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ANNEX 1

ANNEX

to the

Commission Decision

**Approving the Annual Work Programme 2017 of the European Research Council
Executive Agency**



Annual Work Programme 2017

European Research Council Executive Agency



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PART 1. MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Created by the Commission under the previous Framework Programme¹ (FP7) and extended by the current Framework Programme Horizon 2020 (H2020)², the European Research Council (ERC) supports best researchers in Europe in any field of science on the sole criterion of excellence by providing attractive, long-term funding to pursue ground-breaking, high-gain/high-risk research. The activities of the ERC are expected to have a direct impact through advances at the frontier of knowledge, opening the way to creating new scientific and technological results which ultimately can lead to innovation. Being *one of the best success stories for Europe in terms of scientific impact, researchers' careers and innovation* as Commissioner Moedas³ said, the ERC has widely gained recognition as a world-class research funding agency and has attained a significant reputation within the scientific community across Europe and worldwide. Inspiring other institutions and having established itself as an essential component of the Union's research funding landscape, its label of excellence has raised the level of science across Europe.

The European Research Council Executive Agency (ERCEA), the dedicated implementation structure of the ERC, contributes to help the Commission to achieve its general objective "*A new boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment*" as well as helps its parent DG, DG Research and Innovation (DG RTD), to achieve its specific objective related to the implementation of H2020⁴. By given opportunities to non-EU researchers supported by foreign agencies to visit ERC research teams⁵, or by fostering broadening participation outside-ERA⁶, the ERCEA also contributes to the *open to the world* priority of DG RTD.

In 2017, as stated in the ERC Work Programme 2017⁷ adopted by the Commission on 25 July 2016⁸, the ERCEA will continue managing the Horizon 2020 specific objective "Strengthening frontier research through the activities of European Research Council" of part I "Excellent Science" of the Horizon 2020 Specific Programme⁹, as well as continue supporting the ERC Scientific Council in its tasks¹⁰. The 2017 grant competitions, supported by an operational commitment budget of around € 1.8 billion, the highest since the ERC's inception in 2007, will enable the Agency to fund some 1100 new grants, most of them to start in 2018. For that purpose, the ERCEA will launch calls for proposals under the Starting, Consolidator and Advanced grant schemes¹¹, as well as offer the opportunity for supplementary funding by means of the Proof of Concept instrument, aiming at bridging the gap between research and societal or commercial innovation. The ERCEA will also continue ensuring the implementation of FP7 legacy (Ideas).

¹ Cf. OJ L 412 of 30/12/2006.

² Cf. OJ L 347 of 20/12/2013.

³ Cf. Press release of 25 July 2016 – ERC to invest record budget in 2017 published on the ERC website (https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/press_release/files/erc_work_programme_2017.pdf)

⁴ Namely specific objective 1.3 of DG RTD Strategic Plan 2016-2020: *To ensure an effective and efficient implementation of Horizon 2020 and other RTD programmes and maximise synergies.*

⁵ Cf. implementing arrangements with key funded bodies and science ministries of the United States, Korea, Argentina, Japan, China, South Africa and Mexico. More information on that under the "ERC teams open to the world section" : <https://erc.europa.eu/funding-and-grants/funding-schemes/other-erc-opportunities>.

⁶ By the means of communication actions organized by the ERCEA or by joining parent DG's campaigns.

⁷ The ERC Work Programme is established the ERC Scientific Council, the autonomous body responsible for setting and monitoring of the overall scientific strategy of the ERC.

⁸ Cf. Commission Implementing Decision C(2016)4616 of 25/07/2016 adopting the 2017 Work Programme in the framework of the specific programme implementing Horizon 2020 – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) in relation to the specific objective "Strengthening frontier research, through the activities of the European Research Council".

⁹ Cf. Council Decision 2013/743/EU of 3/12/2013 establishing the specific programme implementing Horizon 2020 – The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) (OJ L347, 20/12/2013).

¹⁰ More details about the tasks under the remit of the ERC Scientific Council are provided in Art. 7 of Council Decision 2013/743/EU/ of 3/12/2013 (OJ L347 of 20/12/2013).

¹¹ More information on the type of calls and funding instruments can be found in the 2017 ERC Work Programme (cf. C(2016)4616) of 25/07/2016.

Both Ideas and H2020 specific programmes will continue to be managed with an effective, efficient and cost-effective structure as acknowledged by the recent triennial external evaluation of the ERCEA activities¹² while keeping its administrative expenditures below 3% of the operational one. The Agency will continue using its acquired experience to monitor and maintain the effectiveness of its internal control system and seek efficiency gains wherever possible within the given resources. Also, the 2017 operational and operating budgets entrusted to the ERCEA will be implemented in accordance with the principles of sound financial management. The achievement of the operational objectives set in this Annual Work Programme for key processes will be measured by related performance indicators. The five Key Performance Indicators selected by the Agency, namely "time to inform", "time to sign grant agreements from the date of informing successful applicants", "budget execution" (commitment and payments), "time to pay" and "ex-post control error rate", are highlighted in bold in the related tables¹³.

In 2017, the ERCEA's main challenges will be, for the granting department, to continue managing in parallel two framework programmes with different set of rules, processes, procedures and IT applications and to efficiently manage an overall foreseen increase of 29% of payments related to FP7 legacy and H2020 while maintaining the same level of achievement of Key Performance Indicators. In addition, in accordance with its establishment plan the Agency's workforce will continue to grow in 2017. The smooth accommodation of new staff members might prove difficult since the office space in COV2 building is limited and plans to free additional space are being delayed, putting at risk timely recruitments, thus impacting the achievement of planned targets.

