



ERC 2024 Starting Grant Call Webinar

Session 1:

Overview of the ERC, eligibility and proposal development

4 July 2023

<u>erc-uk@ukro.ac.uk</u>

About the Presenter

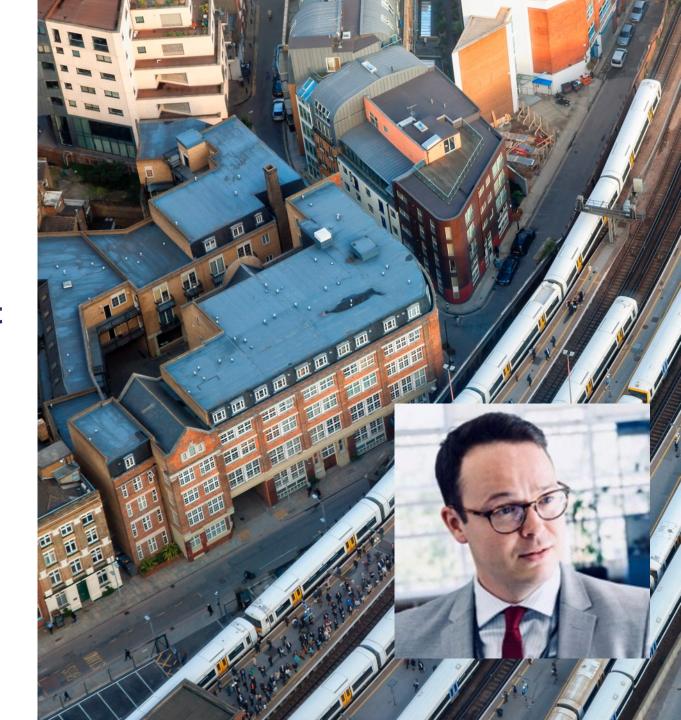
Jon Brookes

- European Advisor since January 2017
- Interim ERC National Contact Point
- They/Them

Guest speaker:

Dr Philippa Tomczak

Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nottingham





Introduction to UKRO & UK Participation in Horizon Europe

What will be covered in this webinar?



Overview of the ERC programme



Eligibility criteria



Proposal development





Questions and answers session



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.

Housekeeping



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 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





UK participation in Horizon Europe

On 24 December 2020, the negotiations on the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement concluded

The <u>announcement</u> sets out the UK's intention to **associate to Horizon Europe**

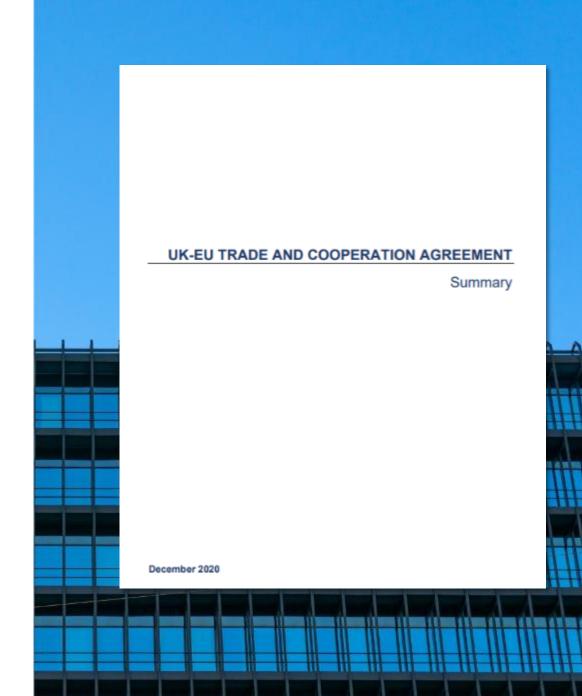
This includes **full participation in the programme** (with the exception of parts of the EIC Accelerator Fund)

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

<u>European Commission's Q&A</u> confirms **UK eligibility to** apply.

