

The European Research Council

ERC: implementing evaluation

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Young Academy, 3 June 2024



European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

ERC

Part of Horizon Europe – 17% of total budget
€ 16 billion (2021-2027) – 2.3 billion €/year

Scientific Governance

- Independent Scientific Council with 22 members, including the ERC President; full authority over strategy
- Support by a Dedicated Implementation Structure: ERC Executive Agency

Scientific Freedom

- Support to frontier research in all fields of science and humanities
- No predetermined subjects: “bottom-up”
- Scientific excellence as the only evaluation criterion
- Support to the individual scientist and their teams
- International peer-review



Life Sciences



Physical Sciences and Engineering



Social Sciences and Humanities

ERC grant schemes



Starting Grants

starters (2-7 years after PhD) up to € 1.5 Mio
for 5 years



Consolidator Grants

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



Advanced Grants

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



Synergy Grants

2 – 4 Principal Investigators up to € 10.0 Mio for 6
years
1 PI can be based outside EU/Associated
Countries



Proof-of-Concept

bridging gap between research - earliest stage of marketable innovation
lump sum €150,000 for ERC grant holders

Why to apply for ERC grant?

ERC offers independence, recognition & visibility to:

- work on a research topic of own choice
- gain financial autonomy for five years
- negotiate the best conditions of work with the host institution
- attract excellent team members and collaborators from anywhere in the world
- relocate from abroad or move with the grant to any place in Europe if desired (“portability of grants”); double affiliations can be kept; brain circulation vs brain drain
- win additional funding, improve career opportunities (especially for younger researchers)



Calendar WP 2024

| | Starting Grant | Consolidator Grant | Advanced Grant | Synergy Grant | Proof of Concept Grant |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Call opens | 11/07/2023 | 12/09/2023 | 29/05/2024 | 12/07/2023 | 16/11/2023 |
| Deadline to submit applications | 24/10/2023 | 12/12/2023 | 29/08/2024 | 08/11/2023 | 14/03/2024 17/09/2024 |
| Budget | €601m | €584m | €578m | €400m | €30m |



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 (new in WP 2024)



Excellence

is the sole evaluation criterion

Excellence of the Research Project

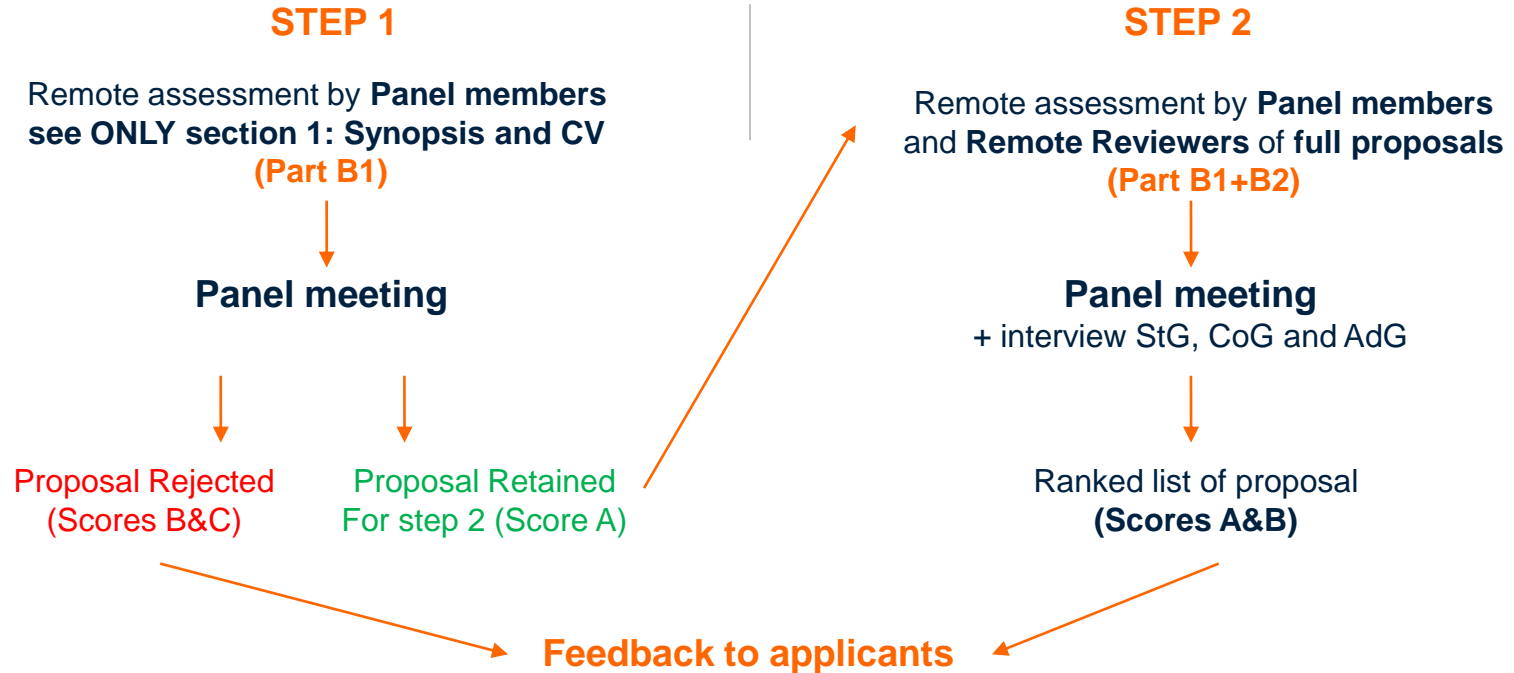
- Ground breaking nature
- Scientific impact
- Scientific Approach

Excellence of the Principal Investigator

- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity
- Commitment

Evaluation: process

For individuals calls: a single submission but a two-step evaluation; for Synergy: 3 steps



Novelties in the ERC Work Programme 2024 (I)

Research assessment

Focus on the research project



- ERC panels will primarily evaluate the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of the project.
- They will also evaluate the intellectual capacity, creativity, and commitment of the applicant, with a focus on the extent to which she/he has the excellence and required scientific expertise to successfully execute the proposed project.

