



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

Press release

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European Research Council promotes funding opportunities to top talent in India

Since the launch of its awareness-raising campaign “ERC goes Global” in 2012, Secretary General of the European Research Council (ERC) Prof. Donald Dingwell, has been on a worldwide tour to forge closer ties and to inform researchers about attractive European funding opportunities in this area. As part of the campaign, India is the next important destination currently being covered by the ERC.

Present in India this week to further develop relations with the ERC's Indian counterparts, Prof. Dingwell held meetings with key representatives and researchers from leading universities and research institutions in Chennai, Bangalore, Pune, Mumbai, and New Delhi. The ERC funds leading researchers from anywhere in the world, and their innovative ideas across all disciplines, with up to €3.5 million (around Rs. 24.68 crore) per grant. Since the ERC's launch in 2007, it has awarded €5.7 billion (approx Rs. 40,196 crore) to over 3,400 scientists - both early-career and senior.

The ERC delegation is headed by Secretary General Prof. Dingwell, who said *“We are delighted with the open-mindedness with which we have been welcomed here. The climate of science, education and research in India is very positive”*. He added *“we are more confident than ever that Indian researchers will respond to this remarkable opportunity.”*

The Secretary General is accompanied by Indian ERC grant holder Dr. Ramesh Pillai. *“The ERC is a fantastic opportunity for young and senior Indian scientists, as it provides significant financial backing for their creative ideas,”* said Dr. Pillai.

Since 2007, around 13 Indian researchers have been awarded ERC grants; a number that the ERC would be happy to see increase. ERC grants are both substantial and highly flexible, and also allow grant-holders to spend half of their research time outside the EU and its associated countries¹. This provides the possibility for grant-holders to maintain an affiliation with their country of origin, if they so wish. ERC grantees can also employ team members based anywhere in the world. The ERC thereby aims to support global “brain circulation” and to bring the best researchers together to exchange both ideas and experience. Current estimates show that – in addition to the principal investigator of the project – the ERC supports some 22,000 team members; out of which close to 500 are of Indian nationality.

Dr. Ramesh Pillai was awarded an ERC Starting Grant in 2010, worth €2.4 million (**Rs. 16.92 crore**) for five years. Based in France, he carries out research in the fields of molecular and structural biology and biochemistry, using interdisciplinary approaches. See article [here](#).

¹ The EU's FP7 associated countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Faroe Islands, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey.



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Background

Set up in 2007 by the European Union, the European Research Council (ERC) aims to stimulate scientific excellence in Europe by encouraging competition for funding between the very best, creative researchers of any nationality and age.

The ERC, which is the newest pioneering component of the **EU's Seventh Research Framework Programme** (FP7), has a total budget of €7.5 billion (over Rs. 52,890 crore) from 2007 to 2013. The European Commission last year proposed to almost double the ERC budget for 2014 to 2020 under the new Framework Programme 'Horizon 2020'.

The ERC has adopted an 'investigator-driven', 'bottom-up' approach, which allows researchers to identify new opportunities in any field of research. Since its launch, the ERC has selected over 3,000 research projects for funding throughout Europe, and has become a "benchmark" of the competitiveness of national research systems as it complements existing funding schemes at national and European levels. The ERC has three core grant schemes: 'ERC Starting Grants', targeted at early-career emerging research leaders; 'ERC Consolidator Grants', aimed at already independent excellent researchers; and 'ERC Advanced Grants', supporting top senior researchers.

It is composed of an Executive Agency and a Scientific Council. The latter sets the ERC scientific strategy and consists of 22 top scientists and scholars. The ERC is led by President Prof. **Helga Nowotny** and the Scientific Council is represented in Brussels by Secretary General Prof. **Donald Dingwell**.

Links

ERC website: <http://erc.europa.eu/>

Prof. Donald Dingwell biography: <http://erc.europa.eu/organisation/prof-donald-b-dingwell-ph-d>

Dr. Pillai's biography: https://www.embl.fr/research/unit/pillai/members/index.php?s_personId=CP-60003087

More on Dr. Pillai's research: <https://www.embl.fr/research/unit/pillai/>

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