Prof. Maurizio Vichi

President

To:
Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon, President ERC

Professor Klaus Bock, Vice-President ERC
Professor Eva Kondorosi, Vice-President ERC
Professor Martin Stokhof, Vice-President ERC

Rome, 22 February 2017

Dear   President ERC, Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon,
       and
       Vice-Presidents ERC, Professors Klaus Bock, Eva Kondorosi and Martin Stokhof,

on behalf of the Federation of the European National Statistical Societies (FENStatS) and with the ethical support of European Official Statistics, represented by EUROSTAT (DG Mariana Kotzeva), European Central Bank Directorate General Statistics (DG Aurel Schubert) and UNECE (DG Lidia Bratanova), we would like to ask the establishment, within the ERC system, of a separate panel for "Statistics".

This request is firstly motivated by the fact that there is an increasing need of Statistics in the European Research. New innovative statistical methodologies to deal with the increasing abundance of automatically produced data, for example, by advanced experiments, connected persons and connected things, are needed. European citizens require new advanced statistics tools to make evidence based decisions. Industry 4.0 needs new statistical procedures for automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies. Statistics has a central and fundamental impact in the areas of Data Science and Big Data. New statistical methods are also needed for optimizing decisions in evidence based medicine, in biostatistics and in genomic research. These are only few examples where new statistical methodologies must be studied to help scientists in developing new innovative, modern and emerging fields of research. Advanced statistics methods are fundamental tools to reach excellence in scientific research.

In the ERC system, the current organization of the descriptors connected with Statistics is not sufficient to deal with the increasing needs of Statistics coming by different fields in the last years. "Statistics" appears in the panel PE1-Mathematics only as a "descriptor", and the panel gives some real chance of success to proposals in "mathematical statistics". This is so although in principle the Statistics term, as a descriptor of the PE1 area, refers to the whole of the discipline. The effect of this

situation can be perceived by examining the list of successful ERC-funded grants, accessible from the following web page:

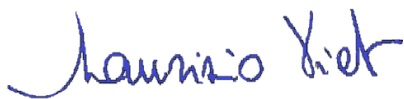https://erc.europa.eu/projects-and-results/erc-funded-projects

Out of 122 funded projects within the PE1 panel and the Starting Grant scheme for the years 2007 to 2013, there have been only four of clear statistical imprint, plus two more with some limited statistical content. The situation is not better for the Advanced Grant scheme: out of 96 such grants in the period 2008 to 2013, there have been two with a clear statistical connotation, plus a few more with some limited statistical content.

Clearly, this situation represents a limit to the development of excellence in Statistics in Europe, and it gives the impression to our junior colleagues that statistical methods do not reach excellence in Europe or are not considered such by the ERC.

A consequence of the above depicted empirical evidences is that the number of applicants to ERC projects is rapidly decreasing in the community of statisticians. In fact, it is increasing the belief that it is not worthwhile to propose a scientific project to ERC for the persuasion that in any case projects will not be taken in the due consideration in the evaluation phase.

I remain at your disposal for any discussion and for a meeting that can help to solve this situation. Best regards and thank you very much for your attention.

Prof. Maurizio Vichi
President of the Federation of European
National Statistical Societies

European National Statistical Societies that co-signed this letter

Prof. Marek Malý, President
Česká statistická společnost (Czech Statistical Society, ČStS)

Prof. Wolfgang Schmid, President
Deutsche Statistische Gesellschaft (German Statistical Society, DStatG)

Prof. Werner Muller, President
Österreichische Statistische Gesellschaft (Austrian Statistical Society, ÖSG)

Prof. Emilio Carrizzosa, President
Sociedad de Estadística e Investigación Operativa (Spanish Society for Statistics and Operation Research, SEIO)

Prof. Maria Eduarda Silva, President
Sociedade Portuguesa de Estatística (Portuguese Statistical Society, SPE)

Prof. Monica Prartesi, President
Società Italiana di Statistica (Italian Statistical Society, SIS)

Prof. Gerard Biau, President
Société Française de Statistique (French Statistical Society, SFdS)

Prof. Matevž Bren, President
Statistično društvo Slovenije (Statistical Society of Slovenia, SSS)

Prof. Fred van Eeuwijk, President
Vereniging voor Statistiek en Operations Research (Netherlands Society for Statistics and Operations Research, VvS+OR)

Dr Eva Laczka, Vice President
Magyar Statisztikai Társaság (Hungarian Statistical Association, HSA)

Prof. Czesław Domański, President
Polskie Towarzystwo Statystyczne (Polish Statistical Association, PSA)

Prof. Marcel Baumgartner, President
Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Statistik / Société Suisse de Statistique / Società Svizzera di Statistica//Societad Svizra da Statistica (Swiss Statistical Society, SGS-SSS)

Prof. Iveta STANKOVIČOVÁ, President
Slovenská štatistická a demografická spoločnosť (Slovak Statistical and Demographical Society, SŠDS)

Prof. Stefan Van Aelst, Past-President
Société Belge de Statistique / Belgische Vereniging voor Statistiek (Belgian Statistical Society, SBS-BVS)

Prof. Jyrki Mottonen, President
Suomen Tilastoseura (Finnish Statistical Society, FSS)

Prof. Gabrielle Kelly, President
Irish Statistical Association (ISA)

Prof. Constantin Mitrut, President
Societatea Romana de Statistica (Romanian Society of Statistics, RSS)

Prof. John Öhrvik, President
Svenska statistikfrämjandet (Swedish Statistical Society, SSFr)

Prof. Claus Thorn Ekstrøm, President
Dansk Selskab for Teoretisk Statistik (Danish Society for Theoretical Statistics, DSTS)

Prof. Jan Terje Kvaløy, President
Norwegian Statistical Association