The European Research Council

ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants Call

Marilena Plesu

Consolidator Grant Call Coordinator

07 June 2023

NCP Belgium

Overview

- **ERC and ERC Grant Schemes**

  ➢ Eligibility

  ➢ Submission and Evaluation Process (including Work Programme 2024 indicative changes)

- Tips and Tricks

ERC is part of Horizon Europe

EUR 16 billion
ERC budget in Horizon Europe

17%
of the entire
Horizon Europe budget

About the ERC

Scientific governance

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

Scientific freedom

- Scientific **excellence** as the sole criterion
- Support to the **individual scientist** – *no consortia!*
- No predetermined subjects – *"bottom-up"*
- Support for **frontier research** in **all fields** of science and humanities
- **International peer-review**

ERC basics

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

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

- win **additional funding**

ERC funding schemes

Starting Grant
Size of the grant: up to €1.5 million + up to €1 million
Duration: up to 5 years
2-7 years of experience since completion of their PhD

Consolidator Grant
Size of the grant: up to €2 million + up to €1 million
Duration: up to 5 years
7-12 years of experience since completion of their PhD

Advanced Grant
Size of the grant: up to €2.5 million + up to €1 million
Duration: up to 5 years
An excellent scientific track record of recognized
achievements in the last 10 years

ERC funding schemes

Synergy grant
Size of the grant: €10 million + up to €4 million
Duration: up to 6 years
Be composed of 2 to 4 PIs and their research groups (**one PI can be based outside EU/AC)**

Proof of Concept
Size of the grant: lump sum €150 000
Duration: up to 18 months
Demonstrate that the idea funded by the original ERC grant has innovation potential and significant economic or societal benefits

erc
European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

European Commission

Overview

- ERC and ERC Grant Schemes

- Eligibility

- Submission and Evaluation Process (including Work Programme 2024 indicative changes)

- Tips and Tricks

Preparing your proposal
…for StG and CoG, make sure you are eligible!

1. Reference date for the calculation of the Eligibility window: **1st of January of the year of the Call**
   StG2024: 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2021
   CoG2024: 1 January 2012 and 31 December 2016
   ➢ *Extensions of eligibility window possible for documented cases*

2. If you previously applied to an ERC call, check **resubmission restrictions**
   ➢ *Indicative submission restrictions for the StG2024 and CoG2024 calls*
       - same as in the past

3. Time **commitment on the project**: Min. 50% (StG), 40% (CoG)

4. Minimum 50% of PI **working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country**

WP2023
Change in PhD eligibility reference date

➢ **New "PhD eligibility reference date" rule:**

> *The reference date towards the calculation of the eligibility period shall be the **certified date of the successful defence**. **Document provided by the awarding institution.***

- Allows for the eligibility window to reflect the *real **academic age*** instead of the "administrative age" of the PI
- Puts an end to confusion about "award according to national rules" - brings clarity to applicants
- Most PhD certificates include the defence date
- If the PhD certificate does not show defence date, the candidate has to ask for written confirmation from the awarding institution

StG and CoG: Extension of the Eligibility windows

For documented situations occurring <u>before the call deadline</u>

➢ ***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 incident 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 1st eligible degree, **up to a maximum of 4 years**;*

➢ <u>*Two new categories for extension*</u>*: documented time of PI's inability to work due to **natural disaster** and for **seeking asylum**.*

Overview

- ERC and ERC Grant Schemes

- Eligibility

- Submission and Evaluation Process (including Work Programme 2024 indicative changes)

- Tips and Tricks

2024 Tentative Call Calendar

	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) Novelties for ERC WP2024

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 panel structure (2024)

Panel structure revised – 2024 ERC Panels and panel descriptors available on the ERC homepage:

- Provide **guidance to applicants**

- Not meant to be a complete scientific classification (*not exhaustive*)

- Panel titles, subtitles, descriptors **do not reflect priorities**

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

- The PI can flag one **"Secondary Review Panel"**. If proposal is across panels: reviewers from both panels used. Explain why proposal is "cross-panel" in Part B1!

Rumour: Choose the panel "strategically", in order to increase chances of success

NOT true: The budget is distributed among the scientific panels as a function of demand ➜ success rate is equal amongst panels ➜ choose the Panel that is right for your proposal!