Moreover, by the end of 2017, it is expected that more than 5100 funded projects will be on-going, 36% funded under FP7 and 64% under H2020. The ERCEA also expects to receive 1320 scientific reports from Principal Investigators, including 869 FP7 final scientific reports. These final scientific reports will give further insight on the impact of the Ideas Specific Programme for Research in Europe and produce outputs which can be used by DG RTD for its policy making objectives. Initial results are promising as demonstrated by the 2016 qualitative evaluation of completed FP7 projects¹⁴ managed by the ERCEA to support the monitoring and evaluation strategy of the ERC Scientific Council. This qualitative evaluation will be continued in 2017.

With this work programme the ERCEA will continue to fund investigator-driven research of the highest quality and favour innovative ideas and inter-disciplinary research. This is unique at EU level and makes thereby an important contribution to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative¹⁵ and the Commission priority for Jobs, Growth and Investment¹⁶.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the ERC President, to the members of the Scientific Council and to the parent DG for their continuous support of the ERCEA. My gratitude goes as well to the Steering Committee members of the ERCEA, a body that is key for the proper functioning and oversight of the Agency. Its dedicated members spend many hours in this task and deserve much credit.

Pablo Amor

¹² Cf. *Evaluation of the operation of ERCEA (2012-2015) – Final report*, 2016 published on the ERC website: http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/archive/other_reports_studies_and_documents/ercea_evaluation_report.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none.

¹³ Cf. tables 3.1 and 4.1.2 pp 8-9 and 14.

¹⁴ The report of the scientific impact of 199 completed projects was presented at the EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF) held in Manchester on 23-27 July 2016. More information can be found on the ERC website: cf. https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/file/Qualitative_Evaluation_of_completed_projects_funded_by_the_ERC.pdf.

¹⁵ COM(2010) 546 final. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on "Europe 2020 Flagship initiative – Innovation Union.

¹⁶ Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/publications/president-junckers-political-guidelines_en

PART 2. MISSION STATEMENT

The aim of the European Research Council (ERC) is to provide attractive and flexible funding to enable talented and creative individual researchers and their teams to pursue ground-breaking, high-gain/high-risk research in any field at the frontier of science. Such EU-funded research responds to the need to increase the research attractiveness of Europe and strengthening the EU ability to generate new knowledge. Both the Ideas and H2020 objectives are fully in line with the aims of the Europe 2020 strategy designed to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive growth through the strengthening of every link in the innovation chain, from 'blue sky' research to commercialization and contribute to the Commission's general objective *A new boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment*.

For that purpose, the ERC is composed on the one hand of an independent Scientific Council of 22 scientists, scholars and engineers of the highest repute who establish the overall ERC's scientific strategy and have full authority over decisions on the type of research to be funded. On the other hand, a dedicated implementation structure in the form of an executive Agency (ERCEA¹⁷) is responsible for the administrative implementation and programme execution¹⁸ under the supervision of its parent DG, DG RTD.

The ERCEA is committed to fund cutting-edge research aiming at bringing major scientific breakthroughs and provide the Commission and more specifically its parent DG, DG RTD, with valuable input for its policy objectives. As it has been doing for FP7, by implementing effectively and efficiently the H2020 specific objective it has been entrusted with, the Agency will support DG RTD in achieving its specific objective related to the implementation of this programme¹⁹.

The mission statement of the ERCEA is "Dedicated to selecting and funding the excellent ideas that have not happened yet and the scientists that are dreaming them up".

¹⁷ The ERCEA established by Decision 2013/779/EU (OJ L346, 20/12/2013) replaced and succeeded the executive Agency set up by Decision 2008/37/EC.

¹⁸ The ERCEA Delegation act (cf. Commission Decision C(2013)9428 of 20/12/2013 amended by Commission Decision C(2014)9437 specifies the tasks delegated by DG RTD to the Agency for the implementation of the above-mentioned H2020 specific objective and FP7 legacy.

¹⁹ Cf. Strategic Plan 2016-2020 – Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, pp.13-14 & 49-51 (Ares(2016)1051529 of 01/03/2016): Specific objective 1.3: *To ensure an effective and efficient implementation of Horizon 2020 and other RTD programmes and maximise synergies.*

PART 3. OVERVIEW OF OUTPUTS FOR THE YEAR – Management of FP7 and H2020 programmes

The management of the specific objective delegated to the ERC by the FP7 as well as Horizon 2020 programmes is achieved by the means of the annual ERC Work Programme. This Work Programme, which is established by the Scientific Council and adopted by the Commission, describes in detail the type of funding instruments aiming at reinforcing excellence, dynamism and creativity in European research by providing attractive long-term funding to support excellent investigators and their research teams.

In order to measure the implementation of specific programmes entrusted to the ERCEA, the following results indicators stemming from the legal basis are measured:

Ideas Specific Programme (FP7) - SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	To enhance the generation of excellent, innovative ideas in frontier research in Europe	
Result indicators	Latest known results (December 2016)	Target (result)
Number of international prizes and awards by grant holders	520 ²⁰	200 by 2020
Number of scientific publications by grant holders	95 000 ²¹	~40-60 000 by 2020

H2020 SP SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1	Excellent science – European Research Council (ERC) – Strengthening frontier research	
Indicator	Share of publications from ERC-funded projects which are among the top 1% highly cited per field of science	
Baseline	Milestone²²	Target for Horizon 2020²³
	2018	
New approach	1.5%	1.8%

3.1 ERC funding instruments and Calls for Proposals

The Scientific Council establishes among other tasks the methods and procedures for the peer review and proposal evaluation on the basis of which the proposals to be funded are selected, while the ERCEA ensures the administrative implementation and programme execution²⁴. The ERC Work Programme 2017²⁵ provides all the information related to the research activities implemented through calls for proposals as well as other types of activities allowing the ERC to carry out its duties and mandate.

²⁰ This number refers to the prizes/awards and other form of recognition which are recorded in ERC internal data systems, taken from reporting by ERC grantees and public records.

²¹ The number refers only to the publications that the ERC grant holders have directly reported in their mid-term or final scientific reports. They are taken largely from the reporting SESAM and include about 1200 which were reported before ERC started using the SESAM reporting tools.

²² Since reliable citation data is available only three years after publication, the first expected result will be visible in 2018. However, data will be continuously available (real-time) and collected automatically from specialized bibliometric databases. The measurement will take place according to reporting requirements from the fourth year of Horizon 2020 onwards. In addition, the indicator will be updated and reported periodically, at least on a yearly basis.

²³ The reference for this target is the year when the last actions financed under Horizon 2020 will be finished *i.e.* several years after the formal end of the programme in 2020.

²⁴ Art. 7(2)(c) and 8(1) of Council Decision 2013/743/EU of 3/12/2013 (OJ L347, 20/12/2013).

²⁵ Cf. C(2016)4616 of 25/07/2016 adopting the 2017 ERC Work Programme.

In 2017, as planned by the ERC WP 2017, the ERCEA will launch and/or evaluate four calls for proposals under the Starting (StG), Consolidator (CoG) and Advanced grant (AdG) schemes as well as provide opportunities for supplementary funding by means of the Proof of Concept instrument (PoC), aiming at bridging the gap between research and social or commercial innovation.

The objective of StG and CoG is to boost the independent careers of excellent researchers by providing adequate support at the critical stage where they are starting or consolidating their own independent research team and programme whilst for AdG it is to encourage substantial advances at the frontier of knowledge by supporting excellent, leading advanced investigators to pursue ground breaking, high-risk/high-gain research. In that context, the 2017 operational budget will be split between young scientists on the one hand (under the StG and CoG) and established research leaders on the other hand (AdG). This budget will enable to grant around 245 established leaders and three times more young scientists as forecasted in the table below.

The budget allocated to the PoC will be kept at last year's level and continue to support the innovation potential as well as the economic and/or societal impact of the growing number of mature ERC funded projects. As planned by the ERC WP2017, a single deadline is set for each type of calls except for the PoC call which has three closing dates spread over the year.

Call identifier	Opening date	Closing date	Indicative n° of outputs	Budget EUR million
ERC-2017-StG – Starting Grant	26/07/2016	18/10/2016	415	605
ERC-2017-CoG – Consolidator Grant	20/10/2016	09/02/2017	320	575
ERC-2017-AdG – Advanced Grant	16/05/2017	31/08/2017	245	567
ERC-2017-PoC – Proof of Concept	02/08/2016	1) 19/01/2017 2) 25/04/2017 3) 05/09/2017	130	20

Relevant general objective: A new boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment		Parent DG: DG RTD
RTD Specific objective: To ensure an effective and efficient implementation of Horizon 2020 and other RTD programmes and maximise synergies		Related to spending programme: H2020
ERC Specific objective: Excellent Science – European Research Council (ERC) – Strengthening frontier research²⁶		Related to spending programme: H2020
Main outputs in 2017:		
Outputs	Indicators	2017 Targets
Launch of calls for proposals ²⁷	% of calls for proposals successfully launched according to agreed deadlines	100 %
Evaluation of calls	% of 2017 calls evaluated in 2017 % of 2016 calls evaluated in 2017	100% of 3 2017 calls ²⁸ 100% of 1 2016 call ²⁹
Grants signed in 2017	Proposals selected under 2016 calls granted in 2017	100% ³⁰

²⁶ The ERC Specific objective (provided by Article 3 of Council Decision 2013/743/EU of 3/12/2013) has been included by DG RTD, the parent DG, into the following global specific objective: *To ensure an effective and efficient implementation of Horizon 2020 and other RTD programmes and maximise synergies* whilst the relevant general objective is: *A new Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment*.

²⁷ Some ERC 2018 calls will also be launched in 2017 further to the adoption of the ERC WP 2018 foreseen to be adopted by the Commission in July 2017.

²⁸ Namely ERC – 2017 StG- Starting Grant, ERC – 2017- COG – Consolidator Grant and ERC – 2017 – PoC – Proof of Concept.

²⁹ Namely ERC-2016-AdG – Advanced Grant.

³⁰ For all projects that can be successfully concluded e.g. excluding terminations, withdrawals etc.

The outputs listed above, related to the ERC Specific objective *Excellent Science – ERC – Strengthening frontier research*, will in turn contribute helping DG RTD to achieve its specific objective: *to ensure an effective and efficient implementation of Horizon 2020 and other RTD programmes and maximise synergies*.

The implementation of the ERC WP by the ERCEA covers various processes from the management of calls, the evaluation of proposals received, the granting process³¹ as well as the financial and scientific follow up. Below are listed their related operational objectives together with indicators and targets enabling to measure their achievement.

Objectives	Performance indicators	2017 targets	Latest known results December 2016
Call management: Clear and stable guidance on the application procedures provided to applicants	a) % of ineligible proposals / total proposals submitted, per call	2017 StG, CoG, AdG calls: 1.5% PoC2017: 5%	2016-StG: 1.1% 2016-CoG: 0.9% 2016-AdG: 1.1% 2016-PoC-1: 0.7% 2016-PoC-2: 2.2% 2016-PoC-3: 15.5%
	b) Maximum % increase of submitted proposals from previous year by call	2017-StG: 10% 2017-CoG: 10% 2017-AdG: 10% 2017-PoC : 10%	2016-StG: 0.5% 2016-CoG: 12.3 % 2016-AdG: 23.1% 2016-PoC-1: 47.9% 2016-PoC-2: 25.2% 2016-PoC-3: 18.4%
	c) % success rate per call ³²	2016-AdG: 11% 2017-StG:14% 2017-CoG: 14% 2017-AdG: 12% 2017-PoC: 40%	2015-AdG: 13.8% 2016-StG: 11.1% 2016-CoG: 13.6 2016-PoC-1: 31 % 2016-PoC-2: 33.6% 2016-PoC-3: on-going
Evaluations: Feedback to all applicants on the evaluation result is timely, unbiased and transparent	Time to inform³³ all (average time in day) /successful applicants on the outcome of the evaluation of their application from the final date for submission of completed proposals³⁴	2016-AdG: 137/196³⁵ 2017-StG/CoG/AdG: 180/280 2017-PoC: 100	2015-AdG: 207/290 2015-PoC-3: 106 2016-StG:166/281 2016-CoG: 178/296 2016-PoC-1:112 2016-PoC-2: 77 2016-PoC-3: on-going
	Overall average number of remote referee reviews per proposal	2016-AdG: 2 2017-StG: 2 2017-CoG: 2 2017-AdG: 2	2015-AdG: 3.1 2016-StG: 3.5 2016-CoG: 3.7
	% of re-evaluations out of overall proposals submitted and following requests for redress	All calls: 0.1 %	2015-AdG: 0% 2016-StG: 0.07% 2016-CoG: 0% 2016-PoC-1: 0% 2016-PoC-2: 0% 2016-PoC-3: 0%
Ethical Review: To monitor that selected ERC proposals receive timely ethical clearance from competent authorities	Time to ethics clearance (average) ³⁶	45 days	2015 calls: 50 days 2016 calls: on-going

