



**EMBARGO: 26 April 2022 until 12.00 (noon)**

## Press release

**The European Research Council - ERC published the recipients of ERC Advance Grants 2021: the recipient of the prestigious funding are two professors at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics of the University of Ljubljana – the astrophysicist Prof Dr Maruša Bradač and the mathematician and academician Prof Dr Franc Forstnerič.**

Ljubljana, 26 April 2022 – In Europe and undoubtedly in the world, the ERC grants are the most prestigious scientific research funding that can be received by an individual researcher. It is not only a top success of researchers, but also an outstanding achievement of the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics of the University of Ljubljana – in particular for the exceptional high-quality research environment it offers to researchers and their groups.

Every year, the **European Research Council – ERC** selects and funds the most excellent frontier researchers of any nationality and age, to run projects based in Europe. It offers four long-term and financially rich schemes of research projects: ERC project to start the independent research path (Starting Grant), ERC project to consolidate the independent research path (Consolidator Grant), **ERC project for established researchers (Advanced Grant)** and ERC project for research synergies (Synergy Grant).

*“This year’s recipients of ERC Advanced Grants are established researchers of the Faculty, and what makes us particularly happy is that they come from the areas of physics and mathematics, the first time in Slovenia,”* said the **dean of the Faculty, Prof Dr Tomaž Košir** and continued: *“scientific excellence, which is the only criterion of the ERC, is of course a great encouragement for the faculty and confirmation that we have top researchers and that we manage to maintain appropriate conditions for ambitions for quality pedagogical work to coexist with international research excellence - both of which we want to pass on to young people. My sincere congratulations to both award researchers. This are the seventh and eighth project of our Faculty members, i.e., the third and fourth ERC project led entirely at the Faculty, and this puts us on the map of the best faculties in Europe.*

**Prof Dr Maruša Bradač, astrophysicist**, is the recipient of the ERC Advanced Grant entitled **FIRSTLIGHT** in the amount of EUR 2,086,250.00 for a period of 5 years. *“With the FIRSTLIGHT project I will focus my research outlook on the early history of the Universe, the time when the first stars and galaxies were created. I will use the data obtained by my group with the James Webb Space Telescope, as our group developed one of the most important scientific instruments on this telescope, the NIRISS camera. Based on these data she will study the dark age when the first galaxies likely reionised the neutral hydrogen and changed space from opaque to transparent for visible light”*, the project is described by **Prof Bradač** who until recently worked as a professor at the University of California, Davis, USA. This ERC Advance Grant enables her to successfully continue her career in Slovenia and establish her own research group collaborating with colleagues from Italy, the USA and Canada.

**The Academic Prof Dr Franc Forstnerič, mathematician** received the ERC Advanced Grant entitled **HOLOMORPHIC PARTIAL DIFFERENTIAL RELATIONS – HPDR** in the amount of EUR 1,476,375.00. *“This grant will allow me to focus on research in the next five years and form an international group of researchers, which will be an important thematic extension of the existing group for complex analysis and geometry at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, University of Ljubljana and the Institute of Mathematics, Physics and Mechanics”* says [Prof Forstnerič](#) and adds: *“This is the first ERC grant in the field of mathematics in Slovenia. It represents a major recognition of my work, and by extension of the work of my research group. I am convinced that it will provide a stimulus to those younger colleagues in my Department who are doing first rate research in mathematics to increase their efforts for obtaining financing from ERC.”*

**The Rector of the University of Ljubljana, Prof Dr Gregor Majdič** congratulated the researchers on this exceptional success and said: *“I am proud that Slovenian science is drawing a map of breakthrough successes in Europe, and I am especially pleased that the University of Ljubljana is so successful in this area. Since 2007 when the European Research Council started to award ERC projects, the **researchers from the University of Ljubljana were granted eight of these prestigious projects**. Sincere congratulations to the esteemed colleague academician Prof Dr Franc Forstnerič for the first Slovenian ERC project in mathematics, and the astrophysicist Prof Dr Maruša Bradač for the project in space research. Maruša Bradač is already the fourth female researcher from our university who managed to obtain a prestigious ERC grant and the second recipient of such a project from the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, University of Ljubljana. Namely, in 2011 the first Slovenian ERC grant was acquired by a female researcher in the field of meteorology, Prof Dr Nedjeljka Žagar. This shows that in Slovenian science women are extraordinarily successful and strongly come forward also in natural and technical sciences”*.

## **ABOUT THE ERC**

The [European Research Council \(ERC\)](#) set up by the European Union in 2007 is the premier European funding organisation for excellent frontier research from all areas of science without predefined priorities. It promotes the work of established top researchers and ensures the growth of future generations of researchers in Europe. Its only selection criterion for projects and granting funds is scientific excellence. Before the beginning of Horizon Europe, the European Research Council funded already over 12,000 top researchers at different levels of their careers and over 75,000 PhD students, post-doctoral researchers and other colleagues in their research teams. It strives to attract the best researchers from all around the world to do their research in Europe. It has agreements concluded with key research agencies around the world to allow their researchers to temporarily participate in ERC research projects in Europe. The European Research Council is led by an independent governing body, the Scientific Council composed of 22 top researchers from different scientific fields. At the moment, its chairperson is Maria Leptin. The ERC budget is part of Horizon Europe.

## **Video statements:**

[Franc Forstnerič: A statement on the occasion of receiving ERC-Advanced Grant](#)

[Maruša Bradač: A statement on the occasion of receiving ERC-Advanced Grant](#)

## **Photo:**

Author of both portraits is Peter Irman.

## **More information:**

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