



European Research Council the policy issues

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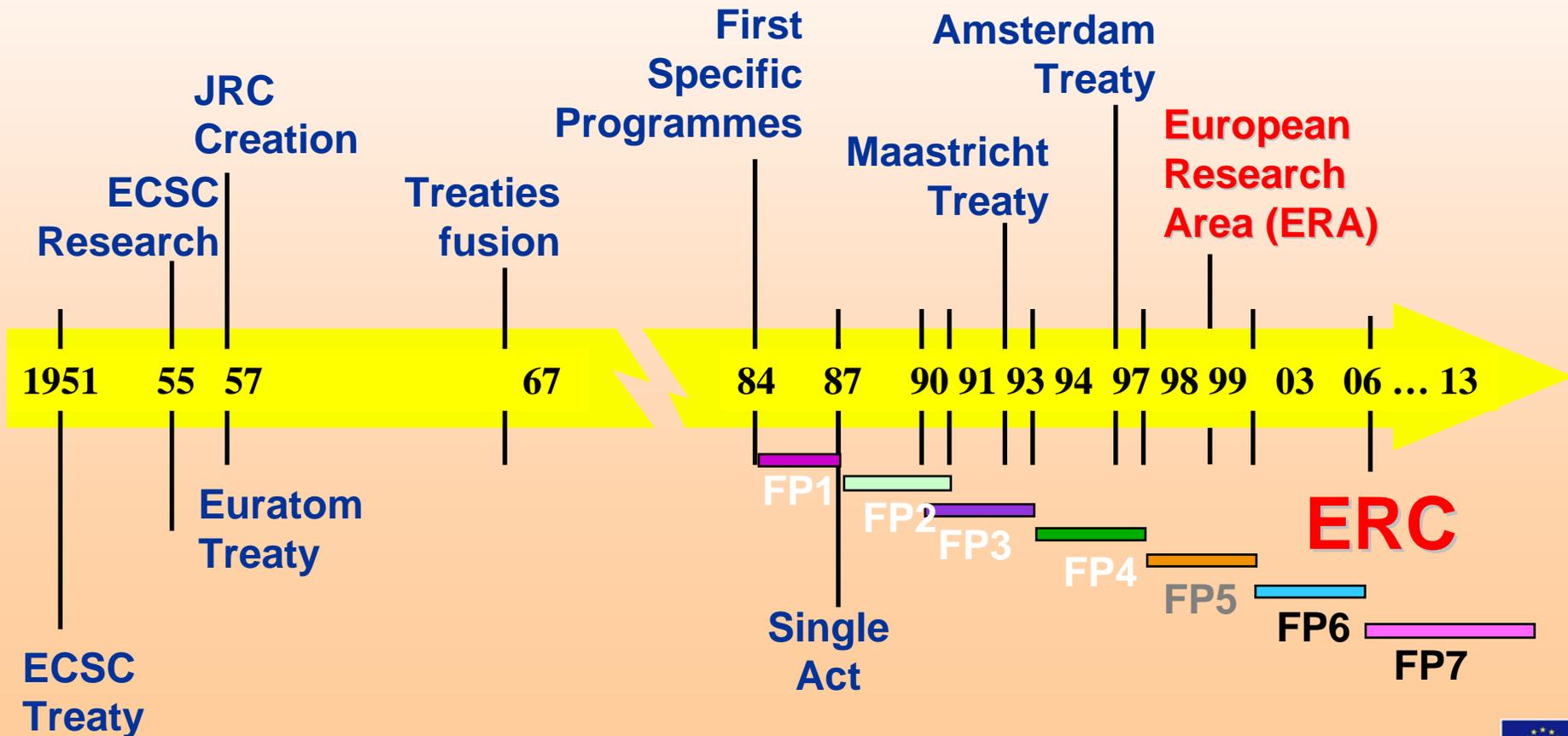


- Background
- ERC Current situation
- Implications for policy
- Next steps





Research and the European Integration Process





Strategic Objectives

Boost European excellence in frontier research:

- **By investing in the best researchers and ideas**
- **Through competition at European level**
- **On the basis of excellence as the sole criterion**
- **Raising incentives towards quality and aspirations of individual researchers**
- **Providing benchmarks and leverage towards broader (structural) improvements in European research**





ERC: The FP7 *Ideas* Specific Programme

- **A new “institution” with a specific vocation**
 - **Fund individual teams**
 - **Independent Scientific governance (Scientific Council)**
 - **Dedicated implementation structure (Executive Agency)**
- **Which is also part of the “family” of FP7**
- **Complementary to other FP7 support to research (bottom-up vs targeted research)**





Activities and principles

- **Support for individual teams**
 - Host organisation to be located in EU or AS
- **All fields of science and scholarship are eligible**
 - investigator-driven, bottom-up
 - can take account of specific topics and target groups (eg next-generation researchers)
- **Excellence is the only criterion**
 - Principal investigator/team + research project
- **Investment in research talent**
 - Flexible grants, under the control of the Principal Investigator





Why “Frontier Research” ?

