

# The European Research Council

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## European Research Council: Evaluation procedures

Dr Giuliano Scalzi  
Call coordinator ERC Synergy Grant  
Call Coordination and Project Follow up Unit (B2)  
Scientific Department



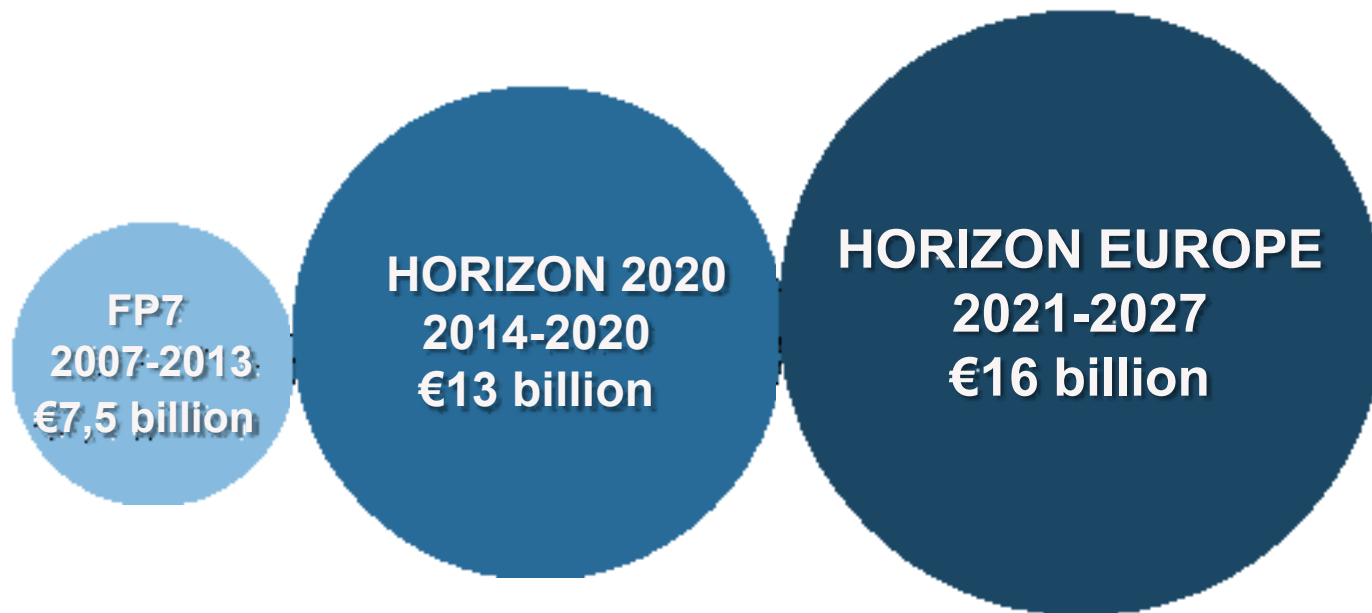
**European Research Council**

Established by the European Commission



## ERC Budget 2007 – 2027: EUR 36,5 billion

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# ERC funding schemes

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## Starting Grant

Size of the grant: up to €1.5 million + up to €1 million  
Duration: up to 5 years  
2-7 years of experience since completion of their PhD



## Consolidator Grant

Size of the grant: up to €2 million + up to €1 million  
Duration: up to 5 years  
7-12 years of experience since completion of their PhD



## Advanced Grant

Size of the grant: up to €2.5 million + up to €1 million  
Duration: up to 5 years  
An excellent scientific track record of recognized achievements in the last 10 years

# ERC funding schemes

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## Synergy grant

Size of the grant: €10 million + up to €4 million

Duration: up to 6 years

Be composed of 2 to 4 researchers and their research groups  
**(one researcher can be based outside EU/AC)**



## Proof of Concept

Size of the grant: €150 000

Duration: up to 18 months

Demonstrate that the idea funded by the original ERC grant  
has innovation potential and significant economic or  
societal benefits

