NOTE
From: Commission
To: Delegations
Subject: Report on the progress of the European Research Council (ERC)
- Information from the Commission

Delegations will find, in annex, a note from the Commission on the above-mentioned topic.
The independent interim evaluation of FP7 recognised that, "Despite being a new, and thus untried instrument, the European Research Council (ERC) has manifestly succeeded in attracting and funding world-class research and is playing an important role in anchoring research talent." Already, the ERC counts three Nobel laureates and three Fields Medallists among its Principal Investigators and the results of ERC funded projects appear weekly in the world's most prestigious scientific journals.

A world-class frontier research agency needs adequate legal and administrative foundations. The independent Review of the ERC's structures and mechanisms, set up by the Commission in 2009, provided an early check on its progress. Its conclusions were broadly endorsed by the Commission\(^1\) and the Council\(^2\). The implementation of its recommendations has given rise to significant improvements in the operations of the ERC:

- **Administrative simplification**, in particular in the appointment and reimbursement procedures of ERC reviewers has been incorporated in the "ERC Rules for the submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures"\(^3\).
The recommendations on the **functioning of the ERC Scientific Council** have been acted upon. They include: the establishment of a standing Identification Committee for the staged renewal of the Scientific Council, whose report has been transmitted to Council and Parliament; the set-up of a sub-committee to oversee the selection of peer reviewers and a permanent committee to deal with conflicts of interest; the publication of the minutes of the Scientific Council; the administrative local support to the Chair and Vice-chairs; and finally, the compensation of the Scientific Council via honoraria for participating in plenary meetings.

In agreement with the Scientific Council, the Commission's action plan to implement the Review's recommendations on the ERC's **governance** was suspended in order to reflect further on a sustainable and forward-looking solution, in view of the forthcoming Common Strategic Framework. This reflection was entrusted to an ERC Task Force, set up in December 2010 under the responsibility of DG Research and Innovation, and composed of representatives of the Scientific Council, the ERC Review Panel, as well as Commission officials.

The final report of the Task Force is being finalised and will be provided to the Council.