

The European Research Council

Information session on
ERC Starting and
Consolidator Grants

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Starting Grant Call Co-Coordinator
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European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

Overview



ERC and ERC Grant Schemes

Eligibility

Evaluation process

Tips and Tricks



ERC is part of Horizon Europe

HORIZON EUROPE



EUR 16 billion
ERC budget in Horizon Europe



17%
of the entire
Horizon Europe budget



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About the ERC

Scientific governance

- Independent Scientific Council with 22 members including the ERC President, with full authority over strategy.
- Supported by a Dedicated Implementation Structure, the ERC Executive Agency.

Scientific freedom

- Scientific excellence as the sole criterion.
- Support to the individual scientist – *no consortia!*
- No predetermined subjects – “*bottom-up*”.
- Support for frontier research in all fields of science and humanities.
- International peer-review.

ERC Scientific Council

Life Sciences



Emmanuelle
Charpentier
Microbiology



Dirk
Inzé
Plant Biology



Leszek
Kaczmarek
Neurobiology



Luke
O'Neill
Biochemistry and
Immunology



Eleftheria
Zeggini
Human
Genetics



Liselotte
Højgaard
Vice-President
Medicine



Maria Leptin
ERC President
Cell Biology



Torsten
Persson
Vice-President
Economics



Nicola Spaldin
Vice-President
Materials Theory

Social Sciences and Humanities



Harriet
Bulkeley
Geography



Kateřina
Králová
History



Karin
Roelofs
Neuroscience



Susana
Narotzky
Social
Anthropology



Giovanni
Sartor
Law

Physical Sciences and Engineering



Conny
Aerts
Astrophysics



Michel
Campillo
Geophysics



Tom
Henzinger
Computer
Science



Maarit
Karppinen
Chemistry



Sylvie
Lorente
Mechanical
Engineering



Björn
Ottersten
Electrical
Engineering



Tomáš
Prosen
Physics



András
Stipsicz
Mathematics



ERC basics



European Research Council
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INDIVIDUAL RESEARCHERS
FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD
**LONG TERM
GRANTS**
TO PIONEERING PROJECTS
IN ANY FIELD OF FRONTIER RESEARCH



Life Sciences



Physical Sciences and Engineering



Social Sciences and Humanities



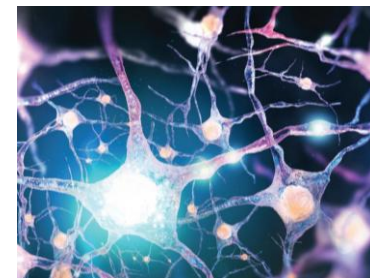
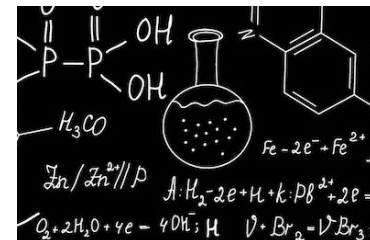
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Why apply for an ERC grant?

ERC offers independence, recognition & visibility to:

- work on a research topic **of own choice**
- gain **financial autonomy** for five years
- negotiate the **best conditions** of work with the host institution
- attract **excellent team members and collaborators** from anywhere in the world
- move with the grant to any place in Europe if desired ("**portability** of grants")
- win **additional funding**



Anyone from anywhere in the world can apply

- Host Institution for the ERC project must be in an EU Member State or Associated Country.
- The Host Institution is not an evaluation criterion.
- No requirement to already have an employment contract in an EU Member State or Associated Country – the institution provides a letter of support with the application.
- Grantees can keep affiliation with home institute outside Europe (“significant part” of work time in Europe: at least 50%).
- Team members can be based outside Europe.
- Grantees can move within Europe with the grant.



