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## Top scientists honoured



**Europe's leading scientists honoured for groundbreaking research into everything from dark energy and black holes to killer T-cells and food-borne pathogens.**

For the first time, the EU's three most prestigious [science awards](#) have been presented together – the science communication prizes, Marie Curie excellence awards and the Descartes research prizes – at an award ceremony in Brussels on 12 March.

Describing the winners as "the best Europe has to offer", science and research commissioner Janez Potočnik said the awards honoured excellence, openness and creativity.

### [Science communication prizes](#)

Three prizes, each worth €60 000, were awarded to projects that boost public interest in research and promote the understanding of science. [Jean-Pierre Luminet](#) picked up the prize for communicator of the year; best writer went to Delphine Grinberg from the Palais de la Découverte [\[fr\]](#), and Peter Leonard and Andrew Cohen got best audiovisual documentary for "[Most of our universe is missing](#)", a BBC [Horizon](#) programme on the mysterious dark matter and dark energy that scientists now think makes up 96% of our universe.

### [Marie Curie excellence awards](#)

Linked to the [Marie Curie actions](#), these awards are for outstanding achievement in science. Five winners were each presented with €50 000: **Dr Luisa Corrado** from Cambridge University for research into wealth and its impact on happiness; **Dr Batu Erman** from Sabanci University in Istanbul for targeting killer T-cells to combat cancer; **Dr Andrea Ferrari** from Cambridge University for research into nanotubes and new electronic devices; **Professor Robert Nichol** from the University of Portsmouth for providing insight into dark energy, and to **Dr Valerie O'Donnell** from Cardiff University for her work on free radicals and inflammation.

### [Descartes research prizes](#)

These prizes go to transnational research teams that have achieved exceptional results together in any scientific discipline. The three winning teams shared a total of €1 360 000: **Virilis** looked into fighting infection through its study of the bacterial genus *Listeria*; **SynNanoMotors** gained recognition for producing some of the world's first working synthetic molecular motors and mechanical nanomachines; **EPICA** was given an award for its analysis of ice cores in Antarctica, which has led to greater understanding of climate change, its mechanisms and consequences.

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