

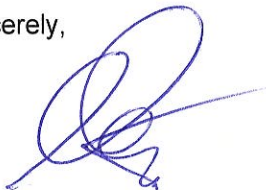
**Friends of the ERC  
25th May 2020**

As Masaryk University, we hereby declare full support for the European Research Council (ERC). The scale of the COVID-19 crisis demonstrates the need for strong, independent basic research building versatile knowledge base and capacity to deal with the unexpected events. Though highly selective, and in terms of awarded grants geographically concentrated to the well-performing countries of Europe, we believe that the ERC has not only funded many breakthrough discoveries, but also contributed to European cohesion by embedding a common understanding of excellence in science, and showing the means to support it.

The fact that ERC gained a prominent reputation across Europe has recently been driving the progress in less-performing countries, such as the Czech Republic. With ERC – a recognized brand of excellence – as a desired funding source, universities and research institutions in our country are motivated to promote brain circulation, open junior leader position, and foster creativity and innovativeness. The generosity and outstanding conditions of ERC grants build the ground for prosperity of teams addressing difficult challenges, pursuing high-risk objectives with the potential to ground-breaking discoveries that in turn have the potential for transformative impact on societies and markets. Without the push on excellence and innovativeness demonstrated by the ERC, national funders, policy makers, and consecutively research leaders and managers focused on short-term impact and risk avoidance. ERC thus contributed to a transition of the Czech system from quantity- and indicator-oriented, toward one based on trust and autonomy.

The openness of the ERC to share its evaluation results has given our national authorities an opportunity to fund researchers evaluated by ERC panels as excellent, but rejected due to lack of financial resources. Moreover, the success of ERC inspired our national funders to develop “mirror” funding schemes, which greatly improved the accessibility of funding and conditions for ambitious long-term oriented research in our country. While these novelties create an environment more open to outstanding scientific leaders and allow realization of more ground-breaking ideas and projects, the brand of the ERC remains unique. Unfortunately, very few researchers working in Czechia receive funding from the ERC directly and we are aware of many who are rejected not due to lacking quality, but due to low financial allocation in the calls. Increasing the budget of ERC would support more leaders and role models in less-performing countries. And it highly motivates these leaders who transform and improve the national systems and environments, so that they catch up with the well-performing and create more value and synergy in the European Research Area.

Yours sincerely,



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rector

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