³¹ Indicators related to the granting process and the financial management are shown under part 4.1.2.

³² This indicator is calculated as follows: (Main+ Reserve)/Evaluated proposals.

³³ According to Article 20.3 of the Rules for Participation and dissemination in H2020 (cf. OJ. L347 of 20/12/2013, p. 92), the ERCEA may exceed the period of 5 months from the final date for submission of complete proposals to inform all applicants of the outcome of the scientific evaluation of their application.

³⁴ Indicators in bold are Key Performance Indicators. They are namely: "time to inform", "time to sign grant agreements from the date of informing successful applicants", and on p. 14 "budget execution" (commitment and payments), "time to pay" and "ex-post control error rate".

³⁵ Targets related to the evaluation process and regarding 2016 calls have been set in the ERCEA AWP 2016, based on the ERC WP 2016.

³⁶ Data relates to the pre-granting ethics review. This time span runs in parallel to the granting process.

Objectives	Performance indicators	2017 targets	Latest known results December 2016
<u>Time to grant:</u>³⁷ To minimise the duration of the granting process aiming at ensuring a prompt implementation of the Grant Agreements through a simple and transparent grant preparation process.	Time to sign grant agreements from the date of informing successful applicants (average values)	2016-StG: 145 days 2016- CoG: 145 days 2016- AdG: 130 days 2016-PoC-1/2/3:145 days 2017-PoC-1/2: 120 days	2015-StG: 137.2 2015-CoG: 168.3 2015-AdG: 114.8 2015-PoC-2: 185.7 2015-PoC-3: 161.7 2016-PoC-1: on-going 2016-PoC-2: on-going 2016-StG: on-going 2016-CoG: on-going
	Time to grant ³⁸ measured (average) from call deadline to signature of grants ³⁹	2016-StG: 434 days 2016-CoG: 448 days 2016-AdG: 326 days 2016-PoC-1: 235 days 2016-PoC-2: 285 days 2016-PoC-3: 250 days 2017-PoC-1/2: 220 days	2015-StG: 410.1 days 2015-CoG: 450.3 days 2015-AdG: 404.8 days 2015-PoC-2: 291.7 days 2015-PoC-3: 267.7 days 2016-PoC-1: on-going 2016-PoC-2: on-going 2016-StG: on-going 2016-CoG: on-going
<u>Scientific follow-up:</u> Timely communicate the assessment of PI's final scientific reports	% of final reports which exceeded 60 days	All calls: 1.5%	StG: 1% CoG: 0% AdG: 1% PoC: 2.6%

3.2 Support to the ERC Scientific Council

The Scientific Council also monitors the effective implementation of the Ideas and Horizon 2020 Specific Programmes⁴⁰ and evaluates the impact of the ERC activities.

In response to relevant requests by the members of the Scientific Council, the Agency will continue to deliver strategic documents and advise them in their activities and thus enabling the Council to fulfil its mandate, as well as to refine the scientific strategy and methodology when deemed necessary, while also considering the needs and constraints of the ERCEA.

The Scientific Council's support activities therefore cover:

- Analysis and drafting of various documents, to reflect the Scientific Council's main orientation, including the ERC Annual Work Programme and its Annual Report;
- The support in preparation of ERC's contribution to the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020 and the review of the MFF. This will include the preparation of studies on the ERC funding activities and their impact to be commissioned to external resources, as well as design and execution of studies to be conducted with internal capacity;
- The support to the President and other members of the Scientific Council in terms of briefings (expected in 2017 to about approximately 30), presentations (about approximately 60), data analysis (about approximately 15) for their participation in various events worldwide such as World Economic Forum meetings in Davos, the AAAS in the USA, the Falling Wall meeting in Berlin and the ERC 10 year anniversary event foreseen in Spring;
- Public Procurement Actions⁴¹, project follow-up⁴² or monitoring reports.⁴³

³⁷ Main and reserve list.

³⁸ According to Article 20.3 of the Rules for Participation and dissemination in H2020 (cf. OJ. L347 of 20/12/2013, p. 92), the ERCEA may exceed the period of 8 months from the final date for submission of complete proposals to signature of grant agreements with applicants.

³⁹ The target calculation excludes for reserve list proposals the time elapsed between the information and the invitation letter, in line with DG BUDG *Vade mecum*, 5.9.1 and 5.9.2.

⁴⁰ Council Decision 2013/743/EU of 3/12/2013 (OJ, L 347, 20/12/2013).

In addition, in view of supporting the Scientific Council's effective decision making process, the Agency provides background information and documents aiming at providing advice and assistance to the work of the Scientific Council and its Standing Committees and other Working Groups according to a timetable decided by the Scientific Council in the plenary meetings. A performance indicator has been established in agreement with the Scientific Council: it corresponds to the % of documents necessary for a plenary meeting that are delivered a week in advance (the benchmark of 80% has always been met). The ERCEA will also plan and organise logistics, including the timely compensation and the coordination of the timely transmission to the Scientific Council and Board of necessary documents⁴⁴. The 2017 target is to pay all Scientific Council members (100%) their compensations within 30 days following ERC meetings (latest known results December 2016: 100%).