# Additional funding

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Up to € 1M for Starting / Consolidator / Advanced grants

Up to € 4M for Synergy grants

Additional funding can be requested to cover the costs below:

- (a) *"start-up" costs for Principal Investigators moving to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant and/or*
- (b) *the purchase of major equipment and/or*
- (c) *access to large facilities and/or*
- (d) *other **major experimental and field work costs**, excluding personnel costs.*



## Evaluation process

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# Excellence

is the sole evaluation criterion

### Excellence of the Research Project

- Ground breaking nature
- Potential impact
- Scientific Approach

### Excellence of the Principal Investigator

- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity
- Commitment

### Frontier of science

- **Multi- or interdisciplinary** proposals - cross boundaries between different fields of research, **or**
- **Pioneering** proposals addressing new and emerging fields of research, **or**
- Proposals introducing **unconventional, innovative** approaches and scientific inventions.



# ERC Panel structure

## Life Sciences (LS)

- LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions
  - LS2 Integrative Biology: from Genes and Genomes to Systems
  - LS3 Cellular, Developmental and Regenerative Biology
  - LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Aging
  - 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
- 
- 3 Domains / 27 Panels
  - Operated by the Scientific Department B

## Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)

- SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations
- SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems
- SH3 The Social World and Its Diversity
- SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity
- SH5 Cultures and Cultural Production
- SH6 The Study of the Human Past
- SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space

## Physical Sciences & Engineering (PSE)

- PE1 Mathematics
- PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter
- PE3 Condensed Matter Physics
- PE4 Physical & 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

NEW in HE!



## ERC Panel descriptors - example

### SH6 panel - The Study of the Human Past

#### Archaeology and History

- SH6\_1 Historiography, theory and methods in history, including the analysis of digital data
- SH6\_2 Classical archaeology, history of archaeology, social archaeology
- SH6\_3 General archaeology, archaeometry, landscape archaeology
- SH6\_4 Prehistory, palaeoanthropology, palaeodemography, protohistory, bioarchaeology
- SH6\_5 Palaeography and codicology
- SH6\_6 Ancient history
- SH6\_7 Medieval history
- SH6\_8 Early modern history
- SH6\_9 Modern and contemporary history
- SH6\_10 Colonial and post-colonial history
- SH6\_11 Global history, transnational history, comparative history, entangled histories
- SH6\_12 Social and economic history
- SH6\_13 Gender history, cultural history, history of collective identities and memories, history of religions
- SH6\_14 History of ideas, intellectual history, history of economic thought
- SH6\_15 History of science, medicine and technologies

descriptors are not ERC priorities





# StG/CoG/AdG: Submission to Panels

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Proposals are submitted to a *targeted Panel* (of PI's choice)

→ Can flag one “*Secondary Review Panel*”

**Applicant chooses his/her panel**, and this panel is “responsible” for the evaluation of the proposal

Each panel covers a given breath of research topics, further detailed with its descriptors

Proposals can be moved to other panels in exceptional cases, e.g. if clear mistake on part of applicant, or due to the necessary expertise being available in a different panel

In case of cross-panel or cross-domain proposals, evaluation by members of other panels possible



# Organisation of the ERC evaluations

## Each panel

- 15-16 members (selected by the ScC)
- Thematic distribution
- Rules : geography, gender...
- Contract : 4 calls (odd/even years)
- Renewal : 25% per year

## Role of the Agency representative (Scientific Officer)

- Technical support
- Ensure there is no conflict of interest
- Close coll. with panel members
- Ensure no bias in the evaluation
- Ensure only ERC criteria are applied

Guarantee an evaluation based only on the scientific quality of the projects (no thematic, geographical bias, ...)

~1400 panel members/year - ~600 days of meetings/year - ~700 new projects ERC/year



# ERC Proposal submission

In step 1 only part B1 is reviewed.

Administrative data and eligibility are checked by ERC staff.

Note! Each Host Institution has to submit their support letter for the PI(s) hosted by them.

