Basic information

2005/0186(CNS) CNS - Consultation procedure Decision	Procedure completed
Research RTD, 7th EC Framework Programme 2007-2013: specific programme "Ideas", frontier research Repealed by 2011/0402(CNS) **Subject** 3.50.02.01 EC, EU framework programme 3.50.06 Research staff, researchers	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	NIEBLER Angelika (PPE-DE)	05/10/2005

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
BUDG Budgets	XENOGIANNAKOPOULOU Marilisa (PSE)	20/09/2004
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
CULT Culture and Education	BERLINGUER Giovanni (PSE)	07/10/2005

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)	2715	2006-03-13
Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)	2731	2006-05-29
Agriculture and Fisheries	2774	2006-12-19

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Research and Innovation	POTOČNIK Janez

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
21/09/2005	Legislative proposal published	COM(2005)0441	Summary
17/11/2005	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
13/03/2006	Debate in Council		
29/05/2006	Debate in Council		
10/10/2006	Vote in committee		
19/10/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading	A6-0369/2006	
29/11/2006	Debate in Parliament		
30/11/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0519/2006	Summary
30/11/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
19/12/2006	Act adopted by Council after consultation of Parliament		
19/12/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		
30/12/2006	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2005/0186(CNS)
Procedure type	CNS - Consultation procedure
Procedure subtype	Legislation
Legislative instrument	Decision
Amendments and repeals	Repealed by 2011/0402(CNS)
Legal basis	EC Treaty (after Amsterdam) EC 166
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ITRE/6/30655

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee opinion	CULT	PE367.925	21/03/2006	
Committee draft report		PE368.075	04/04/2006	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE374.086	29/05/2006	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE374.490	20/06/2006	
Committee opinion	BUDG	PE374.075	23/06/2006	
Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading		A6-0369/2006	19/10/2006	
Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading		T6-0519/2006	30/11/2006	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Legislative proposal	COM(2005)0441	21/09/2005	Summary
Supplementary legislative basic document	COM(2005)0441/2	24/05/2006	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	COM(2006)0239	24/05/2006	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2007)0054	11/01/2007	
Follow-up document	COM(2008)0473	18/07/2008	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2008)0526	26/08/2008	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2009)0488	22/09/2009	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2010)0458	03/09/2010	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2011)0497	17/08/2011	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2012)0297	19/06/2012	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2013)0318	30/05/2013	Summary

National parliaments

Document type	Parliament /Chamber	Reference	Date	Summary
Contribution	PT_PARLIAMENT	COM(2010)0458	04/04/2011	

Additional information

Source	Document	Date
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Final act

Decision 2006/0972
OJ L 400 30.12.2006, p. 0242 Summary

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

2005/0186(CNS) - 30/05/2013 - Follow-up document

This Annual Report of the Commission, drawn up in co-operation with the European Research Council (ERC) Scientific Council and the ERC Executive Agency, presents the **Commission's assessment of the ERC's operations and the achievement of its objectives in 2012**. Its main conclusions are as follows:

- The year 2012 saw **several significant developments** for the ERC. It was marked by the ERC's fifth anniversary celebration, the launch of the "ERC goes Global" campaign, the first international agreement with the US National Science Foundation, an ERC Principal Investigator winning the Nobel Prize for physics, and ERC grantees participating in the Summer Davos meeting. By the end of 2012, the ERC had completed **ten calls for proposals for the Starting and Advanced Grants, two calls for the Proof of Concept and one for the Synergy Grants**. The competitions yielded a **total of over 34 000 proposals** out of which more than 3 500 have been selected for funding through a rigorous peer review.

- The year **2013 is eagerly awaited** for the decisions of the European Parliament and the Council on the Commission's proposals for Horizon 2020, including an anticipated increase of funding for the ERC. Boosting the ERC budget will allow more top researchers and their pioneering ideas to be supported, and especially younger researchers to be provided with a long-term perspective.

Two further developments are foreseen in 2013:

- since 2010, the Starting Grant has been "streamed" to allow applicants to be compared with researchers of a similar level. In general, "Starters" (from 2 and up to 7 years from their PhD award) are still in the process of setting up their own research group, while "Consolidators" (from 7 up to 12 years from their PhD award) are very often already working with their own group, but need to consolidate. As a development from this practice, and in response to the rapidly rising number of applications for Starting Grants, the Scientific Council will introduce **two separate calls in the 2013 Work Programme**;

- in line with the recommendations of the ERC Task Force, incorporated in its proposals for Horizon 2020, the Commission has set up a **high level independent search committee** for the next ERC President. Under Horizon 2020, the ERC President will also ensure the tasks of the ERC Secretary General, will be based in Brussels and devote most of her/his time to ERC activities. The search committee, chaired by Lord Sainsbury of Turville, is expected to report to the Commission in time for the appointment of the next ERC President upon the entry into force of Horizon 2020.

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

2005/0186(CNS) - 21/09/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: To establish a specific programme entitled "Ideas" within the context of the EU's 7th research framework programme.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision

CONTENT: The European Commission is presenting five "specific programmes" in follow up to the approval of the 7th Framework Programme in April 2005. The first relates directly to actions funded under the Joint Research Centre. The other four are entitled: Co-operation, Ideas, Peoples and Capacity. The one under discussion here is the Ideas specific programme.