UKRO <u>website</u> provides latest information on UK participation





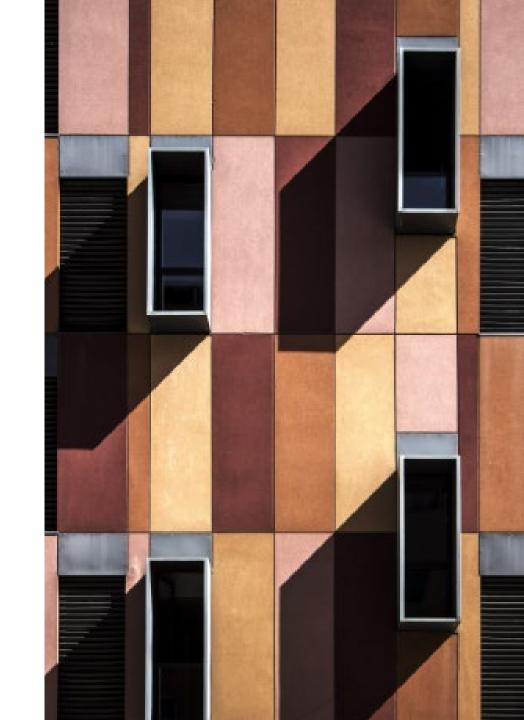
Commission Q&A Guidance

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."



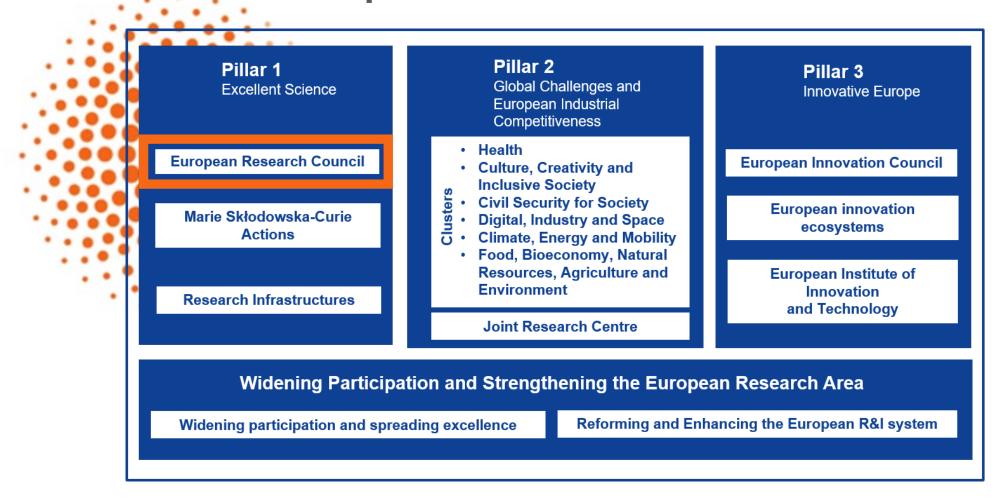




How does it fit into the wider Horizon Europe and what is it about?



Horizon Europe structure



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

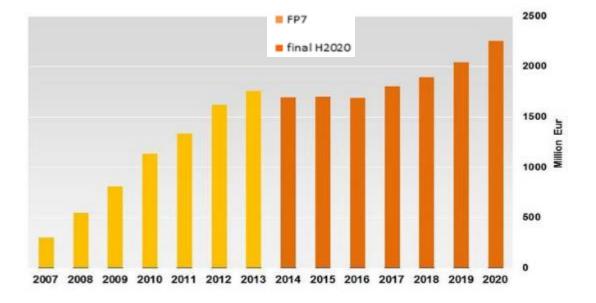
What makes the ERC unique:

- Excellence is the only criteria
- Freedom of PIs to lead their project with anyone in the world in their team

ERC Budget in Horizon Europe

26% increase in real terms compared to Horizon 2020.

Horizon Europe structure is represented below proportionate to budget allocation.



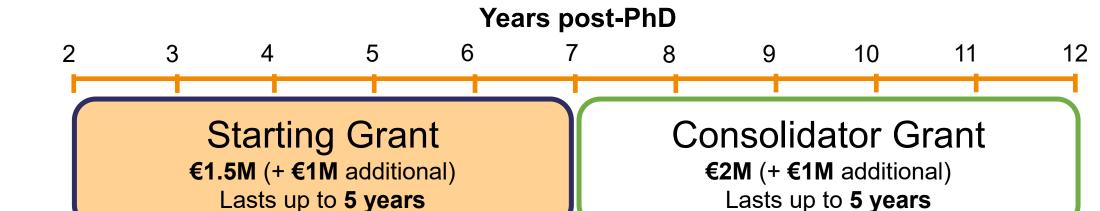


Pillar 3 Innovative Europe

Pillar 4

Pillar 1 Excellent science

Pillar 2 Global challenges



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

Proof Of Concept Grant

€150k Lump Sum, Lasts for 1.5 years
Top-up grants for current ERC grantees



Tentative ERC 2024 Calls

	Starting Grant	Consolidator Grant	Advanced Grant	Synergy Grant	Proof of Concept
Call Type	ERC-2024- StG	ERC-2024-CoG	ERC-2024-AdG	ERC-2024-SyG	ERC-2024- PoC
Call Opens	11/07/2023	12/09/2023	29/05/2024	12/07/2023	16/11/2023
Deadline	24/10/2023	12/12/2023	29/08/2024	08/11/2023	14/03/2024 17/09/2024



Changes to 2024 ERC Calls

- Excellence remains the only evaluation criterion, with a **primary evaluation of the research project** and at the same time an evaluation of the Principal Investigator
- Changes to the evaluation procedure **introducing a maximum number of proposals** (44) per panel for 2024 Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant calls (*More on this in webinar 2*)
- **New panel** in the SH domain **SH8** and changes to the panel title, sub-title and descriptors for others
- The applicant's CV and Track Record are now merged into a single four-page document. The Funding ID is moved to Part B2
- The 2024 Advanced Grant call will be implemented as a pilot call using lump sum funding and has a
 deadline in August now, three months later than in 2023
- The 2024 Proof-of-Concept call will have two cut-off dates instead of three
- The 2024 Consolidator Grant call is in December, two months earlier than in 2023



ERC Panel Structure

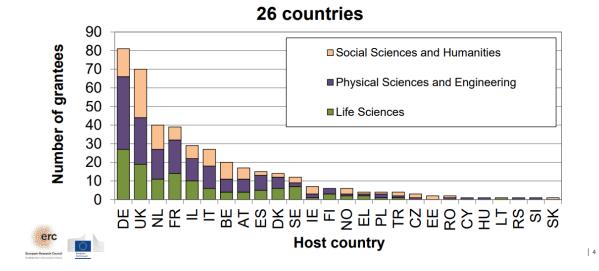
Physical Sciences & Engineering	Life Sciences	Social Sciences & Humanities
PE1 Mathematics PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter Particle PE3 Condensed Matter Physics PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials PE6 Computer Science and Informatics PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering PE8 Products and Processes Engineering PE9 Universe Sciences PE10 Earth System Science PE11 Materials Engineering	 LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures & Functions LS2 Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems LS3 Cell Biology, Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration* LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System* LS6 Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution LS9 Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering 	SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems SH3 The Social World and its Interactions* SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity SH5 Texts and Concepts* SH6 The Study of the Human Past SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space SH8 Studies of Cultures and Arts*



UK Research Office

- SH8 panel is newly added, split off from pre-existing panels
- LS3, SH3 and SH4 panels all have new panel titles
- LS5 panel has a new subtitle and descriptors

Recent UK participation in ERC Starting Grant calls



UK Host Institutions were the second most popular for the 2022 Starting Grant call, chosen by 70 successful applicants in 2022



STG 2023 – Submissions by HI country



UK-hosted submissions were

- 2nd highest for 2022
- 5th highest for 2023

Source: **ERC** statistics



Types of research

- Can be in ANY field of research;
- Must be very ambitious in risk and in scope;
- **Principal Investigator** is central to the project, they can be supported by as many "team members" as they need;
- Must be "frontier research", and should not be incremental advances.

More on evaluation criteria in part 2 including how panels and external experts evaluate proposals

Judged on the scientific excellence of the project and PI

No need to aim for externally selected policies or research themes, it's up to the applicant!





Tentative 2024 Starting Grant call details*

Call Identifier	ERC-2024-StG
Budget	€601 Million
Estimated no. grants funded	387





^{*} Double check with the 2024 ERC Work Programme is published later this month

2024 Starting Grant Eligibility window

Cut-off dates:

Successful defence of PhD between 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2021 (inclusive)

The date of the first PhD considered for the calculation of the eligibility period is the date of the actual award according to the national rules of the country where the degree was awarded.

Applicants should check with the awarding institution if there is any doubt on the date of actual award.





Extending Eligibility window of an **ERC** applicant

No extensions for part time working, non-research careers, travel, Covid restrictions (e.g. home schooling) etc., unless linked to illness/maternity.

But evaluators do take these circumstance into account if you describe them in your track record.

Starting and Consolidator Grant eligibility window can be extended for:

Maternity leave

(18 months per child or longer if documented)

Paternity leave

(actual amount of documented leave taken)

National service

(Actual amount of documented leave taken)

Long-term illness

(lasting over 90 days) Illness of PI/family member

Clinical training

Maximum 4 years

Children born before or after the date of successful defence

of PhD degree

Only occurrences after date of successful defence of PhD degree

Only occurrences after award of first eligible degree

Seeking Asylum

(Actual amount of

documented time)



NEW

since

Only occurrences after date of successful defence of PhD degree

Natural Disaster

(Actual amount of documented time, min. 30

Only occurrences after date of successful defence of PhD degree

Am I a competitive candidate?

- Constantly measure yourself against the Starting Grantee profile and the PI Evaluation Criteria in the 2023 ERC Work Programme
- Evaluators will benchmark you to your specific career age;
 2 years PhD ≠ 7 years post PhD.
- Think about what this profile looks like in your field of research.
- Look at <u>previously funded Starting Grant Pls in your field</u>, but remember you can present yourself on your own terms
- Prestigious achievements can matter but they aren't the only way to be successful. There are no blunt markers of an ERC grantee.
- Context matters, demonstrate what you did well and details that show your role so that evaluators can make a nuanced consideration



2024 Call Resubmission Restrictions

Call to which the Princi under previous ERC Work evaluatio	2024 ERC calls to which a Principal Investigator is <u>not</u> eligible	
2022 and 2023 Starting, Consolidator, Advanced Grant or 2022 Synergy Grant	Rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity	Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grant
2022 Starting, Consolidator, or Advanced Grant	C at Step 1	Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grant
	A or B at Step 2	No restrictions
2023 Starting, Consolidator, or Advanced Grant	B or C at Step 1	Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grant
	A or B at Step 3	No restrictions
2022 and 2023 Synergy Grant	B at Step 1 or 2	No restrictions
	C at Step 1	Synergy Grant



How are ERC proposals evaluated?

Excellence is the sole evaluation criterion, primarily

to:

Research Project

- Ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility
- Scientific approach

At the same time:

Principal Investigator

Intellectual capacity and creativity





Principal Investigator Eligibility

Who?

No restrictions based on age, nationality, current location or current employment/contract status.

Where?

Must have an institution based in an EU member state or associated country willing to host them.

Calculated as an average across entire project duration, can vary to a degree year on year

Grant Type	Minimum % of Working Time on Grant	Minimum % of time* in EU Member State or Associated Country	Years since PhD Award
Starting	50	50	2-7
Consolidator	40	50	7-12
Advanced	30	50	N/A
Synergy	30	50	N/A
-		†	



Fieldwork/work abroad related to the ERC project counts towards time commitment

Host Institution Eligibility











Must be based in the territory of an EU Member State or Associated Country









Has the infrastructure and capacity to allow the PI to independently direct the research and manage ERC funding





Must not constrain the PI to the institution's research strategy. PI has the right to transfer the grant to another institution.





Must 'engage' the PI for project duration, if grant is successful



Not assessed as a separate criterion during peer review but must sign a letter of commitment as part of application

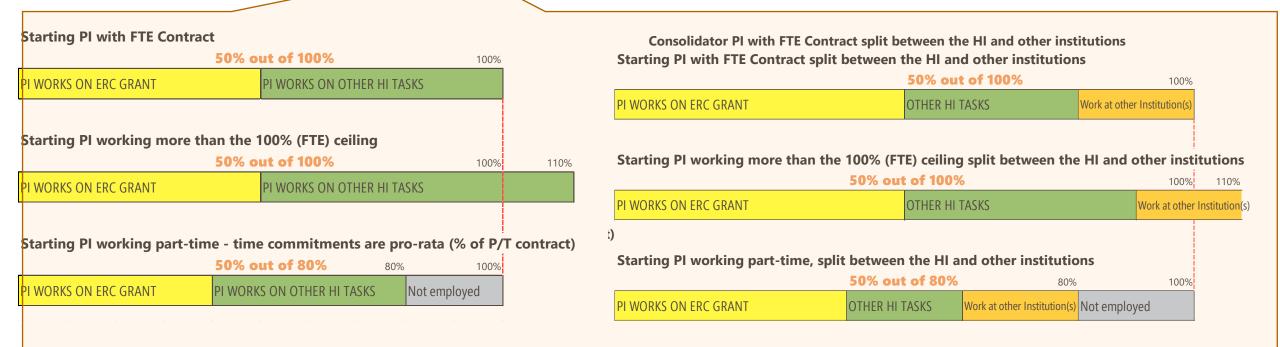
Working out the PI's time commitments

Minimum 50% working time working on the ERC grant

 All percentages are established by reference to the full time equivalent at the host institution (see below) or 1720 hours per year.

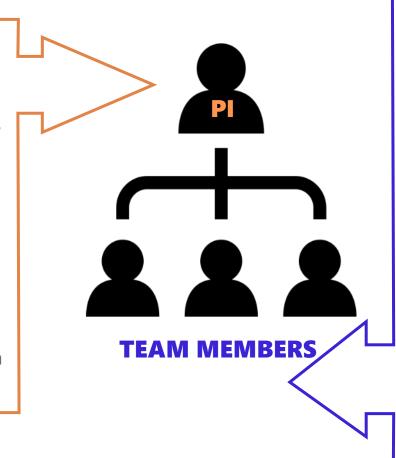
Minimum 50% time spent in Europe (Member State or Associated Country)

Fieldwork/work abroad related to the ERC project does not count against time commitment



Principal Investigators leading Team Members

- PI leads the research project, they are not collaborating as equals with their team
- PI has the freedom to choose how many team members are included in the project
- PI names individuals or roles that will be recruited in the proposal
- PI must justify the team and its composition and contribution
- Evaluators reject proposals where the PI is overshadowed by any team members



- Cannot be co-investigators
- Assigned to specific project outputs/tasks
- Do activities the PI can't do by themselves
- Should not have purely supervisory/mentor roles
- Can be research staff at any level (including technicians and project managers)
- Think about career path of employees
- Of any age, nationality or country of residence
- Can be based at the Host Institution or any other organisation in the world
- EU funded, even outside member states or associated countries



What kind of team members can be in an ERC project?

The constitution of the research teams is flexible. 2023 ERC Work Programme

Depending on the nature of a project the research team may involve team members from other research organisations situated in the same or a different country.

Only one PI

evaluated in proposal according to the broadly defined work programme (no prescribed job title)

Only one Host Institution (although a PI can transfer or be based at multiple organisations)

PI designs and chooses their team according to the needs of the project



Can my team include:

Researchers at any career stage?

YES, from PhD to Professor etc, as long as the PI is clearly leading the project.

Non-academic/administrative team-members?

YES, if they are justified and help to carry out the objectives

Team members based in other organisations?

YES, if they are justified and help to carry out the objectives

More in Session 2

2023 ERC Work Programme

about adding organisations other than the Host Institution on the EC portal (other beneficiaries or third parties)

Eligible costs for ERC projects

The ERC funds up to 100% of the total eligible costs with a 25% flat rate of indirect costs on top.