Applicants submit their proposal via the common submission system linked to the Funding and Tenders Portal (SEP submission)

## Administrative forms (Part A)

- 1 – General information
  - 2 – Administrative data of organisations
  - 3 – Budget and resources description
  - 4 – Ethics
  - 5 – Call specific questions
- 1-4 ERC keywords are selected, panels are not defined at submission*

## Annexes

Commitment of all the Host Institutions, PhD certificate (StG & CoG), ethics documentation, etc.

## Part B1 (submitted as pdf)

### ***Evaluated in Step 1 & Step 2***

- a – Extended synopsis      5 pages
- b – Curriculum vitae      2 pages
- Appendix – Funding ID
- c – Track-record      2 pages

## Part B2 (submitted as pdf)

### ***NOT evaluated in Step 1 (only in Step 2)***

- Scientific proposal      15 pages
- a – State-of-the-art and objectives
- b – Methodology



# Evaluation

## hardship measures related to Covid-19

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In the context of the Covid-19 outbreak, applicants may mention in their research proposal (Curriculum Vitae) any specific situation caused by the pandemic that had a negative effect on their curriculum vitae or track record.

Features:

- Similar to the approach used for career breaks and unconventional research career paths,
- Case-by-case evaluation by each Panel based on the applicant's statements,
- Part B1 template of the proposal includes a dedicated section to describe the Covid-19 impact to scientific productivity.



# New eligibility condition

## Gender Equality Plan

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- Host Institutions must have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in place for the duration of the project.
- The absence of a GEP does not affect the evaluation of a proposal. **For Synergy 2022 and Proof of Concept 2022 - deadline 1 only - calls, a GEP is not obligatory to be put in place at the time of the signature of a grant.** For Starting / Consolidator / Advanced grants 2022 a GEP must be in place by the time of the signature of a grant, at the latest. **For SyG2023 a GEP is likely to be obligatory at the granting stage.**
- The attention of applicants is called at the time of application about the consequence of the absence of a GEP at the time of the signature of the grant.
- The Gender Equality Plan requirement is detailed in the new Annex 5 of the Work Programme. Minimum process-related requirements:
  - Formal document published on the institution's website and signed by the top management,
  - Commitment of resources and gender expertise to implement it,
  - Production of sex/gender disaggregated data on personnel (and students for establishments concerned) and annual reporting based on indicators,
  - Awareness raising/trainings on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers.



# DORA principles adopted by the Scientific Council

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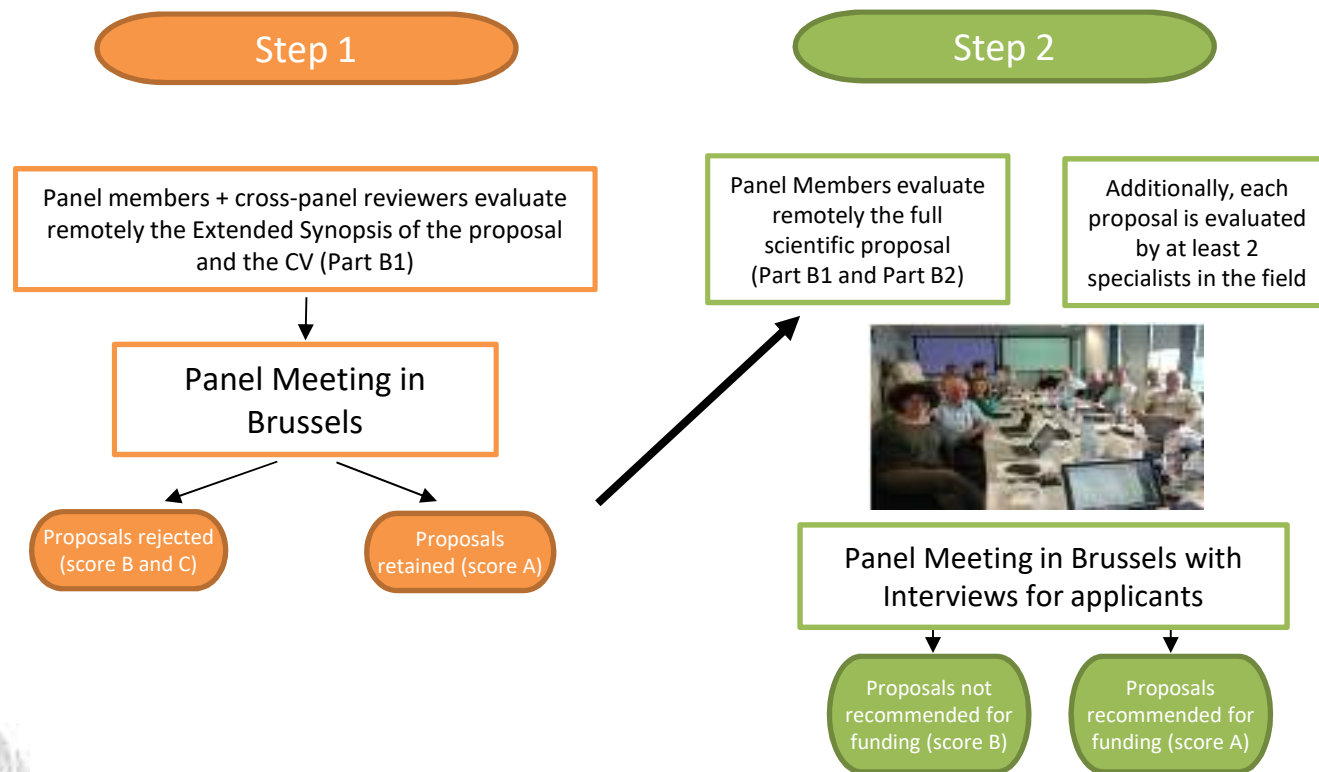
Review of funding strategy in light of DORA principles discussed by the Standing Committee on Panels. Regarding the WP the following advice was integrated in the text:

- **Journal Impact Factor not accepted anymore among the field relevant bibliometric indicators** that may be included as part of the publications track record required for applications to the main frontier research grants,
- The track record should specify that the list of achievements under each Principal Investigator profile is not exclusive, other types of achievements can be included if relevant to the research field and project proposal,
- Within the existing proposal template and page limits, Principal Investigators can provide **a short narrative description of the scientific importance of the research outputs** submitted as part of the proposal, and of the role that the Principal Investigator played in their production.



# How are the ERC proposals evaluated

For individuals calls: a single submission but a two step evaluation



## To consider when applying

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- State of play – and where does this project go beyond?
- Scope and cohesion
- Most ERC panels are multidisciplinary –
  - ➔ ‘interdisciplinary’ vs ‘cross-panel’
- Proposals are assessed by generalists (panel members) and specialists (remote reviewers)
- Step 1 ‘feasibility’ vs step 2 ‘methodology’
- High risk high gain – and risk mitigation





# ERC Consolidator Grants

## The applicant's profile

### Potential to become a leader in the field

*“Am I competitive enough?”*

- Potential for research **independence**
- Able to develop ground-breaking idea, think out of the box
- Evidence of scientific maturity and **creativity**
- Several (CoG) publications without participation of PhD supervisor

### *Promising track-record of early achievements*

- Significant publications and research monographs, contribution to the field
- Invited presentations in conferences
- Funding, patents, awards, prizes



# ERC Advanced Grants

## The applicant's profile

### Already a leader in the field?

- Track-record of significant research achievements **in the last 10 years**
- Exceptional **leaders** and **mentors**



# Typical reasons for rejection

## Research Project

**Scope:** Too narrow  $\leftrightarrow$  too broad/unfocussed

Incremental research

Collaborative project, **several PIs**

**Work plan** not detailed enough/unclear

Insufficient **risk** analysis

Part B2 similar with part B1

## Principle Investigator (PI)

Insufficient **track-record**

Insufficient (potential for) **independence**

### Interview

Vaguely addressed questions

Not convincing is their own idea/project

Lack of preliminary results

Similar work published in the meantime –  
unaddressed issue

Before Redressing: see what you could you have done/explained/presented better before blaming the process!

