European Research Council-ERC

ERC Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant

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OVERVIEW

- ERC: Aims and funding principles
- Evaluation and proposal structure
- Tips for a competitive proposal
- ERC-NSF-Agreement
- Support & important weblinks

ERC: MAIN FEATURES

- Funds potentially groundbreaking research (“frontier research”) by **individual researchers** (“Principal Investigators”) and their teams
- Open for all areas of research
- Scientific excellence is the **only** criterion for funding
- “By scientists for scientists”: Led by autonomous Scientific Council
- highly competitive : ~ 12% success rate

ERC: FUNDING PRINCIPLES

1 Principal Investigator (PI) + **Host Institution (HI)**

Target group: excellent scientists in all career stages

"Starters": establish independent research team/programme

"**Consolidators**": consolidate research team/programme

"**Advanced**": novel, ambitious research programme

- Minimum time commitment by PI (50%/40%/30%)
- Funding goes to HI, but HI guarantees autonomy of PI
- ERC-Grants are portable – "Money follows researcher"

MAIN ERC GRANT FAMILY MEMBERS

STARTING GRANT

2-7 years post PhD
max. 1,5 (-2,0) Mio € for 5 years

CONSOLIDATOR GRANT

7-12 yrs post PhD
max. 2,0 (– 2,75) Mio € for 5 Years

ADVANCED GRANT

outstanding track record in the last 10 years

max. 2,5 (– 3,5) Mio € for 5 years

Eligibility time-window can be prolonged under defined circumstances (e.g. parental leave)

Coming up: SYNERGY GRANT
2-4 Principle Investigators
max 14 Mio EUR for 6 years

FUNDING RATES AND IMPORTANT FURTHER RULES

- Horizon 2020 **funding rates** apply:

  100 % funding of direct costs,

  25% flat rate for overheads

- All documents and proposal submission online via **EU Resarch Participant Portal**
- **Open Access** mandatory for peer-reviewed ERC publications; research data sharing by default (possible to opt out any time)
- **Waiting time for resubmission** of non-funded ERC proposals (1-2 years depending on evaluation category)

EVALUATION SUBCRITERIA

SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE

research project: groundbreaking nature
potential impact
feasibility

PI: intellectual capacity
creativity
commitment

HOW ARE ERC PROPOSALS STRUCTURED & EVALUATED?

Social Sciences and Humanities
(6 Panels)

Physical Sciences and Engineering
(10 Panels)

Life Sciences (9 Panels)

LS1 Molecular & Structural Biology and Biochemistry
LS2 Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics, Systems Biology
LS3 Cellular and Developmental Biology
LS4 Physiology, Pathophysiology and Endocrinology
LS5 Neurosciences and Neural Disorders
LS6 Immunity and Infection
LS7 Diagnostic Tools, Therapies and Public Health
LS8 Evolutionary, Population and Environmental Biology
LS9 Applied Life Sciences and Non-Medical Biotechnology

Step 1: part 1 (5 pages + CV + track record) is read by panel members only (+ online forms; incl. ethics)

Step 2: part 2 (15 pages) also becomes available to panel members and external referees

StG, CoG: Interview with panel members

„Generalists“
10-16 Panel Members
Step1 and Step 2

„Specialists“
Remote Referees
Step 2

PROFILE OUTLINE OF A “STARTER”

- **PhD** awarded **2 – 7 years** before ERC Reference Date (January 1st in the year of the resp. ERC Work Programme)
- must have already shown the **potential for research independence** and evidence of maturity. E.g. at least **one important publication as main author or without** the participation of the **PhD supervisor**
- promising **track-record of early achievements** appropriate to the research field and career stage: publications, monographs, invited presentations, patents, prizes/award,…

PROFILE OUTLINE OF A “CONSOLIDATOR”

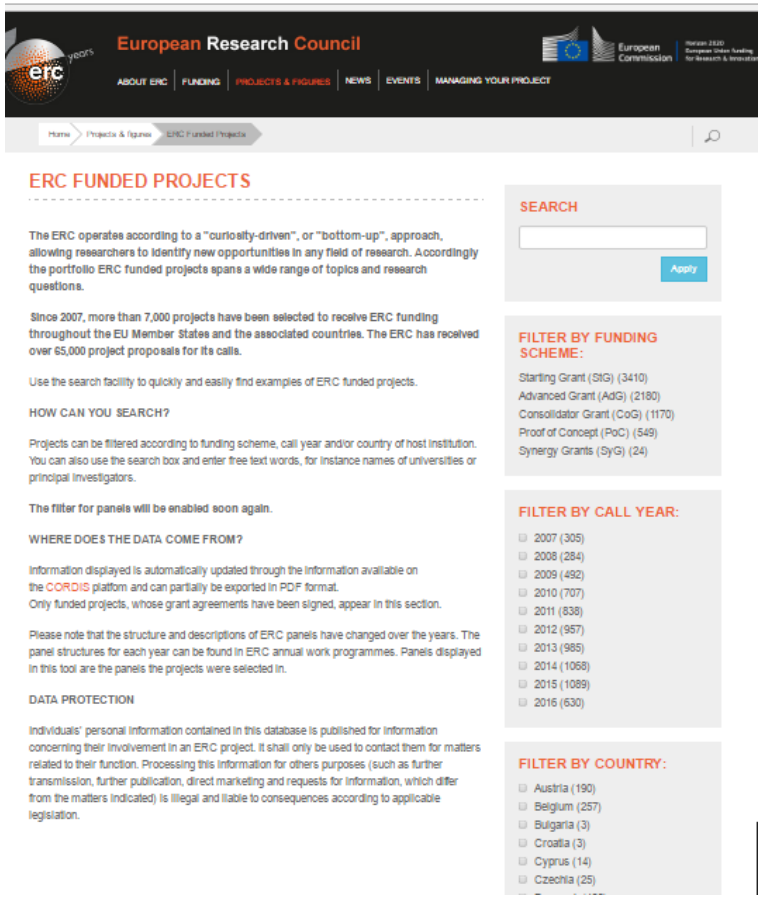
- **PhD** awarded >**7 – 12 years** before ERC Reference Date (January 1st in the year of the resp. ERC Work Programme)
- must have already **shown research independence and evidence of maturity**.