PART 4. ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT

4.1. Relevant objectives and indicators

4.1.1. Human Resource Management

The objective of the ERCEA HR Unit is to manage the Agency's human resources, internal communication activities and to provide logistics and infrastructure support. The unit acts as a strategic partner aligned with the Agency's objectives and priorities and actively supports management and staff in view of ensuring the smooth operations of the ERCEA.

In 2017, the main focus of the unit continues to be the selection and recruitment of new staff: 21 new posts are foreseen in the staff allocation of 2017 while the average turnover of about 8% is expected. Staff turnover is likely to increase compared to previous years further to the expected adoption by the Commission of new Implementing Rules for Contract Agents and the subsequent launch of the inter-Agency job market for contract agents as well as the roll-out of the new permanent CAST selection procedure by EPSO. The unit will therefore prepare itself to hire about 60 new staff members within the year, aiming at reaching an occupation rate of 98%.

At the same time, the unit will put additional efforts in retaining and motivating its staff, with a series of targeted actions: personalised follow-up programme for newcomers, fostering the role of networks within the Agency, continuous actions to promote internal mobility as well as a broad offer of learning and development opportunities for all staff in line with the priorities set in the Agency's Learning and Development Strategy. The well-being of staff will be a major focus of the HR unit, too. The Vitality Week of 2015 will therefore be rolled-out as a Vitality Programme during 12 months in 2016 and 2017.

Finally, the following challenges are high on the unit's agenda for 2017: elaborating a multi-annual HR strategy, following up workload indicators and adjusting the Agency's structure and staffing to new challenges, adapting the staff's talent, skills and

⁴¹ In the course of 2017 there will be two running projects both launched via public procurement procedure: one on the impact of ERC funding on the researchers' careers and another one on open access research data management and sharing within ERC projects.

⁴² With regard to project follow-up, two grants to support open access will continue to run during 2017: "Support to the Europe PMC initiative – Co-funding grant for the 2016-2021 period" and "Support towards the OAPEN initiative (2015-2016)".

⁴³ Regarding monitoring reports, a Group of Expert has been contracted to support the ERC in assessing the first five year of the Proof of Concept Grant.

⁴⁴ In 2017 the Scientific Council is expected to meet five times in plenary session: February, April, June, October and December either in Brussels or in other ERA countries, upon invitation of national authorities. Each of the following committee and working group will meet between one and three times: the Standing Committee on Conflict of Interest and Scientific Misconduct as well as the Committee on Panels and the five working groups (Innovation and Relations with Industry, Gender Balance, Open Access, Widening participation and on KPIs). All these meetings, involving various sub-groups of the Scientific Council, including the Board meetings could exceed 30 per year.

competencies to new requirements, enhancing knowledge sharing and the use of collaborative tools, finalising the digitalisation of all personnel files and continuing negotiations with OIB on a mid-term office space solution for the Agency.

Objective: The EA deploys effectively its resources in support of the delivery of the Commission's priorities and core business, has a competent and engaged workforce, which is driven by an effective and gender-balanced management and which can deploy its full potential within supportive and healthy working conditions.

Indicator 1: Percentage of female representation in middle management

Source of data: ERCEA

Baseline (2014: 44.4%)	Target 50% (2018)
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Indicator 2: Percentage of staff who feel that the Commission cares about their well-being

Source of data: Commission staff survey

Baseline (2014: 47.6%)	Target 60% (2018) The implementation of a series of wellbeing actions (including a. o. Vitality programme) will contribute to meeting this target in 2018)
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Indicator 3: Staff engagement index

Source of data: Commission staff survey

Baseline (2014: 67%)	Target 70% ⁴⁵ (2018) The implementation of a series of actions focused on staff motivation will contribute to meeting this target in 2018
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Main outputs in 2017:

Output	Indicator	Target
To support Agency's core business by providing the required number of staff on time	Occupation rate at year end	98%
To develop internal mobility in order to offer more career development prospects to staff	% of staff movements within the ERCEA ⁴⁶	9%

⁴⁵ The result of the staff engagement index was 67% in 2014 and reached 70.5% in 2016. The ERCEA would like to maintain this very good result while keeping a realistic target of 70%.

⁴⁶ Number of staff movements within the ERCEA divided by the average number of staff over the year.

4.1.2. Financial Management: Internal control and Risk Management

Overarching objective: The Authorising Officer by Delegation should have reasonable assurance that resources have been used in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions including prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities.

The Agency is committed to continuously monitor and report on the compliance and effectiveness of its internal control system while being proportionate to its risks as to ensure that reasonable assurance can be given in line with the above overarching objective.

As in previous years, the ERCEA will manage in 2017 financial and non-financial risks related to the delegated programmes and to its administrative budget. The risk assessment exercise conducted during the third quarter of 2016 did not result in critical risks been identified for 2017.

The first significant number of H2020 interim and final payments (about 1000) will be due in 2017. These will represent approximately 32% of the H2020 total voted payment credits (C1 credits), in line with the maturity of the grant portfolio.

Although the first H2020 ex-post audit campaign will be launched in 2017 by the Common Audit Service (CAS), only a very limited number (about 20) of H2020 payments related to ERCEA are expected to be selected, thus mitigating measures will have to be implemented to obtain sufficient evidence to support the 2017 declaration of assurance.

Regarding FP7 payments the ERCEA manages the ex-post controls in line with the FP7 Common Audit Strategy and is part of the FP7 Common Representative audit Samples (CRaS 1 & 2). To conclude on the legality and regularity of transactions, the ERCEA does not rely however on the common approach of the CRaS, since the risk profile of the Ideas beneficiaries is inherently lower compared to the rest of the FP7. Thus, while contributing to the Research Family common strategy by performing audits, the ERCEA has adopted an alternative assessment pattern as part of its audit strategy and implemented its own multi-annual ex-post controls indicators to provide assurance to the Authorising Officer by Delegation on the ERC specific population. These control indicators reflect the multi-annual results of audits performed on a representative sample ("ERCEA MUS250") and on a risk based sample of ERCEA expenditure.

Objective 1: Effective and reliable internal control system giving the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and the regularity of the underlying transactions

Indicator 1: ERCEA FP7 Estimated residual error rate⁴⁷

Source of data: ERCEA AAR 2016

Baseline: 2016	Target
0.85%	Below the materiality threshold of 2%

Indicator 2: ERCEA FP7 Estimated overall amount at risk for the year for the entire budget under the EAs responsibility.

⁴⁷ For the definition, see the first annex to the AAR instructions 2014 "Key definitions for determining amounts at risk" at <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/budgweb/EN/rep/aar/Documents/aar-standing-instructions.pdf>.

Source of data: ERCEA AAR 2016		
Baseline: 2016	Target	
11.9 million €	none	
Indicator 3: ERCEA FP7 Estimated future corrections		
Source of data: ERCEA AAR 2016		
Baseline: 2016	Target	
3.6 million €	none	
Main outputs in 2017:		
Output	Indicators	Targets
FP7 ERCEA Ex-post controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Audits launched - Audits closed - Completion of audit plan - Audit Coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 60 - 60 - 100% - 6%-7%

To ensure the continuous effectiveness of its internal control system, the Agency will closely monitor on a regular basis the effective implementation of risk mitigating measures, exception requests and non-compliance events, internal control weaknesses and audit recommendations (Court of Auditors and Internal Audit Service). Finally, the ERCEA will implement the revised Internal Control Framework upon its adoption by the Commission.

Objective 2: Effective and reliable internal control system in line with sound financial management.

Indicator 1: Conclusion reached on cost-effectiveness of controls
Source of data: ERCEA AAR 2015

Baseline: 2016	Target
Yes	Yes

Indicator 2: Cost of controls over operational expenditure (commitments)

Baseline: 2016	Target
2.8%	Below 3% of the operational commitments made

Main outputs in 2017:

Output	Indicator	Target
To ensure the effectiveness of the internal control system	Number of critical audit recommendation	none

Financial transactions are part of the core activities of the financial management of ERC-funded projects entrusted to the Grant Management Department. In the light of the parallel running of the two framework programmes and the increased volume of transactions, execution of payment credits requires a coherent and consistent interpretation of the rules and regulations and effective controls across the units while meeting performance indicators' targets summarised in the table below:

Objectives	Performance indicators	2017 Targets		Latest known results December 2016	
		H2020	FP7	H2020	FP7
To maximise execution of the operational commitment credits delegated to ERCEA by the European Commission	% execution of L1 commitment ⁴⁸	100%		100%	
	% execution of L2/L1 commitment (C8)	100%		99.99%	
To ensure full yearly execution of payments credits (operational budget) through careful planning and monitoring	% execution of payment credits (C1)	100%	100%	100%	100%
Minimise financial and legal transaction time for ERC beneficiaries	a) time to pay (% according to milestones & budget table specified in the Description of Work and processing payments ie economic target days)	Pre-financing: 85% within 20 days		91.5% (average 8.8 days)	
		Interim payment: 95% within 90 days	IP: 95% within 90 days	100% (average 34.8 days)	98.9% (average 29.3 days)
		Final payment: 95% within 90 days	FP: 95% within 90 days	100% (average 55 days)	98% (average 43.8 days)
	b) time to invoice (% within 5 days)	95%	95%	97.3%	98.9%
	c) time to amend (% approved or rejected within 45 days upon receipt of valid request)	95%	95%	73.4% (average 36.3 days)	99.7% (average 13.2 days)
Expert management: To fully execute the yearly experts' operational budget by executing efficient payment process	a) time to pay (average)	100% within 30 days		98.9% (average 13.3 days)	
	b) % of experts payments budget execution (C1)	100%		100%	
To ensure legality and regularity of underlying transactions to support ERCEA's positive Declaration of Assurance	ERCEA FP7 specific error rate ⁴⁹		MUS residual error rate <2%		MUS residual error rate: 0.85%

During 2017 the implementation of the Anti-Fraud Action Plan updated in 2016, will continue to be monitored by the Anti-Fraud Sector and will require, inter alia, maintaining an adequate level of interaction and coordination with the anti-fraud networks of the Research Family and OLAF.

In addition, the Anti-Fraud Sector will continue to ensure an effective coordination with OLAF on detected and reported cases of serious irregularities and potential fraud.

⁴⁸ Indicators in bold are Key Performance Indicators. They are namely: "time to inform", "time to sign grant agreements from the date of informing successful applicants", which can be found on p.8-9 "budget execution" (commitment and payments), "time to pay" and "ex-post control error rate",

⁴⁹ i.e. MUS ERCEA residual error rate, computed on the basis of MUS detected error rates.

Objective 3: Minimisation of the risk of fraud through application of effective anti-fraud measures, integrated in all activities of the EA, based on the EA's anti-fraud strategy (AFS) aimed at the prevention, detection and reparation of fraud.

