The European Research Council

Funding opportunities

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ERC Executive Agency
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ERC has a unique mission

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- To encourage the highest quality research in Europe through competitive funding
- To support investigator-driven frontier research across all fields, on the sole basis of scientific excellence

ERC Budget from EU 2021 – 2027: €16 Billion

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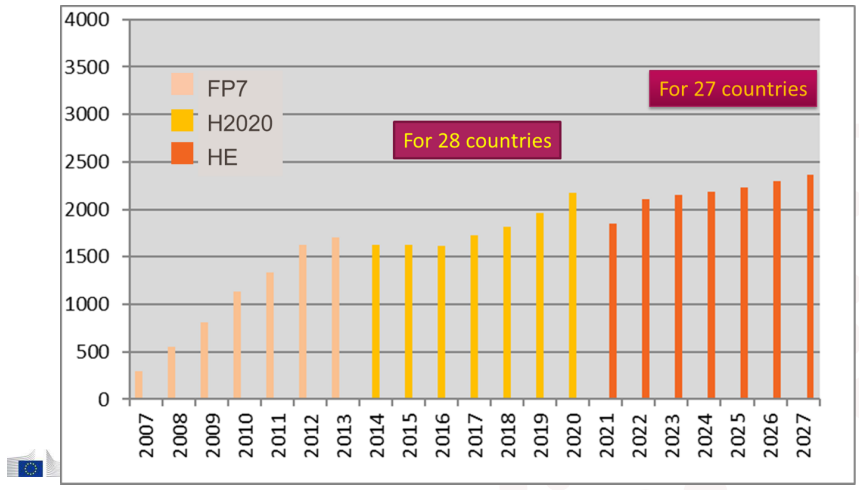

Evaluation Panel Structure (2021-2022)

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Life Sciences

- 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 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

Physical Sciences & Engineering

- PE1 Mathematics
- PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter
- 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 Process Engineering
- PE9 Universe Sciences
- PE10 Earth System Science
- PE11 Materials Engineering

Social Sciences and Humanities

- 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

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What does ERC offer?

Creative Freedom for the Individual Grantee

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ERC offers selective and generous grants, independence, recognition & visibility

- Work on any research topic: **bottom-up**
- Gain **financial autonomy** for 5 years
- Negotiate the **best work conditions** with the host institution
- Attract **top team members and collaborators** (EU and non-EU) **, flexible team structure**
- **Portability of grants**
- **Attract additional funding and gain recognition:** ERC is a quality label

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Particular emphasis on…..

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Frontier of science, scholarship and engineering, i.e.

- Multi- or interdisciplinary proposals which 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.

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ERC Funding Schemes

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Starting Grant

- 2-7 years after PhD
- up to €1.5M (+1M)
- for 5 years
- Time commitment: 50%

Consolidator Grant

- 7-12 years after PhD
- up to €2M (+1M)
- for 5 years
- Time commitment: 40%

Advanced Grant

- 10 years of significant research achievements
- up to € 2.5M (+1M)
- for 5 years
- Time commitment: 30%

Proof-of-Concept
for ERC grant holders only

Supporting innovative potential of ideas from ERC projects

- up to €150,000
- for 1 year

Synergy Grant

- 2-4 PIs at any career stage
- up to €10 M (+4M)
- for 6 years
- 1 PI could be based outside EU/AC
- Time commitment: 30%

7

ERC schemes are highly competitive

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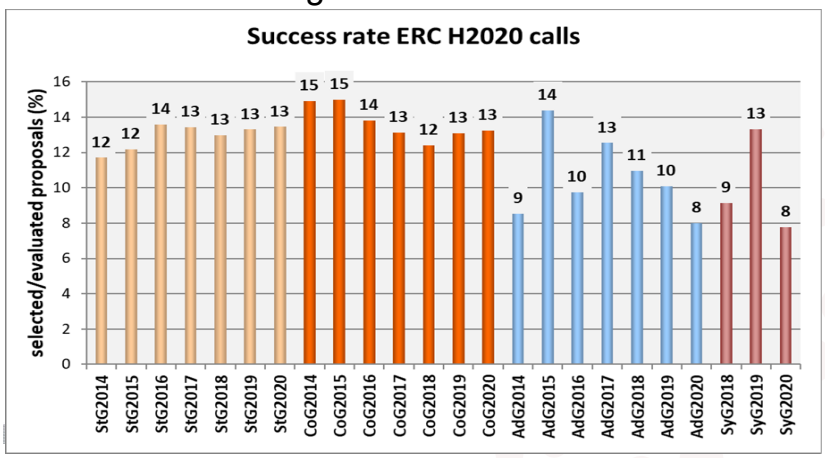
Average success rate 12%



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ERC Evaluation procedure

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How are ERC research proposals evaluated?
Excellence is the sole evaluation criterion

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Evaluation of *excellence* at two levels:

- **Excellence of the Research Project**
  - ✓ **Ground breaking nature**
  - ✓ **Potential impact**
  - ✓ **Scientific Approach**

- **Excellence of the Principal Investigator**
  - ✓ **Intellectual capacity**
  - ✓ **Creativity**
  - ✓ **Commitment**

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Evaluation of Proposals:

Review procedure for StG, CoG and AdG

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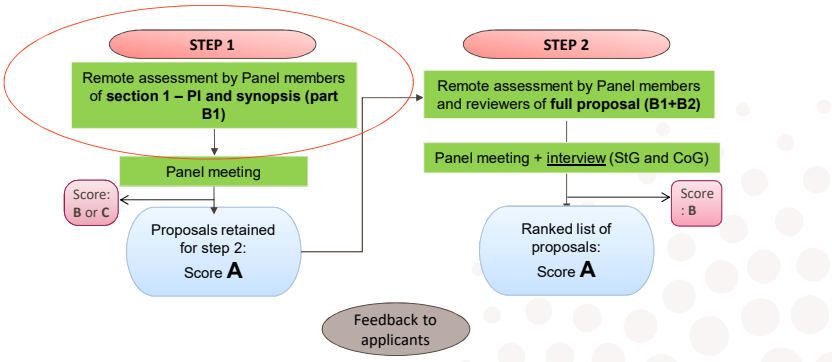

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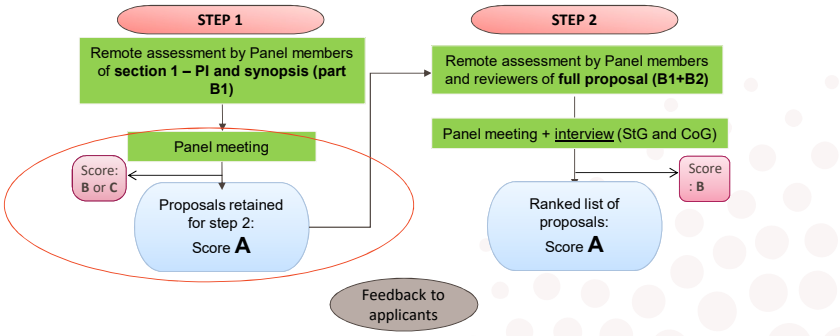

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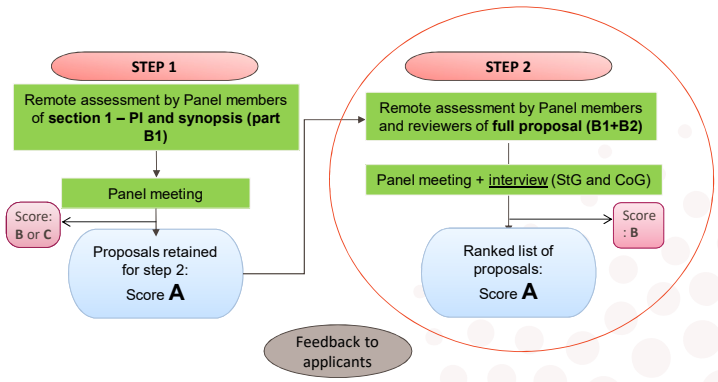

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Evaluation- StG/CoG/AdG

Peers

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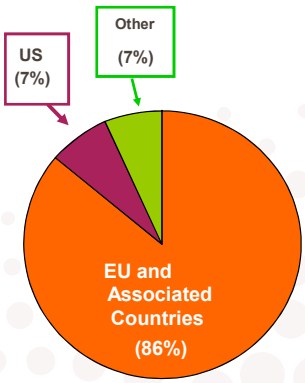
- **Panel members**: typically 375 / call (SyG:~90)
  - High-level scientists
  - Recruited by ScC from all over the world: ~14% from outside Europe
  - c.a. 12-17 members plus a chair person
- **Remote Referees**: typically 2000 / call
  - Evaluate only a small number of proposals
  - Similar to normal practise in peer-reviewed journals



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Preparing and submitting a Proposal

Hints and tips

Preparing your proposal (1)
Generalities

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- **Register early**, get familiar with the system and templates and start filling in the forms
- A submitted proposal can be **revised until the call deadline** by submitting a new version and overwriting the previous one
- Follow the formatting rules and page limits.
- Download and proof-read the proposal before submitting.
- Make use of the **help tools and call documents** (Information for Applicants, Work Programme, Frequently asked questions)
- Support from National Contact Points and your Institution's grant office

Preparing your proposal (2): Make sure you are eligible (StG/CoG)!

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Eligibility windows for PIs:

- StG Eligibility: PhD **at least 2 and up to 7 years before 1 January 2022**
- CoG Eligibility: PhD **over 7 and up to 12 years before 1 January 2022**

(for 2022 calls)

Extensions of eligibility window possible on StG and CoG for documented cases of:

- Maternity – 18 months per child (before or after PhD)
- Paternity – actual time taken off
- Military service
- Medical specialty training
- Caring for seriously ill family members

- No limit to the total time extension

Preparing your proposal (4): Host Institution

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- You **can change** it during the project's life
- **Negotiate** with the HI (your position, equipment, administrative support, access to infrastructure, etc.)

Rumour: *The quality/reputation of the HI is increasing my chances/scores.*

* **NOT true**: the HI is not an evaluation criterion!

Preparing your proposal (5): Choosing the panel

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- composition of the ERC evaluation panels are by nature multi-disciplinary
- initial allocation of the proposal to a panel is based on the preference expressed by the PI
- when additional expertise required
  - additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional remote experts
  - reallocated to a different panel with the agreement of both panel chairs

Preparing your proposal (6) Check past panel members for the call

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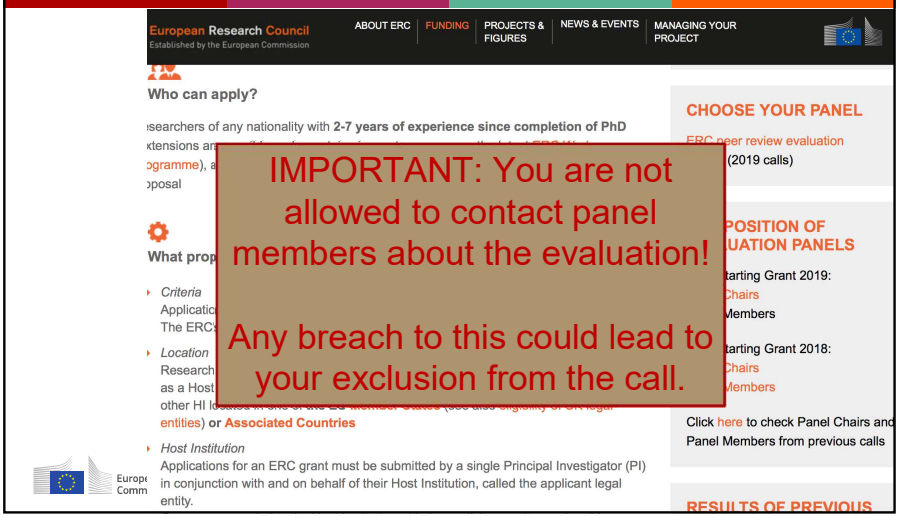

IMPORTANT: You are not allowed to contact panel members about the evaluation!

Any breach to this could lead to your exclusion from the call.

Preparing your proposal (7): Choosing descriptors

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- Descriptors and free keywords may influence:
  - Evaluation Panel
  - **Panel members**
  - Whether a cross-panel evaluation is necessary

Rumour: *The more cross-panel descriptors I indicate, the higher the funding chances, since this emphasises the interdisciplinary character of my proposal.*

* **NOT true**: even though these are used to allocate proposals to Panel Members, once the proposals are allocated, Panel Members do not see the keywords and descriptors used.

ERC Proposal Structure
StG, CoG and AdG 2021 Calls

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Administrative forms (Part A)

1 – General information (here to add the *ERC evaluation panel)*
2 – Administrative data of participating organisations and PI (career stage)
3 – Detailed *Budget*
4 – Ethics
5 – Call specific questions
You may indicate up to four ERC keywords

Annexes

PhD certificate, HI support letter, and any documentation needed on eligibility and ethics issues

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

References do not count towards the page limit

Part B2 (submitted as pdf)

NOT evaluated in Step 1 (only in Step 2)

Scientific proposal 14 pages
a – State-of-the-art and objectives
b – Methodology

Funding & Tenders Portal

Preparing your proposal (8): Part B1: the research project

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- Is my project new, **innovative**, bringing new solutions/theories?
- Does it attempt to go **substantially beyond the state of the art**? – no incremental research. **Think big!**
- Know your competitors – what is the **state of play** and why is your idea and scientific approach outstanding?
- Only the extended Synopsis is considered at Step 1: **a concise and clear presentation** is crucial (all evaluators are not experts in the field)
- How can I **prove/support** my case? Are my goals **realistic**? Explain your **scientific approach** in sufficient detail to convince the panel about the **feasibility** of your project
- What is the **risk**? Is it justified by a substantial potential **gain**? Is there **a plan** for mitigating the risk?
- Societal impact is **not** an evaluation criterion (despite ERC-funded projects could have it)

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Preparing your proposal (8): Part B1: the principal investigator

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- Why am I the **best/only person** to carry this out? Know your competitors
- Am I able to work **independently**, and to manage a 5-year project with a substantial budget?
- Am I **competitive at my career age** and in my discipline?
- Have I shown my **scientific leadership** in my CV?