ERC & Research Assessment

Novelties for ERC WP2024

- **Focus on the project**
  - ➤ Proposals **continue to be evaluated by peer review panels** composed of leading scientists and scholars using <u>sole criterion of scientific excellence</u>
  - ➤ ERC panels will <u>primarily</u> evaluate the **ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of the research project**. <u>At the same time</u>, they will evaluate the **intellectual capacity, creativity, and commitment of the applicant**, with a focus on the extent to which the applicant has the excellence and required scientific expertise to successfully execute the proposed project.

- **CV & Track Record** templates will be combined + simplified (4 pages)
  - ➤ Short **standard biographical information**
  - ➤ List of up to **ten research outputs**
  - ➤ List of ex. of significant **peer recognition** (e.g. prizes)
  - ➤ Applicants will be able to **add short narrative** to explain info provided
  - ➤ Applicants are invited to explain **career breaks or unconventional career paths** & to describe **exceptional contributions** to research community

> Scientific Council announcement on research assessment and WP 2024 changes:
>
> Evaluation of ERC grant proposals: what to expect in 2024 | ERC (europa.eu)
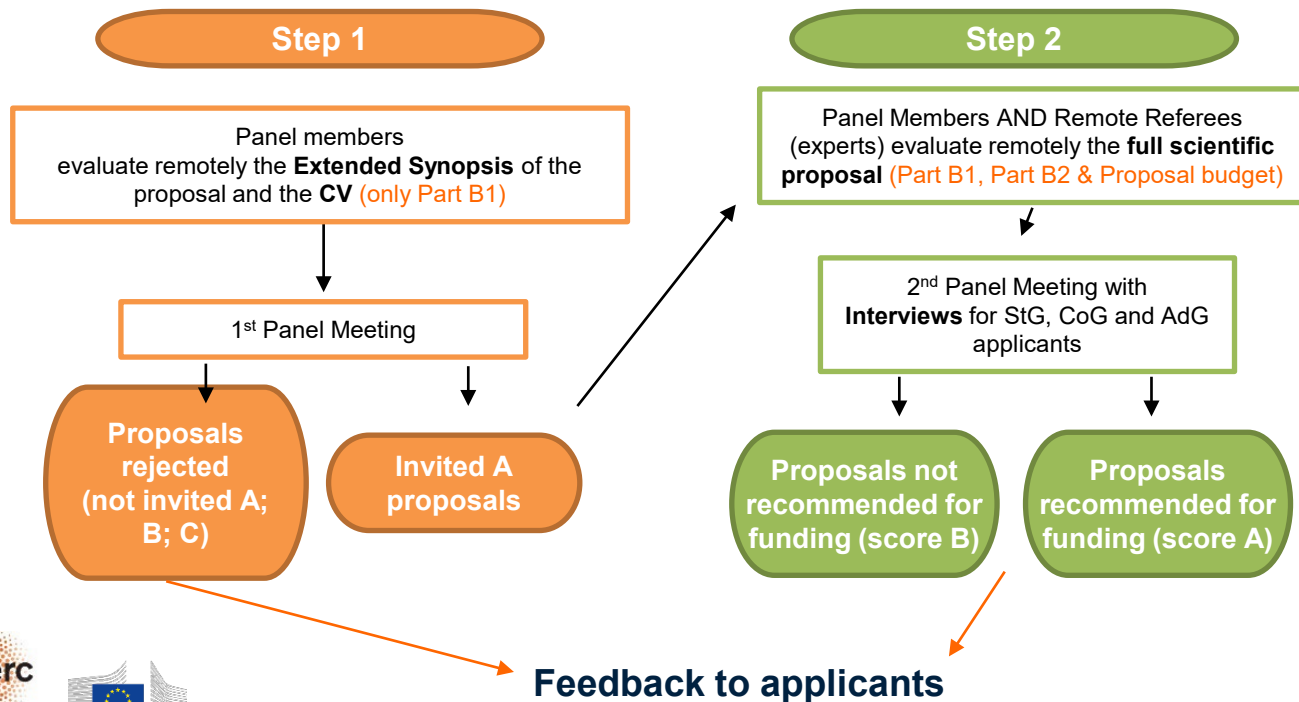
Proposal Structure

o **Part A**: Administrative forms and Proposal Budget

o **Part B1** – Synopsis (5 pages) and CV+Track Record (4 pages)

o **Part B2** - Scientific proposal (14 pages)

- • State-of-the-art and objectives
- • Methodology

o **Host Institution support letter**

o **PhD certificate**

Annexes: *Extension request documents* in <u>one pdf, including cover page;</u> ethics docs, etc.

<u>For StG2024 and CoG2024 - check Guidelines in the 2024 Information for Applicants</u>

Evaluation Process (StG, CoG & AdG)

For individuals calls: a single submission but a two-step evaluation
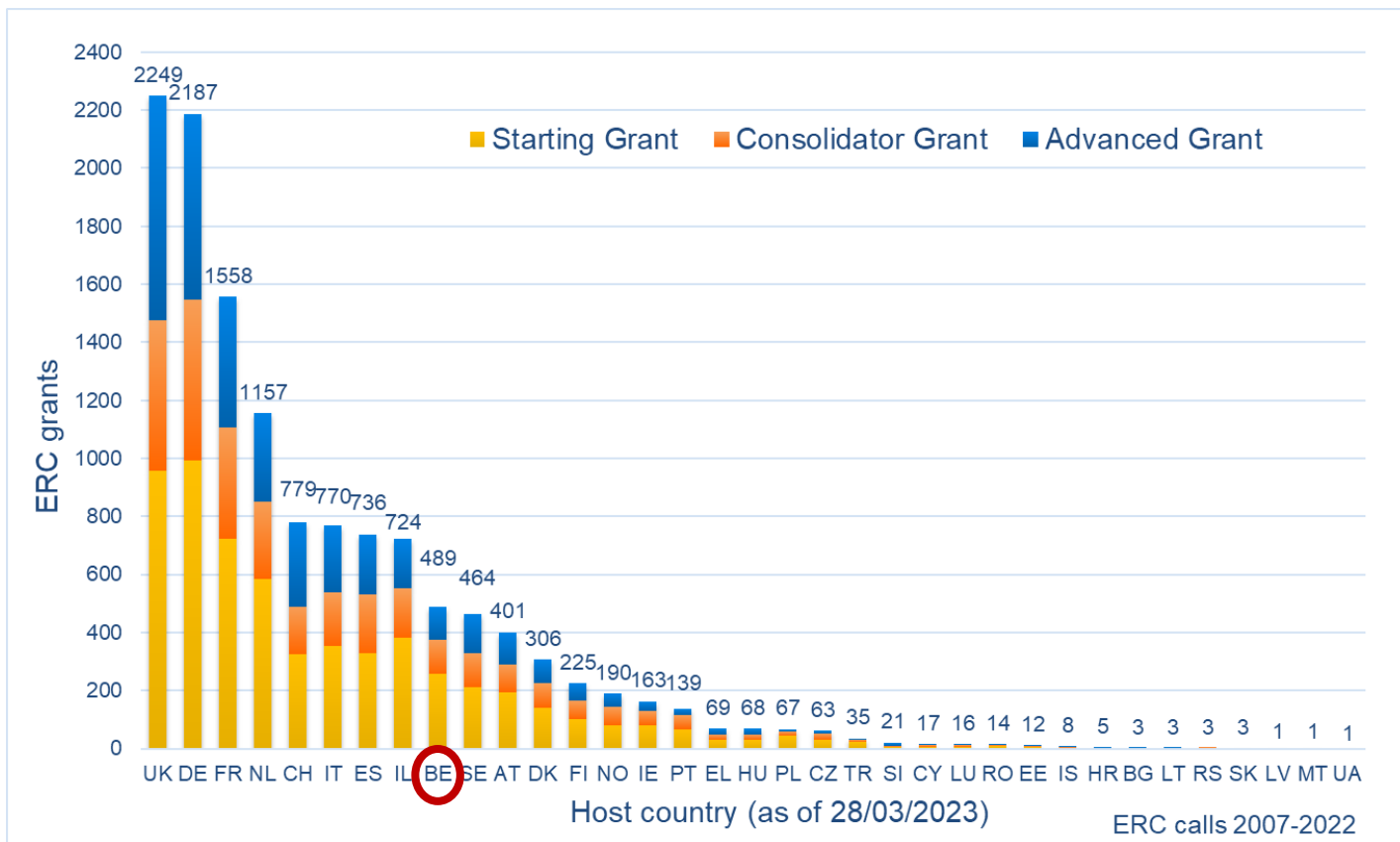
Step 1

