



Opening Session of the Conference

**“Enhancing the Attractiveness of European Universities as a
Destination for World-Class Researchers”**

5 de novembre del 2012

Auditori del campus de la Ciutadella

Dear...

Prof. Carmen Vela Olmo, Secretary of State for Research, Development and Innovation in the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness

Prof. Andreu Mas-Colell, Catalan Minister of Economy and Knowledge

Prof. Helga Nowotny, President of the European Research Council

Prof. Octavi Quintana, Director of the European Research Area in the European Commission

Prof. Jorge Sainz González, General Director of University Policy in the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport

Prof. Luis Serrano, director of the Center for Genomic Regulation

Dear professors, academics and colleagues,

Welcome to Pompeu Fabra University. We are honoured to host today's conference, an event that aims to promote dialogue and debate on how to enhance the attractiveness of European universities as a destination for world-class researchers. And, in the first place, I would like to thank the European Research Council for its active participation in the organisation of the act.

During today's event, best practices for attracting and retaining top researchers in different European policy frameworks will be brought up, including those developed in response to the ERC calls and its outcomes. As we have seen since its establishment in 2007, the ERC has achieved global recognition and become a *de-facto* benchmark allowing national systems to assess their relative strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, a specific focus will be given today to the added value of ERC's calls and its funding strategy, not only from the perspective of policy makers and universities but also from the viewpoint of ERC grant-holders.

Indeed, the work developed by the European Research Council in these five years –“finding, funding and empowering the best researchers” as prof. Nowotny said recently– is truly remarkable. Its investment in fundamental research has brought enormous benefits for European science and its society: from the construction of an incipient scientific community with no boundaries in Europe to the transformation of basic research into innovative products and services that, ultimately, should contribute to address the current economic crisis, with its consequences.

On the other hand, as I was saying before, initiatives like the ERC grants not only have contributed to launch new research projects at the frontier of knowledge, but also to enhance a research-based profile at their hosting institutions. And this institutional commitment is especially necessary in the

current circumstances, when drain brain is an issue that higher education institutions have to face, especially the ones facing a rigid context and a restrictive budget.

Today, with about 1% of Spain's research personnel, the UPF Group -with the Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG) and the Research Center for International Economics (CREI) among its most outstanding affiliated institutions– holds about 20% of the ERC grants in Spain. This makes UPF the first Spanish university and one of the twenty European universities with more grants awarded by the European Research Council.

Indeed, these results have influenced the recruitment policy established at the University, which has been opened to international talent with a high research potential or an internationally proven track record since its beginning. Concurrently, our researchers are also highly involved in the European research policy, making a place for themselves within the European scientific community. For example, significantly they are part of the ERC Scientific Council where two of the three Spanish representatives are members of the UPF Group.

All together shows our commitment to the European research policy because, now, more than ever, Europe needs its scientific community's commitment and unity to continue at the forefront of science; to make possible its "Horizon 2020".

To conclude, I think it is the time to get started. I invite you all to take advantage of today's conference and I hope your stay in Barcelona and especially at UPF will be fully satisfactory and rewarding.

And now I am very pleased to give the floor to Prof. Nowotny, current president of the European Research Council, who will give the keynote speech.

(Prof. Nowotny SPEECH)

(...)

Thank you very much, professor Nowotny.