- Same as most EU grants based on actual cost reporting
- The budget covers the full project duration,
- It can be adjusted with budget transfers from one category to another, but the overall grant amount cannot be increased after start date.

The budget is subdivided into:













Ask for support from your Host Institution's research support or finance team as early as possible,

The ERC project costing must follow Host Institution rules as well!

Funding Levels

Grant Type	Main Grant Amount up to:	"Additional Funding" up to:
Starting	€1.5 M	€1.0 M
Consolidator	€2.0 M	€1.0 M
Advanced	€2.5 M	€1.0 M
Synergy	€10 M	€4.0 M
		↑

ERC's Additional Funding:

- eligible "start-up" costs for PIs moving from outside Europe
- the purchase of major equipment
- access to large facilities
- major experimental/fieldwork costs (excluding personnel)



Additional funding requests are **mixed into the main budget table** but **written separately** in the justification of resources text



Short break





ERC Proposal Development

Part B1 & B2

Part A is addressed in Thursday's session



1-Step Submission

All parts submitted together by the call deadline.

Part A is filled in online.

B1, B2 & Annexes are uploaded as PDFs.

Part A

Administrative Forms and Abstract

- General Info
- Participating Institutions
- Budget & Description of Resources
- Ethics Check

Part B1

Proposal Overview and Pl Track Record

- Cover page and summary
- Extended Synopsis (5 pages)
- CV and Track Record (4 pages)

Part B2

Detailed Research
Proposal

- State of the art
- Objectives
- Methodology
- Funding ID
 (Total of 14 pages)

Annexes

Host Institution Letter, Ethics, Eligibility Documents

ERC Panel Structure Open to any field of research

Physical Sciences & Engineering	Life Sciences	Social Sciences & Humanities
PE1 Mathematics	LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms,	SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations
PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter Particle	Structures & Functions	SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems
PE3 Condensed Matter Physics	LS2 Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems	SH3 The Social World and its Interactions*
PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences	LS3 Cell Biology, Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration*	SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity
PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials		SH5 Texts and Concepts*
PE6 Computer Science and Informatics	LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing	SH6 The Study of the Human Past
PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering	LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous	SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space
PE8 Products and Processes Engineering	System*	SH8 Studies of Cultures and Arts*
PE9 Universe Sciences	LS6 Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy	
PE10 Earth System Science	LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases	
PE11 Materials Engineering	LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution	
,	LS9 Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering	



*From 2024, LS and SH domains have changed slightly, check again to find your proposal's best fit!

- SH8 panel is newly added, split off from pre-existing panels
- LS3, SH3 and SH4 panels all have new panel titles
- LS5 panel has a new subtitle and descriptors

How do I pick the right panel for me and my project?

Make the right choice/configuration

You must choose a **best fit primary panel – might not be perfect**

You can choose a **secondary panel** – indicate where other panellists could help the primary panel to evaluate your proposal

Choose **Panel Descriptor** – this helps the Panel Chair to identify your proposal's main readers ahead of the panel meeting.

Choose ERC-listed keywords from primary/secondary panel in order of priority

Choose Free keywords that complement your selected ERC keywords.

Keywords in your abstract – try to use keywords that define your project because they are used by the ERC to find the right remote expert reviewers.

You can change your chosen panel right up to the deadline.



Ev	aluation panel section in	Part A form
Primary ERC Re	view Panel*	
SecondaryERC	ReviewPanel	(if applicable)
ERC Keyword 1	As first keyword please choose one which is linked to the Prim	,
	Please select, if applicable, the ERC keyword(s) that best characterize the sc	ubject at your proposal in order of priority.
ERC Keyword 2		
ERC Keyword 3		
ERC Keyword 4		
Free keywords	In addition, please enter free text keywords that you consider best choice of keywords should take into account any multi-disciplinary as	

Do your homework to judge which panel best matches your proposal.

Read panel descriptors & keywords in the ERC Work Programme to get an idea of the best-fit panel for you they align with the kinds of experts on the panel.

Search for previously funded projects from your potential panel choices to see examples of projects.

