

European Research Council UK National Contact Point

Information and Proposal Writing Event for
the 2018 ERC Starting Grant Call

July 2017

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Agenda

- 10:15** **Registration**
- 10:45** **Welcome**
- 11:00** **Presentation of the ERC Starting Grant scheme (including Q&A)**
- Introduction to UKRO and UK ERC NCP
 - Implications of the EU Referendum Outcome
 - Introduction to the ERC
 - ERC Starting Grant – main features
 - Proposal – PI and research project evaluation criteria
 - Project costs and budget
 - Grant Management
 - Ethics
 - Evaluation Process
 - Interviews
- 12:00** **Coffee/tea break**
- 12:30** **Case Study (incl. Q&A) – Dr Hugo Bronstein, UCL**
- 12:45** **Presentation of the ERC Starting Grant Scheme (continued)**
- 14:00** **Finish**

Introduction to UKRO and UK ERC NCP



- **Mission:**

To maximise UK engagement in EU-funded research, innovation and higher education activities

- **The Office:**

- Based in Brussels
- European office of the UK Research Councils
- Delivers subscription-based advisory services for around 150 research organisations in the UK and beyond
- Also provides National Contact Point services on behalf of the UK Government



UKRO subscriber services

- I. **UKRO Portal:** tailored news articles and clear and accessible web pages on the latest in EU funding
- II. **Enquiry service:** individual support through your dedicated European Advisor
- III. **Annual briefing visits:** bespoke training for your institution
- IV. **Meeting room:** a venue in Brussels

European Research Council UK National Contact Point (ERC NCP)

- Provides advice on the ERC and its grant schemes
- Website: www.ukro.ac.uk/erc
- Helpdesk
 - Email: erc-uk@bbsrc.ac.uk
 - Phone: 0032 2289 6121

- Funded by BEIS



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Implications of the EU Referendum Outcome

Current situation

- The UK is still an EU Member State and continues to be until the end of the negotiations.
- This means it has the same rights and obligations as all other 27 Member States, including the participation in EU funding programmes.
- Details on how the UK can participate after an exit need to be determined during the negotiations.
- UK Government has a dedicated inbox for specific concerns Research@beis.gsi.gov.uk and UKRO can advise on latest developments UKRO@bbsrc.ac.uk .

The Commission explicitly briefs evaluators in their guidance:



http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/support/expert/h2020_expert-briefing_en.pdf

UK Government Statement 13 August 2016

- UK Government guarantees EU Funding for UK researchers beyond the date the UK leaves the EU: *"where UK organisations bid directly to the European Commission on a competitive basis for EU funding projects while we are still a member of the EU, for example universities participating in Horizon 2020, the Treasury will underwrite the payments of such awards, even when specific projects continue beyond the UK's departure from the EU"*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-philip-hammond-guarantees-eu-funding-beyond-date-uk-leaves-the-eu>

- **UKRO understand that eligibility for the guarantee will extend to all application submitted before the exit date, and not just to grants signed.**
- British universities and research organisations should therefore continue to apply for EU funding through mechanisms such as Horizon 2020 while the UK remains a member of the EU.

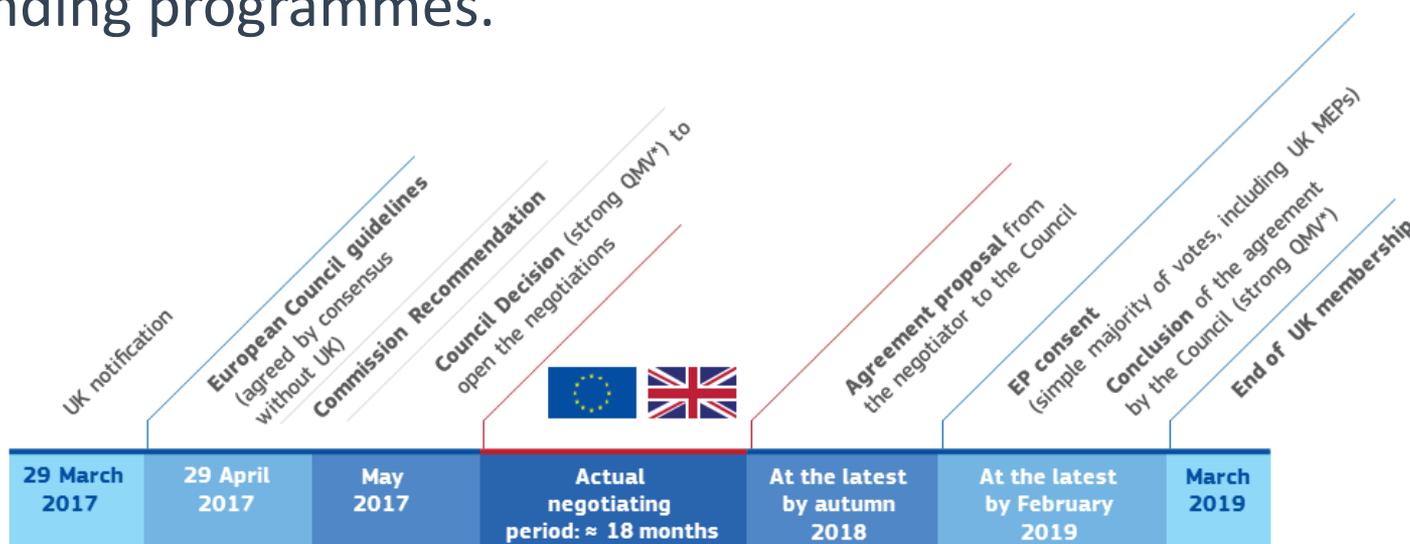
Article 50 Invoked: 29 March 2017

- The UK has formally invoked Article 50
- A [letter](#) was delivered to the President of the European Council.
- In the Prime Minister's [statement](#) to the UK Parliament, **Theresa May reiterated the importance of continued collaboration in research:**

"We hope to continue to collaborate with our European partners in the areas of science, education, research and technology, so that the UK is one of the best places for science and innovation."

What happens next?

- An extraordinary meeting of the European Council was held on 29 April where remaining 27 states adopted a set of negotiating guidelines.
- It is too early to speculate on the timing and nature of the negotiations on UK engagement with Horizon 2020 and future funding programmes.



* **Strong QMV** = 72% of the 27 Member States, i.e. 20 Member States representing 65 % of the EU 27 population.

- UKRO also provides a [public page and FAQ sheet on UK participation in EU funding for research, innovation and higher education](#).
- Aims to provide factual answers to the most common questions, both with a UK and international audience in mind.

The UK's Exit from the European Union - UKRO FAQs on UK Participation in EU Funding for Research, Innovation and Higher Education

The information below is provided by the UK Research Office and reflects our current understanding of the UK situation with regards to Horizon 2020 and other funding programmes in research, innovation and higher education.

Universities UK also provides [FAQs](#) on a wide range of post-referendum issues and information for students coming to the UK.

Please contact UKRO (ukro@bbsrc.ac.uk) with questions relating to the post-referendum situation. We will endeavour, where possible, to provide answers or to signpost to appropriate contacts.

Research Councils UK released a [statement on international collaboration post the outcome of the EU referendum on 6 July 2016](#). It states that "While the UK remains a full member of the European Union we encourage researchers to continue to engage with partners in the EU and with European funding schemes as normal. The Research Councils recognise that there is uncertainty about the future of the UK's relationship with the EU in general and specifically affecting aspects of the research system. We are working with Government to ensure that the concerns and needs of UK researchers are represented and are considered in the negotiation of a future relationship with the EU."

What has changed for UK participation since the referendum and the triggering of Article 50?

Key message: No immediate changes to UK participation in Horizon 2020 - [read more](#)

What happens to proposals and projects involving UK participants when the UK leaves the EU?

The UK Government will underwrite funding for EU projects beyond the date the UK leaves the EU - [read more](#)

What is the advice from the European Commission on UK participation in Horizon 2020?

The Commission has confirmed that the status of UK participants in EU funding programmes remains unchanged until the UK leaves the EU - [read more](#)

Not from the UK and have concerns over including UK partners?

The UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy created a special inbox for queries and to report issues - [read more](#)

Coming to Brussels with a group and looking for an update for your researchers/research managers?

UKRO can provide an update on the UK situation at your Brussels event - [read more](#)

Where can I find UK Government resources? - [read more](#)

Introduction to the ERC



What is the ERC?

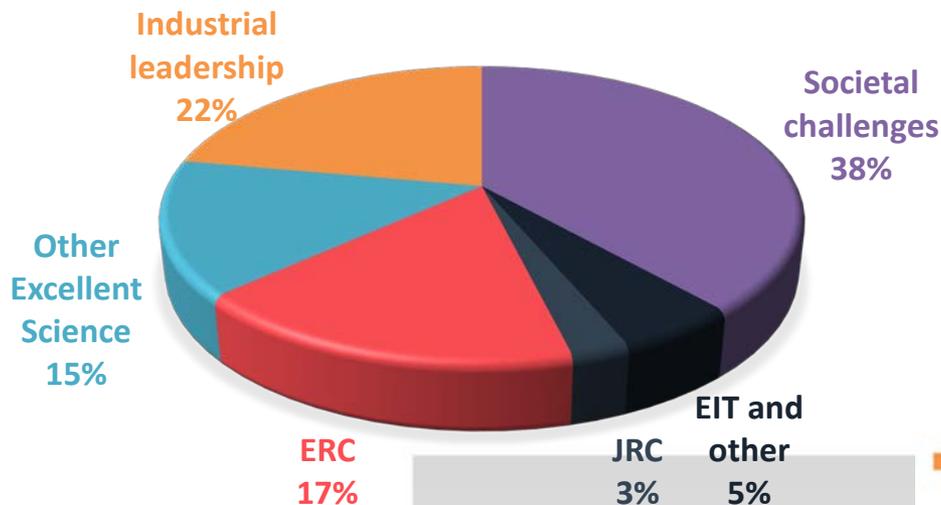
“The fundamental activity of the ERC is to provide attractive, long-term funding to support excellent investigators and their research teams to pursue groundbreaking, high-gain/high-risk research.”

“Scientific excellence is the sole criterion on the basis of which ERC frontier research grants are awarded.”

“The ERC’s frontier research grants operate on a ‘bottom-up’ basis without predetermined priorities.”

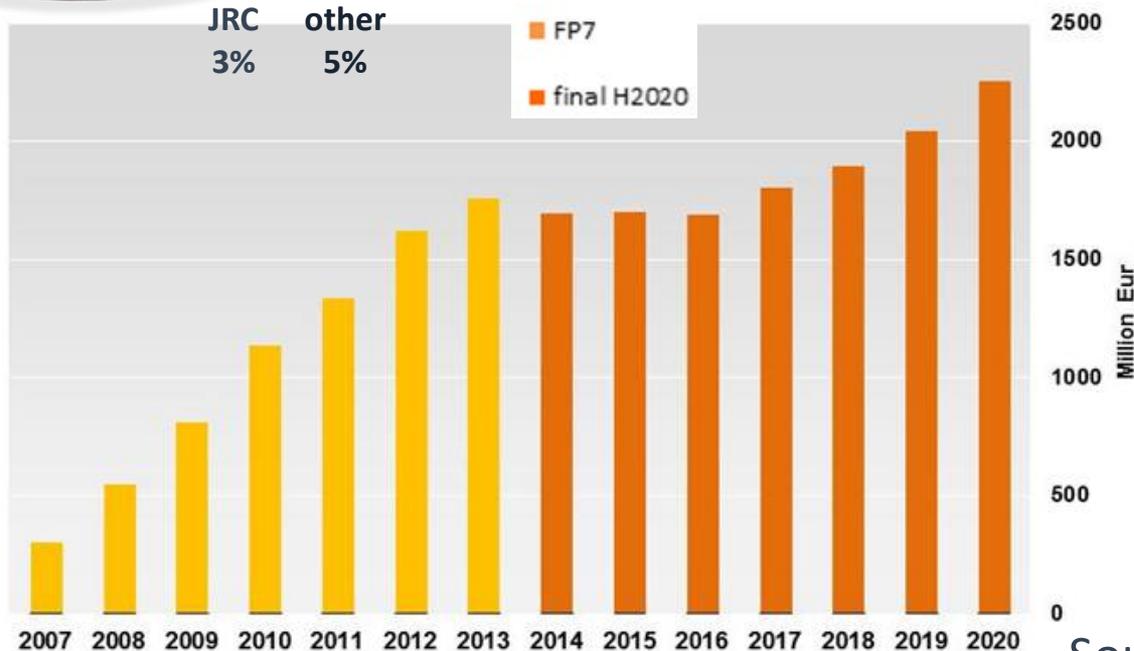
ERC Work Programme 2017 text

ERC Budget in Horizon 2020



ERC allocated around €12.7 billion for Horizon 2020 (~ 60% increase in real terms compared to FP7).

Largest amount of funding will go to the Starting Grants and Consolidator Grants schemes.



Source: ERC

ERC Grant Schemes

Starting Grants

- For PIs 2-7 years from PhD, up to €2 million for 5 years

Consolidator Grants

- For PIs 7-12 years from PhD, up to €2.75 million for 5 years

Advanced Grants

- For leading researchers, up to €3.5 million for 5 years.

Synergy Grants

- for 2 to 4 PIs, up to €14 million for 6 years.

