



European Research Council
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EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY 2024

Mario Caironi and his team developed a prototype which could power small electronic devices, such as low-power LEDs. 💡

The battery is rechargeable and completely edible and might be used in the future for medical treatments.

and pave the way for a new field of science: **quantum biology**

ERC grantee Alessio Rovere is about to be back in the field, to collect more data on past sea level changes & coral reefs!

Stay tuned!

@ALESSIO_ROVERE

A **B**

europa.eu
ERC's Scientific Council ensures rigorous evaluation
#EUfunded #FrontierResearch #ERCStG @HorizonEU

Pooling different skills, knowledge and resources

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Frontiers of Research

Science podcast from the European Research Council

“ It is disappointing that we cannot support every deserving project simply due to budget constraint. Can Europe afford to let such talent go unrealised? We need to collectively advocate for increased investment in R&I. ”

PROF. MARIA LEPTIN
PRESIDENT OF THE ERC

<https://erc.europa.eu>

European Research Council

External Communication Strategy 2024

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1. Foreword

As President of the European Research Council, I am concerned to see the EU falling behind the USA, China and other international competitors when it comes to research and innovation. We are still far from the EU's target of investing 3% of GDP in research and development that was set over two decades ago.

As we look ahead to the next seven-year EU budget and R&I framework programme, the ERC is determined to make the case for more ambitious levels of investment in research. The Scientific Council calls on the EU to raise its game. This is necessary for safeguarding Europe's competitiveness, its place in the world and the welfare of its citizens.

The ERC's achievements clearly demonstrate the value of supporting bottom-up research that pushes the frontiers of knowledge. Much of this research has brought about breakthroughs that matter for both our society and our economies. ERC grantees have to date won 14 Nobel Prizes, 6 Fields Medals, 11 Wolf Prizes and many other prestigious scientific awards. They have produced over 200,000 articles published in peer reviewed scientific journals. And these publications by ERC-funded researchers are seven times more likely than average to be in the top 1%-most cited category.

The ERC can show that it is contributing substantially to many of the wider goals of the EU in terms of the green and digital transitions, societal challenges such as health, as well as key enabling and industrial technologies. Our analysis of ERC projects funded under the previous framework programme, Horizon 2020, found that a large share of the research tackles key global challenges in the areas of climate change, health and digital transformation.

ERC grantees also prove the economic impacts of frontier research. They have founded or co-founded over 400 start-up companies. They have applied for over 2,200 patents and other IPRs such as trademarks. 40% of ERC projects have produced research which has been subsequently cited by patents. ERC-funded researchers are also very successful in the European Innovation Council's "Transition" funding scheme.

Researchers have a particular responsibility to contribute towards informed debate and decision-making in the face of disinformation and fake news. In the run-up to next year's European elections, I am pleased that we will be co-organising a Nobel Prize Dialogue on the future of democracy. I am also happy that we are organising for the third time the ERC's Public Engagement with Research Award. And the ERC's Science Journalism Initiative is now up and running, with the first residencies of journalists in research organisations due to take place in 2024.

We look forward to working with all our partners to implement the actions set out in this communication strategy!

Maria Leptin
President of the ERC

2. Objectives

The ERC's communication actions in 2024 will continue to be guided by the following strategic objectives:

1. Illustrate the intrinsic value of frontier research, as well as the contributions it makes to tackling societal, economic, environmental and policy challenges.
2. Provide talented researchers in Europe and globally with timely and reliable information about funding opportunities offered by the ERC.
3. Promote public engagement with research by offering ERC grantees opportunities and incentives to share their work.

3. Audiences

The ERC will continue to target the following audiences in 2024:

1. Potential applicants for ERC grants
2. ERC grantees and their research teams
3. Universities and research institutions that host grantees
4. Policy-makers and research stakeholders at European and national levels
5. Journalists and media
6. General public

Linked with the ERC Executive Agency's internal communication strategy, we will also continue to engage staff of the Agency as ambassadors and multipliers.