Rumour: *One needs publications in Nature/Science/High Impact Factor journals to succeed.*
***NOT true**

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2018 Calls "Academic age" of grantees

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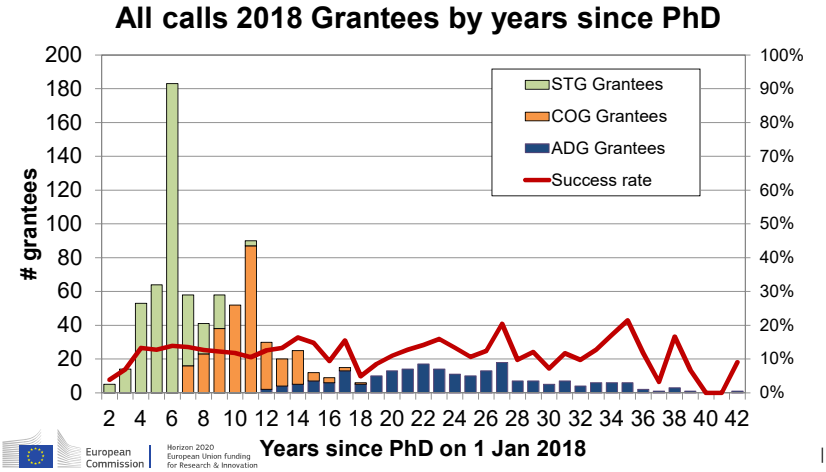

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Preparing your proposal (9): Part B2

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In Step 2, both parts B1 and B2 are considered by Panel Members and other experts from around the world.

Therefore in Part B2:

- Do not repeat the synopsis, provide sufficient details on your methodology and work plan
- Make sure that the quantitative and qualitative differences to the state of the art are clear and referenced - show you did your homework.
- Provide alternative strategies to mitigate risks
- Explain **involvement of team members**
- Justify requested **resources – explain your budget properly**

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Preparing your proposal (10): Budget considerations

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- Budget analysis carried out in Step 2
- Panels have responsibility to ensure that resources requested are reasonable and well justified
- Budget cuts need to be justified on a proposal by proposal basis (no across-the-board cuts)
- Panels to recommend a final maximum budget based on the resources allocated/ removed
- Panels do not "micro-manage" project finances
- Awards made on a "take-it-or-leave-it" basis: no negotiations

Typical reasons for rejection / not making it to Step 2

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It takes a considerable effort and time to compose a good application!

Research Project

- Incremental research
- Scope: too narrow ; too broad / unfocused
- Hypothesis and objectives not sufficiently clear
- Work plan not detailed enough / unclear
- Insufficient risk management
- For interdisciplinary proposals: expertise missing in one area

Principal Investigator

- Insufficient track-record
- Insufficient (potential for) independence (StG and CoC)
- Insufficient experience in leading projects (especially in AdG)
- Complementarity of PIs not evident enough (SyG)

Interview

- Not addressing the questions / poor presentation

I did not get the grant, can I apply next year?

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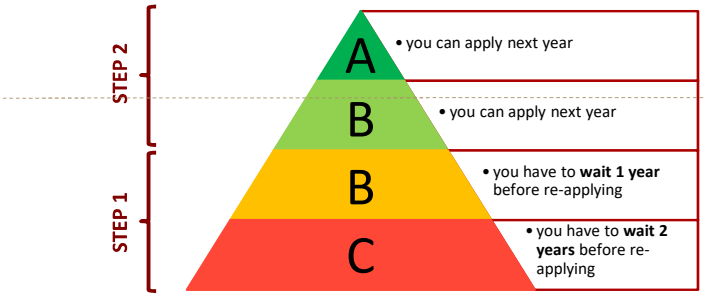
In order to make the evaluation process more effective, the Scientific Council has introduced **re-submission restrictions**.



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Ongoing and future ERC calls

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- Ongoing calls

ERC calls	Feedback to applicants
Starting Grants - ERC-2021-StG	26/08/2021 - 20/12/2021
Consolidator Grants - ERC-2021-CoG	22/11/2021 - 28/03/2022
Advanced Grants - ERC-2021-AdG	28/01/2022 - 13/05/2022

- Future calls

ERC calls	Call Opening	Submission Deadline
Starting Grants - ERC-2022-StG	23/09/2021	**13/01/2022**
Consolidator Grants - ERC-2022-CoG	19/10/2021	**17/03/2022**
Advanced Grants - ERC-2022-AdG	20/01/2022	28/04/2022
Synergy Grants - ERC-2022-SyG	15/07/2021	10/11/2021

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