Use the ERC Information System

Part B1 – Step 1 of the Evaluation



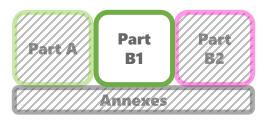
Strict formatting requirements:

Page Format	Font Type	Font Size	Line Spacing	Margins
A4	Times New Roman, Arial or similar	At least 11	Single	2cm Side 1.5cm Bottom

Part B1 includes:

- Cover Page (info repeated from Part A)
- Extended Synopsis (5 pages)
- CV and Track Record (4 pages)

Writing the Extended Synopsis



Self-contained

- All the essential info about your idea in 5 pages.
- Describe where the novelty lies what is the state-of-the-art and how does this proposal go further?
- Your synopsis should be referenced, these won't count towards page limits – using end-notes is recommended.

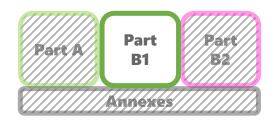
Persuasive to generalists

- A variety of experts decide collectively whether to pass the proposal to Step 2.
- Be clear and don't use specialist jargon because the panel are generalists as a whole, some will be less familiar with your field.
- Applicants need to persuade the whole panel – include just enough info and don't give any reasons to reject!

Entertaining!

- Sell your idea and yourself the synopsis should grab the panellists' attention
- Your idea should be ambitious – be explicit about high risk and potentially high gain.
- The description of novelty and ambition should leave them curious to find out more detail in Part B2 and the interview at Step 2.

Things to think about: Extended Synopsis



- **Dual role:** key text in stand-alone B1, then goes hand-in hand with the B2 full proposal. Make it work in both ways, not as a summary of the full proposal
- What excites you about your research? Convey that in your application
- Scientific Impact how can you change your field of research and make progress beyond the current state-of-the-art.
 - Does the research open new lines of research and/or enquiry
 - Will it lead to new scientific activity and further questions beyond the current frontier?
 - Be positive about achievements made by others thus far then demonstrate you have something new and different to offer.



- Timeliness and relevance of the work during the project, not just at the deadline but throughout the project's five years. Scientific impact can also be made at anytime of the project, not just at the end
- Research Aims, should clearly link to the research objectives, which should clearly link to research methodology(ies)

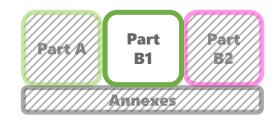
Writing your CV and Track Record

No prescriptive PI profiles

- Personal details: education, employment
- Research achievements (up to a max. 10)
 - Demonstrating advancement in the field
 - Emphasis on more recent achievements
 - Short narrative on significance of achievements
- Peer recognition, prizes, fellowships, academy memberships, etc
- Additional information (setting the context)
 - Career breaks, diverse career paths, life events
 - Other contribution to research community









Administrative Forms and Abstract

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Part B1

Proposal Overview and Pl Track Record

- Cover page and summary
- Extended Synopsis (5 pages)
- CV and Track Record (4 pages)

Part B2

Detailed Research Proposal

- State of the art
- Objectives
- Methodology
- Funding ID

(Total of 14 pages)



At Step 2 there is also a ~30 min interview with your panel (presentation and Q&A)

WATCH OUR WEBINAR ON INTERVIEWS

Part B2

State of the art and objectives

 Objectives here become grant agreement objectives

Methodology

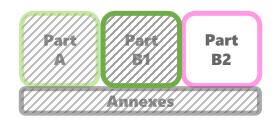
- Proposed methodology
- Milestones and alternatives
- Risk and mitigation
- Project Management
- Publication & Exploitation of results







Writing your State of the Art and Objectives



Coherence with Part B1

- Elaborate Part B1 coherently: Explain precisely how you plan to achieve what you promised.
- A remote expert review will be provided to the generalist panel, add technical detail that someone much closer to your field would need to know.
- Don't copy & paste from Part B1.

 Both looked at together at Step 2, so make them complementary.

State of the art

- It should be clear how and why the proposed work is important for the field.
- What scientific impact will your project have if successful? What new horizons or opportunities for science, technology or scholarship?