Panel members evaluate remotely the **Extended Synopsis** of the proposal and the **CV** (only Part B1)

1st Panel Meeting

Proposals rejected (not invited A; B; C)

Invited A proposals

Step 2

Panel Members AND Remote Referees (experts) evaluate remotely the **full scientific proposal** (Part B1, Part B2 & Proposal budget)

2nd Panel Meeting with **Interviews** for StG, CoG and AdG applicants

Proposals not recommended for funding (score B)

Proposals recommended for funding (score A)

Feedback to applicants

3 Domains / 28 Panels

13-18 Panel Members / Panel

European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

European Commission

Overview
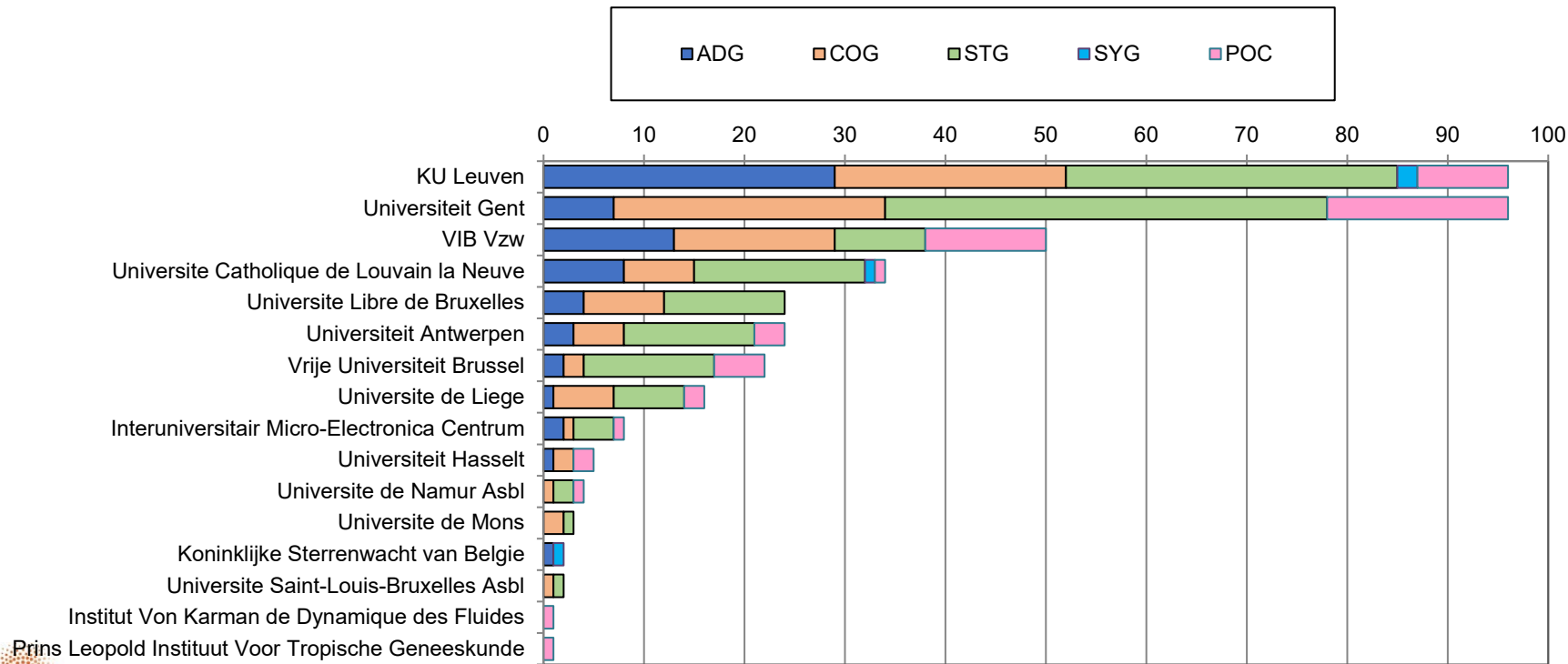
- ERC and ERC Grant Schemes

- Eligibility

- Submission and Evaluation Process (including Work Programme 2024 indicative changes)

- Tips and Tricks

ERC-funded projects by country of Host Institution

ERC grants

- Starting Grant
- Consolidator Grant
- Advanced Grant

2249, 2187, 1558, 1157, 779, 770, 736, 724, 489, 464, 401, 306, 225, 190, 163, 139, 69, 68, 67, 63, 35, 21, 17, 16, 14, 12, 8, 5, 3, 3, 3, 3, 1, 1, 1

Host country (as of 28/03/2023)

UK DE FR NL CH IT ES IL BE SE AT DK FI NO IE PT EL HU PL CZ TR SI CY LU RO EE IS HR BG LT RS SK LV MT UA

ERC calls 2007-2022

European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

European Commission

| 21

ERC Funded Projects in Belgium
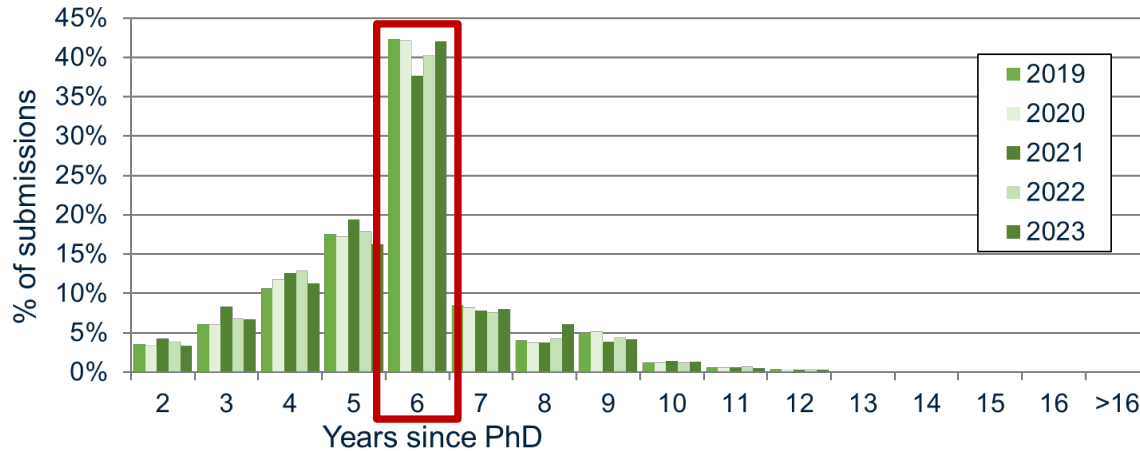# H2020 and Horizon Europe (signed so far……)