- **Traditional terminology** (“basic” / “applied” research; “science” vs “technology”) **is no longer appropriate:**
 - Research at the frontiers is characterised by an absence of disciplinary boundaries
 - New discoveries are often triggered by real world problems (and vice-versa)
 - Progress in understanding phenomena and techniques for investigation go hand in hand





- **Political negotiations almost complete**
- **Key issues in the debate:**
 - **ERC structure:**
 - **Autonomy**
 - **Compatibility with the European institutional structure and democratic process (future decision making on the structure and positioning of the ERC)**
 - **ERC operation - ensure transparency**
 - **ERC performance - review and assessment**





ERC in the European political environment

- **ERC demonstrates a new phase of European research policy (a “real” research policy)**
- **It also shows the leading position of science and research within European integration**





Science in EU politics (I)

- **FP7 - €54bn. ERC - €1 bn pa,**
- **Big changes; How did they happen?**
 - **In the “globalisation conundrum” (code-Lisbon), research has a good story to tell – Research is a Lisbon success**
 - **Re-allocation of money is a (relatively) mild form of politics**
 - **Small structural changes in the budget can have big payoff for research**





Science in EU politics (II)

“subsidiarity”

- **In political terms, the ERC is nevertheless quite revolutionary :**
 - **It has involved a major adjustment to the concept of European Added Value**
 - **It represents probably the largest budgetary item dispensed without national quotas**

- **We are in a very dynamic environment; lots of opportunities and challenges**





Next steps

- **ERC launch (and learn)**
- **Integrating ERC with European funding structures**
- **Relationships with stakeholders:**
 - **Research performers**
 - **Industry (& society)**
 - **The international dimension**
- **The knowledge challenge**





ERC in European context

- **Community research:**
 - **Co-operation**
 - **Ideas**
 - **People**
 - **Capacities (infrastructure)**
- **Euratom**
- **Inter-governmental organisations**
 - **CERN, EMBL, ESA, ILL.....)**





ERC and national funding structures

- **Alignment of objectives and structures can be anticipated – EU, MS (and regional)**
- **Self-organisation will be the key, but discussion needed**
- **Some issues:**
 - **How to establish a “division of labour” (easiest for smaller and less science-intensive MS)?**
 - **Does the ERC represent direct “systemic competition” to national agencies**
 - **What are the important “benchmarks” ERC can provide?**
 - **How marginal is ERC in the long run? Will it snowball and change the balance towards a more “European” system?**





Opportunities for individual players

- **ERC is part of ERA – allowing institutions to play “in Europe” rather than only in their own countries**

- **As an example:**
 - **It will put pressure on universities for structural change (eg young independent investigators)**
 - **But it will also act as an ally for good individuals and those universities that are investing in new talent**
 - **This not only in the best-endowed places (people like to be at home)**





Systemic pressures

- **Pressures on institutions will translate into pressures on national policies**
- **Eg university reform agenda (3000 US degree-giving bodies of which 100 research universities; 2000 EU research universities)**
- **Here the ERC may help to provide “market information” to assist national policies (eg RAE in UK, Excellenz in DE)**
- **There will also no doubt be “regionalist” tendencies (Nordic, Baltics)**
- **What strategies and models? - European (global) champions or delocalised networked universities?**





Industry and society

- Industrial organisations and others can apply for ERC funding
- Innovation and uptake are not criteria for evaluation of ERC proposals
- But a dynamic programme of “frontier research” should attract investment and uptake
- Relations with “industry” and “society” must be developed
- The ERC’s contribution to society and economy will inevitably be an issue for future funding rounds





International relations

- The ERC will have visibility at global level:
 - As a beacon for European science
 - Because successful teams will be (or become) European and global players
- There should be a readiness to accept ERC as a partner (one of Europe's "telephone numbers" for science?)
- But frontier research is a strategic asset for Europe, so co-operation strategy must be carefully defined





The knowledge challenge

- Funders and performers are facing a complex environment
- It used to be easy (Community programmes as source of money, not a “competitor”)
- People need to know more about the community (and intergovernmental) system
- More mobility (cf END problems)
- Universities need to put resources into Euro & international activities (an investment)





Further Information

Website of the ERC Scientific Council at <http://erc.europa.eu>