4. Actions

Illustrate the intrinsic value of frontier research

The ERC Executive Agency's Communication Unit will continue to support the Scientific Council in its mandate to engage with policy-makers, stakeholders and the public through speaking engagements, media interviews and other communication activities.

Whenever possible, our communication activities will feed into the wider narrative on the achievements of the EU's Horizon Europe programme, in cooperation with the Commission's DG for Research & Innovation.

The outputs of the ERC's work on 'feedback to policy', highlighting the contribution of frontier research towards tackling policy and societal priorities, will provide valuable communication opportunities.

A highlight in 2024 will be the organisation of a Nobel Prize Dialogue on the theme 'Fact and fiction: the future of democracy' in partnership with Nobel Prize Outreach, which will serve as an opportunity to show the ERC's wider impact, as well as a specific 'feedback to policy' report on democracy.

We will present frontier research success stories by organising sessions with ERC grantees at the EU Research and Innovation Days, as well as participating in several events focusing on different EU policy priorities.

We will continue to collaborate with the European Parliament's Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA).

We will work closely with the Scientific Council's Innovation Working Group in order to demonstrate the strong links between frontier research, innovation and industry. Communication actions will include testimonials featuring ERC grantees whose research has led to the creation of intellectual property and companies.

Provide information on ERC funding

We will continue promoting ERC grant schemes and funding opportunities to potential applicants, including through a webinar to be organised following the adoption of the 2025 ERC Work Programme. We will also relevant information on how to manage an ERC grant (including reporting, ethics and communication requirements).

A new ERC Ambassadors network will be launched in 2024. This network will bring together ERC grantees (and possibly panel members) from each EU Member State and perhaps from some countries associated with Horizon Europe. The ambassadors will be invited to act as multipliers, to spread information about EU funding opportunities through events and social media, and to provide extra support to the ERC NCPs and potential applicants.

We will continue to work with new grantees and their host institutions to announce the results of ERC calls, which can serve to inspire future applicants as well as providing examples that illustrate the value of frontier research.

Targeted communication actions will be organised to support the ERC's work on widening European participation. This will include awareness-raising activities in selected countries (in agreement with the Scientific Council's Widening Working Group) as well as promotion of the ERC's mentoring and fellowship schemes.

Global outreach to research talent worldwide will rely particularly on empowering key multipliers like the EURAXESS network and the science and innovation counsellors in EU Delegations.

Considering the relatively low application rates for grants in panels in some domains, we will work with the ERC Executive Agency's Scientific Department to see how communication with the relevant research communities could play a useful role.

Promote public engagement with research

Following the launch of the call in November 2023, proposals submitted for the ERC's Public Engagement with Research Award will be evaluated during the first half of 2024. The winners will be announced at a networking event on science communication and public engagement to be organised in October 2024.

The first placements under the ERC's science journalism initiative will take place in 2024. These are designed to support stronger relationships and improve mutual understanding between researchers, research institutions and science journalists.

We will continue to work with grantees in order to produce ERC stories about their research. These will include articles that illustrate how bottom-up frontier research can deliver policy-relevant results. This will support the dissemination of the ERC's work on feedback to policy (priority themes for 2024 will adapt to evolving policy priorities and scientific advancements but are expected to include democracy, artificial intelligence, barriers to a green transition, planetary ethics, and critical technologies). In line with the objective of showing the intrinsic value of frontier research, ERC stories will also include projects that push the frontiers of human knowledge but without necessarily offering immediate applications or impacts.

The stories will be disseminated via the ERC's own channels, and in cooperation with the Commission (corporate campaigns, research success stories, Cordis etc) and European Parliament (European Science Media Hub etc). We will also work with grantees and their host institutions to pitch these stories to journalists and the media (including popular science TV shows and podcasts). We will continue to provide training to selected ERC grantees (public speaking, media relations etc) in order to empower them to communicate about their research and engage with the public. A more detailed calendar of events and communication opportunities is annexed to this communication strategy.

