ERC 2023 Starting Grant Call Webinar

Session 2:
Submitting your proposal and how it is evaluated by the ERC

24 June 2022
erc-uk@ukro.ac.uk
Who is who

Dr Phil Holliday (presenter)
  – European Advisor and ERC National Contact Point

Sean Rowlands (moderator)
  – European Advisor and ERC National Contact Point
What will be covered in this webinar?

- UKRO & UK Participation in Horizon Europe
- Recap about the ERC
- Submission Process
- How the proposal is evaluated
- Q&A
All participants will be muted for the duration of the webinar.

We will be recording this session.

Slides will be shared after the webinar on the event page.

Please use the Q&A function to submit questions.

You can ‘up vote’ your favourite questions in the Q&A

A chat function is available and will be monitored.
About UKRO

We support UK research intensive organisations

UK National Contact Point for the European Research Council and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions programmes

Unique partnership between UKRI and subscribing organisations

Provide a service to more than 140 subscribing organisations

A Brussels-based team of advisors

Part of UKRI’s wider International team
On 24 December 2020, the negotiations on the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement concluded

The announcement sets out the UK’s intention to associate to Horizon Europe

This includes full participation in the programme (with the exception of the EIC Fund)

UK entities can participate in/coordinate projects and receive funding from Horizon Europe, incl. ERC grants

European Commission’s Q&A confirms UK eligibility to apply.

UKRO website provides latest information on UK participation
European Commission’s Q&A confirms UK eligibility to apply:

“UK entities including universities, research centres, scientists, innovative businesses, industry, etc. can participate in the first calls for proposals of Horizon Europe as soon as they are published on the European Commission’s website.”

“...UK applicants are treated as if the UK is an associated country throughout the process, from admissibility and eligibility to evaluation, up until the preparation of grant agreements.”
UK’s Horizon Europe Guarantee fund

Short-term measure intended to address the delays in the formalisation of the UK’s association to Horizon Europe.

Guaranteed funding for the first two waves of eligible, successful applicants unable to sign their grant agreements with the EU. List of covered calls available in UKRI guidance annex.

The UK government has stated that it continues to monitor the situation closely and may consider whether it is appropriate to change the scope of the guarantee, in which case it will provide updated guidance.

If UK does not associate to Horizon Europe this guarantee will be part of the initial measures to be delivered, and will be an important part of the plan to provide stability for the UK sector, as we transition to a bold domestic alternative.

If you have any queries about the scope of the guarantee, please contact us at EUGrantsFunding@ukri.org.
Recap about the ERC

Brief recap of the overview presented previously in Session 1
What is the European Research Council?

The ERC’s mission:
- Support investigator-driven frontier research across all fields
- Fund projects purely on the basis of scientific excellence
- Encourage the highest quality research in Europe

What makes the ERC unique:
- Excellence is the only criteria
- Funding is distributed on researcher demand
- Freedom of PIs to lead their project with anyone in the world in their team

BOTTOM-UP,
CURIOSITY-LED,
EXCELLENT RESEARCH
ERC Frontier Research Grant Schemes

**The ERC funds**
- the best ‘frontier research’ proposals
- submitted by excellent researchers
- in the research field of their choice

**Projects are led by a Principal Investigator**
- plus team members (if required)
- NOT the same as a collaborative grant

**Funds any field of research**
- Evaluation by 27 expert panels under 3 domains:
  - Physical Sciences and Engineering (PE)
  - Life Sciences (LS)
  - Social Sciences and Humanities (SH)
Proof Of Concept Grant
€150k Lump Sum, Lasts for 1.5 years
Top-up grants for current ERC grantees

Years post-PhD

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Starting Grant
€1.5M (+ €1M additional)
Lasts up to 5 years

Consolidator Grant
€2M (+ €1M additional)
Lasts up to 5 years

No PhD Requirements

Advanced Grant
€2.5M (+ €1M additional)
Lasts up to 5 years

Synergy Grant
€10M (+ €4M additional)
Lasts up to 6 years with 2-4 PIs
Tentative 2023 Starting Grant call details*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call Identifier</th>
<th>ERC-2023-StG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>€628 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated no. grants funded</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Call open**: 12/07/2022
- **Deadline**: 25/10/2022
- **Step 1 Decision**: 26/05/2023
- **Step 2 Decision**: 25/08/2023
- **Grant Signature**: 23/12/2023

* Double check with the 2023 ERC Work Programme is published next month
Other points to consider

Important aspects of proposal development that might not be immediately apparent.
Under Horizon Europe, beneficiaries of ERC grants must ensure open access to all peer-reviewed scientific publications relating to their ERC project results.