ERC grant schemes



Starting Grants

Researchers (0-10 years after PhD)
up to €1.5 million for 5 years



Consolidator Grants

Researchers (5-15 years after PhD)
up to €2 million for 5 years



Advanced Grants

Researchers with track-record of significant
research achievements up to €2.5 million for 5 years



Proof of Concept

bridging gap between research
- earliest stage of marketable innovation
lump sum €150 000 for ERC grantees



Synergy Grants

2-4 Principal investigators
up to €10 million for 6 years
1 PI can be based outside
EU/Associated Countries



Plus Grants

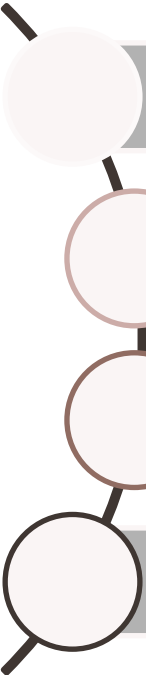
Principal investigators at all career stages
with a vision for transformative research
up to €7 million over 4-7 years



Additional funding (+ new features as from WP2026)

- **up to 1M €:** Applicants already based in an EU Member State or country associated to HE
 - Additional funding can be requested to cover e.g.: *purchase of **major equipment**, access to **large facilities**, other **major experimental** and **field work costs**, including personnel costs (WP2026)*
- **up to 2M €:** Applicants currently based outside Europe (WP2026)
 - ✓ to facilitate the **relocation** of their laboratory/team to the EU/country associated to the ERC part of the HE programme

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Preparing your proposal

...for StG and CoG, make sure you are eligible!

1. Reference date for the calculation of the Eligibility window: **1st of January of the year of the Call = 1st of January 2027 for StG2027 and CoG2027***
 - *Extensions of eligibility window possible for documented cases*
2. If you previously applied to an ERC call, check **resubmission restrictions**
 - *Indicative submission restrictions for the StG2027 and CoG2027 calls*
- same as in the past
3. Time **commitment on the project**: Min. 50% (StG), 40% (CoG)
4. Minimum 50% of PI **working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country**

Since WP2023

Change in PhD eligibility reference date



➤ New “PhD eligibility reference date” rule:

*The reference date towards the calculation of the eligibility period shall be the **certified date of the successful defence**. Document provided by the awarding institution.*

- Allows for the eligibility window to reflect the *real academic age* instead of the “administrative age” of the PI;
- Puts an end to confusion about “award according to national rules” - brings clarity to applicants;
- Most PhD certificates include the defence date;
- If the PhD certificate does not show defence date, the candidate has to ask for **written confirmation from the awarding institution**.

What changes in 2027*?

The eligibility period for both Starting and Consolidator Grant schemes have been widened:

- From 2027 on, researchers will be eligible to apply for a Starting Grant immediately after successfully defending their PhD, and at any time within the following ten-year period.
- Consolidator Grant applicants will be eligible to apply between five and fifteen years after defending their PhD.
- Researchers will be awarded no more than one Starting Grant and one Consolidator Grant during their career.
- The rules for the extension of the eligibility periods will remain in place.

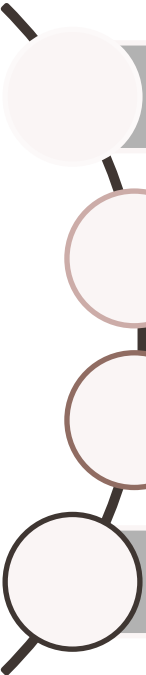
Starting/Consolidator Grant: Extension of the Eligibility Windows

For documented situations occurring before the call deadline

- Maternity leave: 18 months for each child born before/after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- Paternity/parental leave: documented time taken for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- Long-term illness (>90 days for the PI or a close family member) or national service: documented amount of leave taken for each occurrence that happened after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- Clinical training: documented amount of clinical training received after the reference date of the 1st eligible degree, up to a maximum of 4 years;
- Major disaster (natural or human-caused such as armed conflicts)
- Seeking asylum
- Gender-based violence or any other form of violence



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Excellence

is the sole evaluation criterion

Excellence of the Research Project

- Ground-breaking nature
- Ambition
- Scientific approach

Excellence of the Principal Investigator

- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity

The panels will **primarily evaluate the ground-breaking nature and ambition of the project.**

At the same time, the panels will evaluate the intellectual capacity and creativity of the PI, with a focus on **the extent to which the PI has the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project**

Evaluation Process – Individual Grants

For main grant schemes (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced grants):
one single submission but a **two-step** evaluation

STEP 1

Remote assessment by **panel members**
Part I, CV and Track Record



Panel meeting



**Proposal rejected
(Scores B&C)**



Feedback to
applicants

**Proposal retained
for step 2 (Score A)**
- max. 44 per panel
- above 44: 'A non-
invited'

STEP 2

Remote assessment by **panel members**
and **remote reviewers** of **complete research proposal**



**Panel meeting
+ interview**



**Proposal not
funded
(Score B)**



Feedback to
applicants

Proposal funded (score A)
• **A funded** (within available
budget)
• **A non-funded** (outside
available budget)



Changes introduced in WP 2026

- **Increased ERC funding for researchers moving to Europe:** Additional funding of up to €2 million for researchers currently based outside Europe applying for Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grants.
- On top of its standard grants, the ERC has always offered additional funding for major costs not covered by the main grant. Applicants already based in an EU Member State or associated country remain eligible for up to €1 million of additional funding.
- ERC Plus funding scheme to support outstanding PIs to address a major scientific challenge that can't be solved with a regular ERC grant.
- Measures to mitigate workload for panel members

Changes introduced in WP 2026

Grant application

- New structure of the scientific proposal:
 - Scientific Proposal Part I (up to 5 pages) should describe the overall idea of the proposed research project;
 - Scientific Proposal Part II (up to 7 pages or 10 pages for Synergy Grant) should describe the implementation in detail: the research methodology, work plan, risk assessment etc.

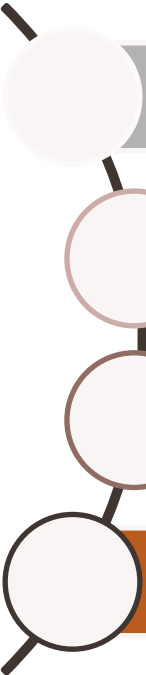
The panels will use Part I for evaluation at Step 1 and both parts together for their evaluation at Step 2.

Approach for Evaluation in 2026

Evaluation

- Applicants will be assessed on the ambition of their idea in advancing present-day knowledge in the field based on Part I of the Scientific Proposal.
- Feasibility of the scientific approach will no longer be assessed at Step 1. The proposed timescales and resources will be assessed at Step 2 of the evaluation. The PI time commitment will be verified during the eligibility checks.
- Combination of scientific approaches to address scope and complexity of research questions in Synergy Grant will now be assessed at Step 2 (instead of Step 1).
- One general category for additional funding without pre-defined sub-categories (for both actual and lump sum cost models).
- Applicants to SyG 2025, who have obtained a score 'B' at Step 1 will not be eligible for SyG 2026 call.

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Contrary to what you may think

- The budget is distributed among the scientific panels as a function of demand.
- The panel descriptors do not represent ERC scientific priorities.
- The success rate is not linked to academic age.
- Publication record is not decisive in selection decisions.
- The Host Institution is not an evaluation criterion.



Evaluation panel structure (2025-2026)

Life Sciences

- LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions
- LS2 Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems
- LS3 Cell Biology, Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration
- LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing
- LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System
- LS6 Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy
- LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases
- LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution
- LS9 Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering

Physical Sciences & Engineering

- PE1 Mathematics
- PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter
- PE3 Condensed Matter Physics
- PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences
- PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials
- PE6 Computer Science and Informatics
- PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering
- PE8 Products and Processes Engineering
- PE9 Universe Sciences
- PE10 Earth System Science
- PE11 Materials Engineering

Social Sciences and Humanities

- SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations
- SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems
- SH3 The Social World and Its Interactions
- SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity
- SH5 Texts and Concepts
- SH6 The Study of the Human Past
- SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space
- SH8 Studies of Cultures and Arts



Get the information (early on)!

- Register early, get familiar with the European Commission's **Funding and Tender portal** and download the templates
 - <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>
- ERC page for Starting Grants: <https://erc.europa.eu/apply-grant/starting-grant>
- Read the call documents (**Information for Applicants, Work Programme, Frequently Asked Questions**) that explain how to prepare your proposal
- Talk to your Institution's grant office
- Talk to ERC grantees
- Contact the ERCEA to ask all your questions well ahead of the submission deadline –
ERC-2027-STG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu or ERC-2027-COG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu
- Get the written consent of your collaborators before the submission deadline (a simple email exchange is OK)

Preparing your application

PART A – admin forms online

Section 1 Proposal and PI info

Section 2 Host Institution info

Section 3 Budget

Section 4 Ethics

Section 5 Call-specific Questions

Annexes – submitted as .pdf

- Statement of support of HI
- copy of PhD or equiv. (StG & CoG)

If applicable:

- document for extension of eligibility window (StG & CoG)
- explanatory info on ethical issues

Seen by the panel

PART B1 – submitted as .pdf

Abstract and Cross-Panel explanation	1 p.
Scientific Proposal Part I	5 p.
CV & Track Record	up to 4 p.

PART B2 – submitted as .pdf

Scientific Proposal Part II	7 p.
Funding ID	

Research Project

**is this an original and creative idea
addressing an important question
that would be worth pursuing?**



**can that idea be pursued
realistically, and if so, with the
approach that the PI proposes?**

Part I (Max 5 pages)

should describe the overall idea of the proposed research project:

- .. What is the current state of knowledge;
- .. How is the idea original, creative, ambitious?
- .. What is the scientific question and the objectives;
- .. What is overall approach/research strategy to reach the goals of the project?

Part II (Max 7 pages)

should describe the implementation in detail:

- .. Provide extensive research methodology;
- .. Describe the work plan;
- .. Include risk assessment;
- .. Expand on mitigating measures etc.

Part II is complementary to, and not redundant with, Part I.

Explain properly your resources and budget

- Additional funding: up to 1 million Euro can be requested to cover further eligible costs if needed for implementing the project
- No more pre-defined cost categories for additional funding
- May include personnel costs

- Budget analysis carried out in Step 2 evaluation.
- Panels have responsibility to ensure that resources requested are reasonable and well justified.
- Budget cuts need to be justified on a proposal-by-proposal basis (no across-the-board cuts).
- Costs might be cut when they have not been explained.
- Panels do not “micro-manage” project finances.
- Awards made on a “take-it-or-leave-it” basis: no negotiations.
- Ask for funding for Open Access – this is obligatory in HorizonEurope!

I have been invited for an interview .. now what?

- Have **clear** and **representative slides** and focus on **SCIENCE!** Don't try to make a business presentation – you are talking to scientists.
 - Get panel interested in **YOUR ideas** & proposal
 - Don't over-explain your CV!
- **Anticipate questions**
- Know the **details of your proposal** and methods, as well as your **research area** – who are your main competitors/collaborators?
- **Practice** thoroughly, several (many?) times; **Keep the time**; typically, a 5-10 min. presentation followed by 15-20 min. of questions.



Key messages

- **Don't exclude yourself from participating in ERC calls;**
- If you have an idea that you think will make a significant change in your field of research or some other area, consider writing it down and apply to ERC;
- Be ambitious and "daring", **think big**;
- Look at **funded projects in your field** (search tool on ERC website), testimonials, tutorials ([ERC homepage](#));
- **Take risks**, explain your project's expected high scientific impact, and **provide evidence that you can do it**;
- **If you fail, try again!** Gain experience from evaluation. Panel feedback is useful and resubmissions have higher success rate (typically 1.5 times higher).
- Submit your research proposal **before the deadline** – avoid submitting on the last day.



Where can you find more information?

The ERC website

[Apply for a grant | ERC](#)



6 New Videos - ERC Classes

- How can you get started with your ERC proposals?
- How can you write your ERC proposal?
- How do we evaluate your ERC proposal?
- What do you need to know about the ERC Synergy Grants?
- How can you best prepare for your ERC interview?
- Why care about ethics in your ERC proposal?

Thank You!

More information: erc.europa.eu



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