Proof of Concept

- For ERC grant holders only, up to €150,000 for 18 months

ERC Starting Grant 2018 call*

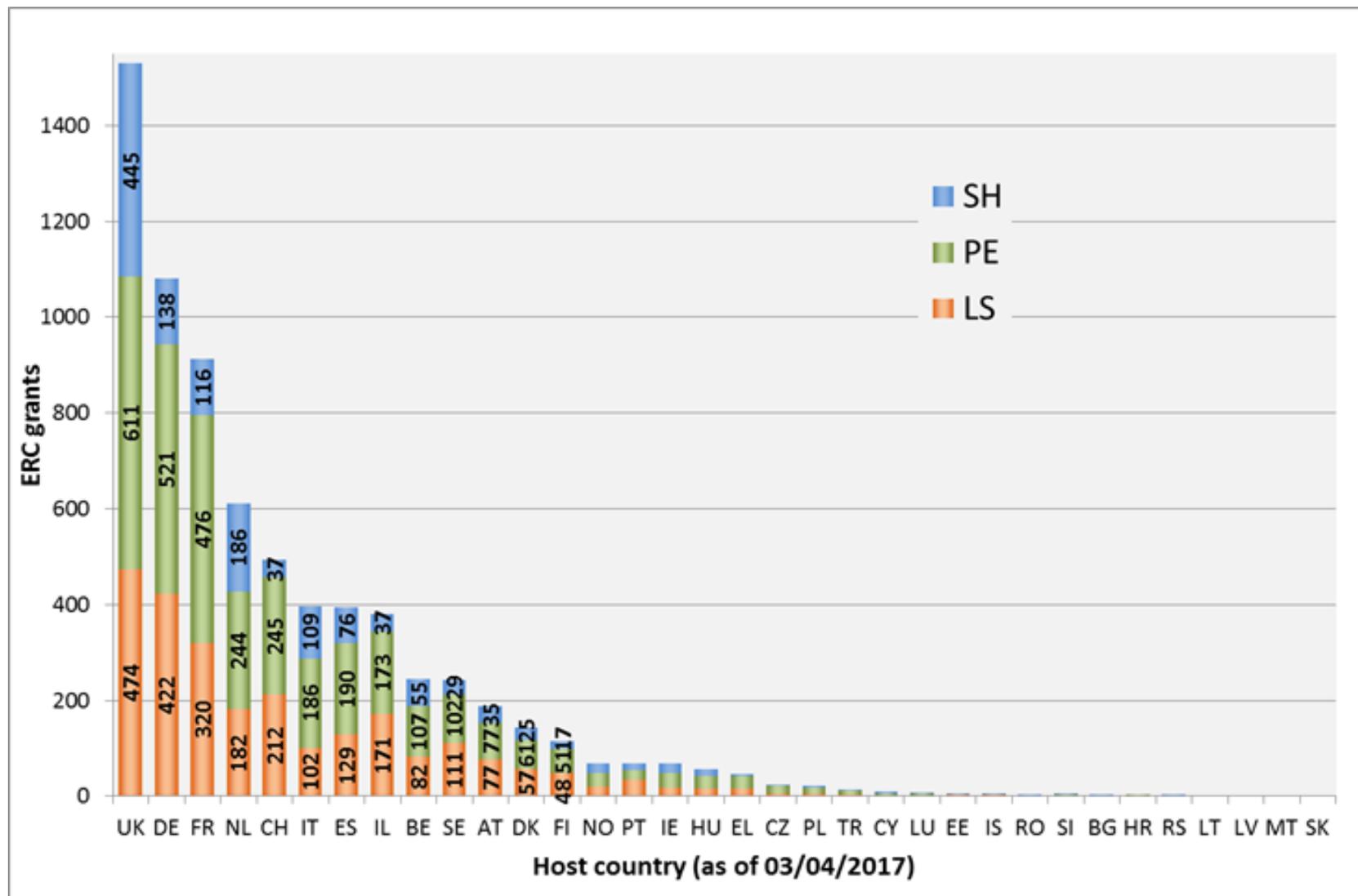
Call identifier	ERC-2018-StG
Call opens	July 2017
Deadline	October 201
Budget €million (estimated grants)	581 (391)
Planned dates to inform applicants	May 2018 August 2018
Indicative date for signature of grant agreements	December 2018

* Work programme has yet to be finalised/adopted. Call information on the Research & Innovation Participant Portal

UK historic success in ERC

- The UK was the most successful country in applying to the ERC in FP7
- Around 20% of all ERC grants are based in the UK
- PIs at over 80 institutions in the UK have been awarded an ERC grant
- Over 1500 grants have been awarded to UK Host Institutions since 2007.
- See here for the details of funded projects: <http://erc.europa.eu/erc-funded-projects>
- And here for more statistics: <http://erc.europa.eu/projects-and-results/statistics>

Funded Projects by Domain



Source: ERC

ERC-2016-StG Results

- 390 proposals selected for funding from a total of 2935 submitted. Overall success rate around 13%, compared to around 12.2% in 2015 and the UK success rate is around 13.9%.
- The numbers by research domain are:
 - Physical Sciences and Engineering (PE): 1268 evaluated (176 UK), 180 funded (21 UK)
 - Life Sciences (LS): 850 evaluated (118 UK), 121 funded (16 UK)
 - Social Sciences and Humanities (SH): 763 evaluated (189 UK), 89 funded (30 UK)
- UK was awarded the second highest number of grants per country, with 67 grants awarded to different UK institutions; this is 17.2% of all grants awarded in this call.
- Success rate for male applicants 14.5% and for female applicants 11.4%. Female applicants made up 30% of funding list vs 28% in 2015.

ERC Starting Grant

Main features

Aims of **Starting Grant** scheme

- Support excellent researchers at the career stage of starting their own independent research team or programme.
- Improve opportunities and independence at the start of a research career.
- Provide structure for transition from working under a supervisor to independent research.
- Enable PIs to create excellent new teams to bring new ideas to their disciplines.

