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PRESS RELEASE

ERC Starting Grants 2020: €677 million awarded to unravel scientific mysteries

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What can be done to improve the efficacy of vaccines? How can we predict our future climate? What is the environmental impact of nanoplastics? Are there alternative economic models to endless economic growth? What is the nature of dark matter in the Universe? Four hundred thirty-six laureates of the 2020 European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grants competition will now be able to tackle these and other big scientific questions at universities and research centres across Europe.

The funding, worth in total €677 million, will help these early-career scientists and scholars to build their own teams and conduct pioneering research across all disciplines. The grants are part of the EU's Research and Innovation programme, Horizon 2020.

President of the European Research Council (ERC), Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon, commented: *"The present health crisis showed that despite spectacular progress in research over the past decades, there still remain plenty of unsolved scientific mysteries, as well as lessons to be learnt from the past. Therefore, the best strategy to tackle it is to enable some of the brightest minds to pursue their most innovative ideas, in order to create opportunities for serendipitous discoveries. This is what the European Research Council is for. It's clear that, if Europe is to be competitive globally, it needs to give excellent prospects to the next generation of researchers as these ERC Starting Grants do, and to invest much more in top blue sky research."*

The grantees are a diverse group with 40 different nationalities. Amongst the winners, 20 researchers are moving to Europe from further afield thanks to the funding. The new grantees will be based in 25 countries across Europe, with Germany (88 grants), the UK (62), the Netherlands (42) and France (38) as top locations. Some 13% of applications were selected for funding in this round.

These Starting Grants will create an estimated 2,500 jobs for postdoctoral fellows, PhD students and other staff at the host institutions.

- [Examples of the research selected for funding](#)
- [Starting Grants 2020 - fact and figures](#)
- List of researchers selected for funding:
 - o [All grants](#)
 - o [Grants in physical sciences and engineering](#)



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- [Grants in life sciences](#)
- [Grants in social sciences and humanities](#)

About the ERC

The European Research Council, set up by the European Union in 2007, is the premiere 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 offers four core grant schemes: Starting, Consolidator, Advanced and Synergy Grants. With its additional Proof of Concept grant scheme, the ERC helps grantees to bridge the gap between their pioneering research and early phases of its commercialisation.

To date, the ERC has funded over 9,500 top researchers at various stages of their careers, and over 50,000 postdoctoral fellows, 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 (*ad interim*) ERC President is Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon. The overall ERC budget from 2014 to 2020 is more than €13 billion, as part of the Horizon 2020 programme, for which the European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya Gabriel is responsible.

More information

[ERC website](#)
[Horizon 2020](#)

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