them produce high quality work, and therefore achieve the best results. For example, recently conducted analyses shows that 12% of publications acknowledging ERC funding are in the top 1% of most cited scientific publications in the world.

Technical presentations followed the opening, including detailed information on legal, technical and scientific parts of an ERC grant agreement. The participants were also reminded of their rights and responsibilities. For example, grantees are obliged to carry out at least 50% of their research exclusively in Europe. On the other hand, as grants are assigned to researchers rather than to their host institutions, ERC grantees have a right to move to a different university or research institute to carry out their ERC-funded research there. Furthermore, the participants received tips on communicating on their research results (read below).

The conference was also an occasion to discuss ERC policies on gender equality and international cooperation. The ERC is actively raising awareness on gender mainstreaming with a focus on excellence. Currently, around 20% of ERC grants are awarded to female researchers, with ratios varying greatly between the schemes. The number of women in ERC-funded teams and peer review panels is gradually increasing.

Prof. Michael Jetten, an ERC Advanced grantee, shared his insight on how to keep young women (and men) in science. He stressed the importance of using their full potential and pointed to the lack of confidence, absence of good role models and job insecurity as main issues which turn many women away from a scientific career.

Prof. Georgina Waylen, also an Advanced grantee, provided a summary of her research on gender equality in institutions. The results show that changing rules, norms and practices in the workplace is essential to improve gender equality. In particular, flexibility is crucial as it provides women with time and means to balance their family life without having to forgo their professional career. The ERC already uses some flexibility measures to attract more female applicants who are mothers, for instance, by extending their eligibility window for Starting and Consolidator Grant calls by 18 months per child.

The value of international teams and the rules concerning them were also part of the discussion. For example, the agreements signed with the US [National Science Foundation](#) (NSF) and the [National Research Foundation of Korea](#) (NRF) with the aim to

encourage more international collaboration mean that ERC grantees can now host in their team scientists funded by these foundations. Starting grantee Dr Santofimia Navarro explained how she hired a NSF-funded scientist from the Colorado School of Mines to support her research on steel properties. In turn, this exchange inspired her to explore new lines of research and training in specific new technologies.

Testimonies by Starting grantee Dr Armagan Kocer and Advanced grantee Prof. Axel Cleeremans concluded the conference. Dr Kocer said that the funding gave her the freedom to focus on her research without limiting herself to teaching. In addition, she could hire four PhD students and establish other collaborations. Prof. Cleeremans was able to involve his entire lab in his ERC-funded project. Overall, the grant gave him inspiration, peace of mind and recognition. His advice to his fellow scientists was “to always think big”.

Similar events, bringing together ERC beneficiaries to exchange experiences and learn more about opportunities offered by the ERC, take place in various countries around Europe.

Communicating on ERC projects: good and bad practices

The workshop was an opportunity to explain the main principles of science communication and to call the attention of ERC grant holders to the practices of some publishers that are charging substantial fees for publishing articles on project results.

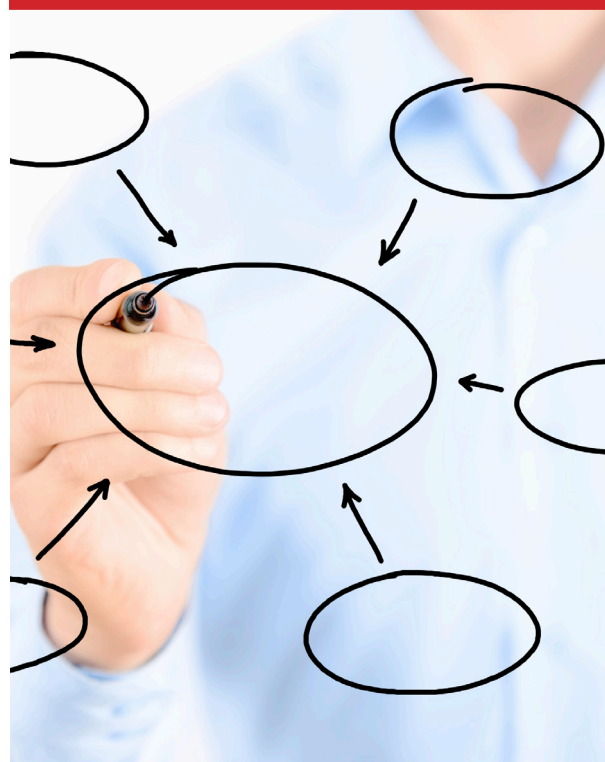
According to the ERC grant agreement, grantees are encouraged to promote their research results obtained thanks to ERC funding. They can use tools such as project websites and social media accounts, and present their projects at scientific events. The grantees are also encouraged to interact with mainstream and specialised media that report on scientific results free of charge. They can contact their university press offices to promote their research to media. The costs can be covered by an ERC grant. The ERC Communication Unit can also serve as a multiplier by sharing their results on social media, in the ERC [Newsletter](#) and on the ERC [website](#).