- **Open access means accessible on:**
  - a trusted repository
  - under a CC BY (or equivalent) licence (either to the ‘author accepted manuscript’ or the published ‘version of record’).

- **For long-text publications like monographs**
  - a CC BY-NC / ND / NC-ND licence (or equivalent) is acceptable.
  - The ERC Scientific Council recommends the use of the OAPEN Open Books library (https://oapen.org) as repository for monographs and other books as well as book chapters.

Provisions related to Open Science can be found on pages 107 – 109 of the Model Grant Agreement.

Guidelines on FAIR Data Management in Horizon 2020
www.openaire.eu
https://www.fosteropenscience.eu/

**Publishing Fees**
Will not be eligible for funding from the grant if the publication venue is not fully open access (i.e. a fully open access journal or book, or an open access publishing platform like, e.g., Open Research Europe)
Open Research Europe

Scholarly publishing platform that will provide Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe beneficiaries with a no-cost full open access peer-reviewed publishing service, across all fields of research

https://open-research-europe.ec.europa.eu/
Data Management Plan (DMP)

Every ERC grantee must submit a DMP within 6 months of the start of their ERC project.

Further information:
- Information for ERC Grantees on DMP
- Data Management Plan
Gender Equality Plans (GEP)

The host institution will need a GEP in place for this call

- Necessary before the signing of the Grant Agreement
- Not the responsibility of individual PI applicants, it is meant for the organisation, approved by management.
- Applies to public bodies, research organisations and HEIs, not required for SMEs, industry, NGOs or civil society organisations.

GEP must have the following building blocks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Dedicated resources</th>
<th>Data collection and monitoring</th>
<th>Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• formal document published on the institution’s website and signed by the top management</td>
<td>• commitment of resources and gender expertise to implement it</td>
<td>• sex/gender disaggregated data on personnel and students and annual reporting based on indicators</td>
<td>• Awareness raising/trainings on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Why Gender?

Sex & Gender is not an evaluation criteria, but it could have a lot to do with your proposal’s scientific excellence.

Make sure you think about it in your research design relative your field/discipline, evaluators might see this as a gap in your proposal.

Some ideas to ponder:

• Integrating the gender dimension in R&I can be added value in terms of **excellence** and **creativity**

• S&G helps researchers question gender norms and stereotypes, to rethink standards and reference models – **improve methodology**

• It can **enhance** the **validity of results** and the **societal relevance** of the knowledge, technologies and innovations produced.

• It also contributes to the **production of goods and services** better suited to potential markets – not specifically important for winning an ERC but it could be a big deal further down the line.
ERC has formally endorsed the **San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA):**

*Do not use journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an individual scientist's contributions, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions.*

What does this mean for applicants?

- Publications listed in the “track record” (Part B1) **can have contextual details** incl. field-relevant bibliometric indicators
- **Journal Impact Factor will be disregarded** anywhere in the proposal
Covid-19 and the ERC

• Possible to postpone project start date by 6 months
• Possible to extend duration of project by 6 months or further on case by case basis
• Flexibility on teleworking and time commitments (notify ERCEA)
• New since 2022 – Covid-19 Impact to scientific productivity (300 characters in CV)

Remember – EU financial contribution to the project cannot be raised

Click here for the ERC’s up to date coronavirus measures (covering submission, evaluation, interviews and implementation)
Useful links

- ERC 2023 StG call on the Funding and Tenders portal - Not yet available.
- ERC 2022 StG and CoG Information for Applicants
- Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement
- Part B1/B2, Host Institution Support Template (pdf)
- ERC Website, including the easy to use Project Database and the more in depth ERC Information System
- Novelties in the Horizon Europe MGA – Commission Stakeholder Workshop video
Which panel should I apply to if my proposal covers more than one panel?

Pick the panel that the majority of your proposal fits. You are allowed to select a secondary panel as well. The primary panel will evaluate your proposal and could ask for support from a panel member from the secondary panel. At Step 1 you have to convince the generalist, at Step 2, remote expert evaluators will be assigned to your proposal.

New PhD reference date – what does successful defence of your PhD mean?

Successful defence of your PhD means your viva, so you will need to contact your awarding institution to ask them for a letter stating the date of your viva.

If you did not have a viva, you will need to contact your awarding institution directly and ask them which date they would use as the "date of successful defence of PhD". It could be the date that the Research Studies Committee passed its recommendation on to the University Senate for approval of the PhD, but please double check with your awarding institution.

Where can I find all the template documents for the call?

The call is not currently open, but when it does, you can download the template documents for Part B1, Part B2 and the Host Institution support letter when you create a submission on the Funding & Tenders Portal. For now, you can use a PDF version as a reference, but please use the 2023 versions of the templates when they are available.
Q&As from Session 1 (2/2)

What is the best strategy to demonstrate to the panel that you are the best person to carry out the project without sounding rude?

Applicants should constantly refer to the Principal Investigator profile in the ERC Work Programme for the criteria evaluators will use.

Competitive applicants don’t just address these broad criteria, they also stand out from their field, at their career stage and link their excellent attributes as best as possible to the specific needs of the project.

Evaluators review lots of proposals and there is not much space. They understand and expect applicants to flag their strengths without niceties, it makes their work easier to see these points clearly stated.

To set the right clarity and tone, we recommend getting as much feedback on drafts as possible.

When it comes to setting out the novelty of your proposal in comparison to the current state-of-the-art, it can be counterproductive to present your work as an antidote to existing flaws as that might be badly received by the expert panellists. We suggest it is more useful to explain their contribution to set the scene and then focus on the positive steps your novel research will beyond that work.

How do the ERC view overlap in the project topic with existing funding, e.g. from a UKRI fellowship?

Submitting similar proposals to different funders is unlikely to undermine the evaluation of the project topic itself. However an overlap can be difficult and unfeasible to implement which might cause evaluators concern.

Concurrent grants can be a problem for eligibility and feasibility if the following occurs:

- **Double funding** (the same activity funded twice by different funders). This is strictly not allowed by EC grant agreements and most other funders.

- **Concurrent project getting in the way of fulfilling ERC time commitments**: researchers have to be sure they have the capacity to carry out the work for both projects while they overlap. Falling below an ERC time commitment can make the whole project ineligible. These time commitments are calculated as an average across the project duration.

If an applicant has an overlap of projects, this can be resolved but it might not be practical and would need careful planning to set up. Time commitment ≠ funding request. If there are periods of overlap between two grants but where the work contributes to both projects, in principle it is possible to report activity to both funders as long as funding is only requested from one.

Otherwise, it might be more feasible to plan to apply to a later ERC call or request a postponement of the ERC project’s start date to minimise the overlap.
ERC Submission Process
Approaching Proposal Submission

1. Register in the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal and create an ECAS account
2. Get in touch with your research support office
3. Add relevant contact people to the online application
4. Submit early and often – latest version will be accepted
5. Keep the Information for Applicants in front of you throughout!!!
ERC Proposal Submission

1-step submission: all parts of the proposal are submitted together at deadline

- Part A is filled in online on the Funding and Tenders Portal
- Part B1, Part B2 and the Annexes are uploaded as PDFs to the Funding and Tenders Portal.

A combined template of these forms is available on the EC website.
Find the call on the Funding & Tenders Portal

Use the topic search
Call not listed yet
Until the submission link is available, key documents are available on the ERC website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Work programme part</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horizon Europe Framework Programme (HORIZON)</td>
<td>HORIZON-ERC-2022</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call</th>
<th>Work programme year</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call for Proposals for ERC Starting Grant (ERC-2022-STG)</td>
<td>HORIZON-ERC-2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of action</th>
<th>Type of MGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HORIZON-ERC HORIZON ERC Grants</td>
<td>HORIZON Action Grant Budget-Based [HORIZON-AG]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deadline model</th>
<th>Opening date</th>
<th>Deadline date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>single-stage</td>
<td>23 September 2021</td>
<td>13 January 2022 17:00:00 Brussels time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PDF of the 2022 Starting Grant application template is available
IDENTIFY THE HOST INSTITUTION (PIC number)

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE ON THE PROPOSAL?

BASIC DETAILS ABOUT THE PROPOSAL

Select your primary evaluation panel (e.g. LS3/SH1/PE4 etc)

See a full list of ERC panels and keywords in Annex 4 of the Information for Applicants document (from page 31)

Anything you enter in this part of the form can be edited later!
The Abstract

- First thing that everyone looks at
- Used by the panel chair to choose which panel members will undertake the Step 1 review
- Mention interdisciplinary elements
- Public facing – a version will be available on CORDIS if your project is selected
Don’t forget to add excellence to the abstract

Most of Part A is not evaluated by experts but they do get a cover page using information from that online form.

*Make it exciting and memorable for panellists!*

Your abstract is an important first glimpse at your proposal, and also the blurb that is likely to become the point of reference for what you want to do.

Getting your abstract right is a great way to improve your chances of standing out for the expert panel which will be have lots of proposals to get through.
ERC Panel Structure

Must choose a primary evaluation panel

Optional secondary evaluation panel

Optional free key words

Read the descriptors

Applicants can flag their proposal as interdisciplinary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Sciences &amp; Engineering</th>
<th>Life Sciences</th>
<th>Social Sciences &amp; Humanities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PE1 Mathematics</td>
<td>LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures &amp; Functions</td>
<td>SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter Particle</td>
<td>LS2 Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems</td>
<td>SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE3 Condensed Matter Physics</td>
<td>LS3 Cellular, Developmental and Regenerative Biology</td>
<td>SH3 The Social World and its Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences</td>
<td>LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing</td>
<td>SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials</td>
<td>LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System</td>
<td>SH5 Cultures and Cultural Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE6 Computer Science and Informatics</td>
<td>LS6 Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy</td>
<td>SH6 The Study of the Human Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering</td>
<td>LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases</td>
<td>SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE8 Products and Processes Engineering</td>
<td>LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE9 Universe Sciences</td>
<td>LS9 Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering</td>
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<tr>
<td>PE10 Earth System Science</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PE11 Materials Engineering</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Main proposal page

**Part A: Administrative Forms**
online only

**Part B1 & Part B2**
Upload PDFs based on editable templates
Other documents listed below uploaded separately as PDFs

**Part B1 & Part B2**
Editable templates available to download

**Support for using the EC portal**
- Not support on content of proposals
- Any issues during submission should be logged with the helpdesk
IT issues on the Funding & Tenders Portal

Avoid issues by:

• Validating your proposal regularly

• Submitting early and often. Each submission overwrites the last, so only your final version will go to evaluators

• You can always submit an improved draft later but if there are IT issues and you do not manage to make any submission before the deadline, a proposal is unlikely to be accepted after the deadline

• Avoid using special characters for file upload. Only alphanumerical characters (A-Z, a-z, 0-9, _ (underscore), - (dash), . (dot) or space are allowed.

Problems? Contact the EC’s IT Helpdesk ASAP
Send screenshots and clear description of the problem.
Log the problem!

Call them if it is urgent:+32 2299 2222

Once you have contact the helpdesk and your issue has been logged, you can try to resolve the issue with minor fixes, e.g.:

• Try using a different browser or computer.
• Try again at another time of day when traffic might be lower on the portal.
Part A – Administrative forms

How to fill in the forms

Navigate by chapter or pages
Part A –
PI Declaration of Consent

• These consents **should not be submitted with the application**, but the applicant must ensure they have written consent from all participants prior to the call submission deadline.
• The written consent doesn’t need to be an official letter, our understand is that an email with the essential info and clear consent would work.
• ERC Executive Agency may request the applicants to provide this written consent as evidence at any time during the evaluation process.

### Application forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal ID</th>
<th>SEP-210732071</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>FAD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Declarations

1) We declare to have the explicit consent of all applicants on their participation and on the content of this proposal. *
Part A - Budget & Resources

3 - Budget

Please indicate the costs for each cost category as accurately as possible using only Euro integers. The 'Total eligible costs' of the project will be automatically calculated based on the figures inserted in individual columns. The Requested EU contribution must be filled in manually. Please make sure to update the Requested EU contribution if updates are made in any of the cost categories.

PI When calculating the salary, please take into account the percentage of your working time dedicated to the ERC project.

Other personnel costs and Other additional direct costs: If applicable, please specify this cost category in the Resources section (textbox below).