Objectives

- Objectives should fit the context of the state-of-the-art – they should match the ambition to go past the current frontier.
- These objectives will become part of the Grant Agreement if successful – so the need to be feasible.



Writing your Methodology

Part Part B2 Annexes

Methodology

- Should be extensive, include the essential detail that an expert in your field would need to know.
- Don't leave any reasons for experts to raise doubts for the panel
- Work plan should also be clear and persuade evaluators that you can carry out the logistics of a long term project.

UK Research Office Brussels

Risk Mitigation Strategy

- Where possible cover every risk with a mitigation strategy.
- ERC accepts high risk to hopefully reach high gain
 so don't shy away
- But evaluators and external experts can be risk averse.
- Explicit but controlled risk

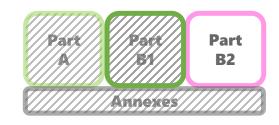
Your team

- Be sure to show how you will be the leader of the team and central figure for the project.
- Explain what each team member will do – these can be named people or roles specified for recruitment.

Justify resources

- Be **ambitious**, if you don't ask for something needed that can be a problem.
- Justify: budget lines must have place in the project and be linked to objectives.

Things to think about for Part B2



- Recap and expand on Part B1 introductory Extended Synopsis.
- Detail the **current state of the art** in your field: highlight the achievements, challenges and gaps. How will your project go beyond these?
- Explain how, and why, your project is important to the field and what **impact** and **implications** it will have if successful. Timeliness should be shown throughout.
- Discuss the challenges and unconventional aspects of your project.
- Coherence and clear linkages throughout proposal text: linking aims to budget via research methodologies. The better your proposal is organised the more feasible the project work plan will appear.
- Any preliminary data management plans could add to the excellence of your scientific approach. The full data management plan is required by Month 6 if funded.



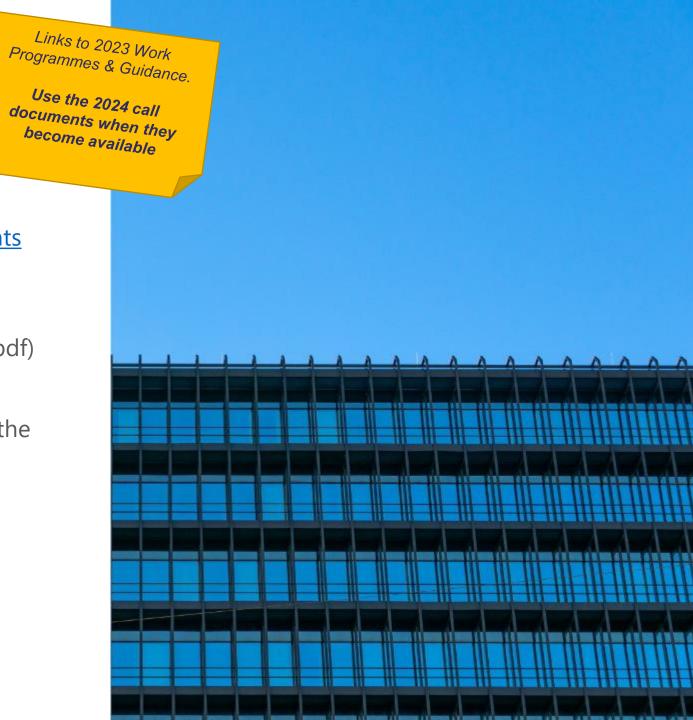


Useful links

 ERC 2024 StG call on the Funding and Tender portal - Not yet available.

- ERC 2023 StG and CoG Information for Applicants
- Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement
- Part B1/B2, Host Institution Support Template (pdf)
- <u>ERC Website</u>, including the easy to use <u>Project Database</u> and the more in depth <u>ERC Information System</u>
- Novelties in the Horizon Europe MGA –
 Commission Stakeholder Workshop video







Guest speaker

Dr Philippa Tomczak

Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nottingham

ERC Principal Investigator on "Regulating criminal justice detention: glocal prospects for improving health and safety in detention and society" (2020 ERC Starting Grant)









Thank you, any questions?





