

Horizon Europe - European Research Council

What is Horizon Europe?

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation with a budget of €95.5 billion for the period 2021-2027. It tackles climate change, helps to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts Europe's competitiveness and growth.

The programme facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges. It supports the creation and better sharing of knowledge and technologies.

It also creates jobs, fully engages Europe's talent pool, boosts economic growth, promotes industrial competitiveness and optimises investment impact within a strengthened European Research Area.

For information on UK participation in the programme see UKRO's [dedicated factsheet](#).

What is the European Research Council (ERC)?

The ERC funds ambitious 'frontier research' proposals submitted by a Principal Investigator (PI) in any area of research and without predefined priorities. The ERC aims to fund the best research undertaken by the best researchers in Europe, with scientific excellence as the sole evaluation criterion (both the scientific excellence of the PI's track record and of the proposed project).

The ERC is part of [Pillar 1 'Excellence Science'](#), along with the **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)** and [Research Infrastructures](#). Pillar 1 sets out to promote scientific excellence and attract highly skilled researchers and innovators to Europe.

What is funded?

ERC proposals should aim to open new areas of research or develop new methodologies. Projects are expected to be ambitious in their choice of topic, scope or scale.

To achieve the outputs of their project, the PI may employ Team Members, who may be of any level of experience and may be based anywhere in the world and their contribution towards the project will be funded by the ERC.

The [latest ERC Work Programme](#) indicates the allocated budget and approximate number of grants that are expected to be awarded for each scheme, as well as the expected timings of the calls.

ERC schemes in Horizon Europe

The ERC main frontier research grants aim to empower individual researchers and provide the best settings to foster their creativity. Scientific excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation. Please see below an overview of all ERC 2026 main frontier research grant calls.

StG Starting Grants	COG Consolidator Grants	ADG Advanced Grants	SyG Synergy Grants
2-7 years (post PhD) Up to €1.5 million for 5 years + up to €1 or €2 million additional funding	7-12 years (post PhD) Up to €2 million for 5 years + up to €1 or €2 million additional funding	 Up to €2.5 million for 5 years + up to €1 or €2 million additional funding	2-4 PIs at any career stage Up to €10 million for 6 years + up to €4 million additional funding

Clarification on additional funding

Researchers currently based outside Europe (please see [here](#) for an updated list of Horizon Europe associated countries) and applying for a Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant will be able to request up to €2 million in additional funding to facilitate the relocation of their laboratory or team to the European Union or a country associated to the ERC part of the Horizon Europe programme.

Applicants already based in an EU Member State or associated country will remain eligible for up to €1 million.

The maximum amount of additional funding that can be requested by Synergy Grant applicants remains the same (up to €4 million).

As of 2026, the additional funding may also be used for personnel costs, and, as before, applicants are requested to define and justify the need for additional funding in their proposal. The decision to award the requested funding rests with the evaluation panel.

Other novelties in the ERC Work Programme 2026

- **Proposal Structure:**

Changes have been made to the length and structure of the research proposal:

- Part I of the Scientific Proposal (max. 5 pages): Scientific vision, objectives, and strategy
- Part II of the Scientific Proposal (max. 7 pages for StG, CoG and AdG, and max. 10 for SyG): Implementation, methodology, budget, and risk management.

- **Evaluation:**

Evaluation procedures have been updated to reflect this new structure.

- Step 1 – Assessment of Part I plus the applicant's CV/track record (Part B1) focusing on ambition and novelty.
- Step 2 – Full evaluation of both Parts, CV, track record, resources and methodology, including feasibility and risk mitigation.

Feasibility is now evaluated only at Step 2 of the review process, allowing Part I to emphasize vision and ambition.

- **Eligibility & Inclusion Updates:**

New extension grounds for Starting and Consolidator Grants: Victims of gender-based or other forms of violence.

Parental leave now explicitly includes maternity, paternity, and general parental leave.

- **Resubmission Restrictions:**

Synergy Grant applicants who received a 'B' score in Step 1 of the 2025 call are not eligible to reapply in 2026.

- **Flexibility for Current Grantees:**

ERC grantees applying for a new frontier research grant may remain eligible even if their current grant is extended beyond the two-year post-deadline window, under certain conditions.

- **Boosted Relocation Funding:**

Additional funding doubled for Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grant applicants relocating from non-associated third countries to the EU or an Associated Country.

Please note: Scientific excellence still remains the sole evaluation criteria for the ERC Grants.

Advanced Grants (AdG)

The ERC Advanced Grants support established researchers of any nationality with a strong track record of significant research achievements and ambitious, high-impact ideas. ERC Grants fund frontier research in any field, including interdisciplinary and pioneering work, and are open to researchers intending to carry out their projects in an EU Member State or an Associated Country.

Successful applicants can receive up to €2.5 million for a five-year project, with an additional €2 million available for start-up costs, major equipment, access to large facilities, or substantial fieldwork.

Projects must be hosted by an institution based in the EU or an Associated Country, which can be any type of legal entity, public or private, including universities, research organisations and undertakings.

Principal Investigators are expected to lead their research teams, spend at least 30% of their working time on the ERC project, and be based at least 50% of their time in the EU or an Associated Country.

The funding is provided as a single lump sum and must be justified with reliable cost estimates. Only eligible direct costs can be included, along with a 25% flat rate for indirect costs, following Horizon Europe rules.

Starting Grants (StG) and Consolidator Grants (COG)

The ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants support researchers of any nationality who are beginning or strengthening their independent research careers and leading their own team or programme. ERC Grants fund frontier, ground-breaking research in any field and welcome interdisciplinary and innovative proposals.

Applicants must hold a PhD, with eligibility based on the date of their first successful PhD defence. For Starting Grants this is 2-7 years post PhD, for Consolidator Grants this is 7-12 years post PhD.

Projects must be carried out in an EU Member State or Associated Country, and the host institution, which can be any type of legal entity, public or private, including universities, research organisations and undertakings must engage the Principal Investigator (PI) for the duration of the grant.

Starting Grants offer up to €1.5 million and Consolidator Grants up to €2 million over five years (pro rata for shorter projects), with an option to request up to €1 million (or €2 million for researchers relocating from outside the EU/AC) in additional funding for major costs like equipment or fieldwork.

Proposals must clearly demonstrate the project's novelty, ambition, and feasibility, and the PI's research independence and track record.

All requested funding must be justified, and eligible costs are reimbursed at 100% for direct costs plus 25% for indirect costs.

Synergy Grants (SyG)

ERC Synergy Grants support groups of two to four Principal Investigators (PIs) who bring together complementary skills, knowledge, and resources to address ambitious and complex research challenges. Researchers at any career stage are eligible to apply, provided they can demonstrate the groundbreaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of their proposal. Each PI must present their profile using a standard template, and one PI is designated as the corresponding Principal Investigator (cPI).

Synergy Grants offer up to €10 million over six years, with the possibility of requesting an additional €4 million for specific eligible costs. The participating PIs do not need to be based at the same institution but must clearly show how their combined expertise and resources are essential to achieving the

project's objectives. Synergy Grants are open to researchers of any nationality intending to carry out their research in an EU Member State or Associated Country. However, one PI per group—excluding the corresponding PI—may be hosted outside the EU or Associated Countries or by an international organisation.

Each group may include up to four host institutions, all of which must be legal entities established in the EU or Associated Countries, unless hosting a PI eligible to be based outside this area. Crucially, Synergy Grant proposals must demonstrate that the project's goals can only be achieved through the unique, collaborative effort of the selected PIs.

Proof of Concept Grants (PoC)

The ERC Proof of Concept (PoC) Grant supports existing ERC grant holders in exploring the commercial or societal potential of ideas developed during their ERC-funded research. It is open to researchers who previously received a Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, or Synergy Grant.

The PoC provides a lump sum of €150,000 for a project lasting up to 18 months, although most projects are expected to finish within 12 months. This funding covers both direct and indirect eligible costs and is paid in full if the project is carried out properly, regardless of actual expenses. Extensions beyond 18 months are only granted in exceptional cases.

Who is eligible to apply?

Anyone can apply to the ERC schemes which cover all postdoctoral career stages. There are no nationality rules and the applicant does not have to be currently based in Europe, they only need a letter of commitment from an eligible Host Institution included in their submitted proposal.

If successful, an ERC PI must be engaged for the duration of the ERC project by the host institution, which is a legal entity established in an EU Member State or Associated Country.

For Starting and Consolidator Grant the PhD eligibility window can be extended for the following:

- **Maternity:** 18-month extension for each child born before or after the PhD award. If the applicant can document a longer maternity leave, the eligibility period will be extended by the documented amount of actual leave taken until the call deadline.
- **Paternity:** extension by the documented time of paternity leave taken until the call deadline for each child born before or after the PhD award.
- **Long-term illness, or national service:** extension by the documented amount of leave taken by the Principal Investigator until the call deadline for each incident which occurred after the PhD award date.
- **Clinical training:** extension by the documented amount of clinical training received by the PI after the award of the first eligible degree and until the call deadline, up to a maximum of four years
- **Natural Disaster:** extension by the documented time of a PI's inability to work before the call deadline due to a natural disaster, after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.

- **Seeking Asylum:** extension by the documented time of the PI's inability to work before the call deadline due to seeking asylum, after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.
- **Gender-based violence or any other form of violence:** extension by the documented duration of the Principal Investigator's inability to work due to being a victim of violence.

More information

- [Horizon Europe website](#)
- [European Research Council website](#)
- [ERC Work Programme 2026](#)
- [ERC 2026 Webinar](#)
- [Information for Applicants to Proof of Concept Grants](#)
- [Information for Applicants to Starting and Consolidator Grants 2026](#)
- [Information for Applicants to Synergy Grants](#)
- [Information for Applicants to the Advanced Grants](#)
- [EU Funding and Tenders Portal](#)
- [Horizon Europe Grant Agreement Model](#)
- [Ethics Guidance](#)
- [Lump sum guidance](#)

Horizon Europe's legal basis:

- [Regulation establishing Horizon Europe](#)
- [Decision establishing the Specific Programme of Horizon Europe](#)

UKRO Portal

- [UKRO Portal](#)
- [ERC Advanced Grant 2025 Webinar](#)
- [ERC Starting Grant 2026 Webinar](#)
- [ERC Synergy Grant 2026 Webinar](#)
- [ERC Consolidator Grant 2026 Webinar – Register Here](#)

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