Indicator 1: Updated anti-fraud strategy of the ERCEA, elaborated on the basis of the methodology provided by OLAF⁵⁰

Source of data: ERCEA AFS

Baseline	Target
Date of the last update: 12/11/2015	The Strategy shall be updated when there is a need for achieving effective alignment of the AFS due to changing circumstances and/or revised systems/programmes

Indicator 2 : Fraud awareness is increased for target population as identified in the Action Plan of the Agency's AFS

Source of data: ERCEA's AFS

Baseline	Target
2016	80% of target population reached by 2017

Indicator 3 : Regular monitoring of the implementation of the anti-fraud strategy and reporting on its result to management

Source of data: ERCEA's AFS

Baseline	Target
2016	-Bi-annual Report to the Director on irregularities and potential fraud cases -Annual reporting to the Director on the implementation of the Action Plan attached to the AFS

Main outputs in 2017:

Output	Indicator	Target
Targeted risk assessment on fraud	Timely completion of the activity	Yearly update of fraud risks and Action Plan of the AFS by 2017
Revision of anti-fraud dedicated procedures	Timely completion of the activity	Update as appropriate the "Scientific misconduct" and "handling and reporting irregularities and potential fraud" procedures by the end of 2017

4.1.3 Information management

The main objective of the Document Management Centre (DMC) is to apply the e-Domec policy at ERCEA by fulfilling the legal obligations related to document management. To this end, the DMC assesses the risks related to Document management, provides advice to services, manages access rights to official documents, trains and supports ERCEA staff in using the dedicated tools (Hermes-Ares-Noncom), shares working methods in an hybrid (paper and electronic) working environment, and contributes to the information management policy.

For 2017 the DMC has as main goal to reach the established objectives concerning document management and to contribute in the development and implementation of the Data, information and knowledge management strategy at Agency level.

⁵⁰ The methodology can be found on the FPDNet website: [https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/serv/en/fraudprevention/ToolBox/Documents/20151022%20%20Methodology%20and%20guidance%20for%20ODGs%20antifraud%20strategies%20ARES\(2015\)4712738.pdf](https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/serv/en/fraudprevention/ToolBox/Documents/20151022%20%20Methodology%20and%20guidance%20for%20ODGs%20antifraud%20strategies%20ARES(2015)4712738.pdf) .

Objective: Information and knowledge in ERCEA is shared and reusable by other Commission services. Important documents are registered, filed and retrievable

Indicator 1: Percentage of registered documents that are not filed⁵¹ (ratio)

Source of data: *Hermes-Ares-Nomcom (HAN)⁵² statistics*

Baseline 2014	Target
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0.95 %	1 % ⁵³
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Indicator 2: Percentage of HAN files readable/accessible by all units in the EA

Source of data: *HAN statistics*

Baseline	Target
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87.8 %	90 %
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Indicator 3: Percentage of HAN files shared with other Commission services

Source of data: *HAN statistics*

Baseline	Target
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33.8%	35 %
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Indicator 4: Implementation of a training policy to increase knowledge of EA staff (Welcoming sessions for newcomers)

Source of data: **DMC/HR – Selections and recruitment**

Baseline:	Target
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none (new indicator)	75 % of newcomers to be trained ⁵⁴
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Main outputs in 2017:

Output	Indicator	Target
e-Domec correspondents network activity.	Number of meetings, specific trainings, events, communication exercise toward the network.	5 / year.

4.1.4 IT

The objective of the unit is to timely deliver and maintain reliable IT tools, IT infrastructure and support services to underpin business processes.

The main focus for 2017 of the unit will be on:

- Collaboration with the Common Support Centre to integrate the Agency's specific requirements in the common systems in the areas of evaluation, expert and grant management of the H2020 programme. It is the strategy to converge to the common systems and to phase out local solutions for ERCEA processes that could be completely serviced by the common systems;
- Development and maintenance of IT systems on request of the Scientific Council (in particular for the initiatives of "Science behind the projects - (SBP)", "Science

⁵¹ Each registered document must be filed in at least one official file of the *Chef de file*, as required by the [e-Domec policy rules](#) (and by ICS 11 requirements). The indicator is to be measured via reporting tools available in Ares.

⁵² Suite of tools designed to implement the [e-Domec policy rules](#).

⁵³ The figure has been rounded to 1% to simplify the communication around this challenging target, as filling is a process involving almost all staff.

⁵⁴ Number of training sessions/coaching given by the DMC compared with number of newcomers.

after the project - (SAP)" and "Panel Member Nominations and Competence - (PAN)");

- Maintenance of the local IT systems to ensure the continuation of FP7 activities;
- Provisioning of support services for the internal users (complementary to the ITIC service) and external users (for the evaluation and expert management processes) together with logistic services;
- Maintaining a local set of IT tools to manage the administration of the Agency in the operational areas as well as resources and support services, aiming at increasing the productivity of the business operations;
- Provisioning of a consolidated, reliable and secure IT infrastructure;
- Maintaining and providing support for reporting, forecasting, knowledge management and business intelligence tools that are not currently supported by H2020 systems.

4.1.5 External Communication

The ERC is acknowledged worldwide as a label of excellence, a European success story. Researchers and public at large increasingly value its brand, recognising the tangible impact of the research it funds. By supporting the best research and making Europe a magnet for world-class talent, the ERC contributes actively to President Juncker political guidelines, pushing knowledge forward in a variety of fields: financial markets, energy and climate, migration, fundamental rights, new media, digital agenda, etc. Furthermore, the ERC backs EU's job creation, long-term growth and investment, encouraging the establishment of new research teams in Europe and supporting young talent.

To consolidate this positive image and successful EU funding model, in 2017 ERC communication efforts will be particularly directed to the organisation of the celebrations for the 10th Anniversary of the ERC, including an "ERC Week" across Europe.

Objective: Citizens perceive that the EU is working to improve their lives and engage with the EU. They feel that their concerns are taken into consideration in European decision making and they know about their rights in the EU.

Indicator 1: Percentage of EU citizens having a positive image of the EU
Definition: Eurobarometer measures the state of public opinion in the EU Member States. This global indicator is influenced by many factors, including the work of other EU institutions and national governments, as well as political and economic factors, not just the communication actions of the Commission. It is relevant as a proxy for the overall perception of the EU citizens. Positive visibility for the EU is the desirable corporate outcome of Commission communication, even if individual EAs' actions may only make a small contribution.