Types of research funded

- No pre-determined priorities – applications can be made in any field of research
- Emphasis on the ‘frontiers of science, scholarship and engineering’ – research to lead to advances at the frontiers of knowledge
- Could be:
 - interdisciplinary proposals
 - proposals addressing new and emerging fields of research
 - proposals introducing unconventional, innovative approaches and scientific inventions
- Not suitable for ‘consortium-type’ proposals

Principal Investigators (PI)

- Central to the grant and review criteria
- Expected to lead their team and be fully engaged in the running of the grant
- Can be of any age, nationality or current location
- Expected to spend:
 - A **minimum 50% of total working time on the ERC project** and
 - A **minimum of 50% of total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country** (this does not exclude fieldwork/research outside Europe needed to achieve research objectives)
- Chooses a host institution in EU Member State or Associated Country (or an 'International European Interest Organisation')

PI eligibility

- **2 to 7 years from date of award of first PhD** or equivalent (as at 1 January 2018)
 - so those who were awarded their PhD from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2015 (inclusive)
- Extensions for certain reasons (must be properly documented). These are:
 - Maternity leave (18 months per child, or if longer by the documented amount of leave actually taken), paternity leave (actual amount of documented leave taken), national service, long-term illness (over 90 days) of PI or a close family member (child, spouse, parent or sibling) and clinical training
 - Please see [Work Programme](#) for details (p 17)
- No extensions for part-time working, non-research careers, travel, etc. (but this is taken into account for evaluation of the PI's track record)

Host Institution

- Can be any type of legal entity
- Must be established in an EU Member State or Associated Country
- The PI does not have to be based there at the time of application
- Has relevant infrastructure and capacity - must provide appropriate conditions for the PI to independently direct the research and manage the ERC funding
- Must not constrain the PI in relation to the research strategy of the institution
- Normally employs the PI
- **Not assessed as a separate criterion during peer review** but must sign a letter of commitment as part of application
- If funded:
 - signs up to the Grant Agreement with the ERCEA
 - signs a 'Supplementary Agreement' with the PI

Team members

- PI has freedom to choose appropriate ‘team members’- constitution of individual research team is flexible (senior research staff, post-docs, PhDs, non academic staff, etc...)
- PI's host institution normally the only institution but can have team members from other institutions in the same or different countries (institutions will sign Grant Agreement)
- Team members can be of any age, nationality and may be based anywhere
- **Individual research team headed by a single PI** (including any team members at other institutions) so not a traditional network or research consortium
- **Resubmission restrictions do not apply to team members**

Funding levels and duration of grant

- Normally maximum grant of **€1.5 million over 5 years** ERC contribution (or pro-rata for shorter projects)
- Can request an **additional €0.5 million** (not pro-rata), but only to cover:
 - eligible “start-up” costs for PIs moving from to the EU/Associated Country from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant;
 - the purchase of major equipment; and/or
 - access to large facilities.

Any additional funding requested must be justified in Part B Section 2c (see later).

- Limit includes direct and indirect costs (see later)

Proposal

Research project and evaluation criteria

Participant Portal

- **Single-stage submission, but two-step evaluation** (with interviews for StG and CoG, not AdG)
- Go to **submission system** (ECAS password required)
- Complete administrative forms online
- Download, complete and upload pdf files for Part B (10MB limit) and annexes
- Proposal formats and page numbers are strictly limited
- No additional documents allowed
- Checklist provided in Information for Applicants document (automated check on some elements only)

Proposal submission

- Start in plenty of time, and check you can save as pdf!
- Double check all details
- Can revise and resubmit up to deadline
 - Remember to press ‘submit’ button!
- **Deadline strictly enforced**
- Help: **Information for Applicants** document
- IT Problems: Participant Portal [IT Helpdesk](#)

Structure of application forms

- **Part A – Administrative and Summary Forms**
 - General information (including abstract)
 - Administrative data of participating organisations (one form per institution, much of this will be pre-filled using information from PIC number)
 - Budget (summary financial information)
 - Ethics
 - Call specific questions

- **Part B1 – Proposal Details**
 - Cover page & proposal summary
 - Extended Synopsis of the scientific proposal (5 pages)
 - Curriculum Vitae including Funding ID (2 pages excluding funding ID)
 - Track record (2 pages)

Structure of application forms (cont.)

- **Part B2 – Research Proposal (15 pages)**
 - a) State-of-the-art and objectives
 - b) Methodology
 - c) Resources (including project costs)
- **Annexes**
 - Host Institution Statement of Support (template from PPSS)
 - Ethics self-assessment (if applicable) (see ‘Information for Applicants’ for guidance)
 - PhD record and supporting documentation for eligibility checking

Parts B1, B2 and supporting documentation to be uploaded and submitted as .pdf files.

ERC evaluation criteria

- Excellence sole evaluation criterion
- Applied to:
 - the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of the **research project**
 - the intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment of the **Principal Investigator**
- Proposals marked on the above, ranging from 1 (non-competitive) to 4 (outstanding)
- Numerical marks not communicated to applicants - outcome of panel meetings expressed as A, B or C (see later).

ERC evaluation criteria: research project

1. Research Project	Starting, Consolidator and Advanced
Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?• To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines)?• To what extent is the proposed research high risk/high gain?
Scientific Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent is the approach feasible bearing in mind the fact that the proposed research is high risk/high gain?• To what extent is the proposed research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?• To what extent does the proposal involve the development of novel methodology (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?• To what extent are the proposed timescales and resources necessary and properly justified (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?

General tips

- Consider what excites you about the research and convey this in your application
 - Explain how the research will open new horizons or opportunities
- Think about your audience and remember to **explain UK-specific terminology**
- Provide a clear, concise work-plan, giving details of any intermediate goals.
- Take the pulse of your field, choose and clearly define an unmet need, think inter-disciplinary
- Explain what each team member is doing (and their background/ recruitment profile)
- Clearly explain how you will manage and disseminate your project
- Don't forget the role and requirements of open data and ethics (see below)
- **Justify the resources** you need for your research proposal and ensure the resources are appropriate.
 - Have you included all staff costs?

Research Project: feedback

- Structure your proposal to address each of the evaluation criteria - use the ERC's terminology explicitly
- You can use data, graphs, photos and pictures where appropriate to visualise your ideas
- Should strike a balance between showing the experts in your field that you know your stuff, and engaging the non-experts
- Balance your vision with a strong, confident plan and good project structure
- Projects with a risky/new methodology are welcomed, as long as there is a good reason for trying it out and a potentially high reward
- The proposal should be easy and enjoyable to read...not just about the science!

Research Project: feedback from panels

Anonymous feedback taken from panel comments on proposals in PE, LS and SH domains

Successful projects

- *“The panel were particularly impressed with the level of both detail and breadth with which the project plans to research this question. It was felt that this research was of **foundational significance** to the understanding of [...] and would have considerable impact in multiple related fields of research.”*
- *“The panel recognized that the **scientific excellence and the novelty** of this project and sees the great potential of a method for [...].”*

Unsuccessful projects

- *“However, the panel was **not convinced about the coherence** of the four parts of the proposal and about the design of this most innovative part. In fact, each part currently has weaknesses.”*
- *“While the ambitions and objectives of the project are highly important proposing high-risk research of a high quality principle investigator with a lot of background in the field, the **proposed concepts are described in very little detail and somewhat lack originality.**”*

Principle Investigator

Lead Researcher and evaluation criteria

ERC evaluation criteria: Principal Investigator

2. Principal Investigator	Starting
Intellectual capacity and creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to propose and conduct ground-breaking research? • To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking? • To what extent have the achievements of the PI typically gone beyond the state of the art?
Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does the PI demonstrate the level of commitment to the project necessary for its execution and the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project (minimum 50% of the total working time) (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?

