

The European Research Council

ERC Grants 2024: Funding for top researchers of all nationalities

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EURAXESS North America



European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

Presentation Outline

- **ERC Overview**
 - Horizon Europe, Scientific Council, and ERCEA
 - Grant schemes and Implementing arrangements
 - Submission and evaluation process
 - Preparing an application
- **ERC 2024 Work Programme**
 - Overview of the 2024 novelties
 - 2024 call calendar



ERC is ...

1. part of Horizon Europe



EUR 16 billion
ERC budget in Horizon Europe



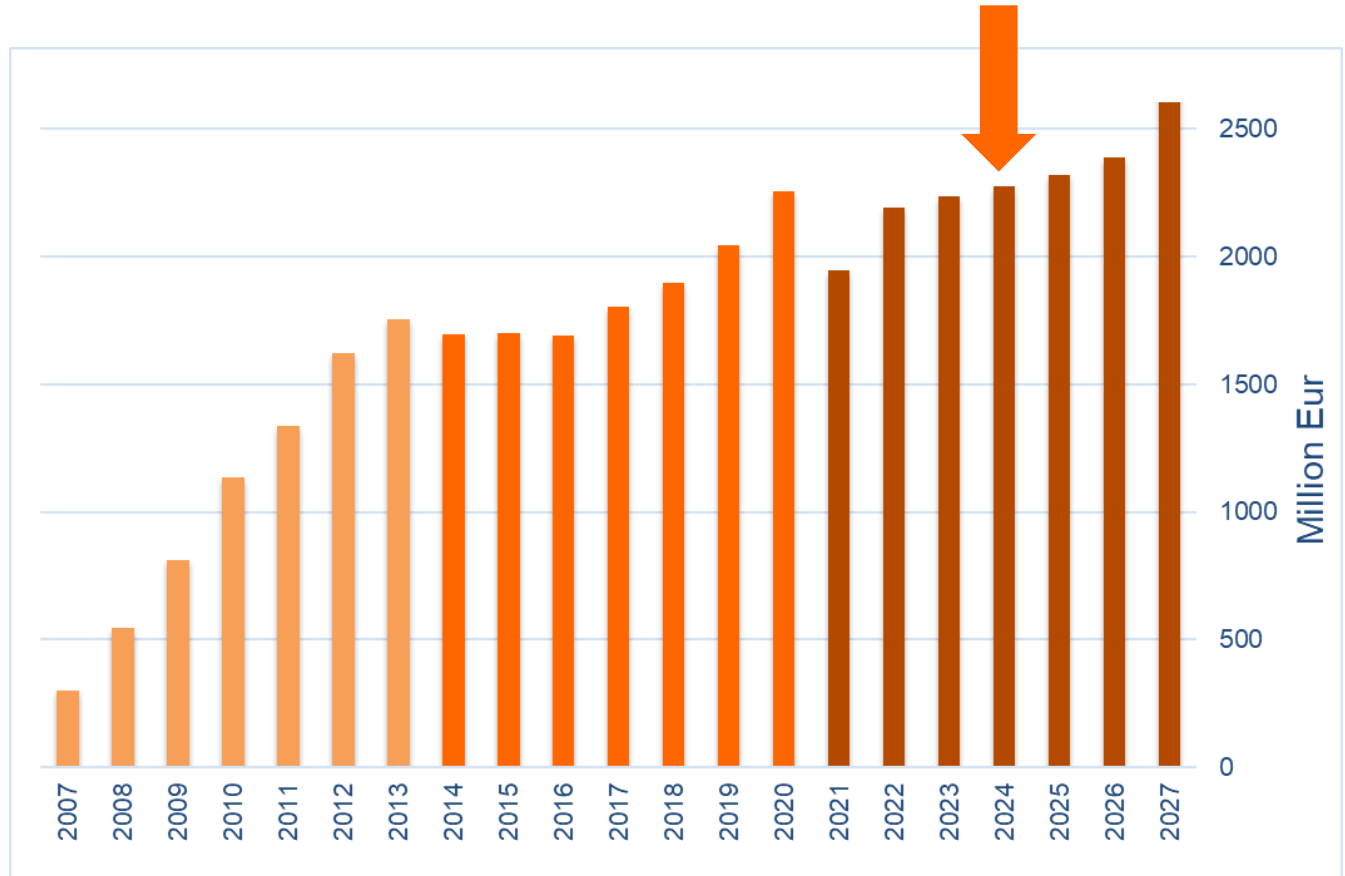
17%
of the entire
Horizon Europe budget



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ERC budget 2007 – 2027: EUR 36.5 billion ~950 grants



- FP7: €7.5 billion
- H2020: €13 billion
- HE: €16 billion

ERC is ...

2. The Scientific Council

The European Commission

- Provides financing through the EU framework programmes
- Guarantees autonomy of the ERC
- Assures the integrity and accountability of the ERC
- Adopts annual work programmes as established by the Scientific Council

The ERC Scientific Council

- 22 prominent researchers proposed by an independent identification committee
- President selected following recommendation of an independent committee
- Appointed by the Commission (4 years, renewable once)
- Establishes overall scientific strategy; annual work programmes (incl. calls for proposals, evaluation criteria); peer review methodology; selection and accreditation of experts
- Controls quality of operations and management
- Ensures communication with the scientific community



ERC is ...

3. The ERCEA

The ERC Executive Agency

- Implements the ERC strategy as set by the Scientific Council
- Manages ERC operations (e.g., organises peer-review evaluations, manages grant agreements, follows-up on projects funded)
- ~ 500 staff, of which ~ 130 scientific



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ERC in figures



Over **13,000**
top researchers funded since
the ERC creation in 2007



Over **90,000**
researchers and other professionals
employed in ERC research teams



Over **2,400**
patents and other IPR applications
generated by ERC funding



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



Over **220,000**
articles from ERC projects published
in scientific journals



Over **900** research institutions hosting
ERC grantees – universities, public or
private research centres in the EU or
Associated Countries



89
nationalities of
grant holders



12 Nobel Prizes, **6** Fields Medals, **11** Wolf Prizes
and other prizes awarded to ERC grantees



ERC has a unique mission

“ The ERC's mission is to encourage the highest quality research in Europe through competitive funding and to support investigator-driven frontier research across all fields, on the basis of scientific excellence. ”



ERC Basics



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- **Individual** researchers from all over the world
- **Long-term** grants (usually 5 years)
- **Frontier** research
- Fully **bottom-up**



Life Sciences



Physical Sciences and Engineering



Social Sciences and Humanities



Why should one apply for an ERC grant ?

- Research topic of own choice, with a team of own choice
- True financial autonomy for 5 years
- Negotiate with the host institution the best conditions of work
- Attract top team members (EU and non-EU) and collaborators
- Portability of grants within Europe
- Attract additional funding and gain recognition: ERC is a quality label

Independence & flexibility & visibility



Anyone from anywhere in the world can apply

Opportunities for researchers outside EU/Associated Countries:

- Grantees can keep affiliation with home institute outside Europe ('significant part' of work time in Europe: at least 50%)
- Additional 'start-up' funding for researchers moving to Europe
- Extra funding for major equipment, access to large facilities or field work
- Team members can be based outside Europe
- Grantees can move with the grant within the EU/Associated Countries



ERC Grant Schemes



Starting Grants

Starters (2-7 years after PhD)
up to € 1.5 M for 5 years



Consolidator Grants

Consolidators (7-12 years after PhD)
up to € 2 M for 5 years



Advanced Grants

track-record of significant research achievements
in the last 10 years up to € 2.5 M for 5 years



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ERC Grant Schemes



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Synergy Grants

2-4 PIs up to € 10 M for 6 years
1 PI can be based outside EU/AC



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Proof-of-Concept

bridging gap between research –
earliest stage of marketable innovation
lump sum € 150 k for ERC grant holders



Advanced Grants

track-record of significant research achievements
in the last 10 years up to € 2.5 Mio for 5 years



Additional funding up to 1M €*

Additional funding can be requested to cover the following costs:

- (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.*

* up to 4M € for Synergy Grants



Preparing your proposal

.....for StG and CoG, make sure you are **eligible**

- Reference date for the calculation of the eligibility window: 1st January of the year of the call
 - StG 2024: **1 January 2017 to 31 December 2021 (inclusive)**
 - CoG 2024: **1 January 2012 to 31 December 2016 (inclusive)**
- ***Extensions of the eligibility window possible in certain documented circumstances***
- If you previously applied to an ERC call, check resubmission restrictions
- Minimum 50% of PI working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country
- Time commitment on the project: Min. 50% (StG), 40% (CoG), 30% (AdG/SyG)