- Diverting scientific opinion is not a motivation for redress
- An obvious mistake however might result in a re-evaluation

## Some rumours

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**Rumour 1: *You can only apply for an ERC grant if you are a highly accomplished scientist.***

**✗ NOT true:** Accomplishments are appreciated in relation to your stage/seniority as giving some evidence of your capacity to conduct the research you propose and of creativity.

**Rumour 2: *To be successful, you need to continue on an established research line, to prove continuity and credibility***

**✗ NOT true:** Generally, the opposite is true.

**Rumour 3: *The more socially or medically relevant a grant proposal is, the higher the chances of it getting funded.***

**✗ NOT true:** ERC funds frontier research, not research that promises to be only an incremental advancement of knowledge. This is irrespective of the field and whether it has societal, medical or clinical applications.



## Contrary to what you may think

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- ERC funds "**frontier research**", including applied research.
- The **budget** is distributed among the scientific panels as a function of demand.
- The **panel descriptors** do not represent ERC scientific priorities.
- The **success rate** is virtually flat across the eligibility window (StG, CoG).
- **Publication record** is not decisive in selection decisions.
- The **Host Institution** is not an evaluation criterion.



## Where can you find more information?

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### Videos - ERC Classes

- What to consider before applying
- How to fill in the application (Part B1 and B2)
- The interview
- How the evaluation works

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbFbkVWgCU&list=PLtv6FnsXqnXAYRk6HCerwMxwML0ZKoMcy>

Get inspired by browsing through the ERC-funded projects on our website – <https://erc.europa.eu>

The screenshot shows the ERC website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for 'ABOUT ERC', 'FUNDING', 'PROJECTS & RESULTS', 'HOW & EVENTS', and 'MANAGING YOUR PROJECT'. The main content area is titled 'ERC FUNDED PROJECTS' and includes a search bar with an 'Apply' button. Below the search bar, there is a 'FUNDING SCHEME' section listing various grant types and their counts: Starting Grant (StG) (3840), Consolidator Grant (CoG) (1582), Advanced Grant (AdG) (2413), and Proof of Concept (PoC) (736). The page also contains introductory text about the ERC's 'curiosity-driven' approach and a section titled 'HOW CAN YOU SEARCH?'.

<https://erc.europa.eu/projects-and-results/erc-funded-projects>



# ERC 2023 Call Calendar - Indicative

ERC calls	Call Opening	Submission Deadline
<b>Starting Grants</b> ERC-2023-StG	<b>12/07/2022</b>	<b>25/10/2022</b>
<b>Consolidator Grants</b> ERC-2023-CoG	<b>28/09/2022</b>	<b>02/02/2023</b>
<b>Advanced Grants</b> ERC-2023-AdG	08/12/2022	23/05/2023
<b>Proof of Concept</b> ERC-2023-PoC	20/10/2022	24/01/2023 20/04/2023 14/09/2023
<b>Synergy Grants</b> ERC-2023-SyG	<b>13/07/2022</b>	<b>08/11/2022</b>





More information: [erc.europa.eu](http://erc.europa.eu)

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Funding & Tender Opportunities:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

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# Thank you!

[Giuliano.Scalzi@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Giuliano.Scalzi@ec.europa.eu)



# ERC in Figures: After 15 Years, a Success Story



Over **11,000**  
top researchers funded since  
the ERC creation in 2007



Over **200,000**  
articles from ERC projects published  
in scientific journals



Over **80,000**  
researchers and other professionals  
employed in ERC research teams



Over **890** research institutions hosting  
ERC grantees – universities, public or  
private research centres in the EU or  
Associated Countries



Over **2,200**  
patents and other IPR applications  
generated by ERC funding



**87**  
nationalities of  
grant holders



Over **400**  
start-ups identified as founded  
or co-founded by ERC grantees



**9** Nobel Prizes, **4** Fields Medals, **11** Wolf Prizes  
and other prizes awarded to ERC grantees