PI: competitive candidates

Must have already shown potential for research independence and evidence of maturity. For example:

- By having produced at least one important publication as main author or without the participation of their PhD supervisor
- Should also be able to demonstrate promising track record of early achievements appropriate to their field and career stage:
 - including significant publications (as main author) in major international peer-reviewed multidisciplinary scientific journals, or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals of their respective field
 - they may also demonstrate a record of invited presentations in well-established international conferences, granted patents, awards, prizes etc.

PI: CV (2 pages max.)

- Should include standard academic and research records – **template available** (may be modified)
- Concise ‘funding ID’ (outside page limit) covering:
 - Current research grants and their subject
 - Ongoing applications for work relating to the proposal
- Any research career gaps and/or ‘unconventional career paths’ should be clearly explained so that they can be fairly assessed by the evaluation panels.

Track record (2 pages max.)

The PI should list:

- **Up to five publications** in major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals and/or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals, peer-reviewed conferences proceedings and/or monographs of their respective research fields, highlighting those as main author or without the presence as co-author of their PhD supervisor (properly referenced, field relevant bibliometric indicators may also be included);
- Research monographs and any translations thereof;
- Granted patent(s);
- Invited presentations to internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools;
- Prizes/ Awards/ Academy memberships

PI: general tips

- Sell yourself
- Remember the Funding ID section in the CV is important
- Make sure you address the full requirements of the track record, and consider what makes you stand out
- Clarify specific points to strengthen your application and give additional relevant details
- **Explain anything that is UK specific**
- The evaluators will review the PI on the basis of their experience and information the PI provides on the application form
- If you refer to journal impact factors, state which one you are using

PI: feedback

- **Provide specific details** of prizes, citation data for publications, project management experience, papers at conferences, mentoring of students etc.
- **Pack the Track Record with evidence** about your achievements – panels are more likely to give an ambitious project the go-ahead if they ‘trust’ the PI, and are convinced of your credibility as an excellent researcher/project leader.
- Try to explain how you are exactly the right person to undertake this particular project, at this specific moment in time.
- **Refer explicitly to the criteria** used in the Starting Grant call documents.



PI: feedback from panels

Anonymous feedback taken from panel comments on successful proposals in PE, LS and SH domains

Successful projects

- *“The PI has a superb publication track record in **all three areas covered by the proposal**. She is one of the world leaders in these fields and her work sets the state-of-the-art.”*
- *“The PI has produced fundamental work in [...], relevant for much of the proposal, and has given a very illuminating account of a huge range of recent work pertinent for the project.”*

Unsuccessful projects

- *“The PI’s track record is **solid but not outstanding** with work mostly published in specialty journals.”*
- *“The applicant has a **good but not outstanding track record**. Parts of the proposal are not sufficiently covered by the research expertise of the principal investigator.”*



Project Costs and Budget



Costs

- Reimbursement of up to 100% of total eligible costs:
 - **Direct costs:** up to 100% of eligible costs
 - **Indirect costs:** flat-rate of 25% of eligible direct costs
- Information on eligible and ineligible costs on next slides and also given in detail in Article 6 of the Annotated Model Grant Agreement for Horizon 2020:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf

Direct costs

- *“Costs that are directly linked to the action implementation and can therefore be attributed to it directly.”*
- Examples: personnel, equipment, consumables, travel and subsistence, and publication costs
- Most costs likely to be ‘actual’:
 - actually incurred by the beneficiary;
 - incurred within the duration of the project (except costs relating to last periodic/final report);
 - must be indicated in estimated budget;
 - must be incurred in connection with the action and necessary for its implementation;
 - recorded in accounts (identifiable and verifiable) and determined according to hosts’ usual cost accounting practices;
 - must comply with the applicable national law on taxes, labour and social security;
 - must be reasonable, justified and must comply with the principles of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

Indirect costs

- *“Costs that are not directly linked to the action implementation and therefore cannot be attributed directly to it.”*
- To be declared as a flat-rate of 25% of eligible direct costs, excluding:
 - subcontracting;
 - costs of certain resources made available by third parties, not used on the premises of the host institution
- Examples:
 - Costs related to general administration and management
 - Costs of office or laboratory space, including rent or depreciation of buildings and equipment, and related expenditure such as water, heating, electricity
 - Maintenance, insurance and safety costs
 - Communication expenses, network connection charges, postal charges and office supplies
 - Common office equipment such as PCs, laptops, office software
 - Miscellaneous recurring consumables

Ineligible costs

- Costs that do not comply with eligibility conditions, in particular:
 - costs related to return on capital
 - debt and debt service charges
 - provisions for future losses or debts
 - interest owed
 - doubtful debts
 - currency exchange losses
 - bank costs charged by the beneficiary's bank for transfers from the Agency
 - excessive or reckless expenditure
 - deductible VAT
 - costs incurred during suspension of the implementation of the action
- Also: costs declared under another EU or Euratom grant

Budget in ‘administrative forms’ section

- Each institution involved (other than subcontractors) will have a line on this form – pre-filled
- **Important** – The figures must match those in Part B2 (otherwise the figures from the administrative form will be used)

3 - Budget

Participant Number in this proposal	Organisation Short Name	Organisation Country	Total eligible costs/€ (including 25% indirect costs) ?	Requested grant/€
1	BBSRC	UK		
Total				

Part B2, section c, resources

Cost Category			Total in Euro	
Direct Costs¹	Personnel	PI ²		
		Senior Staff		
		Postdocs		
		Students		
		Other		
	<i>i. Total Direct Costs for Personnel (in Euro)</i>			
	Travel			
	Equipment			
	Other goods and services	Consumables		
		Publications (including Open Access fees), etc.		
		Other (please specify)		
	<i>ii. Total Other Direct Costs (in Euro)</i>			
A – Total Direct Costs (i + ii) (in Euro)				
B – Indirect Costs (overheads) 25% of Direct Costs³ (in Euro)				
C1 – Subcontracting Costs (no overheads) (in Euro)				
C2 – Other Direct Costs with no overheads⁴ (in Euro)				
Total Estimated Eligible Costs (A + B + C) (in Euro)⁵				
Total Requested EU Contribution (in Euro)⁶				

The project cost estimation should be as accurate as possible. Significant mathematical mistakes may reflect poorly on the credibility of the budget table and the proposal overall. The evaluation panels assess the estimated costs carefully; unjustified budgets will be consequently reduced.

Part B2, section c, resources (cont.)

In case you are requesting additional funding above the normal EUR 1 500 000, fully justify your request by filling in the table below (please delete the table if not applicable).