Background:

The restructuring of the RT&D framework programmes is a bid by the European Commission to help the EU achieve its goal of becoming the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010 and to help the EU realise its ambition of devoting 3% of GDP to RT&D by the same date. The specific programmes identified by the Commission have been designed to address major weaknesses in the level, quality and impact of European research. Their creation represents a further consolidation of the European Research Area by offering financial support to the free movement of ideas, knowledge and researchers. The re-structuring of the programmes includes a number of core innovations, including, for example, allowing researchers (under some actions) to identify topics for future funding. Other advances include the setting up of a Risk-Sharing Facility to improve access to EIB loans for large scale European actions and the establishment of a European Research Council under the Ideas initiative. The Commission is also looking to overhaul the management methods of the framework programme by introducing improved efficiency drives through the externalisation of administrative tasks to an executive agency, seeking a clearer presentation of evaluation criteria, guaranteeing transparent work programmes and streamlining procedures for approving projects.

Specific programme – Ideas:

Possibly one of the most innovative of the five specific programmes being proposed, the Ideas initiative seeks to address the growing angst within Europe that it is failing to deliver the kind of outstanding research required if it is to become the most competitive, knowledge based economy in the world by 2010. The aim of the Ideas programme is to provide a pan-European mechanism to support truly creative scientists, engineers and scholars,

whose curiosity and thirst for knowledge will result in unpredictable and spectacular discoveries. A key term linked to the Ideas programme is “frontier research”. This term reflects the Commission’s recognition that basic research is an intrinsically risky endeavour involving the pursuit of fundamental advances in science and technology without regard for established disciplinary boundaries or national borders.

In order to enact its objective of creating a frontier driven research community, the programme will follow an investigator driven approach whereby researchers will be given the freedom to choose the scope of their own topics. Grants will be provided for individual teams, leaving the flexibility for a team to consist of any grouping of researchers appropriate for the conduct of the projects – from one single institution or several institutions. The scope for funding could include engineering, socio-economic sciences and humanities. In all cases scientific excellence and not administrative requirements should drive the team’s formation.

Heading up and investigating the proposed research topics will be the European Research Council. Its establishment represents a new departure for the EU and will consist of two arms. Firstly, an independent Scientific Council and secondly a dedicated implementing structure. To make it effective, the ERC will operate according to the principles of trust, credibility and transparency. It should guarantee a high degree of autonomy and integrity, while being consistent with the requirements for accountability. Further, the ERC is expected to act independently of any political or any other vested interests.

Concerning the first branch of the ERC, the Scientific Council, it will be made up of European scientists, recruited from the highest echelons of the scientific community. They will be appointed by the European Commission following an independent procedure in which their credibility is verified. The Council will be mandated to develop a scientific strategy for the programme. A number of factors must be taken into account when preparing the scientific strategy including: identifying Europe’s specific needs, the establishment of a work programme, (which can be, if necessary be modified), preparing calls for proposals, setting criteria and defining specific topics for research. Criteria will be based on the conclusions of peer reviewed evaluations, which in turn will form the basis on which proposals will be funded. In addition the Scientific Council is expected to monitor the quality of operations and evaluate the programmes implementation. Where necessary is should make recommendations for corrective actions.

Concerning the second branch of the European Research Council, namely the dedicated implementation structure, the Commission proposes that it be responsible for the programmes execution in accordance with the annual work programme. The implementation structure will be headed up by an Executive Agency, which will oversee the implementation of evaluation procedures, peer reviews, the selection process in accordance with the principles set out by the Scientific Council and the management of financial grants.

Lastly, the European Commission proposes that it act as guarantor of the ERC’s full autonomy and integrity as well as ensuring that the Ideas programme is executed according to the scientific objectives set out by the programme. As a general rule, the Commission will adopt the work programme as proposed by the Scientific Council. Should the Commission fail to adopt the work programme; its reasons will be stated publicly.

For further information concerning the financial implications of this measure, please refer to the financial statement.

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

2005/0186(CNS) - 24/05/2006 - Supplementary legislative basic document

On 21 September 2005, the Commission presented a proposal for a Council Decision concerning the specific programme: “Ideas” implementing the 7th Framework Programme (2007-2013) of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities.

The overall financial amount initially proposed by the Commission amounted to **EUR 11 861,514** .

The Commission subsequently adapted the budgetary aspects of these proposals following the Interinstitutional Agreement of 17 May 2006 on the Financial Framework 2007-2013.

The new overall amount is set at **EUR 7 460 million,** of which less than 6% shall be for the Commission’s administrative expenditure.

Please refer to the financial statement for more details.

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

2005/0186(CNS) - 24/05/2006

Package of legislative proposals following the Interinstitutional Agreement on

budgetary discipline and sound financial management

The conclusion on 17 May 2006 by the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament of the agreement on the 2007-2013 financial framework (Interinstitutional Agreement on budgetary discipline and sound financial management – please refer to procedure ACI/2004/2099) marks a real success for Europe, providing a stable financial framework for the political priorities of the enlarged Union for the next seven years. It is now up to the institutions and Member

States to ensure that the financial resources available are used and implemented as well as possible. Action at European level must contribute true added value to that taken at national, regional or local level and must have an optimum impact on each European player. The Commission is ready to play a full role in all these areas.

The agreement marks a decisive step forward towards the ultimate objective of providing the Union with operational programmes by the beginning of 2007. Work must now be continued on each legislative act. To this end, the Commission intends to continue to provide momentum and act as a facilitator, as it has been doing since the start of the negotiations.

As part of the negotiations on the 2007-2013 financial framework, in October 2005 the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission adopted a joint declaration in which they undertook to continue work on the legislative proposals currently being discussed and then, once the interinstitutional agreement had been adopted and on the basis of amended proposals by the Commission, to reach agreement on each of these proposals. Thus, in accordance with Article 250(2) of the EC Treaty and in order to facilitate this phase for each legislative act, the Commission has adopted a total of 30 proposals, 26 of which are amended and 4 new.

