

FENStatS General Assembly

19. February 2021

Dear FENStatS members, dear colleagues,

At our General Assembly last September, I informed you that I had made a new effort to improve the funding conditions for statistical research by the European Research Council. In my letter to the ERC Chair, Professor Jean-Pierre Bourignon, of 3 September 2020, I pointed out that the pandemic crisis has once again highlighted the importance of statistics and statistical research for modern societies: *“In the midst of a crisis of enormous dimensions we needed high quality statistics with utmost urgency, but instead we are in danger of drowning in an ocean of data. This is very remarkable as we live in a time when data is seen as the new oil that should generate progress and prosperity. What exactly is lacking is the research and production of statistics in order to get us out of this paradoxical position needs further investigation.”*

Professor Bourignon has responded to the FENStatS initiative in the following terms: *“I have ... brought your concerns to the Scientific Council during our recent meeting in October and there was unanimous agreement on the importance of high quality statistics and on the imperative need to develop new methodology that would allow for the interpretation of the increasing availability of data.”*

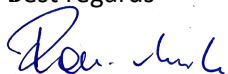
To address the need for improved funding of statistical research, the *“Scientific Council exceptionally accepted to modify the PE1 descriptors with the creation of a new descriptor (PE1\_15) to specifically cover “Generic statistical methodology and modelling”. The former statistics descriptor was renamed “Mathematical statistics”. These changes will take effect from the first calls under the Horizon Europe programme, which starts in 2021.”*

With these changes, the door has been further opened for funding of statistical research. Now it is important to actively use these opportunities. As President of FENStatS, I therefore invite all colleagues in all member societies to familiarise themselves with the structures of the ERC and to actively use these new opportunities offered to us.

I would be very pleased if this invitation fell on fertile ground and the number of research proposals and the representation of statisticians in the selection panels grew strongly. I am also counting on the feedback to the National Statistical Society or directly to FENStatS in case of difficulties or hurdles.

In this sense, I would like to ask the National Statistical Societies organised in FENStatS to forward my message to their members.

Best regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Walter J. Radermacher'.

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