



Heraklion, November 9, 2020

PRESS RELEASE

Professor Nektarios Tavernarakis elected Vice President of the European Research Council

As announced today in Brussels, Nektarios Tavernarakis, Chairman of the Board of Directors at the Foundation for Research and Technology – Hellas (FORTH), and Professor at the Medical School of the University of Crete, was unanimously elected Vice President of the European Research Council (ERC). Nektarios Tavernarakis will be in charge of ERC activities in the domain of Life Sciences, assuming duties on January 2021. He has been a member of the ERC Scientific Council since 2016, after being selected by an independent Identification Committee, of six distinguished scientists appointed by the European Commission. The scientific community was also consulted in this process.

Nektarios Tavernarakis is the first Greek to have been elected Vice President of the ERC, following an outstanding scientific and managerial career, with substantial contributions in frontier research and important initiatives towards promoting excellence and innovation. This significant distinction comes as recognition of the scientific quality and the highly competitive research conducted at FORTH and the University of Crete.

The ERC Scientific Council, which is composed of 22 eminent scientists and scholars, representing the European scientific community, is the governing body of the European Research Council. Its main role is setting the ERC strategy, selecting proposal evaluators and promoting creativity and innovative research. The ERC Scientific Council is chaired by the ERC President, who is assisted by three Vice Presidents that represent the three ERC domains: the Life Sciences, the Physical Sciences and Engineering, and the Social Sciences and Humanities. Vice Presidents are elected by the ERC Scientific Council and they are also members of the ERC Board, which oversees the implementation of the ERC strategy and work programme, established by the Scientific Council.

The European Research Council, set up by the EU in 2007, selects and funds the very best, creative researchers of any nationality and age, to run projects based in Europe. Since 2007, close to 10.000 top researchers have been selected for funding through open competitions and over 110.000 articles acknowledging ERC support have been published in international scientific journals. ERC grantees have won prestigious prizes, including 7 Nobel Prizes, 4 Fields Medals and 5 Wolf Prizes. The ERC has already enabled researchers to pursue promising avenues, leading to scientific breakthroughs, and has also attracted top researchers from all over the world, to Europe. ERC's budget in the framework of the "Horizon 2020" programme exceeds 13.3 billion €.

Professor Tavernarakis stated: *I am deeply honoured to have been elected Vice-President of the European Research Council, for the Life Sciences Domain. Having witnessed firsthand, as a grantee, the transformative impact of ERC on European science, I am wholeheartedly committed towards contributing to its mission, in my capacity as a member of the ERC Scientific Council, and now as Vice-President. The ERC is not merely a success story in the framework of the European ideal; it stands as a radiant paradigm of how prudent investment in frontier research can reap enormous benefits for society and the scientific community. I am looking forward to working closely with my colleagues at the Scientific Council, across all three domains, to serve science by building on ERC's legacy of fostering excellence and high*

quality research. Today, more than ever, the need for ERC's support of bottom up, blue skies research is even more relevant. It is this strategy that stands any chance of protecting us in the face of unpredictable threats, and is best poised to address the diverse and complex challenges our world is confronted with.

Short Biography

Nektarios Tavernarakis is the Chairman of the Board of Directors at the Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas (FORTH), Research Director at the Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (IMBB), and Professor of Molecular Systems Biology at the Medical School of the University of Crete, in Heraklion, Greece. He is the Director of the Graduate Program on Bioinformatics at the Medical School of the University of Crete, and is also heading the Neurogenetics and Ageing laboratory of IMBB. He is an elected corresponding member of the Academy of Athens, an elected member and Vice President of the Scientific Council of the European Research Council (ERC), and an elected member of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Governing Board and Executive Committee, the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO), the German National Academy of Sciences (Leopoldina), the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, and Academia Europaea. He has also served as the Director of the Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology. He earned his Ph.D. degree at the University of Crete, and trained as a postdoctoral researcher at Rutgers University in New Jersey, USA. His research focuses on the molecular mechanisms of necrotic cell death and neurodegeneration, the interplay between cellular metabolism and ageing, the mechanisms of sensory transduction and integration by the nervous system, and the development of novel genetic tools for biomedical research. He has published numerous scientific papers in top-tier, cross-discipline, international scientific journals, in addition to invited book chapters, and other publications, including editorials, commentaries, and science-popularizing articles. His research has been commended internationally, and is supported by highly competitive funding from the European Union, international organizations and the Greek Government. For his scientific accomplishments, he has received several notable scientific prizes, including two ERC Advanced Investigator Grants, and an innovation-supporting ERC Proof of Concept Grant. He is one of the first in Europe, and the first in Greece, to have been awarded this highly competitive and prestigious grant twice. He is also the recipient of the EMBO Young Investigator award, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel research award, the Bodossaki Foundation Scientific Prize for Medicine and Biology, the Empeirikeion Foundation Academic Excellence Prize, the Research Excellence award of the Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, the BioMedical Research Award of the Academy of Athens, the Galien Scientific Research Award, the Helmholtz International Fellow Award, the International Human Frontier in Science Program Organization (HFSP) long-term Postdoctoral Fellowship, the Honorary Education Business Award, and the Dr. Frederick Valergakis Post-Graduate Research Grant Program Academic Achievement Award of the Hellenic University Club of New York.

For more information, please visit the website of the European Research Council: <https://erc.europa.eu/>