StG and CoG: Extension of the Eligibility windows

For documented situations occurring before the call deadline

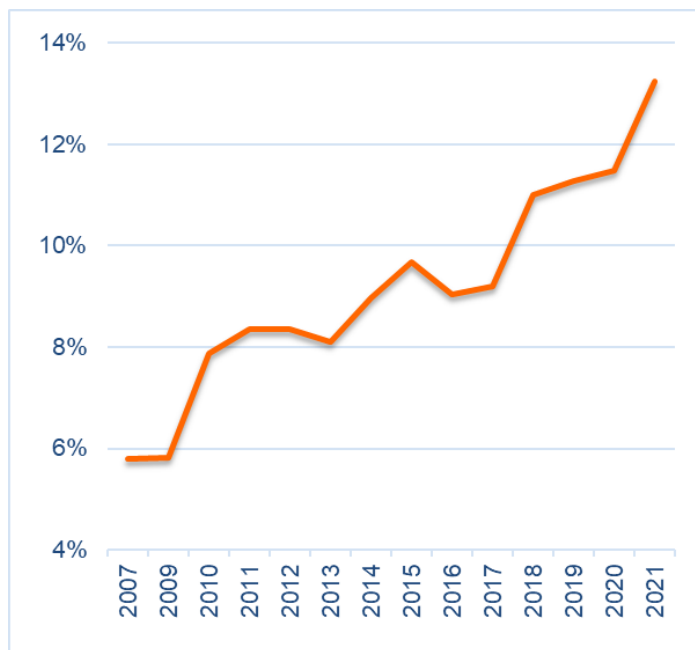
- **Maternity leave:** +18 months for each child born before/after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree;
- **Paternity leave:** documented time taken for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Long-term illness** (>90 days for the PI or a close family member) or **national service:** documented amount of leave taken for each incidence that occurred after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Clinical training:** documented amount of clinical training received **after** the reference date of the first eligible degree, **up to a maximum of 4 years;**
- Two new categories for extension: documented time of PI's inability to work due to **natural disaster** and for **seeking asylum.**

PI's from all over the World can apply to ERC

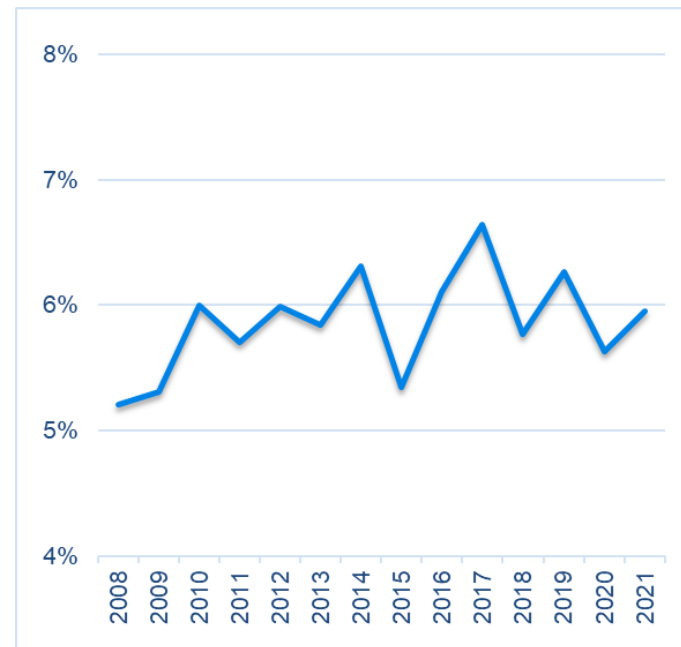
- Any nationality, age, current place of work
- In conjunction with a Host Institution based in Europa or Associated Countries
- If granted, you need to spend at least 50% of your working time in the EU or Associated Countries
- Grantee can move within Europe with the grant (**portability**)



Increased international participation in Starting and Consolidator calls



Starting and Consolidator



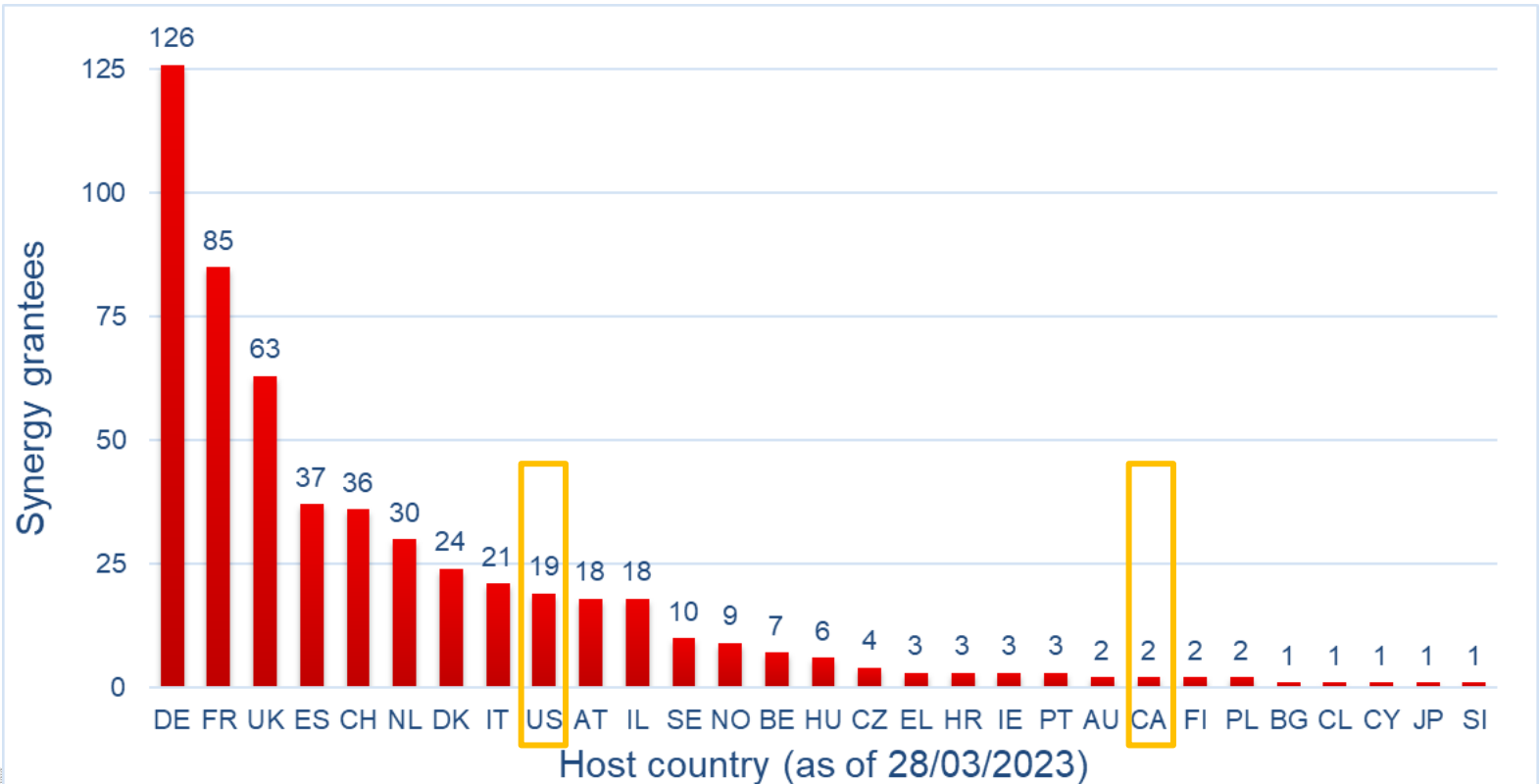
Advanced

Proportion of evaluated proposals from non-EU/AC nationals by call year

48 non-EU/Associated Country grantee nationalities - 8% of all ERC grants

Non-EU/AC Principal Investigators	Starting and Consolidator grants	Advanced grants	Total grants
USA	276	142	418
Canada	100	21	121
China	77	2	79
India	73	3	76
Australia	59	16	75
Russia	62	11	73
Japan	32	9	41
New Zealand	19	6	25
Argentina	23	2	25
Other	141	13	154
Total	862	225	1087

Synergy grantees

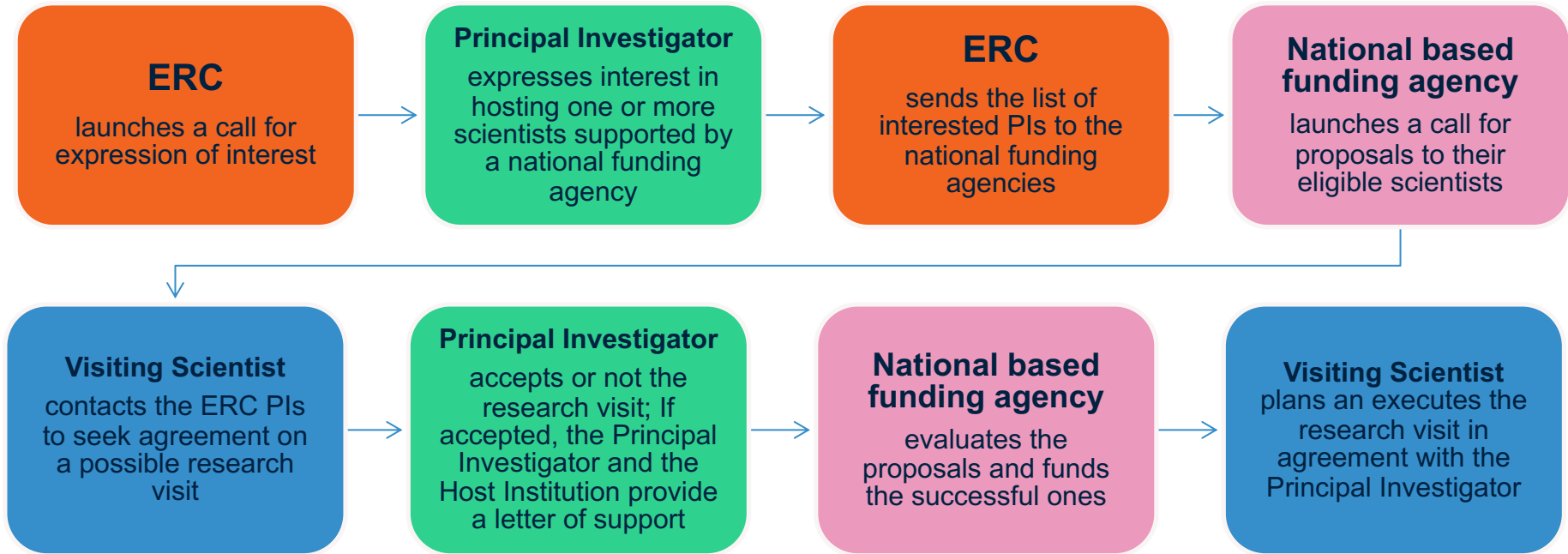


ERC Implementing Arrangements (IA)

The Implementing Arrangements, are international initiatives promoting opportunity for scientists to visit and collaborate with ERC research teams, **partially supported by non-European agencies**.



Implementing/Administrative Arrangements (IA/AA) procedures



Proposal Structure

- **Part A:** Administrative form and Proposal Budget
- **Part B1:** Synopsis (5 pages) and CV+Track Record (4 pages)
- **Part B2:** Scientific proposal (14 pages)
 - State-of-the-art and objectives
 - Methodology
- **Host Institution** support letter
- **PhD** certificate (StG & CoG)

} Submitted together

Annexes: extension eligibility window request documents, ethics docs, etc

Check Guidelines in the 2024 Information for Applicants



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Choose your panel in Part A (Administrative form)

- Descriptors are **not exhaustive** (not a classification)
- **Any topic/field is equally welcome**, whether mentioned in panel structure or not
- **Descriptors and free keywords** used by panel chair to assign reviewers
→ **choose carefully**
- If proposal is across panels: reviewers from both panels are used.
Explain why proposal is “cross-panel” in Part B1



Evaluation panel structure (2024)

Life Sciences

- LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and 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

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 Processes 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 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



Evaluation: Principle



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

Changes in Work Programme 2024 - New CV and Track Record

- No prescriptive Principal Investigator profiles
- Personal details: education, employment
- Research achievements (≤ 10):
 - demonstrating advancement in the field
 - emphasis on more recent achievements
 - short narrative on significance of achievements
- Peer recognition: prizes, fellowships, academy membership, etc.
- Additional information:
 - career breaks, diverse career paths, life events
 - other contributions to research community