Internally invoiced goods and services: Costs for host institution invoices and invoices for other entities should be included here, e.g., access to large facilities, access to other services that are charged as unit costs. For more details on the budget table, please consult the ERC Information for Applicants document applicable to the call and year. Please note that the budget table and the description of resources below will be made available to the experts evaluating the proposal at Step 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PI</th>
<th>Senior Staff</th>
<th>Postdocs</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Other Personnel costs</th>
<th>A. Total personnel costs</th>
<th>B. Subcontracting Costs</th>
<th>C.1 Travel and subsistence</th>
<th>C.2 Equipment - including major renovations</th>
<th>Consumables incl. fieldwork and animal care</th>
<th>Publications (incl. Open Access fees) and</th>
<th>Other additional direct costs</th>
<th>C.3 Total other goods, works and services</th>
<th>Total Purchase costs</th>
<th>D. Internally invoiced goods and services</th>
<th>E. Indirect costs</th>
<th>F. Eligible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Make sure the figures match

Additional funding:
- Mixed in the budget table with the main budget, included in totals for the fitting cost categories
- Separate in the Description of Resources text
Part A - Budget

Budget and Resources description are seen by evaluators

Four main sections:
- Personnel
- Subcontracting
- Purchase
- Internally invoiced good and services

All ‘Additional Funding’ requested must be
- Included in the overall budget table
- Added to sums under each appropriate cost category
- For example fieldwork travel would go under Travel & Subsistence along with non-fieldwork travel like conferences

If funding is requested for ‘Other personnel costs’ & ‘Other additional direct costs’
- Should be entered as a total figure on your budget table
- Should be unpacked in the Resource section with each item briefly described
Part A – Description of Resources

Specify all the resources required and justify them against the needs of the project.
Unjustified budget lines may be reduced or count against your proposal.

Suggested elements to briefly describe and justify:
• Describe your commitment to the project
• Describe all the cost categories considered necessary for the project
• Describe the size and nature of the team, indicating the key team member(s) and their roles, or key vacant roles, specify and justify if they based at organisations other than the Host
• Describe any requested equipment, justify why you need it and how much it will be used
• Include the costs for Open Access to project outputs including data management
• Describe any additional funding requested for the project
• Describe any existing resources that will be used but don’t require funding

Template for Resources Description
(from Information for Applicants page 53)
• “I plan to allocate ….” + Justification
• Max. 8000 characters (equivalent to about 2 pages)
• Request for additional funding if applicable.
  • Provide a total figure (cost in EUR)
  • Address specific grounds for additional funding in justification..
  • Additional funding described separately in Resources section
ERC Additional funding

Additional funding up to €1 million (incl. 25% indirect costs) can be requested to cover the following eligible costs when these are necessary to carry out the proposed work:

“Start-up” costs for PIs moving to the EU or an AC from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant

The purchase of major equipment

Access to large facilities

Other major experimental and field work costs, excl. personnel cost

Special features of Additional Funding:

- What fits into the 4 categories in your field will vary from other fields
- If this additional part of the budget is not spent it cannot be transferred
- Same amount available to all ERC schemes
Part A – Ethics & Security questions

• Follow Horizon Europe guidance document: ‘How to complete your ethics self-assessment’

• UK applicants should answer ‘yes’ on questions about non-EU activity. This will not affect eligibility.

• Answering ‘yes’ on certain questions may require a brief text response from the applicant.

• Applicants may be requested to upload documents related to particular questions.

• Free text character limits: 5000 per text box

• If the character limit is too short, we recommend using a separate document uploaded as one of the optional PDF annexes. Make a reference to the annex in the Ethics text box in the application form.

Include page references to relevant sections in Part B1 & B2 for each issue if you answer ‘Yes’
Part A –
Responses on non-EU activity

**Ethics Section 6, Non-EU countries** – “Will some of the activities be carried out in non-EU countries?”

- Answer **yes for UK activity** and cite relevant points in the proposal.
- Similarly if there are any other activities outside EU member states.

**Ethics Section 4, Personal data** – “Is it planned to export personal data from the EU to non-EU countries?”

- Explain how these exports are in accordance with GDPR (Chapter V of the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679).
- Mention the EU Adequacy Decisions for the UK on the protection of individuals regarding the processing of personal data and free movement of such data from the EU to the UK.

