

ERC grants

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The ERC is the first pan European funding body set up to support the best frontier research in Europe. Created by the European Commission in 2007, it is the newest pioneering component of the EU's Seventh Research Framework Programme with a total budget of €7.5 billion. The ERC aims to stimulate scientific excellence in Europe by supporting the very best scientists, scholars and engineers in any field of research, including high-quality research from the software engineering & systems area, which is the profile of "Computer Science—Research and Development".

Through Europe-wide peer-reviewed competition with scientific excellence as the sole selection criterion the brightest ideas at the frontiers of knowledge are funded by ERC. There are neither thematic priorities, nor geographical quotas. The competitions are open to top researchers from anywhere in the world, provided they are based in or are moving to Europe. Being 'investigator driven', or 'bottom up', in nature, the ERC approach allows researchers to identify new opportunities and directions in any field of research. This ensures that funds are channeled into new and promising areas of research with a greater degree of flexibility.

The ERC has a set of funding instruments providing opportunities to the most promising and top researchers. ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants aim to support up-and-coming research leaders who are about to establish or consolidate a proper research team and to start conducting independent research in Europe. ERC Advanced Grants allow exceptional established research leaders of any nationality and any age to pursue ground-breaking, high-risk projects that open new directions in their respective research fields or other domains. For 2012 the ERC has introduced the

'Synergy Grant', which is intended to enable a small group of Principal Investigators and their teams to bring together complementary skills, knowledge, and resources in new ways, in order to jointly address research problems. In addition, the ERC launched the new funding initiative, called "Proof of Concept", in March 2011, open to researchers who have already been awarded an ERC grant, to establish the innovation potential of ideas arising from their ERC-funded frontier research projects.

By 2012, the ERC has launched 12 calls for proposals of which 8 have been completed. In total over 26,000 proposals have been received and over 2,500 have been selected for funding.

By the end of FP7 in 2013, the ERC will have awarded approximately 5,000 grants.

The ERC counts three Nobel laureates and three Fields Medalists among its grant holders.

However, the ERC aims to do more than simply fund research. In the long term, it looks to substantially strengthen and shape the European research system. By challenging Europe's brightest minds, the ERC expects that its grants will help to bring about new and unpredictable scientific and technological discoveries—the kind that can form the basis of new industries, markets, and broader social innovations of the future.

The ERC is committed to support the widest dissemination of results, thus it welcomes this Special Issue, "Rigorous Software Engineering" based on the workshop of a set of ERC grantees on software quality.

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