Changes in Work Programme 2024 - Research Assessment

- Evaluation is **primarily** focused on the **proposed research project**
 - Ground-breaking nature, ambition, and potential scientific impact
 - Feasibility of the scientific approach
- Intellectual capacity, creativity, and commitment of the PI also evaluated, with a focus on the extent to which the PI has the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project



Evaluation: Process

For individual calls: a single submission but a two-step evaluation

STEP 1

Remote assessment by **Panel members**
see **ONLY** section 1: **Synopsis and CV**
(Part B1)



Panel meeting



Proposal Rejected
(Scores B&C)



Proposal Not Retained
(Score A not-invited)

Feedback to applicants



Proposal Retained
For step 2
(Score A invited)

New feature for 2024 calls:
44 proposals interview limit

STEP 2

Remote assessment by **Panel members**
and **Remote Reviewers** of **full proposals**
(Part B1+B2+Budget)



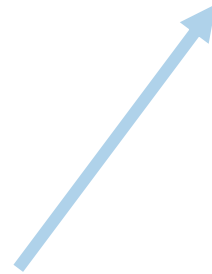
Panel meeting
+ **interview** StG, CoG and AdG



Ranked list of proposal
(Scores A&B)



Feedback to applicants



Preparing your proposal

In Step 1: Panel Members see only **Part B1** of the proposal (prepare it accordingly!)

Part B1: Find the right balance (5 pages)

- ✓ Innovative? Beyond state-of-art?
- ✓ Goals realistic? Think about risk mitigation
- ✓ Outline state of play (incl. competition)
- ✓ Be concise & clear – beware using too much jargon (think about **generalists** at Step 1)
- ✓ Feasibility (scientific approach)



Preparing your proposal

In Step 2: Part B1 and B2 and Budget section are evaluated by Panel Members & Remote Referees

Part B2: Fill in the details

- ✓ No verbatim repetition of synopsis
- ✓ Detailed state-of-art
- ✓ Extensive methodology and work plan
- ✓ Provide risk mitigation strategies
- ✓ Explain involvement of team members
- ✓ Justify requested resources - Panels have to ensure that the requested resources are reasonable and well justified.



Contrary to what you may think

- **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 not linked to academic age
- Publication record is not decisive in selection decisions
- The Host Institution is not an evaluation criterion



Five main tips, but no tricks!

1. Consult the Information for Applicants
2. Register early on the Funding & Tenders Portal
3. Have your documentation ready
4. Contact the ERCEA and ask all your questions to the call coordinators well ahead of the submission deadline
5. Get the written consent of your collaborators before the submission deadline (a simple email exchange is OK)



Summary of Novelties – ERC Work Programme 2024

FOCUS ON RESEARCH

- Ground-breaking
- Ambitious
- Feasible

- Up to 10 research outputs
- Short narrative
- Career breaks, diverse paths

- Up to 44 proposals in step 2 (exc. SyG)
- 'A not invited' can reapply next year

- AdG only: One amount payment based on the work done (not success)
- Additional funding and portability

- New Panel – SH8
- Changes in description of LS3/LS5 panels

Assessment

No prescriptive PI profiles

Evaluation Procedure

Lump Sum Pilot

Panels



Call Calendar – Work Programme 2024

	<i>Starting Grant</i>	<i>Consolidator Grant</i>	<i>Advanced Grant</i>	<i>Synergy Grant</i>	<i>Proof of Concept Grant</i>
<i>Call opens</i>	11/07/2023	12/09/2023	29/05/2024	12/07/2023	16/11/2023
<i>Call deadline (cut-off date)</i>	24/10/2023	12/12/2023	29/08/2024	08/11/2023	14/03/2024 17/09/2024
<i>Budget (M €)</i>	601	584	578	400	30



Where can you find more information?

ERC website: erc.europa.eu



Videos - ERC Classes

- What to consider before applying
- How to fill in the application
- The interview
- How the evaluation works



<https://erc.europa.eu/apply-grant/starting-grant>
<https://erc.europa.eu/support/national-contact-points>



Thank You!

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