

Chairman and officers of ERC Scientific Council announced

The newly-nominated Scientific Council of the future European Research Council (ERC) has announced its Chairman, Prof. Fotis Kafatos, and two Vice-Chairs Prof. Helga Nowotny and Dr. Daniel Estève. They have been elected by their peers, the 22 founding members of the Scientific Council, following a procedure agreed by them at their inaugural meeting on 19 October. This puts the Scientific Council in a position to start exercising its leading role in the development of the European Research Council.

Prof. Kafatos currently holds the Chair of Insect Immunogenomics at Imperial College, London. Born in Greece, he studied Biology in the USA and worked as Professor at Harvard for three decades, before serving two successful terms (1993-2005) as Director-General of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL). He also held several leading positions in universities and research establishments in Greece. He is a leading molecular biologist and works on malaria.

Prof. Nowotny is currently Chair of the EURAB (European Research Advisory Board); Fellow at the Wissenschaftszentrum in Vienna and Professor emeritus of Social Studies of Science at ETH Zurich. She has occupied several teaching and research positions in several leading European universities, specialising on the current transformation of the research system.

Dr. Estève is currently Research Director in the Service de Physique de l'Etat Condensé at CEA Saclay. His main fields of research are superconductivity and mesoscopic physics in general. In particular, he has recently developed electronic circuits for the purpose of quantum computing, which earned him the Europhysics prize in 2004. He has long-standing collaborations with a number of universities in Europe.

The ERC is an unprecedented initiative designed to boost European excellence in science, technology and the humanities, through the creation of a new, autonomous funding agency to support frontier research, selecting projects on the basis of excellence through pan-European competition. EU Research Ministers recently came to a political agreement to support this initiative, in the next round of funding for the EU research, in the period 2007-2013.

Prof Kafatos said today: *“It is a privilege for us to head the Scientific Council and thereby constitute the presidency of the future ERC. The ERC initiative is vital for European science, and we are delighted that the Research Ministers have given their support. This heralds the realisation of a project which has come about through the concerted effort of committed scientists and scientific organisations, politicians and other stakeholders across Europe over many years. At this juncture we wish to acknowledge the strong commitment to this project by Commissioner Janez Potocnik and Director-General Achilleas Mitsos. We look forward to the formal co-decision of the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament in the next year.*

The Scientific Council is absolutely committed to an ERC which meets the highest aspirations of scientists and scholars across Europe. With the assistance of an experienced Secretary General whom we intend to appoint, we will work intensively to create and secure an appropriate organisational framework that takes into account the international best practice. In this framework, the Scientific Council will be guiding an efficient, flexible and responsive administrative structure, which we expect to be in the form of an Executive Agency whose

Director will be selected with our full involvement. Coherent progress in developing both the strategy and the operational methods will allow the ERC to work efficiently, in an integrated way. We are determined to seize this unique opportunity to build a new pan-European organisation dedicated to research excellence, thereby contributing to both the culture and the competitiveness of Europe.”

Notes to editors

- Short biographies of the full Scientific Council (22 members) can be found at

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/05/265&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

- The ERC will be funded under a research programme entitled “Ideas”, part of the 7th EU research framework programme (2006-2013). The European Commission has proposed a budget of approximately €1.5 bn p.a. The eventual budget will be determined by the outcome of the ongoing discussions on the EU budget. The Commission’s proposals for the 7th Framework Programme can be found at:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/press/2005/pr0704-2en.cfm>

- The Commission’s proposals for the “Ideas” programme can be found at

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/press/2005/pr2109-2en.cfm>

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/future/pdf/specifc_programmes/fp7sp_ideas_en.pdf

- Under the proposals the Scientific Council will have authority over all aspects of scientific governance of the ERC, including the development of scientific strategy and work programmes, peer review processes, project selection and funding, and communications.
- A provisional political agreement on the FP7 package was achieved at the meeting of the EU Competitiveness Council of Ministers on 28 November 2005. Press information on this can be found at

http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/intm/87210.pdf