

# 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.

The ERC in Horizon Europe is mostly a continuation of the scheme as it was in Horizon 2020. However, there have been some novelties – such as interviews becoming part of the evaluation for the Advanced Grant calls and the change to the calculation of researcher age for Starting and Consolidator calls.

## What is funded?

ERC proposals should aim to open new areas of research or develop new methodologies. Projects are expected to be ambitious and inherently high-risk 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

### Starting/Consolidator/Advanced Grants (StG/CoG/AdG)

The Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants all operate similarly, with eligibility for the first two determined by the number of years since the date of successful defence of their first PhD.

All three schemes support a single PI to work on an ambitious research project for up to five years, with the option to engage additional Team Members, if required, who can be based anywhere.

There are minimum eligibility requirements of time spent working on the ERC grant, etc. that the PI must meet, but the grant itself is portable and moves between institutions with the PI; thus the funding awarded can be spent flexibly as the project evolves.

	Years since the PI successfully defended their PhD	Maximum Funding (Additional funding available for specific costs categories)	Minimum Working Time on Grant
Starting Grant	2 – 7	€1.5 million (additional funding up to €1 million)	50%
Consolidator Grant	7 – 12	€2.0 Million (additional funding up to €1 million)	40%
Advanced Grant	No PhD requirement but evaluation restricted to 10 years prior to call year	€2.5 Million (additional funding up to €1 million)	30%

## Synergy Grants (SyG)

ERC Synergy Grants support groups of two to four PIs, who bring together complementary skills, knowledge, and resources in new ways, to jointly address ambitious research problems. Synergy Grants award up to a maximum of €10 million for a period of six years. Applicants can request €4 million of additional funding to cover specific expense categories.

## Proof of Concept Grants (PoC)

The Proof of Concept scheme funds ERC grant holders to explore the innovation potential of an idea developed during an ERC-funded project. The scheme aims to build upon ideas which draw substantially from research that has been funded by the ERC, exploring opportunities for commercial or societal applications of ideas that have arisen from research performed on Starting, Consolidator, Advanced or Synergy Grants.

**Currently, UK applicants cannot apply for PoC if they hold an ERC grant funded by the UK Guarantee.**

## 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.
- **Disability:** extension by the documented period during which a Principal Investigator was unable to work or had reduced working capacity after their PhD defence due to their disability (up to the call deadline).

The eligibility window is calculated *from 1 January of the work programme year* and not the call closure date.

## Novelties in the ERC Work Programme 2025

The 2025 ERC Work Programme includes some novelties, such as

- **Changes in the eligibility extensions:**
  - Extension on the grounds of disability
  - Major disasters – definition elaborated to include disasters caused by humans
- **Changes in the evaluation of Synergy Grants:**
  - Flexibility in the number of panels in Step 2: between five and seven
  - At Step 2, the budgetary cut-off to pass to Step 3, reverts to three times the panel budget (instead of four)

### Scientific excellence remains the sole evaluation criteria.

The **Lump sum** funding model remains in place for the Advanced Grant 2025 call. Lump sums are awarded on the basis of a detailed budget that is justified in the proposal and, if successful. Awarded as a single lump sum. Expenditure does not have to be justified once the grant agreement has been signed.

For more information about the use of the Lump Sums model in ERC Advanced Grant, please visit the [ERC website](#) which includes link to a dedicated webinar on the topic.

## More information

- [Horizon Europe website](#)
- [European Research Council website](#)
- [ERC Work Programme 2025](#)
- [Lump sum guidance](#)

Horizon Europe's legal basis:

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

UKRO Portal

- [UKRO Portal](#) (subscriber access required)
- Watch our ERC information webinar recordings
  - [ERC 2024 Advanced Grant: Call Information Webinar 1 of 2 \(10 June 2024\)](#)
  - [ERC 2024 Advanced Grant: Call Information Webinar 2 of 2 \(12 June 2024\)](#)
  - [ERC 2025 Starting Grant: Call Information Webinar 1 of 2 \(29 July 2024\)](#)
  - [ERC 2025 Starting Grant: Call Information Webinar 2 of 2 \(1 August 2024\)](#)
  - [ERC 2025 Synergy Grant: Call Information Webinar \(30 August 2024\)](#)