



Press Release No. 74/2019

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Two ERC Starting Grants for the University of Konstanz

Dr Damien Farine, a principal investigator from the “Centre for the Advanced Study of Collective Behaviour” at the University of Konstanz, and Professor George Walkden, Professor of English Linguistics and General Linguistics at the university’s Department of Linguistics, have been awarded a prestigious ERC Starting Grant.

Announced today, 3 September 2019, by the European Research Council (ERC), the prominent grant – which includes 1.5 million euros in funding over the next five years – is designed to help early career researchers and scholars build their own teams and conduct pioneering research. There were 408 grants awarded out of a pool of 3106 applications from around the world.

About Dr Damien Farine’s ERC Starting Grant

Damien Farine, who also holds the position of principal investigator at the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior in Konstanz, works at the interface of collective behaviour and ecology. The ERC Starting Grant will allow him to conduct innovative and high-risk research that will have a major impact on our understanding of how animals successfully navigate complex social and physical environments. The grant will fund research on group-living birds in Kenya, where Farine seeks to understand how the past experiences of individuals, together with environmental conditions, affect leadership in animal groups. His ERC-funded project will combine state-of-the-art technological and scientific methods that will revolutionise the study of animal groups in the wild. In addition, the ERC Starting Grant will provide opportunities for young scientists, including Kenyan students, to undertake world-class research in Farine’s team.

About Professor George Walkden’s ERC Starting Grant

George Walkden’s main research interests are in historical linguistics and language change, especially morphosyntactic change, with a particular focus on the Germanic languages. He wants to learn more about how languages change once they come into contact with each other, and more specifically about what happens to the grammar and the way phrases and sentences are structured. Thanks to the ERC Starting Grant, George Walkden, who has been a Professor of English Linguistics and General Linguistics at the University of Konstanz since 2017, will be able to address a range of interlinked questions around this topic. One of them has to do with second-language learners: “One of the things I’m interested in is if and to what extent the ‘mistakes’ made by second-language learners make their way into the grammar of the language, thus affecting usage on a wider level”. The funding he is due to receive will allow Walkden to study the long-term effects of language contact and language change on a range of very different languages, including ones from outside Europe.

For more detailed information about the two awardees and their research projects, please click here: <https://www.uni-konstanz.de/en/university/news-and-media/current-announcements/press-releases/press-releases-in-detail/Zwei-ERC-Starting-Grants-gehen-an-die-Universitaet-Konstanz/>

Facts:

- Double success for University of Konstanz researchers: Dr Damien Farine from the Cluster of Excellence “Centre for the Advanced Study of Collective Behaviour” and Professor George Walkden from the Department of Linguistics have been awarded a prestigious European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant each
- In total, 408 applications by scientists from over 50 countries were selected from a pool of 3106
- Funding period: five years
- Funding amount: approx. EUR 1.5 million each
- Damien Farine is a principal investigator of the new Cluster of Excellence “Centre for the Advanced Study of Collective Behaviour” at the University of Konstanz and a principal investigator at the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior in Konstanz
- George Walkden has been Professor of English Linguistics and General Linguistics at the University of Konstanz since 2017

Note to editors:

You can download a selection of photos here:

Image 1: https://cms.uni-konstanz.de/fileadmin/pi/filesserver/2019/Bilder/Zwei%20ERC%20Grants_Follow%20the%20leader.jpg

Caption: Follow the leader? Dr Damien Farine – a principal investigator from the “Centre for the Advanced Study of Collective Behaviour” at the University of Konstanz and the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior in Konstanz – has won a 2019 ERC Starting Grant, worth 1.5 million euros over five years, which he will use to decipher how animal groups reach a consensus and make collective decisions.

Credit: Peter Milburn

Image 2: https://cms.uni-konstanz.de/fileadmin/pi/filesserver/2019/Bilder/Zwei%20ERC%20Grants_Different%20ways%20to%20say%20not%20in%20medieval%20English.jpg

Caption: Map showing different ways to say “not” in medieval English, suggesting that Norse influence was involved.

Credit: George Walkden and Donald Alasdair Morrison (Source: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/stap-2017-0007>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

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