Caution against some publishing houses

It may however be wise for grant holders to remain critical about some publishing houses. Some of them may contact grantees proposing to publish articles for fees which can amount to a few thousand euros. These publishers may use “cold calling” and claim to be associated in one form or another to the ERC, the European Commission or other institutions. Grantees should be aware that if fees are involved in the offer, there is absolutely no link to any official EU publication. Whilst researchers are free to choose which media service they see fit, it is recommendable to be very cautious if approached by such publishers.

How to communicate research findings?

- Explain research as if you were talking to a relative
- Do not use professional slang and scientific terms
- Use real-life examples
- Think of possible new solutions the research could bring
- Use illustrations, graphics, photos



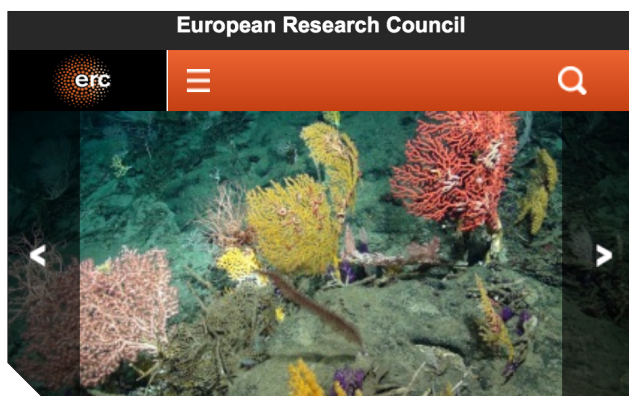
ERC Annual Report 2014 published

Do you want to know more about the activities and achievements of the ERC last year? Read the ERC Annual Report 2014 which was published [online](#) in March. A whole section is dedicated to the ERC under FP7, including data and statistics. It also showcases some funded projects and includes the major highlights of the year, such as the celebration of the 4000th grant agreement and the award of the Nobel Prize to three ERC grant holders.



Researchers win ERC grants

On 5 February, the ERC announced 59 winners of the latest [Proof of Concept](#) call aiming to help ERC grant holders commercialise their research results with funding up to EUR 150,000 per grant. A month later, the ERC revealed the names of [additional ERC Starting grantees](#) selected in the 2014 call, backed with up to EUR 2 million each. On 12 March, the ERC published the list of 372 top mid-career researchers who received, in total, €UR 713 million in the [2014 Consolidator Grant call](#).



ERC on your phone

From now on, you can read the latest news on ERC projects, funding opportunities, call results and much more on your smartphone or tablet. The mobile friendly ERC website automatically adjusts all of the content to the screen of the device. This makes it easier and more convenient for users to read and navigate on the ERC website, no matter the device used.

Ukraine joins Horizon 2020

Ukraine is officially associated with Horizon 2020 and can fully participate in its funding schemes. For example, ERC grantees can be based at Ukrainian universities and research institutes while carrying out their ERC-funded projects. The agreement was signed in Kiev by Commissioner Carlos Moedas and Ukrainian Minister of Science and Education Serhiy Kvi on 20 March (see [more](#)).



Calendar of ERC calls

Grants open to researchers from anywhere in the world

Call for proposals	Publication date	Deadline	Budget	Funding
ERC 2015 Proof of Concept*	7 November 2014	28 May 2015 1 October 2015	EUR 20 million	Up to EUR 150 000 per grant
ERC 2015 Advanced Grant	10 February 2015	2 June 2015	EUR 630 million	Up to EUR 3.5 million per grant

*Calls open to ERC grantees only

Important:

Researchers who wish to apply to one of the ERC's calls can do so through the [Participant Portal](#).

Candidates should apply with a host institution in an EU Member State or Horizon 2020 Associated country.
(See further information on the [Participant Portal](#).)

Read the new rules for re-submission of proposals. For details on these rules, please see the [ERC Work Programme 2015](#) (pp. 18-19).

Note that there are new rules regarding the reference date for Starting and Consolidator grant applicants' eligibility in the [ERC Work Programme 2015](#) (pp. 15-17).

Stay tuned on the [ERC website](#).





European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

Supporting **creative minds** from everywhere in the world



The newsletter is available in English. Subscription is free.
You can subscribe online by [clicking here](#).

Next issue: June 2015

For the ERC National Contact Point in your country,
[click here](#).

To receive ERC News Alerts,
[click here](#).

<http://erc.europa.eu>

Follow us on:

