The European Research Council

ERC 2023 Advanced Grants

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Belgian Information Webinar

erc

European Research Council

Established by the European Commission
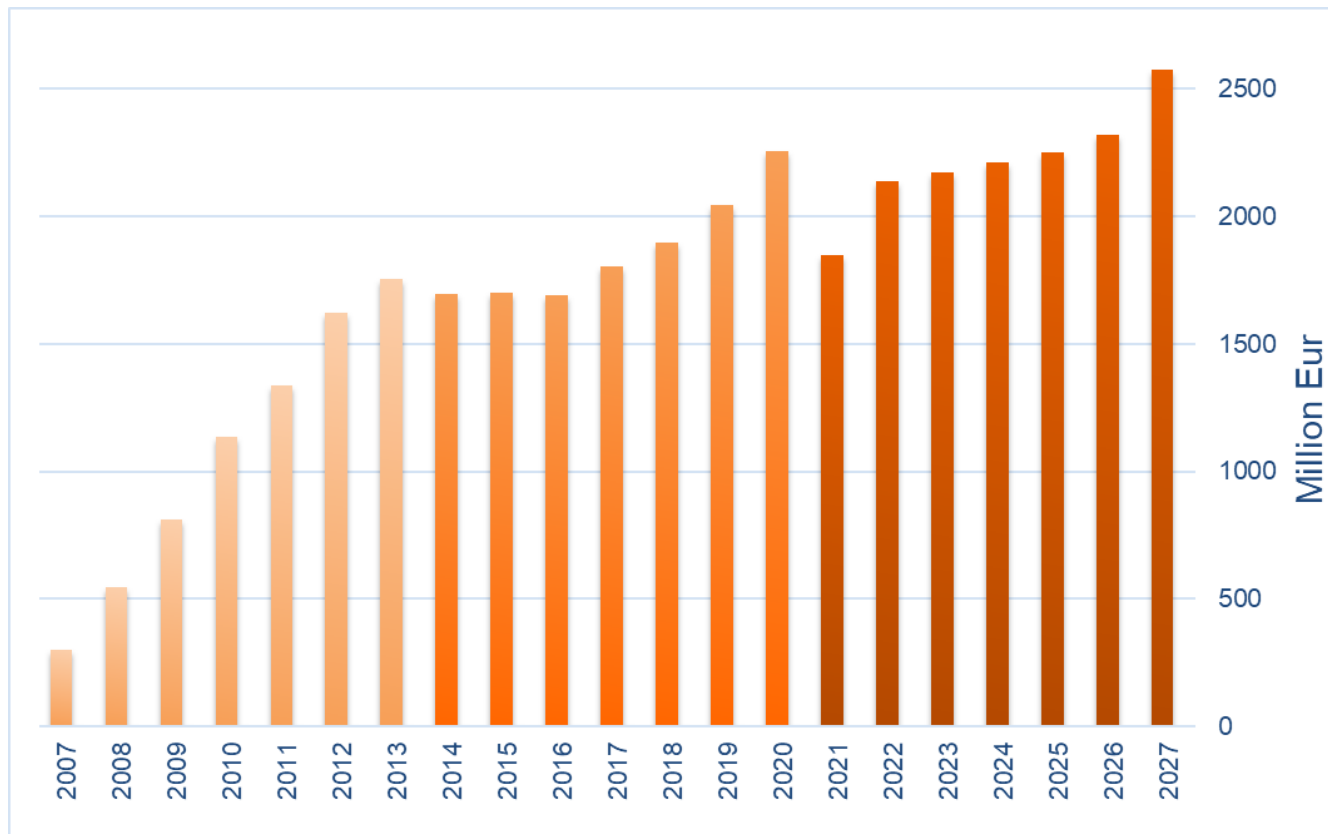
European Commission

ERC in Horizon Europe

ERC Budget

FP7: €7.5 billion

H2020: €13 billion

HE: €16 billion

ERC Structure

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
- 21 prominent researchers proposed by an independent identification committee
- President appointed 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 Structure

The ERC Dedicated Implementation Structure - ERC Executive Agency

- Executes annual work programme as established by the Scientific Council
- Implements calls for proposals and provides information and support to applicants
- Organises peer review evaluation
- Establishes and manages grant agreements
- Administers scientific and financial aspects and follow-up of grant agreements
- Carries out communications activities and ensures information dissemination
  to ERC stakeholders

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Creative Freedom to Individual Grantee

ERC offers independence, recognition & visibility

- to work on a research topic of **own choice**, with a team of **own choice**

- to gain true **financial autonomy** for 5 years

- to negotiate with the host institution the **best conditions** of work

- to attract **top team members** (EU and non-EU) **and collaborators**

- to move with the grant to any place in Europe if necessary (**portability of grants**)

- **to attract additional funding and gain recognition;** ERC is a quality label

ERC in Figures

Over **12,000** top researchers funded since the ERC creation in 2007

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

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

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

Over **200,000** 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

87 nationalities of grant holders

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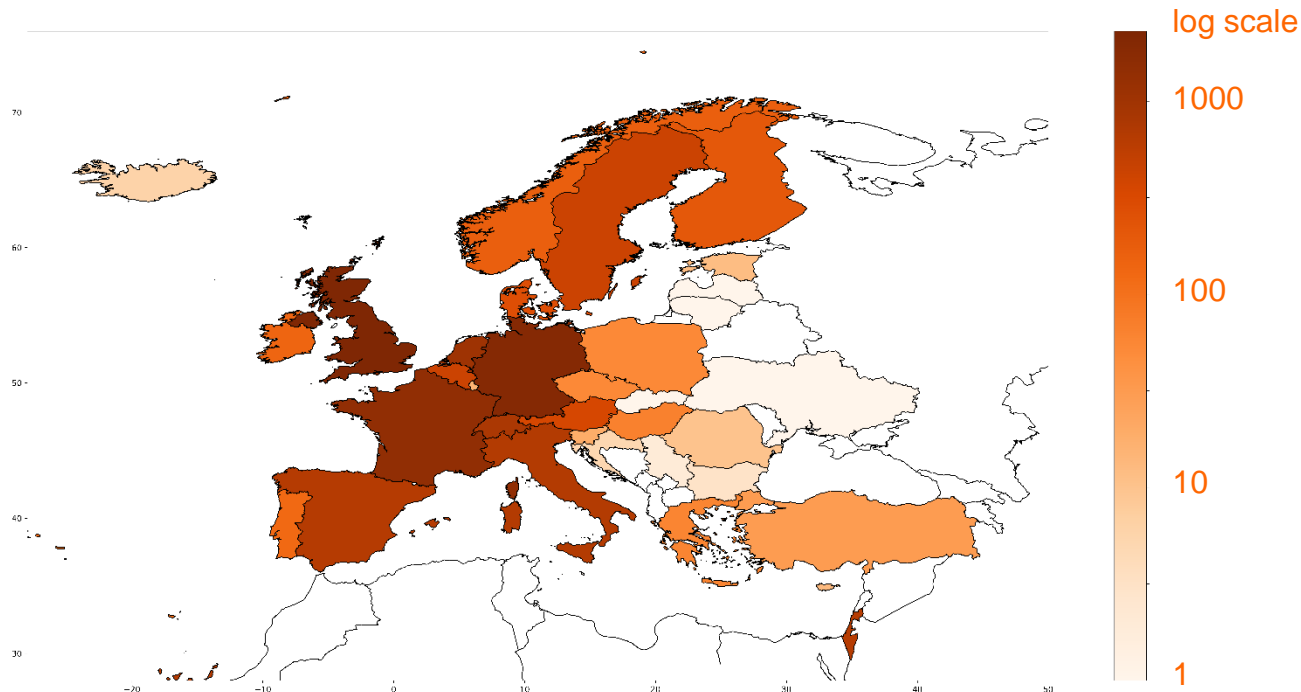
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European Commission

ERC Funded Projects by Country of HI

… ERC main grants based in …

Total grant value over … billion euro

Success rate: …

Host countries as of 15/06/2022

log scale

1000

100

10

1

ERC Funded Projects by Country of HI
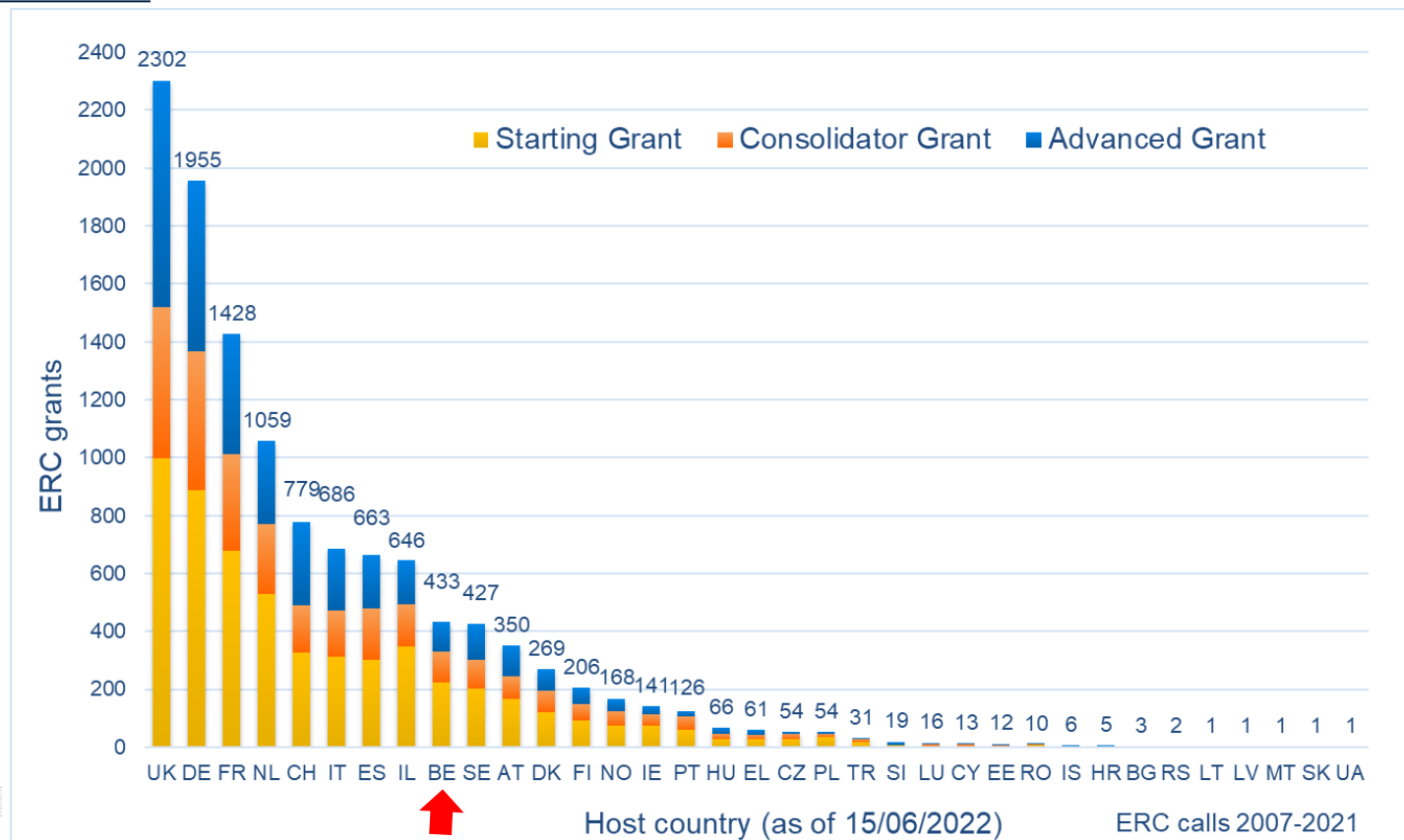
THE SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION PROCESS

ERC-2023-Advanced Grant call

- Call to be published on 8 December 2022 on the F&T Portal
- The submission deadline is 23 May 2023 at 17:00:00

- Call budget is 597 M EUR
- 246 expected number of funded proposals

ERC Panels structure – 3 domains, 27 panels

Physical Sciences & Engineering (PE)

- 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)

Social Sciences and Humanities (SH)

- 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 (NEW)

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

Choose your panel in Part A (Administrative form)

o Descriptors are **not exhaustive** (not a classification)

o **Any topic/field is equally welcome**, whether mentioned in panel structure or not

o Descriptors and free keywords used by panel chair to assign reviewers → **choose carefully!**

o If proposal is across panels: reviewers from both panels used. **Explain why proposal is "cross-panel" in Part B1!**

Evaluation process

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

Who can apply?

- All excellent researchers of any:

- **Age**, **nationality**, **current place of work**

- **Host Institution in the European Union or in one of the associated countries**

ERC Advanced Grants: profile of competitive applicants, time commitment and budget

o track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years

o exceptional leaders in terms of originality and significance of their research contributions

o ≥ **30%** working time on the ERC project

o ≥ **50%** time in Europe (MS/AC)

o up to **€2.5** M for 5 years + up to **€1** M

Proposal structure

- Part A: Administrative form

- Part B1 - submitted as PDF

- Part B2 - submitted as PDF

- Host Institution support letter

Annexes - submitted as PDF

Part A: Administrative form

1. General information

2. Participants

3. Budget table and Resources (evaluated in Step 2)

4. Ethics and Security

5. Other questions – declaration of written consent of collaborators
   (on their participation and content)

Activities raising ethics issues in HE

Ask your questions directly to the ERCEA ethics team: ERC-ETHICS-REVIEW@ec.europa.eu

1. Human embryonic stem cells (hESCs) & human embryos
2. Research involving humans
3. Human cells or tissues
4. Personal data
5. Animals
6. Non-EU countries
7. Environment, health and safety
8. **Artificial intelligence**
9. Other ethics issues

Security issues:
EU classified information
Potential misuse of results
Use of information/materials subject to national security restrictions

Part B1 - evaluated in Step 1 & Step 2

a - Extended synopsis   5 pages

b - Curriculum vitae   2 pages

c - 10 year track record   2 pages

Only the last 10 years are taken into account! Extensions in case of career breaks are possible (as per ERC WP) and must be reported in Part B1.

Funding ID table does not count towards the page limits

References do not count towards the page limits

AdG 2023 – Covid impact

Part B1 template - CV:

Applicants may mention in their research proposal any specific situation caused by the Covid19 pandemic that had a negative impact on their curriculum vitae or track record.

o Part B1 template of the proposal includes a dedicated section in the CV to describe the Covid-19 impact to scientific productivity.

o Similar approach to the one used for career breaks and unconventional research career paths.

o Case-by-case evaluation based on the applicant's statements.

- **COVID-19 IMPACT TO SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTIVITY (if applicable)**

Please specify which of the following situations apply to you:

☐ Increased caring responsibility for dependent person, including home schooling of children;
☐ No access to laboratory facilities, archives, or other necessary facilities;
☐ No access to field work;
☐ Adaptation to online teaching;
☐ Physical and/or mental health issues;
☐ Other(s) _____

(optional)
Explain with objective facts how your productivity was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a limit of 300 characters, spaces and line breaks included.

DORA
Updated guidance on the track record for applicants

In light of the DORA principles, the Scientific Council integrated the following advice in the ERC Work Programme:

- Journal Impact Factor: not accepted anymore among the field relevant bibliometric indicators that may be included as part of the publications track record;

- Track record: the achievements listed under each PI profile are not exclusive; any other achievements can be included if relevant to research field and project;

- Principal Investigators can provide a short narrative describing the scientific importance of the research outputs and the role played by the Principal Investigator in their production.

https://sfdora.org/resource/european-research-council-erc/

Part B2 - evaluated in Step 2 only

Scientific proposal = 14 pages

a – State-of-the-art and objectives

b – Methodology

References do not count towards the page limits

Preparing your proposal: Part B1

o   Project: innovative? new aspects/solutions/theories?

o   Current state-of-play? Know your competitors.

o   Beyond the state of the art VS incremental?

o   Highlight the high-risk & high-gain character!

o   Goals realistic? Risk mitigation?

o   Concise and clear: also for generalists!

o   Coherence of proposed project?

o   Feasibility (scientific approach)

Preparing your proposal: Part B2

o   Do not repeat the synopsis

o   Extensive methodology and work plan

o   Go into more detail with the state of the art

o   Provide strategies to mitigate risks

o   Explain involvement of team members

o   Justify requested resources – **Part A**

o   Ask funding for Open Access –full open access venues (mandatory) – **Part A**

Differences between Part B1 and Part B2

Step 1: Panel members and cross-panel reviewers (if needed)

o Only Part B1 is evaluated!

Principal investigator

o Are you internationally competitive?

o Why are you the right person to carry out the project?

o Show your scientific leadership in your CV.

o Give a realistic picture of your collaborations – show that you can drive the collaborations.

Differences between Part B1 and Part B2

o **Step 2: Panel members + external reviewers**

o **Both Parts B1 and B2 plus Budget section and time commitment** are assessed.

o Do not just repeat the synopsis, go in more depth especially on methodology.

o Provide details on methodology, work plan, selection of case studies etc. Show that you know the alternative methodologies and argue why your choice is the best.

o Make sure that the quantitative and qualitative differences with respect to the state of the art are clear and referenced.

o Check coherence of budget figures, justify requested resources, based on the research proposed

o Explain involvement / profiles of team members.

o Show that you understand the risks and provide alternative strategies to mitigate them.

What do panel members look for in your proposal?

Fund frontier research projects:

o Does the project go substantially **beyond the state of the art**?

o **Why** is the proposed project important?

o Is it **timely**?

o What are the **risks**? Are they justified by a substantial potential **gain**? Is there **a plan** for managing the risks?

Fund the future leaders in the field:

o **Why** is the PI the best person to carry it out?

o Is the **PI internationally competitive** as a researcher at his/her career stage and in his/her discipline?

o Is there **evidence** that the PI is able to work independently, and to manage a 5-year project with a substantial budget?

Typical reasons for rejection

Research Project

o Scope: too narrow ←→ too broad/unfocussed

o Incremental research

o Work plan not detailed enough/unclear

o Insufficient risk management

Principal Investigator

o Insufficient track-record

o Insufficient (potential for) leadership

o Insufficient experience in leading projects (AdG)

ERC evaluation process

StG/CoG/AdG: single submission, two-step evaluation
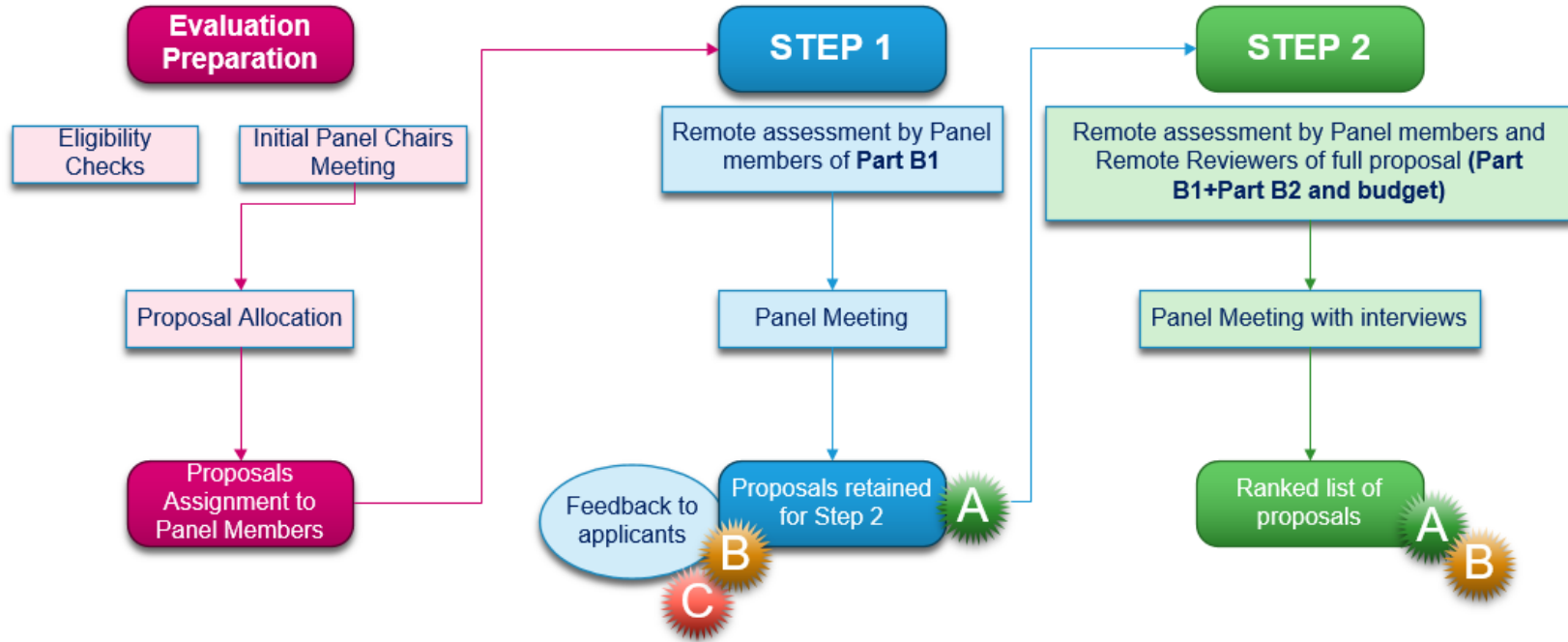
TIPS and TRICKS

Five main tips, but no tricks!

1. Consult the Information for Applicants

2. Register early on the F&T 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)

Key points:

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o Writing is hard and requires time: devote plenty of time to the "job"

o Writing a proposal = rewriting it many times

o Proofread and/or secondary read by a friend, colleague, family member

o Do not work right up to the deadline: it can undo weeks/months of hard work (e.g. submission of early draft, connection failure, IT malfunctions)

Key points:

Avoid:

o Spelling mistakes

o Grammatical slips

o Exceeding the word and page limits

Always use clear language ⇔ clear focus of the research

Key points:

- The Host Institution is not an evaluation criterion, only the **excellence** of the proposal and the applicant

- Proposals **shorter than five years** are welcome. The content of the proposed research determines its budget

- Already having an ERC grant does not guarantee obtaining another one; each proposal is evaluated on its **own merit**

- Making to the reserve list in a previous submission does not pave your way to granting at the next round

- **Publication record is not decisive** in funding decisions

Key points:

- Be ambitious and "daring", think big; panels are instructed to select high-risk research

- Grab interest and attention of reviewers

- Remember that Part B1 will be seen by "generalists" (panel members)

- If you make it to Step 2, reviewers (including specialists – external reviewers) see both B1 and B2, so do not repeat/duplicate part B1 in part B2.

- Do not include unnecessary partners and collaborators; it is not a "consortium"

Be ready! Be informed!

- Consult the ERC Work Programme, the Information for Applicants and the Guide for Peer Reviewers

- Look at funded projects in your field (search tool on ERC website), testimonials, tutorials

Where can you find more information?

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=xbFbzkVWgCU&list=PLtv6FnsXqnXAYRk6HCErwMxwML0ZKoMcy

Thank You!

More information: erc.europa.eu

National Contact Point: erc.europa.eu/national-contact-points

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Funding & Tender Opportunities: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home

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