Source of data: Standard Eurobarometer (DG COMM budget)

Baseline: November 2014	Target: 2020
Total "Positive": 39% Neutral: 37 % Total "Negative": 22%	Positive image of the EU ≥ 50%

Main outputs in 2017:

Output	Indicator	Target
ERC week - promoting the work and impact of the ERC across Europe	Number of events	12 events
ERC 10 th anniversary Brussels' event	Number of participants	400 participants

Annual communication spending:	
Baseline (2015)	Estimated commitments (2017)
515 000 euros	630 000 euros

In addition to the first objective, ERC communication activities will continue to be built around three pillars, as identified in ERC's external communication strategy 2017⁵⁵:

- Disseminating timely information on ERC funding opportunities under Horizon 2020 to the scientific community, the national and international media, policy makers and the general public. Communication channels for the promotion of calls and results include the ERC website, social media, ERC presence at conferences and events and the NCP (National Contact Point) network. Special effort will be done for widening participation in Europe and outside-ERA, via autonomous "ERC open to the World" communication actions, or by joining parent DG campaigns.
- Highlight ERC projects, researchers and calls' results: the focus will continue to be on communicating the ERC's excellence, results and achievements. These activities will continue to be supported by the multiannual communication campaign funded by a CSA, signed in 2015.
- Consolidate the ERC image: actions will be carried out during the year to increase the public knowledge of the ERC and of its research projects and their impact among policy-makers, stakeholders and citizens at large.

Objective	Performance indicators	2017 targets	Latest known results December 2016
To raise visibility and awareness of the European and worldwide scientific community and policy makers on ERC and its funding opportunities, key developments and project results ⁵⁶	Number of ERC website visitors	550 000 visitors	561 615 visitors
	ERC Press coverage (number of articles/interviews mentioning ERC published and print circulation)	7 000 media items mentioning the ERC 80 million copies	10 521 media items mentioning the ERC 136 million copies
	Social media followers	30 000 Twitter followers 18 000 Facebook likes	28 248 Twitter followers 14 650 Facebook likes

4.1.6 Example of initiative to improve economy and efficiency of financial and non-financial activities of the Agency

Work has been ongoing with the Common Support Centre to finalise the full integration of scientific /ethical consultation on amendments into the Compass workflow. Once this development effort will be finalised in 2017, it is expected that seamless integration of these features into the system will save time and resources previously used on managing the same process with multiple systems such as Ares and Excel.

⁵⁵ Cf. Ares(2016)7040207 of 19/12/2016.

⁵⁶ This operational objective concerning ERC communication activities contributes to some extent to DG RTD's specific objective *to translate Europe's strengths in science and technology into a global voice.*

4.2 Operating budget, staff and operational appropriations

4.2.1 Operating budget

2017 - Budget title		EU contribution	EFTA/EEA contribution	Third countries' Contributions	Total appropriations (€ million)
Title 1	Staff expenditure	34.474.073	841.167	555.460	35 870 700
Title 2	Infrastructure and operating expenditure	7.003.088	170.876	112.836	7 286 800
Title 3	Programme support expenditure	3.644.839	88.934	58.727	3 792 500
Total		45 122 000⁵⁷	1.100.977	727.023	46 950 000

Objective	Performance indicator	2017 Target	Latest known results December 2016	
			Budget 2016 (C1)	Budget 2015(C1+C8)
To ensure sound financial management of ERCEA's operating budget as well as the regularity and legality of its underlying transactions	% budget execution commitments	99%	99.7 %	
	% budget execution payments	99%		98.7 %
	% of error in transactions related to staff expenditure (salaries) detected through ex-ante checks	<1.5%	1.5%	
	Time to pay	<15 days	9 days	
	Number (and % of total) of late payments for the administrative budget	<20 (<1 %)	7 (0.3 %)	
	No material findings related to the sound financial management and legality and regularity of budget's underlying transactions in the financial report of the CoA	None		None

⁵⁷ A modification to the amount of the EC contribution to the administrative budget not exceeding 5% shall not be considered as substantial change within the meaning of Article 94(4) of Delegated Regulation (EU) N°1268/2014. A modification to the amount of the EC contribution could only be requested from the budget authority in the course of the budget year up to the maximum amount foreseen in the specific financial statement for the given year.

4.2.2 Human resources

The following figures are indicative.

Programmes	2017 - Staff (EU Budget)					
	TAs	Of which Seconded officials	CAs	SNEs	Total	Percentage
FP7						
FP7	30	6	79	6	115	24.5%
Management and administrative support	5	1	18	0	23	4.9%
Subtotal	35	7	97	6	138	29.5%
H2020						
H2020	72	10	192	10	274	58.6%
Management and Administrative Support	11	3	45	0	56	11.9%
Subtotal	83	13	237	10	330	70.5%
Total	118	20	334	16	468	100%

Staff financed by contributions from EFTA and/or third countries

Staff allocated to operational activities	14
Staff allocated to management and administration	0
Total	14

4.2.3 Delegated operational appropriations

2017 - Budget lines		Commitment appropriations (€)			Payment appropriations ⁵⁸ (€)		
		EU Budget	EFTA/EEA	Total	EU Budget	EFTA/EEA	Total
FP7							
Budget line	08.025100	/	/	/	508 826 007	12 415 355	521 241 362
H2020							
Budget line	08 02 01 01	1 753 136 644	42 776 534	1 795 913 178⁵⁹	935 148 152	22 818 835	957 966 987
Total of the operational budget managed by the Executive Agency:		1 753 136 644	42 776 534	1 795 913 178	1 443 974 159	35 234 189	1 479 208 349

⁵⁸ Payment appropriations may be subject to revision during the year.

⁵⁹ The Commitment appropriations figures of budget line 08 02 01 01 differ from the ones provided in the ERC Work Programme 2017 adopted on 25 July 2016. This discrepancy comes from the budget modification that took place in November 2016 and which concluded with the Conciliation (on 16-17 November 2016) between the European Parliament and the Council by an increase of 16 665 000 € in commitment appropriations for budget line 08 02 01 01.