5. Channels

5a. ERC communication tools and channels

Website

> The ERC website attracted around 1 million visits in 2023. The website was further improved, particularly as regards the presentation of data on ERC-funded projects and the outputs of the ERC's project to map the frontier research it supports, as well as information on ERC panel members. Further improvements are planned in 2024 to ensure that the website offers a reliable source of information for potential applicants and grantees, as well as a dynamic presentation of the Scientific Council's priorities and the work of ERC grantees.

Multimedia

> There was a significant increase in videos produced by the ERC in 2023 and the new series of podcasts featuring ERC grantees also began to attract an audience. Video productions next year are expected to include short-form clips on ERC-funded research, new or updated "ERC classes" for grant applicants, and explainers on important aspects of ERC grants (e.g., ethics or open access). We will continue to explore different formats to present ERC stories and data including videos, infographics and podcasts.

Social media

> 2023 saw continued strong growth in the number of ERC's followers across our two main social media platforms, with a consistent increase of followers on X, formerly Twitter (surpassing 156,000 in November 2023) and very rapid follower gains on LinkedIn (more than 171,500 in November 2023). We are enhancing the ERC's Instagram presence to provide another platform for making science both more accessible and captivating. This effort has resulted in a steady

growth of followers, particularly resonating with a younger generation of scientists. There has also been an increase in engagement with content posted on the ERC's social media channels, for example around the announcement of call results. We have had two positive experiences with the use of Twitter Spaces to host live events in 2023, and will continue to explore and experiment with different features and content forms. Building on these achievements, we aim for a further increase in social media engagement in 2024, via careful community management (fulfilling the needs of our online audience through e.g. responding to comments and questions, and sharing the type of content our followers need). Social media are also an important channel for attracting talented staff to work in the agency.

Online magazine

- > The ERC online magazine's editorial approach will continue to be based on quarterly collections of articles with a thematic focus, including op-ed written by thought leaders from the broader research community, inside analysis and hands-on advice for current and prospective grantees and ERC applicants.

Email alerts

- > The ERC maintains a database of more than 100,000 subscribers who have chosen to receive alerts about ERC funding and stories. In 2024, we will further maintain and develop this mailing list.

Publications

- > We will continue to follow a 'digital first' approach to content production, but taking into account the growing number of physical events we will produce a limited number of print publications for targeted distribution as well as interactive publications for the website (including the ERC Annual Report and specific factsheets).

5b. Earned media

The ERC is frequently in the news. Every month, more than a thousand articles mention us in the online and printed press. Next year, we will explore collaborations with selected podcasts as a channel for promoting the research funded by the ERC.

During 2024, we will continue to provide media relations support to the ERC President and the Scientific Council. We will work with grantees and their host institutions to encourage media reporting of the results of ERC grant competitions, as well as ground-breaking research results by ERC grantees. We will also continue connecting interested journalists with grantees who are experts on specific topics.

We will continue to cooperate closely with journalists covering science, EU affairs, international and national affairs. Our media relations work involves prompt responses to journalists' enquiries, as well as reaching out proactively to the media with newsworthy information. We will proactively pitch stories about ERC grantees and their research to popular science TV programmes and podcasts. We will also organise media briefings on hot topics from a science perspective.

5c. Multipliers and communication partners

National Contact Points

The ERC's National Contact Points (NCPs) are often the first port of call for potential applicants. We will continue to ensure that the NCPs have the latest information on ERC grant schemes and calls. Three meetings with the NCPs and ERC Executive Agency staff will be organised throughout the year, with a physical event in Brussels scheduled during the first half of the year.

Host Institutions

The communication departments of universities and research institutions that host ERC grantees are key partners when it comes to the communication of call results as well as project examples. We will continue to expand our network of communication officers from host institutions and organise 2-3 online events during 2024.

Association of ERC Grantees

The Association of ERC Grantees has now been formally established as an independent voice for the growing community of current and former grantees. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the Association on its 'Science and Society' series of webinars and other communication actions.

European Commission Representations

The European Commission's Representations in the Member States play a key role in raising the visibility of EU policies and programmes amongst the media and the public. We will continue to cooperate with the Representations on success stories, call results and other announcements.

European Parliament

We will continue to work closely with the European Parliament's Committee for Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), the Science and Technologies Options Assessment Panel (STOA), as well as the European Science Media Hub (ESMH) and to collaborate on various events and activities.

EU Delegations / Euraxess network

Following on from the very successful series of global outreach webinars organised in 2020-2022, we will continue to work with the Science Counsellors in EU Delegations and the EURAXESS Worldwide Network in order to bring ERC grant schemes and calls to the attention of talented researchers around the world. We will also pursue our collaboration with the International Cooperation Directorate in the Commission's DG for Research and Innovation.

Commission DGs and EU staff

Commission DGs use a wide range of communication channels to reach the European citizens and stakeholders. In 2024 we will continue building synergies with their communication services, in order to amplify the message and spot windows of opportunity, in close coordination with the Feedback to Policy sector in order to ensure maximal synergies. In addition, the European Commission counts more than 33,000 staff members and the total number of people employed by the EU is over 60,000 people. The ERC will continue to strengthen its internal networks, aiming to count on this important audience to relay its messages. The ERC Executive Agency staff will be part of this effort.

6. Internal communication and staff engagement

Internal communication is critical in ensuring that ERC Executive Agency staff are working towards a common goal, have the required information and resources to do their tasks effectively, and feel valued and motivated at work. The updated Internal Communication (IC) strategy will be built on three pillars: Connecting, Channelling, and Collaborating. The first pillar will continue to focus on bringing the ERC's objectives, governing bodies, and funded research closer to the agency's staff. The second pillar will continue to establish a cohesive narrative about the ERC Executive Agency's goal and value, channelling the rising volume of information and communications directed at staff. The third and most recently added pillar will tackle the need to link colleagues with one another and with key internal stakeholders by using new collaborative tools. The Commission's migration to a future intranet that combines communication and collaboration seeks to improve cooperation across departments, break down silos, give better ways to collect and distribute knowledge Commission-wide, and prevent digital overload.

7. Key Performance Indicator

We will track the following KPIs to assess the performance of our communication actions:

Indicator	Baseline (31 December 2023)
Website visits	909,000
Social media followers	X/Twitter – 158,000 LinkedIn – 179,000 Facebook – 38,000 YouTube – 5,800 Instagram – 4,100
Media mentions	23,000
Views of ERC videos across different platforms	~ 1 million
Subscribers of e-mail newsletter	102,000
Grantees speaking at events organised by the ERC	25
ERC science articles published on own channels and channels of EU services	219
Events (No. of people who participated or watched the event recordings)	14,300

Annex – Key Communication Opportunities in 2024

January

- World Economic Forum, Davos

February

- Webinar for Advanced Grant applicants on lump sums
- ERC Annual Report 2023

March

- Nobel Prize Dialogue - a partnership between Nobel Prize Outreach and the ERC, Brussels
- EU Research & Innovation Days, Brussels
- Scientific Analysis of ERC Projects from the EU's seventh Framework Programme (report)
- MIT Career Fair, Boston

April

- Science is Wonderful!, Brussels
- ERC National Contact Points meeting
- Advanced Grants call results

June

- EuroScience Open Forum, Katowice
- European Network of Science Centres & Museums, Ljubljana
- Scientific Council plenary, Norway
- European Sustainable Energy Week
- ERC National Contact Points meeting

July

- 2025 ERC Work Programme adoption

September

- EU Researchers Night
- Starting Grants call results

October

- ERC Public Engagement with Research Award – announce winners, networking event
- Science communication training for new ERC grantees
- European Week of Regions & Cities, Brussels

November

- Annual ERC Scientific Conference, Brussels
- EU side-event at COP29 (tbc)
- National Contact Points meeting
- Synergy Grants call results

December

- Event on frontier research and innovation, Brussels
- Consolidator Grant Call results



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