

**The European Research Council for a policy of excellence :**  
**the first award winners pave the way**  
**Collège de France, Paris - 7 octobre 2008**

The European Research Council (more commonly known by its initials ERC) was inaugurated in February 2007 under the German EU Presidency. From the very beginning, France has supported the creation of this Council for which the scientific community has been calling for years. Today, the Council is considered to be the standard bearer of the 7th EU Research Framework Programme (FP7) and the flagship instrument in re-launching the European Research Area.

Funding "frontier research" in all scientific disciplines with the only obligation being the development of knowledge, and making researchers the keystone of the system marks a major change in European research policy.

The funded researchers are selected on the basis of their potential and the excellence of their project which they will carry out completely independently. These researchers will open up new paths leading to unpredictable discoveries, undoubtedly paving the way for the innovations of tomorrow or the near future. The researchers will therefore be contributing to the reinforcement of European competitiveness and improving the well-being of their fellow citizens.

The ERC was set up almost two years ago, and has launched three calls for proposals, two of which were for Starting Grants. The 300 Starting Grant winners selected from among over 9000 candidates are now in their laboratories working on their projects. The French EU Presidency felt it was important to organise a Conference dedicated to the first Starting Grant winners.

The aim of the conference is to look at the lessons learnt from the first stage of the ERC's existence and to share them with the scientific community. The debate will feature the principal actors involved in the first ERC call for proposals, with Starting Grant winners in the forefront. This will help future candidates and their host institutions to prepare for future calls and better understand the strategy defined by the ERC Scientific Council and implemented by the European Commission. It is also meant to stimulate stakeholders to integrate this new strategic FP7 tool into their strategy and scientific policy.

This conference is organised by CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research) on behalf of the French ERC National Contact Points (CEA, CPU, INRA, INRIA and INSERM) in close co-operation with the ERC, the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research, and the National Research Agency (ANR).

**To find out more about the ERC, please visit:**

<http://erc.europa.eu>

**To find out more about PCN ERC, please visit:**

<http://www.eurosfaire.prd.fr/7pc/erc>