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Press release

From babies' brains to bacterial warfare: European Research Council invests €650 million in ground-breaking research

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How does air pollution affect the development of baby's brains? Can innovative heart regeneration treatments increase the long-term survival of heart attack victims? How did non-living matter evolve into living systems that established themselves on Earth? Why are bacteria extremely aggressive towards one another? These are some of the issues that leading researchers will be exploring thanks to Advanced Grants from the European Research Council. This EU funding, worth a total of €653 million, announced today will benefit 269 senior researchers across Europe, giving them a chance to realise their most creative ideas and potentially produce results that will have a major impact on science, society and the economy. The grants are part of the EU's Research and Innovation programme, Horizon 2020.

On this occasion, Carlos Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, said: "*The ERC's Advanced Grant scheme has supported outstanding and established research leaders since 2007. It provides a great example of how EU funding can help expand the frontiers of scientific knowledge, providing the resources necessary to continue ground-breaking, high-risk projects, and ensure Europe's global competitiveness.*"

The President of the ERC, Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon, commented: "*The diversity and boldness of the research in this latest funding round is again impressive. The selected researchers explore the brink of the unknown, the ideal setting to make breakthroughs. If the past is any guide to the future, the ERC is set to continue betting on audacious scientific projects – the latest review shows again that over 70% of ERC-funded research led to discoveries and major scientific advances. But there are many more bright minds with ambitious ideas in Europe that the ERC could fund if we had more means. That's why the ERC Scientific Council argues for more resources for the future while keeping the strategy of using scientific quality as the only criterion for selection.*"

The research of these new grantees covers all fields of scholarship. One grantee in France will explore using underwater communication cables in earthquake warning systems. Another scholar in London will investigate the causes and consequences of electoral hostility and a scientist in Ljubljana will build a new class of molecular machines based on proteins.



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See more project [examples](#).

The ERC competitions are open to any nationality and in this round, researchers of 27 nationalities received funding, with British (50), German (40), French (29) and Spanish (18) researchers being the most numerous. The grantees will carry out their projects at universities and research centers in 20 countries across the European Research Area¹, with the United Kingdom (66 grants), Germany (42) and France (34) as leading locations.

Demand for ERC grants remains very high: 2,167 research proposals were submitted this time, out of which 12% were selected for funding. Female researchers submitted approximately 17% of proposals and some 17% of grants have been awarded to women.

These grants will not only allow top researchers to execute their best ideas at scientific frontiers, but will also lead to job creation as an estimated 2,000 postdocs, PhD students and other staff could be employed in the grantees' research teams.

See more [statistics](#).

[List of all selected researchers](#) (alphabetical order)

Lists of selected researchers by domain (alphabetical order):

- [Physical Sciences and Engineering](#)
- [Life Sciences](#)
- [Social Sciences and Humanities](#)

Discover [more projects](#) in this Advanced Grant competition

Background

The ERC Advanced Grants in brief

- For well-established top researchers of any nationality or age, who are scientifically independent and have a recent high-level research track-record and profile which identifies them as leaders in their respective field(s).
- Based on a simple approach: 1 researcher with his/her team, 1 host institution, 1 project, 1 selection criterion: scientific excellence.
- The host institution should be based in the European Research Area. This can be the institution where the researcher is already working, or a new one. The host institution can

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/index_en.htm



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be changed in the course of the project if the researcher so wishes (“portability of the grant”).

- No consortia or co-funding are requested.
- Funding: up to €2.5 million per grant (can exceptionally go up to €3.5 million, in case of purchase of major equipment, mobility from another continent, etc.).

About the ERC

The European Research Council, set up by the European Union in 2007, is the first European funding organisation for excellent frontier research. Every year, it selects and funds the very best, creative researchers of any nationality and age, to run projects based in Europe. The ERC has three core grant schemes: Starting Grants, Consolidator Grants and Advanced Grants. Another funding scheme Synergy Grants should be re-launched in 2018.

To date, the ERC has funded some 8,000 top researchers at various stages of their careers, and over 50,000 postdocs, PhD students and other staff working in their research teams. The ERC strives to attract top researchers from anywhere in the world to come to Europe. Key global research funding bodies, in the United States, China, Japan, Brazil and other countries, have concluded special agreements to provide their researchers with opportunities to temporarily join ERC grantees' teams.

The ERC is led by an independent governing body, the Scientific Council. The ERC President is Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon. The ERC has an annual budget of €1.8 billion for the year 2017. The overall ERC budget from 2014 to 2020 is more than €13 billion, as part of the Horizon 2020 programme, for which European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science Carlos Moedas is responsible.

More information

[ERC website](#)

[Horizon 2020](#)

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