

A Statement by the ERC Scientific Council regarding the Conference on the Future of Europe

The Conference on the Future of Europe has now been launched¹. It invites Europe's citizens to put forward their own ideas in an original format combining direct participation through a platform managed by the European Commission as well as a series of debates involving panels of randomly chosen citizens.

The conference is promoted as an opportunity to speak up, to express what kind of Europe people want to live in, and to help shape our future. As scientists, we are aware that the future of Europe will be largely shaped by how it performs in Research and Innovation. A list of nine key topics to be addressed has been chosen such as climate change, health and social justice (with the possibility of a tenth category "Others").

The ongoing pandemic has shown to all of us how much we rely on the dedication and skills of Europe's researchers. They will be needed more than ever to help our societies make fundamental green and digital transitions while maintaining readiness to address unexpected future challenges, in the context of a very competitive international environment.

Therefore, we are highly concerned to see that research and innovation were not identified as priority topics for discussion by the organisers of the Conference.

Thus, we, the members of the ERC Scientific Council, urge all those involved in developing research and research policies in Europe to support our views by all means available (to submit ideas via the online platform, to organise events, to get involved in the citizens panels) during this year of reflection.

For our own part, the ERC Scientific Council will use this time to engage further with the public and promote the value of the research carried out by ERC grantees. We will:

- further inform the general public about the contributions of ERC-funded researchers with a focus on those directly relevant to the future of Europe;
- make the necessity of the frontier research that the ERC is funding explicit to a wider public, and share with them the passion of scientists, as well as the close personal engagement that a career in science entails;
- get more people to appreciate how frontier research fundamentally shapes the future of Europe and, in so doing, stimulate their interest in the sciences and in humanities;
- illustrate to a wider public the diverse ways scientific research is done in various fields as well as how essential a solid training in science is, regardless whether one follows an academic career or not.

¹ On Europe Day, EU kicks off 'conference' on its future

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/conference-on-the-future-of-europe/>

Building on the Statement of Principles on Public Engagement agreed by the Global Research Council in May² we would also urge other research funders, researcher organisations and individual researchers to conjugate their efforts and pursue similar campaigns to get the process by which research and innovation impact society better understood.

It is absolutely critical that Europe continues to support and promote the value of science and in particular to ensure that research remains an attractive career for its next generation.

²https://www.globalresearchcouncil.org/fileadmin//documents/GRC_Publications/Sof/new_logo_2020_GRC_FINAL_Statement_of_Principles_Public_Engagement.pdf