The **proposals amended as a result of the IIA** are as follows:

Programmes concerning the external policy of the Union and development cooperation:

Ø **COD/2004/0219** (**European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument**)

Ø **COD/2004/0220** (**development co-operation and economic co-operation instrument**)

Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows Programme(JHA):

Ø **COD/2005/0046** (**European Refugee Fund**)

Ø **COD/2005/0047** (**External borders fund, 2007-2013**)

Ø **COD/2005/0049** (**European Return Fund**)

Fundamental Rights and Justice Programme (JHA):

Ø **COD/2005/0037/A(DAPHNE**)

Ø **COD/2005/0037/B** (**drugs prevention and information**)

RDT Framework Programme and specific programmes :

Ø **COD/2005/0043** (**RDT Framework Programme**)

Ø **CNS/2005/0044(Nuclear Research Programme**)

Ø **CNS/2005/0184** (**Joint Research Centre - JRC**)

Ø **CNS/2005/0185** (**Transnational cooperation specific programme**)

Ø **CNS/2005/0186** (**Specific programme Ideas, frontier research**)

Ø **CNS/2005/0187(Specific programme supporting researchers)**

Ø **CNS/2005/0188(RDTCapacities specific programme**)

Ø **CNS/2005/0189** (**specific programme direct actions by the Joint Research Centre JRC**)

Ø **CNS/2005/0190** (**fusion energy, nuclear fission and radiation protection specific programme)**

Employment and social cohesion Programme:COD/2004/0158

- Programmes in the fields of youth and education:
  - Ø **COD/2004/0152** (**Youth**)
  - Ø **COD/2004/0153** (**Education – lifelong learning**)
- Consumer Protection and Public Health Framework programme:
  - Ø **COD/2005/0042/A** (**Public health**)
  - Ø **COD/2005/0042/B** (**Consumers**)
- Programme in the fields of energy, environment and transport :
  - Ø **COD/2004/0218** (**LIFE+)**
  - Ø **COD/2004/0154** (**TransEuropean networks in the areas of energy and transport**)

- Ø **CNS/2004/0221** (**Decommissioning of the Bohunice nuclear plant**)

- GALILEO (**radio-navigation by satellite**): **COD/2004/0156**

In terms of **new proposals**, the Commission has already submitted three in the area of agriculture and rural development policy and fisheries and aquaculture policy:

- Ø **CNS/2006/0081** (**fisheries and aquaculture**)
- Ø **CNS/2006/0082** (**rural development**)
- Ø **CNS/2006/0083** (**common agricultural policy**).

Certain legislative acts do not form part of this package of measures, in particular those on which political agreement has been reached since 17 May. For these measures, the Commission has played a full part in helping to bring about agreement between the arms of the legislative authority. The same applies to the acts for which conclusion of the interinstitutional agreement does not modify the Commission's original proposal. For all the others, which are included in the package presented, the changes proposed by the Commission take account of the content of the interinstitutional agreement adopted, either in a simplified form, where the financial resources allocated to each programme must be adapted, or in a more detailed form where the structure or even the content of the act must be revised. It should also be noted that four of the amended proposals contain amendments already voted on by the European Parliament at first reading and that one proposal has been divided into two amended proposals in response to a request by the Council and the European Parliament, although Parliament has not yet proceeded to a first reading of this proposal.

Based on these amended proposals, the Commission calls on the European Parliament and the Council to continue their discussions of these proposals and conclude them as soon as possible in order to ensure that all the legal instruments are available in time for the effective launch of the programmes in January 2007.

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

2005/0186(CNS) - 19/12/2006 - Final act

PURPOSE: to adopt the Specific Programme **"Ideas"** under the 7th Framework Programme.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Decision concerning the specific programme "Ideas" implementing the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013).

CONTENT: the adoption of the Specific Programme "Ideas" stems from Council Decision 1982/2006/EC concerning the Seventh Framework Programme (2007-2013). See: COD/2005/0043. The new 7th Framework Programme is centred on four research pillars: Co-operation; Ideas; People; and Capacity.

Possibly one of the most innovative of the five specific programmes, the Ideas Specific Programme seeks to address the growing realisation within Europe that it is failing to deliver the kind of outstanding research required if it is to become the most competitive, knowledge based economy in the world by 2010. The aim of the Ideas programme, therefore, is to provide a pan-European mechanism to support truly creative scientists, engineers and scholars, whose curiosity and thirst for knowledge will result in unpredictable and spectacular discoveries. A key term linked to the Ideas programme is "frontier research". This term reflects the fact that basic research is an intrinsically risky endeavour involving the pursuit of fundamental advances in science and technology without regard for established disciplinary boundaries or national borders. The Programme has been awarded a **EUR 7 510 million** budget to help realise these objectives.

In order to enact its objective of creating a frontier driven research community, the programme will follow an investigator driven approach whereby researchers will be given the freedom to choose the scope of their own topics. Grants will be provided for individual teams, leaving the flexibility for a team to consist of any grouping of researchers appropriate for the conduct of the projects – from one single institution or several institutions. The scope for funding could include engineering, socio-economic sciences and humanities.

Heading up and investigating the proposed research topics will be the European Research Council. Its establishment represents a new departure for the EU and will consist of two arms. Firstly, an independent Scientific Council and secondly a dedicated implementing structure. To make it effective, the ERC will operate according to the principles of trust, credibility and transparency. It should guarantee a high degree of autonomy and integrity, while being consistent with the requirements for accountability. Further, the ERC is expected to act independently of any political or any other vested interests.