**Security Section 1 EU classified information** – “Does this activity involve non-EU countries?”

- You need to answer **yes for UK activity** if the project involves EU classified information (EUCI; see Article 3 definition)

Read the Commission’s step-by-step guidance on how to complete the ethics self-assessment.
Supporting Documents

**About the Applicant**
- Evidence of degree & date of award
- Documentation to support extension of the eligibility window (if relevant)
  - Birth certificates
  - Doctor’s letters
  - Proof of leave from an employer/previous employer
  - Etc.

**About the Institution**
- Host Institution support letter (using the template, on official headed letter)
- Documentation to support extension of the eligibility window for applicant (if relevant)

**About the Project**
- Ethics documents if requested by the Part A Ethics questionnaire (e.g. ethics committee decisions, licenses etc.)
- If the character limit in the Ethics questionnaire is too short, upload appropriate responses as PDF annexes.

Official documents can be submitted in any EU official language OR certified translation into any EU language.
Short break
ERC Evaluation Process & Criteria
Evaluation Process

**Tentative timeframe for StG call feedback**

- **May 2023**
  Feedback to unsuccessful applicants about Step 1 evaluation. Interview invitations sent to successful candidates passed to Step 2

- **August 2023**
  All applicants informed about Step 2 evaluation

PI has approx. 30 minute interview that includes a presentation to the panel followed by a Q&A
### Evaluation Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal Grading</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Funded?</th>
<th>Reaplication Restrictions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>If sufficient budget</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Proposals which do not progress to Step 2 have “demand management” restrictions**

- Restrictions are produced from Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant calls
- Restrictions from Starting Grant calls apply to subsequent Consolidator Grant calls
- Synergy Grant calls only produce restrictions for Advanced Call applicants
Final Ranked List Calculation

Requested EU Contribution (Panel) \times \text{Available Budget} = \text{Panel Budget}

\text{Requested EU Contribution (Total)}

\text{Normalised Accumulated Budget (NAB)} = \left( \frac{\text{Funding Requested} + (\text{Funding for Higher Ranked Proposals})}{\text{Panel Budget}} \right) \times 100

Example: If a Panel has a €6 million budget:
- 3 projects selected
- 1 on reserve list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>NAB</th>
<th>Funded?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>€2M</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1/3 \times 100 = 33%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>€2M</td>
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<td>(1+1)/3 \times 100 = 67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>€2M</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(1+1+1)/3 \times 100 = 100%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>€2M</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(1+1+1+1)/3 \times 100 = 133%</td>
<td>Reserve?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>€2M</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(1+1+1+1+1)/3 \times 100 = 168%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>€2M</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(1+1+1+1+1+1)/3 \times 100 = 200%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proposals with a NAB between 0\% and 100\% are funded.

Evaluators make a ranking list, then the cut off is decided automatically.

Budgets are set by researchers’ demand.
ERC evaluation criterion

Proposals are not judged on socioeconomic impact or relevance to European policy.

Excellence is the sole evaluation criterion.

Excellence of one is not more important than that of the other.

Research project’s
- ground-breaking nature
- ambition
- feasibility

Principal Investigator’s
- intellectual capacity
- creativity
- commitment

Proposals marked by panel from: 1 – 5 (non-competitive to outstanding)

Numerical marks not communicated to applicant

Outcome of panel meetings expressed as A, B or C
1. Research Project - Ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility

The Project

- Does the proposed research address important scientific challenges?
- Are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art?
- Is the proposed research high risk/high gain?

The Scientific Approach

- To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the high risk/high gain?
- Are the research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve project goals?
- Does the proposal involve the development of novel methodology?
- Are the timescales, resources and PI commitment adequate and properly justified?
2. Principal Investigator - Intellectual capacity and creativity

The Principal Investigator (PI)

To what extent:
• has the PI demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?
• does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking?
• does the PI have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?
## Typical Reasons for Rejection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Project and Scientific Approach</th>
<th>Principal investigator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Scope is too narrow or too broad or not focussed enough etc.</td>
<td>• Insufficient track-record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Incremental research, not ground breaking</td>
<td>• Insufficient (potential for) independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work plan not detailed enough or unclear</td>
<td>• Insufficient experience in leading projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Insufficient risk management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reviewer comments about the Principal Investigator

**Unsuccessful**

- PI has very good track record, yet, it is not entirely clear, what are their own original contributions their potential as an independent project leader (creativity, management) is to be demonstrated.