Broad assessment of the applicant



- Curriculum Vitae and Track Record: one document, structured
- Up to 10 research outputs that demonstrate how the applicant has advanced knowledge
- Selected examples of significant peer recognition
- Noteworthy contributions to the research community, career breaks or unusual career paths. These will not in themselves be evaluated but are important to provide context.

Novelties in the ERC Work Programme 2024 (II)

Evaluation procedure



- At most 44 proposals to step 2
- Proposals scored A at step 1 but not taken to interview may be re-submitted the following year.

Lump-sum funding for Advanced grants



- 2024 Advanced grants: awarded as a **single lump sum**
- Final payment will be based on the work carried out and reported, irrespective of the “successful” outcome of the project activities.
- Additional funding (equipment, access to research facilities) remains available and will be made part of the lump sum.
- Portability of grant maintained.

Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity in the ERC: from eligibility to evaluation and project implementation

EXTENSIONS for applicants

- ✓ Eligibility extensions for **maternity** by 18 months per child born before or after PhD and any time of **parental leave** used by the other parent; cases of **single parents** addressed (e.g. adoption)
- ✓ Care of **sick relative** considered as a reason for eligibility extension
- ✓ **Long-term illness; disability** (disability acknowledged as specific condition rather than illness)
- ✓ Other grounds for extension: asylum seeking, national service, major natural and human causes disasters

PROPOSALS submitted to ERC Calls

- ✓ **Evaluation criteria** > since WP 2024 explicit more weight on the Project quality than PI track-record
- ✓ **Model CV template** includes the possibility to report unconventional career breaks and life event (e.g. COVID) that had an impact on scientific productivity

EVALUATIONS by independent panel members

- ✓ **Unconscious Bias** (briefing, available at: <https://erc.europa.eu/support/document-library/archive>)
 - Raise awareness for **evaluators** and **Scientific Council members**
 - Training for ERCEA Scientific Officers and Management

INCENTIVES

- ✓ Activities promoting **equal opportunities** or **gender balance** are **eligible costs** stated in the WP



Ethics review

Research ethics: compliance with legislation (e.g. General Data Protection Regulation, legislation on animal welfare or environmental protection), respect for research subjects (including vulnerable groups), shared benefits (e.g. with local communities).

The responsibility for ethics lies with the individuals carrying out the research; the formal accountability lies with the signatory of the Grant Agreement, the Host Institution.

ERC as part of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme sets high expectations. The Grant Agreement states: *'The action must be carried out in line with the highest ethical standards and the applicable EU, international and national law on ethical principles.'*

Applicants need to fill an Ethics Self Assessment (the relevant form is part of the application)

An Ethics Review Procedure is conducted after the conclusion of the scientific evaluation –only for selected proposals- before the start of the project

More info at: <https://erc.europa.eu/manage-your-project/ethics-guidance>



ERC Mentoring Initiative (MI)

- Some national programmes lack access to international expertise to mentor ERC applicants.
- To address the problem, **ERC identifies a pool of mentors** among its grantees and former evaluators, available to provide training, scientific feedback, and other forms of mentoring to ERC applicants in less performing countries.
- **How:** ERC launches yearly calls for interest among its grantees and former evaluators. **The list is provided to target countries** via the National Contact Points. The local offices in charge of the national/regional support programme should coordinate their participation in the ERC Mentoring Initiative with the [National Contact Points](#).
- **Ongoing call** for expression of interest –**including UKRAINE**



ERC MI – Mentees selection and application results

- **750** ERC grantees and former panel members expressed interest to participate as mentors.
- **94** of them were selected by **108 mentees** from CY, HU, IT, MT, PL, SK and TR targeting **2023** and **2024 ERC** calls.
- **22 mentees applied** to ERC calls, and **5 (i.e. 23%) were funded** so far.



ERC Visiting Fellowship Programmes (VFP)

ERC promotes the efforts of national and regional authorities that set up and fund mobility programmes to allow potential ERC candidates to visit and gain experience with ERC-funded teams.

VFP in few points:

- Duration of visits **1-6 months** (*up to 2019 the minimum duration was 3 month*)
- Visiting fellows commit to **apply for an ERC grant** in specified timeframe
- Visiting fellows need to have a **letter of support** of the proposed host researcher and institution when applying
- National/regional **funding agencies cover the travel and salary costs** of the fellows for the duration of the visit



Visiting Fellows participation in ERC calls

- **58 visiting fellows** have submitted **61 proposals** for an ERC grant after the VFP:
 - 36 (59%) to STG
 - 18 (30%) to COG
 - 7 (11%) to ADG
- **8 visiting fellows (13%) were funded** with ERC grants:
 - 4 in PE (PE4, PE8)
 - 3 in SH (SH3, SH5)
 - 1 in LS (LS8)
- The **success rate of VFP fellows** is **higher than Widening countries**, in particular for STG.



Where can you find more information?



Videos - ERC Classes

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

[Click here to watch!](#)

On WP 2024 see:
[Evaluation of ERC grant proposals: what to expect in 2024 | ERC \(europa.eu\)](#)

Thank You!

More information: erc.europa.eu



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