

Research RTD, 7th EC Framework Programme 2007-2013: specific programme "Ideas", frontier research

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The Commission presents a report on the European Research Council's operations and realisation of the objectives set out in the Specific Programme Ideas in 2010. To recall, the European Research Council (ERC), established by Commission Decision 2007/134/EC has as its essential task the implementation of the Specific Programme "Ideas", with an overall budget of EUR 7.51 billion. The ERC consists of an independent Scientific Council supported by a dedicated implementation structure, which took the form of the ERC Executive Agency (ERCEA) created under the general regime of executive agencies. Responsibility for implementing the

"Ideas" programme and supporting the Scientific Council was delegated to the Agency by the Commission in 2008 and autonomy was granted to the Agency in July 2009. The 2010 Work Programme for the Specific Programme "Ideas" was established by the Scientific Council on 2 April 2009 and subsequently adopted by the Commission on 29 July 2009. No fundamental change in strategy was introduced via the 2010 Work Programme, but only a refinement of grant schemes on the basis of experience gained.

Programme implementation: in the implementation of the programme, commitments of more than EUR 1.1 billion and payments of EUR 528 million were fully executed, representing 100% of the operational appropriations of the "Ideas" Specific Programme for 2010. Around 2.58% of the operational budget was spent on administration.

ERC Starting Grants: the 2010 ERC Starting Grant call was published in July 2009 with an indicative budget of EUR 528 million. In total 2,873 proposals were received distributed by domain as follows: 1 205 proposals in Physical Sciences and Engineering, 1 230 in Life Sciences and 638 in Social Sciences and Humanities. A total of 436 proposals were funded with a budget of more than EUR 537 million and an average award of around EUR 1.2 million.

The 2011 ERC Starting Grant call was published in July 2010 with an indicative budget of EUR 661 million. A total of 4,080 proposals were submitted in response: 1,690 for Physical Sciences and Engineering, 1,440 for Life Sciences and 950 for Social Sciences and Humanities, representing respectively 42%, 35% and 23%, a split similar to the 2010 Starting Grants call.

ERC Advanced Grants: the 2010 ERC Advanced Grant call was published in October 2009 with an indicative budget of EUR 590 million. A total of 2 009 proposals were received distributed by domain as follows: 902 proposals in Physical Sciences and Engineering (45%), 621 in Life Sciences (31%) and 486 in Social Sciences and Humanities (24%). The evaluation process resulted in a total of 266 proposals retained for funding with a total of more than EUR 588 million awarded and an average award of around EUR 2.2 million. The 2011 ERC Advanced Grant call was published in November 2010 with deadlines between February and April 2011 and an indicative budget of EUR 661 million. The rise in proposals in both granting schemes shows an unbroken demand for funding of excellent research at European level.

Redress: in 2010, a total of 225 redress complaints for both calls were introduced, representing 4.6 % of the total number of proposals. Although the percentage of redress cases introduced shows a slight increase compared to 2009 (+0.7%), the number of re-evaluation decreased by 71% (from 14 to 10 re-evaluations)

based on the outcome of the ERCEA Redress Committee's assessment and none of the 2010 redress complaints introduced was successful. One re-evaluation is still pending.

Communication: during the course of 2010, the ERC continued its efforts to raise awareness of its funding opportunities in the research community and increase the visibility of the ERC and its research projects among the general public and the media. In particular, the ERC Scientific Council decided to put further emphasis on awareness raising outside Europe in order to attract more top researchers from non-European countries to pursue their research in Europe. To this end, targeted visits and outreach campaigns in the US, China, Japan, India and Brazil were organised.

Outlook: the ERC funding schemes have captured the interest of the European Research community. The first six calls have yielded more than 20,000 applications.

While in 2009 about 400 journal articles acknowledging the ERC were recorded, their number tripled in 2010. This is a combination of rising number of projects and maturing projects producing more results. For 2009, the articles are from 182 projects and for 2010 from 453 projects i.e. on average two and three articles per project for 2009 and 2010 respectively. In response to the Commission's call to strengthen the role of the ERC in the innovation chain (see [Communication on the Innovation Union](#)), the Scientific Council developed a new granting opportunity which from 2011 will be offered to ERC grant holders to establish the innovation potential of ideas arising from their ERC-funded projects. The scheme aims to cover a funding gap in the earliest stage of an innovation. ERC grant-holders will have the opportunity to establish "proof of concept" of an ERC-funded idea, i.e. make its innovation potential evident to the market, securing thereof prospective commercialisation opportunities. The Scientific Council is also discussing how to diversify and broaden its programmes, always on the basis of the principles which have made the first two schemes successful: investigator-driven proposals, rigorous peer review based on scientific excellence.

In 2011, the ERC Task Force will deliver its report on the legal and organisational structure of the ERC, in time for the Commission's proposals for the "Horizon 2020" Programme, expected before the end of the year.