Request for additional funding above EUR 1 500 000 for	Justification
<p>Keep only that category(ies) that apply to the project.</p> <p>(a) covering eligible 'start-up' costs for a PI moving from another country to the EU or an Associated Country as a consequence of receiving an ERC grant and/or,</p> <p>(b) the purchase of major equipment and/or,</p> <p>(c) access to large facilities.</p>	

Part B2, section c, resources (cont.)

The requested contribution should be in proportion to the actual needs to fulfil the objectives of the project.

Please indicate the duration of the project in months:¹	
Please indicate the % of working time the PI dedicates to the project over the period of the grant:	%

Specify briefly your commitment to the project and how much time you are willing to devote to the proposed project in the resources section. Please note that you are expected to devote at least 50% of your total working time to the ERC-funded project.

What to include in the resources section

- State the amount of funding considered necessary to fulfil the objectives: the project cost **estimation should be as accurate** as possible.
- Include the **direct costs of the project plus** a flat-rate financing of **indirect costs** of 25% towards overheads.
- State how the costs will be distributed over the duration of the project.
- There is **no minimum contribution per year**; the requested contribution should be in proportion to the actual needs to fulfil the objectives of the project.
- The evaluation panels assess the estimated costs carefully; **unjustified budgets will be consequently reduced**.

What to include in the resources section (cont.)

- Resources requested should be **reasonable and fully justified** in the proposal
 - Describe the size and nature of the team, key team members and their roles; **justify participation of team members from other host institutions in relation to the additional financial cost it may impose.**
 - Describe other necessary resources, such as infrastructure and equipment. It is advisable to include a short technical description of the equipment requested, a justification of its need as well as the intensity of its planned use.
 - Justify if asking for > € 1.5 million.
 - Specify **any existing resources** that will contribute to the project.
 - Specify briefly your commitment to the project and how much time you are willing to devote to the proposed project.

Resources: general tips

- **Speak to your host institution's research/finance office as early as possible**
- The overall grant amount is determined by the peer review panels
- If your team members are at other institutions, those institutions will need to be involved in costing their part of the proposal
- All costs must be calculated and claimed according to your host organisations own accounting rules
- You can only budget for costs directly related to carrying out the project
- Link the budgets clearly to the proposed activities

Resources: feedback from panels

Anonymous feedback taken from panel comments on successful proposals in PE, LS and SH domains

- *“Given the detail of the planning, the budget is entirely reasonable.”*
- *“The budget and resource distribution match research goals as stated.”*
- *“The budget is carefully laid out and appropriately justified.”*
- *“The project has three main research directions. Given this, the panel recommends funding only three postdoctoral associates instead of four as requested in the proposal, and finds the other budget items appropriate.”*
- *“However, the panel found that the major equipment costs were not adequately justified and it recommends that the standard maximum grant amount according to the ERC Work Programme 2015 should not be exceeded.”*

Grant Management

Intellectual Property and Open Data access

Management issues to consider when preparing your application

- Grant Agreement
 - Annex 1 – description of the action (what you wrote in the proposal)
- Flexibility
 - Scientific
 - Portability
- Progress reporting
 - Scientific – submitted by the PI (mid-term and final)
 - Financial – submitted by the beneficiary (18 months)
- Publication and exploitation of results
 - IPR
 - Open Access

IPR in ERC Grant Agreement

- **‘Background’:**
 - *“any data, know-how or information — whatever its form or nature (tangible or intangible), including any rights such as intellectual property rights — that:
(a) is held by the beneficiaries before they acceded to the Agreement, and
(b) is needed to implement the action or exploit the results.”*
 - Examples: prototypes; cell lines; patents; database rights
- **‘Results’:**
 - *“any (tangible or intangible) output of the action such as data, knowledge or information — whatever its form or nature, whether it can be protected or not — that is generated in the action, as well as any rights attached to it, including intellectual property rights.”*
 - Results are normally owned by the beneficiary that generates them.
- Further information:
 - [IPR Helpdesk](#)
 - Articles 23-26 of [Annotated Model Grant Agreement](#)



Open access: publications

- Beneficiaries of ERC grants must ensure open access to all peer-reviewed scientific publications relating to its results. They must:
 - Deposit a machine-readable electronic copy of the published version or final peer-reviewed manuscript accepted for publication in a repository for scientific publications as soon as possible and at the latest on publication. Moreover, they must aim to deposit at the same time the research data needed to validate the results presented in the deposited scientific publications.
 - Ensure open access to the deposited publication — via the repository — at the latest:
 - on publication, if an electronic version is available for free via the publisher (**gold open access**), or
 - within six months of publication (twelve months for publications in the social sciences and humanities) in any other case (**green open access**).
 - Ensure open access — via the repository — to the bibliographic metadata that identify the deposited publication, which must include a persistent identifier.



Open access: publications (cont.)

- The ERC Scientific Council recommends subject-specific repositories:
 - for publications in the Life Sciences domain: Europe PubMed Central (<http://europepmc.org>)
 - for publications in the Physical Sciences and Engineering domain: arXiv (<http://arxiv.org>)
 - for monographs, book chapters and other long-text publications: OAPEN Library (<http://oapen.org>)
 - If there is no appropriate discipline specific repository, researchers should make their publications available in institutional repositories or in centralized ones, e.g. Zenodo (<http://zenodo.org>).
- Open Access costs **should be budgeted for** when submitting the application
- Further information:
 - [Open Access Guidelines for research results funded by the ERC](#)
 - Article 29 of [Annotated Model Grant Agreement](#)

Open access: research data

- Open access to and reuse of research data should follow **FAIR** principles – all research data should be **F**indable, **A**ccessible, **I**nteroperable and **R**eusable.
- Open Research Data pilot is now opt-in by default, as of 2017.
- Participating beneficiaries must take the following three steps to ensure open access to research data:
 - Deposit research data repository needed to validate the results presented in scientific publication, including associated metadata, in a repository as soon as possible.
 - Take measures to enable third parties to access, mine, exploit, reproduce and disseminate (free of charge for any user) their research data, including associated metadata.
 - Provide information via the chosen repository about tools available in order for the beneficiaries to validate the results e.g. specialised software or software code, algorithms and analysis protocols. Where possible, these tools or instruments should be provided.
- Beneficiaries of the ERC projects participating in the ORD Pilot have to formulate a **Data Management Plan (DMP)** after the project has started:
 - a brief plan to define what data sets the project will generate or process, whether and how these data will be made accessible, and how they will be curated, stored and preserved.
 - the DMP should also provide information on the measures taken to safeguard and protect sensitive data.

Gender balance

- Beneficiaries of ERC grants must take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the implementation of the action and aim for a gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action.
- PIs should determine the relevance of integrating sex and gender analysis into their research.
- Specific activities promoting equal opportunities or gender balance or covering the gender dimension of research funded by the ERC can be considered as eligible costs where these costs are necessary for the implementation of the action.

Ethics

Ethics in the ERC application

- Administrative forms, section 4 - Ethics issues table

4 - Ethics issues table



1. HUMAN EMBRYOS/FOETUSES		Page
Does your research involve Human Embryonic Stem Cells (hESCs) ?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
Does your research involve the use of human embryos?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
Does your research involve the use of human foetal tissues / cells?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
2. HUMANS		Page
Does your research involve human participants?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
Does your research involve physical interventions on the study participants?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
3. HUMAN CELLS / TISSUES		Page
Does your research involve human cells or tissues (other than from Human Embryos/ Foetuses, i.e. section 1)?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	

- Ethics Self-Assessment Annex (only if answered ‘Yes’ to any questions on ethics issues table)
 - Brief explanation of the ethical issue(s) involved & how it will be dealt with
 - You may include supporting documentation, such as authorisations already received. (Not counted in page limit)

Ethics review process

- The main areas that are addressed during the ethics review process include:
 - Human protection (including study participants and researchers)
 - Animal protection and welfare
 - Data protection and privacy
 - Environment protection
 - Participation of non-EU countries
 - Malevolent use of research results

- The ethics review process consists of:
 - Three steps take place before the conclusion of grant preparation:
 - i. Ethics Pre-Screening
 - ii. Ethics Screening
 - iii. Ethics Assessment
 - A fourth step takes place, after the signature of the grant agreement, during the lifetime of the selected projects:
 - iv. Ethics Monitoring

Ethics review process (cont.)

- **Ethics Pre-Screening** – All proposals recommended for funding will undergo an Ethics Pre-Screening performed by the ERCEA ethics team where the proposals which can be cleared for granting are identified
- **Ethics Screening** – All the proposals where potential ethical issues have been identified have to undergo an Ethics Screening,
 - carried out soon after the scientific evaluation and concerns only proposals shortlisted for funding.
 - Each proposal will be screened by at least three independent ethics experts or the ERCEA
 - The possible outcomes of the ethics screening process are:
 1. The proposal is "ethics-ready" and therefore receives ethics clearance
 2. Conditional clearance
 3. The proposal must proceed to Ethics Assessment

- **Ethics Assessment** – an in-depth analysis of the ethical issues.
 - Proposals involving the use of Human Embryonic Stems Cells (hESCs) automatically undergo an Ethics Assessment.
 - carried out by a panel consisting of at least three independent ethics experts
 - The possible outcomes of the ethics assessment process are:
 1. The proposal is "ethics-ready" and therefore receives ethics clearance
 2. Conditional clearance
 3. The proposal must proceed to a second ethics assessment

Evaluation Process

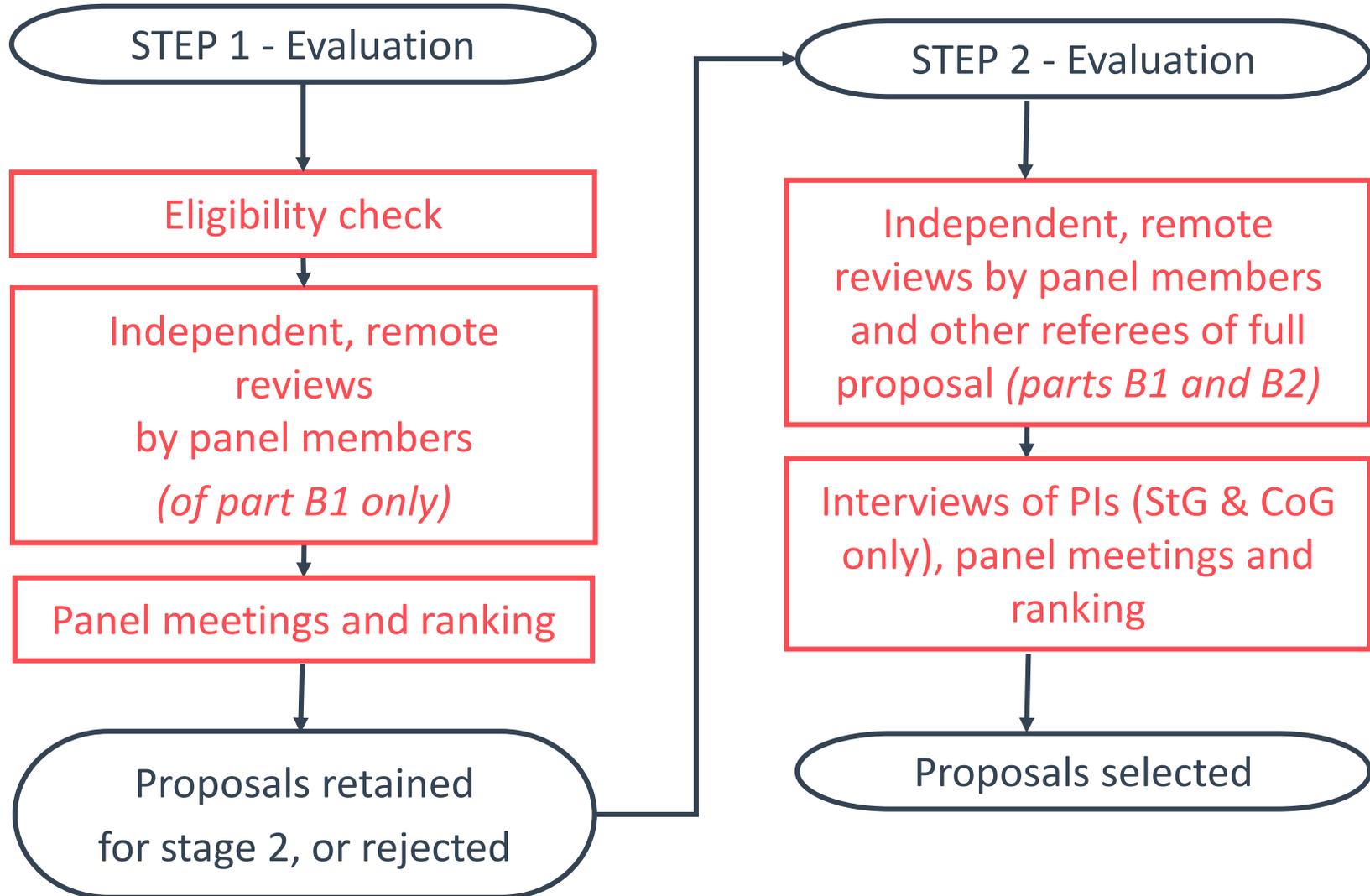
Peer review

- 3 research domains, 25 panels - 2 separate sets of panel members
- Indicative budget will be allocated to each panel in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals
- Information for Applicants document provides list of panels and keywords, indicating fields of research covered
- Lists of panel members for previous ERC Starting calls can be found on the ERC website for each individual grant type under the funding section: <https://erc.europa.eu/funding/starting-grants>

ERC panel structure

Social Sciences and Humanities	Physical Sciences and Engineering	Life Sciences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SH1: Individuals, Markets and Organisations• SH2: Institutions, Values, Environment and Space• SH3: The Social World, Diversity, Population• SH4: The Human Mind and Its Complexity• SH5: Cultures and Cultural Production• SH6: The Study of the Human Past	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LS1: Molecular Biology, Biochemistry, Structural Biology and Molecular Biophysics• LS2: Genetics, 'Omics', Bioinformatics and Systems Biology• LS3: Cellular and Developmental Biology• LS4: Physiology, Pathophysiology and Endocrinology• LS5: Neurosciences and Neural Disorders• LS6: Immunity and Infection• LS7: Applied Medical Technologies, Diagnostics, Therapies, and Public Health• LS8: Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology• LS9: Applied Life Sciences, Biotechnology and Molecular and Biosystems Engineering

Proposal evaluation process



Outcome of evaluation

- Step 1 (Part B1 of proposal)
 - A: is of sufficient quality to pass to Step 2 of the evaluation
 - B: is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to Step 2 of the evaluation
 - C: is not of sufficient quality to pass to Step 2 of the evaluation

Applicants scoring B or C told the ranking range of their proposal out of those evaluated by the panel

- Step 2 (full proposal and **interview for StG and CoG**)
 - A: fully meets the ERC's excellence criterion and is recommended for funding if sufficient funds are available
 - B: meets some but not all elements of the ERC's excellence criterion and will not be funded

Applicants told the ranking range of their proposal out of the proposals evaluated by the panel

Proportions per score (StG-2016)

Evaluated step 1		
Score	All	UK
A (through to step 2)	28.57%	31.47%
B	41.93%	45.34%
C	29.50%	23.19%

Evaluated step 2		
Score	All	UK
A (funded)	47.14%	44.08%
A (non-funded)	17.13%	17.11%
B	35.72%	38.82%

Restrictions on submissions of proposals for 2018 StG call

No restrictions apply in the following cases:

- A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as **category A** in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programme 2017 may submit a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator, Advanced or Synergy Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2018.
- A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as **category B at step 2** in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programme 2017 may submit a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator, Advanced or Synergy Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2018.

Restrictions on submissions of proposals for 2018 StG call (cont.)

Restrictions apply in the following cases:

- A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as **category B at step 1** in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programme 2017 may **not** submit a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2018.
- A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as **category C** in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programmes 2016 or 2017 may **not** submit a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2018.
- A Principal Investigator whose proposal was rejected on the grounds of a **breach of research integrity** in the calls for proposals under Work Programmes 2016 or 2017 may **not** submit a proposal to the calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2018.
- A researcher may participate as Principal Investigator in **only one ERC frontier research project at any one time**.
- A researcher participating as Principal Investigator in an ERC frontier research project may not submit a proposal for another ERC frontier research grant, unless the existing project ends no more than two years after the call deadline.
- A Principal Investigator who is a **servicing Panel Member** for a 2018 ERC call or who served as a Panel Member for a 2016 ERC call may not apply to a 2018 ERC call for the same type of grant.

Restrictions on submissions of proposals for 2018 StG call (cont.)

Proposal evaluated under Work Programme	Evaluation step	Evaluation score	Can the PI resubmit in 2017?
2016	1	B	yes
		C	no
	2	A	yes
		B	yes
2017	1	B	no
		C	no
	2	A	yes
		B	yes

Points to consider if resubmitting a proposal

- Any specific changes to call and rules of operation
- Can I resubmit?
 - Depends on the score you received, please see earlier slides.
- Should I resubmit?
 - This is of course up to the PI, although many successful applications have come from PIs who were unsuccessful with a previous application and subsequently improved their proposal.
- When should I resubmit? Will the panel members be the same?
 - The ERC operates two sets of panel members, which sit in alternate years.
- How can I improve my proposal? Should I take into account feedback?
 - In general, yes – take into account the evaluators' feedback, while highlighting your increased experience/achievements since the previous application.

Interviews



Interviews

- All PIs whose proposals are retained for Step 2 of the peer review process will be interviewed by the peer review panel
- Takes place in Brussels (travel costs reimbursed), and must attend in person
 - except in exceptional cases (i.e. pregnancy, immobility due to illness, out in research fieldwork) video or telephone interview can be arranged
- Interview lasts approximately 30 minutes (depending on panel)
 - Start with a presentation by the PI on the outline of the research project
 - Followed by a question and answer session
- Not formally weighted, but the panel will take into account the results of the interview alongside the individual reviews.

Interviews Tips

- **Be prepared** for a wide range of questions from different panellists, i.e. from people not necessarily expert in your specific field
- Keep the presentation as simple as possible
- **Arrange mock interviews** and practice extensively
- It's a project pitch rather than a lab meeting, so can also include a short overview of your key achievements as a researcher
 - What do you want people to remember from a short presentation?
- Similarly, can include a short update of CV since the proposal was submitted
- Acknowledge any possible uncertainties/gaps in knowledge, but make clear that you have plans to address them = panel should be confident that PI will be able to deal with potential difficulties

What happens next?

- After review process:
 - Funding decision and feedback
 - (Evaluation review procedure? Seek advice from UKRO? Requests should be raised within 30 days of the date of the initial information letter, details will be given in your letter from the ERC)
 - Feedback from ethics review?
 - Preparation of the grant agreement between the host and the ERC
 - No project negotiations as such
 - Grant agreement based on the proposal and the peer review decision
 - Can accept/reject the offered grant
- When the project starts
 - Sign grant agreement
 - Set up project account
 - Recruit staff onto project
 - Expect that all projects start within 6 months from invitation letter

Final general tips on writing your application

1. Liaise with your HoD and Research Office
2. Use clear and concise language
3. Pay careful attention to each section
4. Be ambitious, but show awareness of cutting edge
5. Look at examples of successful applications
6. Read all the documentation, including the Grant Agreement
7. Be realistic with the budget, clearly link your budget to activities. Has your institution agreed your budget?
8. Proofread your application
9. Get application reviewed by colleagues
10. Stick to page, font size, budget limits and format
11. Check submission checklist from Information for Applicants documents
12. It is possible to submit your proposal on the Participant Portal as many times as you like before the deadline

Useful Links

- [Participant Portal](#)
- StG-2017 call
- Information for Applicants for the StG-2018 call
- 2017 ERC Work Programme
- [ERC website](#)
 - [statistics on funded projects](#)
 - [funded projects](#)
 - [Starting Grants](#) : including link to Panel information for calls

Thank you