Concerning the first branch of the ERC, the Scientific Council, it will be made up of European scientists, recruited from the highest echelons of the scientific community. They will be appointed by the European Commission following an independent procedure in which their credibility is verified. The Council will be mandated to develop a scientific strategy for the programme. A number of factors must be taken into account when preparing the scientific strategy including: identifying Europe's specific needs, the establishment of a work programme, (which can be, if necessary modified), preparing calls for proposals, setting criteria and defining specific topics for research. Criteria will be based on the conclusions of peer reviewed evaluations, which in turn will form the basis on which proposals will be funded.

Concerning the second branch of the European Research Council, namely the dedicated implementation structure, it will be responsible for the programmes' execution in accordance with the annual work programme. The implementation structure will be headed up by an Executive Agency, which will oversee the implementation of evaluation procedures, peer reviews, the selection process in accordance with the principles set out by the Scientific Council and the management of financial grants.

The European Commission will act as guarantor of the ERC's full autonomy and integrity as well as ensuring that the Ideas programme is executed according to the scientific objectives set out by the programme. As a general rule, the Commission will adopt the work programme as proposed by the Scientific Council. Should the Commission fail to adopt the work programme; its reasons will be stated publicly.

During the implementation of this Specific Programme and in the research activities arising from it, fundamental ethical principles must be respected including, inter alia, the principles reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU; the protection of human dignity and human life, the protection of personal data and privacy, as well as of animals and the environment in accordance with Community law and international conventions, guidelines and codes of conduct.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 2 January 2007.

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

2005/0186(CNS) - 18/07/2008 - Follow-up document

The European Commission has presented a report concerning the European Research Council operations and realisation of the objectives set out in the Specific Programme "Ideas" in 2007. The European Research Council (ERC) is an ambitious new component of the European Union's research policy. It has been established under the provisions of the Seventh Framework Programme, and is the means for implementation of the Specific Programme "Ideas", with a budget of EUR 7.51 billion over the period 2007-2013. Consisting of an independent Scientific Council supported by a dedicated implementation structure and operating according to the principles of scientific excellence, autonomy, efficiency, transparency and accountability, the ERC's mission is to promote the very best research at the frontiers of knowledge across all areas of science and scholarship, through competition at European level between individual research teams.

The Commission can report that the main institutional building blocks of the ERC have been successfully established during 2007 in accordance with the timeframe envisaged, and the programme has been implemented according to the principles set out in the Specific Programme "Ideas". There has been a strong and effective collaboration between the Scientific Council and the ERC-DIS in implementing the "Ideas" Programme and progressing towards setting up the ERCEA as an autonomous, independent entity.

The ERC Starting Grant call was published on 22 December 2006 with a deadline of 25 April 2007, and indicative budget of EUR 290 million. The ERC-DIS implemented the ERC peer review system, including the appointment of the panel members, as defined by the Scientific Council. The overwhelming response to the Starting Grant call imposed enormous demands on the ERC's operations at a very early and potentially vulnerable stage, testing the peer review process, imposing a very high workload on the administration and panels and posing serious logistical challenges.

The ERC-DIS and other DG RTD support services (particularly the IT infrastructure: Electronic Proposal Submission Service and Evaluation Support Service) nevertheless coped remarkably well, and allowed the peer review to be conducted according to the original schedule and to high quality standards, as judged by the panels themselves and confirmed by the relatively low percentage of cases upheld at redress.

Structures, mechanisms and governance will continue to evolve during 2008, presenting a dynamic and challenging environment for the ERC as it continues on its trajectory towards administrative autonomy. A further Decision of the Commission, on the delegation of tasks to the Executive Agency, will be presented by DG Research in early 2008. During 2008, as progress is made towards the formal establishment and commissioning of the ERCEA, the current tasks of Directorate S will be transferred to the Agency and further staff will be recruited. Directorate S will be dissolved as soon as the ERCEA is ready to take its place as the ERC-DIS.

Also during 2008, the Commission will present to the European Parliament and the Council a Communication on the methodology and terms of reference of the review to be carried out by independent experts by 2010 concerning the ERC's structures and mechanisms, against the criteria of scientific excellence, autonomy, efficiency and transparency and which will explicitly look at the advantages and disadvantages of a structure based on an Executive Agency, against an alternative structure based on Article 171 of the Treaty.

Communication is, and will continue to be, a core challenge - to assure a high reputation and positive image of the ERC in and outside of Europe. From 2008 onwards, ERC-funded frontier research projects will be starting and the ERC will showcase successful Principal Investigators and projects, which will serve as benchmarks and case studies of European research excellence, raising awareness and the aspirations of potential applicants.

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

2005/0186(CNS) - 03/09/2010 - Follow-up document

The Commission presented a report on the European Research Council's operations and realisation of the objectives set out in the Specific Programme "Ideas" in 2009

The European Research Council (ERC), created by a Commission Decision in 2007, implements the Specific Programme (SP) "Ideas" under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7).

The ERC consists of an independent Scientific Council (ScC) supported by a dedicated implementation structure (DIS). In 2007 the ERC Executive Agency (ERCEA) was created under the general regime of executive agencies with a view to taking over the role of DIS from the Commission.

This Annual Report of the Commission, drawn up in co-operation with the ERC's ScC, presents the Commission's assessment of the ERC's operations and the achievement of its objectives in 2009.

1) Implementation: the 2010 Work Programme (WP) for the SP "Ideas" was established by the ScC on 2 April 2009 and subsequently adopted by the Commission on 29 July 2009. No fundamental change in strategy was introduced via the 2010 WP, although the grant schemes were refined on the basis of experience gained. Other adjustments included further simplification in rules on re-submission and multiple applications and the introduction of measures to increase the attractiveness of the EU and the associated countries to researchers residing in third countries as well as to further encourage the participation of women scientists. Additional funding is to be made available to researchers from third countries to encourage and help them establish themselves in Europe and greater consideration will be given to previous career breaks and unconventional career paths which would be expected to encourage higher participation from women scientists.

Commitments of more than **€ 794,861,770** and payments of more than € 221,422,331,50 were fully executed, representing **100% of the operational appropriations** of the "Ideas" SP for 2009.

Grants are offered to the best proposals depending on the budget available. The offer is made on the basis of the proposal itself and the funding recommended by the peer review evaluation:

- ***ERC Starting Grants***: the 2009 ERC StG call was published in July 2008 with deadlines in Autumn 2008 and an indicative budget of € 295.8 million. In total 2,503 proposals were received, distributed by domain as follows: 1,112 in PE, 927 in LS and 464 in SH. With the total budget increased to € 325 million thanks to FP7 Associated Countries' contributions it became possible to fund 242 proposals. The 2010 ERC StG call was published in July 2009 with deadlines between October and December 2009 and an indicative budget of € 528 million. In total 2,873 proposals were received distributed by domain as follows: 1,205 proposals in Physical Sciences and Engineering, 1,029 in Life Sciences and 639 in Social Sciences and Humanities.

- ***ERC Advanced Grants***: a total of 282 applications submitted for the 2008 ERC AdG call were funded from a final budget of € 553 million including FP7 Associated Countries' contributions. The 2009 ERC AdG call was published in November 2008 with deadlines in Spring 2009 and an indicative budget of € 489.5 million. As demand was expected to be high, the ScC had decided that the first two ERC AdG calls (2008 and 2009) would be linked. For this reason, the 2008 "Ideas" WP stated that no applicant may be associated with more than one proposal to either of the two calls. The 2009 call still attracted 1,583 applications of which, 236 were initially selected for funding. Further proposals may be funded depending on the availability of FP7 Associated Countries' contributions. The 2010 ERC AdG call was published in October 2009 with deadlines between February and April 2010 and an indicative budget of € 590 million.

2) Review of Structures and Mechanisms: the two major developments in the ERC's timeline of 2009 were the **granting of autonomy to the ERCEA and the Review of Structure and Mechanisms**.

In accordance with the Council Decision establishing the SP "Ideas", an an independent review will also be carried out of the ERC's structures and mechanisms. The Panel presented its report in July 2009. It stated that, overall, the ERC had succeeded "beyond all expectations", its creation being a landmark in European research, generally lived up to its stated aim of academic freedom, excellence and merit and produced a "positive spill over effect" in some European national research systems.

The Panel nevertheless identified some specific problems related to rules and practices applied in the ERC's governance which were not fully adapted to the ERC's mission of funding frontier research.

The immediate measures recommended by the review include : (i) the streamlining and integration of governance structures with the fusion of the positions of ERC Sec Gen and Director of the ERCEA; (ii) adapting funding philosophy to frontier research; (iii) establishing standing committees on a number of issues; (iv) adoption of new and streamlined procedures for reviewers and panellists; (v) improvement of transparency; (vi) financial compensation for members of the ScC; (vii) and facilitation of recruitment of scientists by the ERCEA.

The review comes to the position that while the executive agency model, in its current standard form, involves a number of constraints, the difficulties and risks associated with moving to a new structure based on Article 187 of the TFEU, including the possibility of political interference with the ERC's scientific independence, would not justify a change of structure - at least until the prospects for developing and refining the ERCEA to meet the ambitions of the ERC are exhausted. The Panel recommends a further independent review in two years.

In conclusion, the Commission states that the year **2010 will see further progress related to these developments**. The follow-up to the ERC review will entail the appointment of a Director of the ERCEA. Amendments to the legislation to incorporate improvements in the ERC's construction and operations, including the management of independent experts in the peer review process, are also foreseen. A standing Identification Committee will also be set up in view of the renewal of some members anticipated for the end of their first term of office in February 2011.

The ERC grant funding is expected to maintain its current growth path, with the rising annual budget during FP7.

The Commission is delighted that the ERC continues to be extremely popular with researchers and that its reputation is enhanced by the track record that has been built. With a strong likelihood that the volume of high-quality proposals will increase, the ERC should be in a stronger position to contribute to Europe's ambitions for world excellence in research, and thereby to the objective of the Europe 2020 strategyof developing an economy

based on knowledge and innovation. The objectives, as well as the main strands of the future architecture and mechanisms of EU research funding, will be further developed in the "Innovation Union" flagship initiative, that has been announced in the "Europe 2020" communication and will be presented in the Autumn 2010.

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

2005/0186(CNS) - 30/11/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Angelika **NIEBLER** (PPE-DE, D) on the proposal concerning the specific programme: "Ideas" implementing the 7th Framework Programme (2007-2013). The following amendments were voted in plenary session:

- proposals for "frontier research" in the sense of basic research should be evaluated on the basis of the sole criterion of excellence as judged by peer review and should put the emphasis on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary high risk pioneering projects;

- research activities carried out within the programme should respect fundamental ethical principles, including those which are reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, and confirm the civic and humanistic value of research, while respecting ethical and cultural diversity;

- to simplify calls for proposals and reduce costs, the Commission should set up a database as a prerequisite for notifying participants in calls for proposal;

- the Commission shall take all necessary steps to verify that the actions financed are carried out effectively and in compliance with the provisions of the Regulation 1605/2002/EC. The overall administrative expenditure of the Specific Programme including internal and management expenditure for the executive agency which it is proposed to set up, should be proportional to the activities undertaken under this programme and is subject to the decision of the budgetary and legislative authorities. Budget appropriations shall be used in accordance with the principle of sound financial management, namely in accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, as well as the principle of proportionality;

- as with all specific programmes, Parliament stipulated that the Commission shall provide prior information to the budgetary authority whenever it intends to depart from the breakdown of expenditure stated in the remarks in and annex to the general budget of the European Union;

- with regard to the use of human embryonic stem cells obtained prior to the approval of this framework programme, institutions, bodies and researchers shall be subject to a stringent system of licences and checks in accordance with the legal framework of the Member State or States concerned;

- the Scientific Council and the Commission shall submit an annual report on the work of the ERC to the European Parliament and the Council, in particular giving details of the extent to which the objectives have been achieved. The Commission shall ensure that the research results are evaluated and shall report on their contribution to a dynamic, knowledge-based society in Europe;

- after a trial period of two to three years at the most, the ERC's work will be assessed by independent experts. They will assess whether the ERC's objectives have been achieved, whether its procedures have been structured efficiently and transparently, and whether the scientific independence is ensured and whether the concept of scientific excellence has been taken into account. Moreover, the assessment shall address the question of what structure would be the most appropriate for the ERC in the long term.

Notwithstanding this assessment, at all events a long-term structure shall be chosen for the ERC that ensures its maximum autonomy of the Scientific Council while maintaining transparency and accountability with regard to the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council;

- Parliament inserted details on the qualifications and selection of the Scientific Council;

- the amount deemed necessary for the execution of the Specific Programme shall be **EUR 7,560** million, of which **3% at the most** shall be for administrative expenditure and expenditure on staff taken out of the annual budget made available for the ERC.

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

2005/0186(CNS) - 17/08/2011 - Follow-up document

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.

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

2005/0186(CNS) - 26/08/2008 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents a Communication on the methodology and terms of reference to be used for the Review to be carried out by independent experts concerning the European Research Council structures and mechanisms.

The European Research Council (ERC), established under the Specific Programme "Ideas", defines a new scientific component of the 7th research Framework Programme and a far-reaching departure from earlier Community research activities. Supporting frontier research carried out by individual teams, on the basis of open competition across Europe on the sole criterion of excellence, it aims to make a substantial contribution to the development of Europe's research capabilities at the very highest level. This document sets out the Commission’s proposal on the methodology and terms of reference to be used for the review of ERC structures and mechanisms ("the review"), as set out in the legislation on the 7th Framework Programme. It fulfils the Commission’s commitment to come forward with such a Communication by mid-2008.

Selection of independent experts: the Commission proposes to appoint a Panel comprising a Chair and four further members, as well as a rapporteur, and will keep the key stakeholders informed. The Panel would be established to meet certain specific criteria.

Scope: the review must be sufficiently broad-ranging to provide definitive conclusions. It also needs to take into account the various different levels of legislation and administrative practice which, in addition to the legal framework of the Executive Agency as the dedicated implementation structure,

define or condition the ERC's modes of operation. This will be of particular importance when identifying improvements needed, including by means of changes to the legislation, and when examining the advantages and disadvantages of possible structures (e.g. an Executive Agency, a structure based on Article 171 of the Treaty, or any other option), since the operation of any structure will be affected by the broader context.

Working methods: the Commission proposes a "Commission of Inquiry" format involving examination, in confidence, of documentary and oral evidence, which may derive from a wide range of key stakeholders' perspectives, including for example, the ERC Scientific Council; the research community (academia, research institutes, research foundations, industry); Member States; EU Institutions; DG RTD and other Commission services.

Criteria: the criteria for the mid-term review – scientific excellence, autonomy, efficiency and transparency - reflect key principles on which the ERC is founded. The paper examines each criterion in turn. It should be stressed that these criteria must also be considered in a holistic way, since they involve interacting requirements; for example the quality of scientific management cannot be divorced from considerations of efficiency. The criteria should also be applied taking account of appropriate benchmarks, for example the arrangements in research agencies in the EU or in other advanced countries. Furthermore, the fundamental requirement for irreproachable integrity in the ERC's operations must underpin the analysis against each and all criteria.

Timetable: the Panel will prepare a final report in which it will provide recommendations and conclusions. It is expected that the final report will be ready in July 2009, and the initial Commission response will be in September 2009. This should include an analysis and evaluation of the adequacy or deficiencies of the existing structures and mechanisms and whether any changes needed can be regarded as "technical fixes" (for example, adjustments to the Executive Agency model) or are regarded as substantive organisational and /or legal issues. The outcome of the review should provide the justifications for the Commission, in consultation with the Scientific Council, to initiate any legislative proposals that are considered necessary.

The European Parliament and Council are invited to provide their observations on the methodology set out here, by December 2008, in order for the Commission to take them into account in establishing the mandate for the independent review.

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

2005/0186(CNS) - 22/09/2009 - Follow-up document

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 2008. It is recalled that the eEuropean Research Council (ERC) was created in February 2007 by a Commission Decision as an ambitious new component of the EU's research policy under the provisions of the Seventh Framework Programme. It is the means for implementing the Specific Programme "Ideas" whose budget stands at EUR 7.51 billion over the period 2007-2013. The ERC comprises of an independent Scientific Council supported by a dedicated implementation structure (DIS) and operates according to the principles of scientific excellence, autonomy, efficiency, transparency and accountability.

This Annual Report of the Commission for 2008, drawn up in co-operation with the ERC Scientific Council, presents the Commission's assessment of the ERC's operations and the achievement of its objectives in its second year of existence. The ERC's activities for this year can be grouped under two main headings.

1) The first is the continued implementation of the programme, in particular, the implementation of the first call for ERC Advanced Grants and the publication of the second calls for the ERC Starting and Advanced Grants. Related activities include the operational refinements to the call management and peer review systems, measures intended to ensure the integrity of procedures and processes, provision of strategic and administrative support to the Scientific Council and communication with the scientific community.

2) The second area of activities concerns the creation of the ERC Executive Agency which will eventually take on the role of the DIS, currently being performed by the Commission. Activities in this area included adoption of a Delegation Act, selection and recruitment of new staff for the Agency and appointment of a Steering Committee. In addition, the Commission prepared the methodology for a review held in 2009 on the mechanisms and structures used to implement the programme.

Programme implementation: in the implementation of the programme, commitments of EUR 523.90 million (global commitment) and payments of EUR 227.20 million were fully executed. These sums amount to 99.988% and 100% respectively of the operational credits of the "Ideas" Specific Programme.

(a) Grants: the Scientific Council has developed two "core" funding schemes under the "Ideas" Specific Programme designed to promote research excellence in all fields of knowledge. These schemes are:

- the ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grants ("ERC Starting Grants"): supporting the independent careers of excellent researchers who are at the stage of starting or consolidating their own independent research team or, depending on the field, establishing their independent research programme;

- the ERC Advanced Investigator Grants ("ERC Advanced Grants"): supporting excellent, innovative investigator-initiated research projects directed by leading advanced investigators, who have already established themselves as being independent research leaders in their own right.

As regards Starting Grants, a symmetric narrowing of the eligibility window, from 2 to 9 years in 2007 to 3 to 8 years in 2008, was introduced. In the case of Advanced Grants it had been decided that the budget for the first two calls (2008 and 2009) should be linked so as to make available to applicants a cumulative budget of about EUR 1 billion over these two consecutive years. In order to ensure equal treatment of all applicants, the

eligibility conditions and the application and peer review procedures of Advanced Grant sections were not, therefore, materially revised with respect to the previous work programme.

The 2007 Starting Grant: the granting process of the first ERC Starting Grants was concluded during the first half of 2008. The original budget of EUR 292.2 million provided for in the revised 2007 Work Programme grew to EUR 338 million thanks to contributions from the non-EU countries which participate in FP7. This increase in budget allowed the ERC to fund more grants than the roughly 250 originally anticipated. In fact, of the proposals submitted, 299 applications were eventually funded according to the order of merit determined by the peer review evaluation.

The 2008 Advanced Grant: the first ERC Advanced Grant call was published on 30 November 2007 with three different deadlines in Spring 2008 depending on the domain (Physical and Engineering sciences, Life sciences and Social sciences and Humanities). It had an indicative budget of EUR 516.95 million. A total of 2,167 proposals were received (997 in the physical sciences, 766 in the life sciences and 404 in social sciences and humanities) of which 2,034 were peer reviewed following an eligibility check. This was considerably less than the number of proposals submitted for the 2007 Starting Grant, indicating that the counter-measures taken to reduce numbers while maintaining quality of applications had been successful. By the end of 2008, 275 proposals submitted under this call were selected for funding: 114 in physical sciences, 84 in the life sciences, 48 in social sciences and humanities and 29 were considered under the new inter-disciplinary category. Depending on the availability of third country receipts, funding could be made possible in 2009 for more proposals submitted under this call.

The 2009 Starting Grant: the second call for the ERC Starting Grant was published in July 2008 with three different deadlines in Autumn 2008 depending on the domain. A total of 2,503 proposals were submitted: 1,112 in the physical sciences, 927 in the life sciences and 464 in social sciences and humanities. As the process is still underway, no final data are available on the number of selected proposals.

b) **Organisation of the European Research Council**: during 2008, the Scientific Council met five times in plenary session. The ERC Board, set up by the Scientific Council to plan the Scientific Council meetings and liaise with the DIS, met seven times during the year. In 2007 the decision was taken to fulfil the DIS's external structure requirement through the creation of an Executive Agency, formally established by a Commission Decision on 14 December 2007 under the general regime for Executive Agencies.

A Delegation Act was adopted by the Commission in October 2008 delegating powers to the ERC Executive Agency to perform tasks required in the implementation of the programme as well as support the Scientific Council. The creation of a Steering Committee is foreseen in the case of all executive agencies, it being responsible, in particular, for the adoption of the agency's work programme and administrative budget every year. Separate premises have been procured for the ERC in Brussels. All of ERC Executive Agency's staff is expected to have moved to the new offices by the end of 2009.

In conclusion, the Commission considers that the main legislative and operational developments with regards to the ERC Executive Agency have progressed considerably during 2008 leading to the Agency's autonomy in 2009. Effective collaboration with the Scientific Council has been a key factor. Engagement and secondment of staff with the Agency has moved ahead and gained momentum, making up for a few initial delays due to the interest and the very large response generated by the first calls for applications.

The ERC's grant schemes will be further developed in future to ensure that they continue to support excellence and that they are administered in an efficient way. Measures intended to increase the attractiveness of EU and associated countries to researchers from third countries are being considered. Adjustments and campaigning are also planned to improve the participation of female researchers. The Scientific Council has agreed to further strengthen work programme provisions that take into account career breaks in the professional experience of women scientists.

The ERC is also keen that funding is not confined only to the wealthier countries and regions of Europe. Within the framework provided by the ERC Model Grant Agreement and other available administrative and legal possibilities, host institutions are expected to make appropriate efforts to attract and retain scientists and scholars of the calibre to be awarded an ERC grant.

At the same time host institutions are expected to attribute the resources of the ERC grant towards the achievement of the goals of the specific research project. ERC grants should support research excellence across the whole of the European Union and associated countries, including countries and regions that are less well endowed with research facilities and infrastructure.

