



# Research Success Stories



October 2012

## Long-Term Research Funding thanks to a ERC grant

Michalis Vlachos was awarded a Starting Grant from the European Research Council (ERC). These Grants support emerging scientists to establish a team and to conduct independent research.

The ERC was established by the European Commission to support research leaders who are about to establish a proper research team and to start conducting independent research in Europe. The success rate in the Starting Grant competition around 12 per cent.

Dr Vlachos' application was one of this success. Dr Vlachos applied for the grant because "it provided the most long-term research horizon, and promised the greatest independence.

"This was the first time in Switzerland that this grant was given to a researcher hosted by an industrial laboratory. Dr Vlachos learned of the ERC grant from a collaborator of Euresearch who presented various EU funding options at "IBM Research - Zurich, where he works.



**Dr Michalis Vlachos**  
**IBM Research - Zurich**  
 ERC Principal Investigator

### Long-term research horizon and limited administration burden

The main reason for applying for the ERC Starting Grant was that it offers the most long-term EU funding scheme.

"It is one of the few EU funding schemes that does not involve multiple partners, which makes administration simpler," says Dr Vlachos.

**"It was the funding opportunity that provided the most long-term research horizon, and promised the most freedom and independence."**

The administrative burden is quite minimal too: "The institution needs to file a financial progress report every year and half, allowing

### ABOUT THE PROJECT

Today, data is increasingly stored in the 'cloud'. During this process it undergoes a number of modifications: anonymization, watermarking or even lossy compression (e.g. jpeg). In the "Exact Mining from In-Exact Data" (MININEXACT) project Dr Vlachos studies how to support common data transformations in a way that the mining capacity of the original is still retained even after it is modified. For example, if a hospital anonymizes medical data, some of the original information may be lost even to the extent that it is no longer useful for statistical analyses. The ultimate goal is to understand the connection between common data transformations by viewing them as variants of the same basic operation: addition or removal of noise.

the team to focus on the science", Dr Vlachos says.

### Good for employer and employee

Applicants for ERC Starting Grants need the support of a "host institution" that can be any research entity, like a university or, as in the case of "IBM Research - Zurich, an industrial laboratory.

For Dr Vlachos working within an industrial lab, as opposed to a university, brings the advantage that it is easier to commercialize the results of his research and thus achieve greater impact.

He mentions that for IBM the advantage is that they receive funding for forward-looking research and that they are able to secure some of the intellectual property for the results of this work.

### FACTS AND FIGURES

<b>Project Name:</b>	Exact Mining from In-Exact Data (MININEXACT)
<b>Research Area:</b>	Industrial Manufacture
<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	Dr Michalis Vlachos
<b>Host Institution:</b>	IBM Research - Zurich
<b>Start Date - End Date:</b>	01.04.2011 - 31.03.2016 (60 months)
<b>Project Cost:</b>	1.5 Million €
<b>Project Funding:</b>	1.5 Million €
<b>Project Reference:</b>	259569
<b>Contract Type:</b>	ERC Starting Grant

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