  E.g. **several** important publications as main author or without participation of the PhD supervisor.
- promising **track-record of early achievements** appropriate to the research field and career stage: publications, monographs, invited presentations, prizes/awards, patents,…

“ADVANCED” PROFILE OUTLINE

- No specific eligibility criteria, but intense competition
- **active researchers** with a track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years; at least matching one or more of the following benchmarks:
- **10 publications as main author** in major international peer-reviewed multidisciplinary scientific journals
- 3 major research **monographs;** organization of 3 well-established international **conferences** or congresses,…

„ERC PROFILES“ FOR COMPARISON



https://erc.europa.eu/projects-figures/erc-funded-projects

TIPS FOR A COMPETITIVE PROPOSAL

Within few minutes, evaluators want to know:

- What is the problem/research challenge?
- Why is this problem important?
- Why was it not solved until now?
- What is your new idea/approach?
- Is this groundbreaking research?
- What are your concrete research objectives?
- Why can **you** succeed?

YOUR PROPOSAL: A COMPELLING STORY

What is the best **structure** for your narrative?

- Key components:

  State-of-the Art, Objectives/Aims, Impact, Methodology, Team/Resources

- Provide the “big picture” early

- Guide the reader by subheaders, e.g. Research Questions, Work leading up to this proposal,…

- Include high quality figure(s)

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- How does the project break new ground? What is its core novelty? What makes it unique?
- What are the main overarching research questions/testable hypotheses? (→ validation of results, interpretation)
- What are the central research objectives?
- What is your research vision?
- Risk/gain-balance/feasibility: Convincing preliminary data/results & contingency strategies?
- Which reviewer panel is best suited?
- Who can give you critical feedback?

ADDITIONAL ROUTES TO ERC-FUNDING

https://erc.europa.eu/funding/additional-opportunities

You can develop your career through **public funding linked to ERC projects**, even if you do not receive an ERC Grant:

Jobs in ERC teams: Recipients of ERC grants can use their funding to recruit other researchers and team members for their project. On average, each team has 4-5 members.

Visiting Research Fellowships: A number of European countries fund research visits to established ERC projects in order to develop researchers' potential before they apply for their first ERC grant.

International Arrangement funding: International agreements with funding agencies and science ministries in China, South Africa, the United States and some other countries support young researchers to temporarily join ERC teams in Europe.

VISITS BY US-BASED RESEARCHER TO ERC PROJECTS: TYPES OF VISITS

NSF-EC agreement: Cooperation between US-based scientists and EU-based scientists in terms of research visits to ERC funded projects.

NSF

- NSF Career Awardees:

  Multiple short-term visits: should aggregate to an agreed-upon minimum (e.g., 6 months).

- NSF Postdoctoral Fellows:
  - Single and long-term research visits (6-12 months).
  - Time spent in Europe will be in addition to (rather than in lieu of) their NSF-funded postdoctoral fellowship.

EC

- ERC Principal Investigator:

  Hosts the US-based scientist as a member of the research team

VISITS BY US-BASED RESEARCHER TO ERC PROJECTS: CONDITIONS

- for Career Awardees:
  - The salary is covered by the NSF.
  - NSF also provides support for travel expenses of the visiting researcher and also for the travel expenses of accompanying family members in case of long-term visits.
  - ERC grant covers subsistence costs: a per diem or any other applicable modality of the Host Institution.

- for Postdoctoral Fellows:
  - NSF provides support for travel expenses of the visiting researcher and also those of accompanying family members.
  - The salary and any applicable social/health coverage expenses are covered from the ERC grant.

KEEPING UP TO DATE & SUPPORT: IMPORTANT LINKS

ERC homepage: http://erc.europa.eu/

ERC National Contact Points:
https://erc.europa.eu/national-contact-points

Abstracts of granted ERC projects
https://erc.europa.eu/projects-figures/erc-funded-projects

Previous ERC Panel Members:
https://erc.europa.eu/document-category/evaluation-panels

EURAXESS - Support for „researchers in motion“:
https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/

EURAXESS North America:
https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/worldwide/north-america

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS