



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

ERC Highlight:

ERC President Helga Nowotny in Naples: "A culture of excellence is a priority for Italy"
29 October 2013

European Research Council (ERC) President Prof. Helga Nowotny was today at Città della Scienza in Naples to discuss scientific excellence with national and local authorities. Addressing more than 150 researchers, including some 70 outstanding scientists funded by the ERC, she highlighted the importance of supporting young researchers for the future of Italy and of Europe. Considering the research environment as an essential factor, she also insisted on the efforts needed to reinforce the country's attractiveness for scientists. This debate is highly topical, as no less than 40% of Italian ERC grant holders are based outside Italy.

ERC President Helga Nowotny commented: *"I welcome Italian Research Minister Carrozza's willingness to provide better perspectives for researchers in Italy. This is the right philosophy to nurture excellence. The same goes for sport. The best football teams attract the best players because they offer a favourable environment, excellent training and good facilities. Steps taken at national level to be more competitive in ERC calls are raising the overall level of European research".*

In a message sent at the occasion of the event, Italian Research Minister Maria Chiara Carrozza wrote: *"Our Ministry is strongly committed to increase the participation and, most of all, the success rate of both our researchers and our institutions in ERC competitions. In the next national research programme, we will implement specific actions in this respect, that will be based on a national 'mirroring' of what the ERC does at a European level. I hope that these efforts, in spite of the difficult economic situation, will achieve the success they deserve."*

Mixed results in ERC competitions

Italian researchers take fourth position in terms of ERC grants awarded (359, out of some 4000 totally funded), after German, British and French researchers, totaling some €550 million in funding to date. However, some 40% of them are currently conducting their research outside Italy, while only 24 foreign nationals are working in Italy with their ERC grant.

An important number of proposals presented with an Italian institution are presented each year, but only around 5% of ERC are successful, compared to the 12% average in Europe.

In this year's Starting Grant call the share of early-career researchers based in Italy was the lowest so far (2.7% of all funded projects) – see [ERC country sheet on Italy](#).

Excellent ERC projects take centre stage in Naples

Besides the discussions on the future of excellent research, the ERC information day at Città della Scienza was an occasion to showcase some 70 ERC projects in a whole range of research fields, from particle physics, nanotechnology or neuroscience to philosophy, economics or linguistics – see [all projects featured](#) (*in Italian*) and a brochure focusing [on the speakers' projects](#) (*in Italian and in English*).

Amongst the grantees attending the event, Dr Grazyna Ptak, one of the few foreign ERC grantees based in Italy, explained how her research results on sheep embryos could help women have safer pregnancies. [Read more](#).

Prof. Bruno Siciliano, based at the University of Naples Federico II, presented RoDyMan, a promising robot with exceptional manipulation skills. [Read more](#).



European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

The ERC information day at [Città della Scienza](#) follows the ERC President's [solidarity message](#) sent to the Director of the museum, Prof. Vittorio Silvestrini, earlier this year after a fire devastated the site. The event was organized with [Città della Scienza](#), with the support of the [University of Naples Federico II](#) and in partnership with the [Representation of the European Commission in Italy](#), the [Agency for the Promotion of European Research \(APRE\)](#), the [Campania Region](#), the [city of Naples](#) and the [Europe Direct Centre of Naples](#).

Pictures of the event will soon be available [here](#) (under tag "images")

[Agenda of the event](#)

Links

[Version in Italian of the press release](#)

[European Research Council \(ERC\)](#) - [ERC Twitter](#) (#ERCittà) and [Facebook Città della Scienza](#)

Background

Set up in 2007 by the EU, the European Research Council is the first pan-European funding organisation for frontier research. It aims to stimulate scientific excellence in Europe by encouraging competition for funding between the very best, creative researchers of any nationality and age. The ERC strives to attract top researchers from anywhere in the world to come to Europe. It funds young, early-career top researchers ('ERC Starting grants' up to €2 million), already independent excellent scientists ('ERC Consolidator Grants' up to 2.75 million), and senior research leaders ('ERC Advanced Grants' up to €3.5 million). The substantial funding is awarded based on peer review evaluation.

The ERC operates according to an 'investigator-driven', or 'bottom-up', approach, and thereby allows researchers to identify new opportunities in any field of research, without thematic priorities or geographic quotas. The ERC, a pioneering component of the EU's Seventh Research Framework Programme ('Ideas' Specific Programme), has a total budget of €7.5 billion from 2007 to 2013. Its budget will increase by 70% under the new EU research programme 'Horizon 2020' (2014-2020).

The ERC is also complementing national funding schemes. Through its own high standards, it aims to set a clear and inspirational target for frontier research throughout Europe.

The ERC is led by the ERC Scientific Council, composed of 22 top scientists and scholars. Professor Helga Nowotny is the ERC President. The ERC Executive Agency implements the 'Ideas' Specific Programme and is led by Director Pablo Amor.

Press contacts ERC

Email: erc-press@ec.europa.eu

Marie Frenay (in Naples)
Mobile: +32 (0)497 56 56 54
Phone: +32 (0)2 296 45 32

Maud Scelo
Phone: + 32 (0)2 298 15 21

Madeleine Drielsma
Phone: +32 (0)2 298 76 31