- Based on the available information about their track record, publication activity and scientific experience, the Principal Investigator does not seem to have the capacity and is not prepared to execute the outlined project.

- The PIs creativity and independent thinking are not appropriately demonstrated.

- The PI has been working in a specialized field and contributed to a respectable number of publications, although the impact of these publications is not particularly high.

**Successful**

- The PI has a strong track record, including various aspects of scientific service, and seems ready to establish their independent career.

- The PI has shown an excellent knowledge of their field and an amazing productive, including some real highlights.

- The PI made several significant contributions to their field.

- The PI has a strong track record.
Reviewer comments about the Project

Unsuccessful

• The concepts are novel, but very ill described
• Only 5 lines of text to describe a complex set of experiments. Much more information is needed
• Is really high risk but whether it is high gain is not certain due to lack of elements
• Is an important challenge, but the proposed project is not going to make a significant contribution to it.
• There is no description of the expected outcome
• Could not find information whether the PI will have sufficient access [necessary infrastructures]
• The proposal is high risk and low return
• Less sure that the research design proposed will provide particularly convincing answers
• No novel methodology is involved

Successful

• The proposed research is based on a bold vision
• This project certainly has substantial risks with equally substantial payoffs if successful
• Addresses a very relevant research topic
• Proposed project is challenging and the objectives are certainly ambitious
• Approach seems feasible to address the questions
• Project is well grounded in supporting evidence
• Timescale of the project looks adequate
• Funding request is fully justified
• There is also no doubt that the PI would have the optimal working conditions to achieve these results
• The breakthrough of the timescales and resources described in the project by the PI is fully justified
Refer back to Session 1

Your understanding of the evaluation process and other guidance today should inform your proposal writing.

We covered proposal writing in Session 1, the slides and a recording are available [here]
Slides to have with you while writing your proposal
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tips &amp; Tricks to Remember</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speak ASAP with your HI’s Research Support colleagues</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Find colleagues to proofread drafts against evaluation criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You need a strong CV (in relation to your career stage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Read all call documentation and evaluation criteria</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluators are experts, but not necessarily in your exact area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Study previous ERC projects within your research area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The best proposals take time to write</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use clear and concise language, make it easy to find information in your proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explain jargon used in your country/research area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Include diagrams, images, tables if appropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Proposal Advice

Questions to ask yourself

Does the proposal go beyond the state of the art?

Is it timely? (Why wasn't it done in the past? Is it feasible now?)

What is the risk? Is it justified by the potential gain? Do I have a plan for managing the risk?

Why is my proposal important?

Why am I the best/only person to carry it out?

Am I internationally competitive as a researcher at my career stage and in my discipline?

Am I able to manage a 5-year project with a substantial budget?

Key points

Read all call documentation and the evaluation criteria

Be specific and don’t provide unsupported opinions or comments

Clearly address ALL of the evaluation criteria

Make it easy for the evaluators to find the information

Pitch to generalists: evaluators will be experts, but not necessarily in your exact area

Use clear and concise language and explain country/research area specific jargon

Include diagrams, images, tables if appropriate

Research previous and current projects

Find colleagues to proof read drafts with the evaluation criteria
Check your proposal’s coherence

*Does my methodology support my scientific objectives/questions?*
*Do I have the right resources to carry this out?*
*Does the latest version of the B1 match the B2?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific Questions</th>
<th>Methodology 1</th>
<th>Methodology 2</th>
<th>Methodology 3</th>
<th>Methodology 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions 1</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question 3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions 4</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity (Methodology)</th>
<th>Team Member 1</th>
<th>Team Member 2</th>
<th>Team Member 3</th>
<th>Team Member 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity 1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Evaluators are looking for feasibility in the proposal. If something does not match up in the text, it raises concerns for the project.
Useful links

- [2022 ERC Starting & Consolidator Grant Information for Applicants](#)
- [2022 ERC Work Programme](#)
- [ERC Youtube Channel- explainer videos](#)
- [Find out more about ERC Experts who review proposals](#)
- [ERC FAQ page](#)
- [ERC Information Service – the best way to find out about previously funded projects](#)

**Remember**
Read the Information for Applicants & Submit your proposal early and often!
Any Questions?