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

2005/0186(CNS) - 19/06/2012 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents its annual report on the European Research Council's (ERC) operations and realisation of the objectives set out in the Specific Programme "Ideas" in 2011.

Work Programme: the 2011 Work Programme for the Specific Programme "Ideas" was adopted by the Commission on 19 July 2010, and subsequently revised to include the new granting opportunity, the Proof of Concept. Apart from the introduction of the Proof of Concept Grants, few adjustments were made in the scientific strategy: the eligibility window for the Starting Grant was further expanded; it now stands from 2 - 12 years from PhD award (2 - 7 for "starters" and 7-12 for "consolidators"). The restriction on reapplication was also relaxed: applicants can now reapply to the following call if their proposal was evaluated as above the quality threshold. The interdisciplinary domain has been renamed as the "fourth domain" with a 10% indicative budget.

Programme Implementation: in the implementation of the Programme in 2011, commitment credits of EUR 1.3 billion (global commitment) and payments of EUR 725 million were fully executed, representing 100% of the operational credits of the Ideas Specific Programme for 2011. Around 2.2% of the operational budget was spent on administration.

- ERC Starting Grants: the 2011 ERC Starting Grant call had an indicative budget of EUR 661 million. In total 4080 proposals were received distributed by domain as follows: 1690 proposals in Physical Sciences and Engineering, 1440 in Life Sciences and 950 in Social Sciences and Humanities. A total of 485 proposals were selected for funding with a total of more than EUR 670 million awarded and an overall average awarded grant of around EUR 1.4 million.

The 2012 Starting Grant call has an indicative budget of EUR 730 million. A total of 4741 proposals were submitted in response: 2058 for Physical Sciences and Engineering, 1653 for Life Sciences and 1030 for Social Sciences and Humanities, representing respectively 43%, 35% and 22%, a split similar to the 2011 Starting Grant call, and the 2010 Starting Grant call.

- ERC Advanced Grants: the 2011 ERC Advanced Grant call had an indicative budget of EUR 661 million. A total of 2284 proposals were received distributed by domain as follows: 917 proposals in Physical Sciences and Engineering (40%), 789 (35%) in Life Sciences and 578 in Social Sciences and Humanities (25%). The evaluation process resulted in a total of 294 proposals retained for funding with a total of about EUR 700 million awarded and an overall average awarded grant of around EUR 2.4 million.

The 2012 ERC Advanced Grant call has an indicative budget of EUR 680 million.

ERC Proof of Concept: in order to strengthen the ERC's role in the innovation chain from frontier research to socio-economic benefits, the Scientific Council developed and launched in 2011 a new granting opportunity – the Proof of Concept – which is 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.

The first Proof of Concept call was published in March 2011 with an indicative budget of EUR 10 million, approximately half of which for each of the two evaluation rounds following the two deadlines for submission set in June and in November 2011 respectively. Only researchers already holding an ERC Starting or Advanced Grant were eligible to apply for Proof of Concept funding. A total of 78 proposals were received at the first deadline and 73 of them were considered eligible for evaluation, with the following distribution per domain of the original ERC grant held by the applicant: 58% in Physical Sciences and Engineering, 34% in Life Sciences and 8% in Social Sciences and Humanities. The evaluation resulted in 30 proposals retained for funding.

At the second deadline, a total of 73 proposals were received and 67 of them were considered eligible for evaluation, with the following distribution per domain of the original ERC grant held by the applicant: 61% in Physical Sciences and Engineering, 34% in Life Sciences and 5% in Social Sciences and Humanities.

Monitoring, Assessment and Evaluation of the Specific Programme "Ideas": an evaluation of the ERC main results was prepared in conjunction with the ex-ante impact assessment of the Commission's proposal on Horizon 2020, the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

Findings from this evaluation include the following:

- by the end of 2011 more than 2000 frontier-research projects were up and running in around 470 prestigious research institutions in Europe;
- as of 2011, thirty-six ERC grantees have received prestigious international scientific prizes and awards, among which 4 Nobel Prizes and 3 Fields Medals;
- the number of articles acknowledging ERC funding published in peer-reviewed journals increased from over 1200 in 2010 to above 1750 in 2011, totalling more than 3400 since 2008. This is a combination of rising number of projects and maturing projects producing more results;
- focusing on articles in the two of the most-cited scientific journals (Nature and Science) it can be seen that the ERC footprint is rapidly increasing. In 2011, every week at least one ERC-funded project published its findings in either Nature or Science. This corresponded to every two weeks and every seven weeks in 2010 and 2009 respectively.

Outlook: the ERC grants have been well received by the research community. Since its start in 2007 the ERC has completed eight calls for proposals for the Starting and Advanced Grant schemes. The competitions yielded a total of over 26000 proposals out of which more than 2500 have been selected for funding through a rigorous peer review.

In 2012, the Scientific Council will introduce the Synergy Grants to enable small groups of researchers to bring together complementary skills, knowledge and resources, in order to jointly address research problems at the frontier of knowledge, going beyond what the individual researchers could achieve alone. The Synergy grants are introduced on a pilot basis and with a budget of EUR150 million.

2012 will also see the discussions at the European Parliament and the Council on the Commission's proposals for Horizon 2020. One major ambition of Horizon 2020 is to support the EU's position as a world leader in science with a dedicated budget of EUR 24.6 billion, including an increase in funding of 77% for ERC. Boosting the ERC budget will allow more top rate researchers and their pioneering ideas to be supported, and especially younger researchers to be provided with a long-term perspective.

Lastly, in 2012, the ERC Executive Agency will have completed 3 years of autonomous existence and will undergo an external evaluation, which will include a cost-benefit analysis.