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
- **Publication record** is not decisive in selection decisions
- The **Host Institution** is not an evaluation criterion
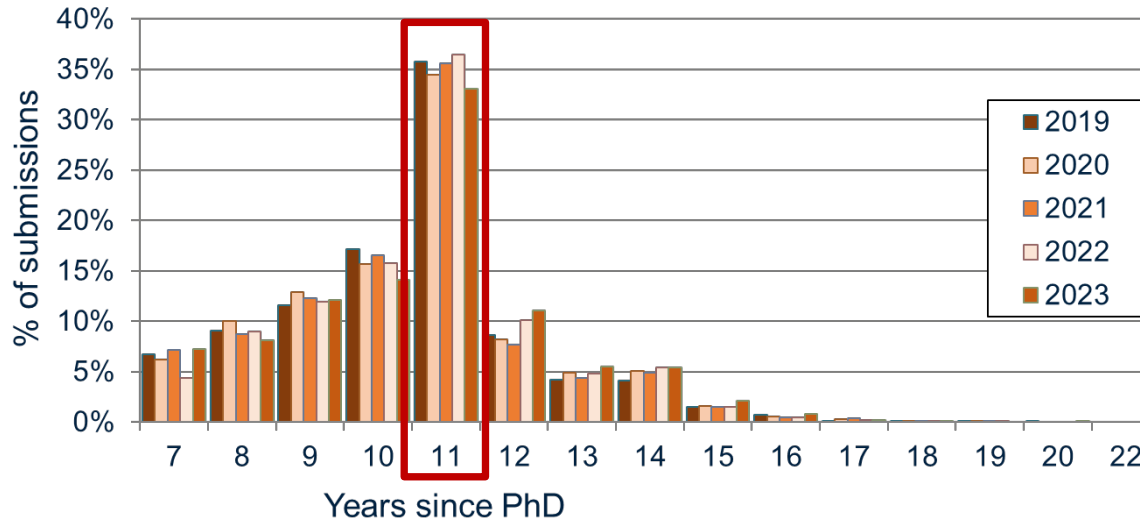- The **success rate** is not linked to academic age
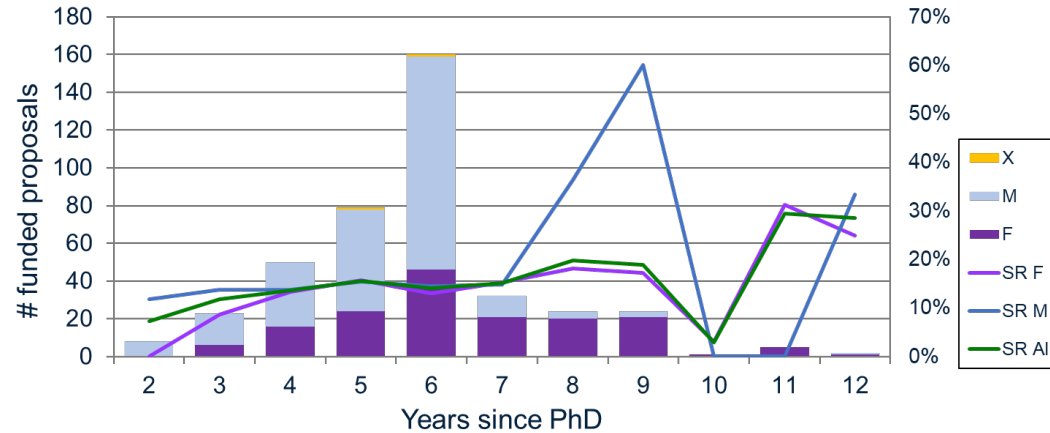
Submissions by years since PhD
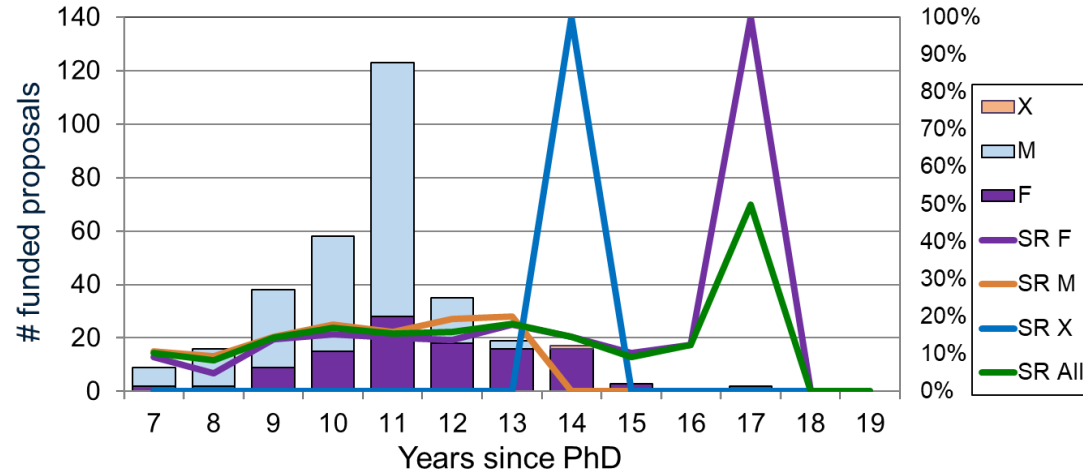
STG 2019-2023

COG 2019-2023

Shall I apply now or wait another year?

STG and COG 2022 - Results of step 2

STG 2022

COG 2022

Evaluation

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

Particular emphasis on…

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.

Five main tips, but no tricks!

1. Consult **call documents** (Work Programme, 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** well ahead of the submission deadline:
   ERC-2024-STG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu
   ERC-2024-COG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu

5. Get the **written consent of your collaborators** before the submission deadline (a simple email exchange is OK)

Preparing your proposal

In Step 1: Panel members see <u>only</u> **Part B1** of the proposal (prepare it accordingly!)

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

Part B1: Find the right balance
- ✓ Innovative? Beyond state-of-art? Realistic/feasible?
- ✓ Outline state of play (incl. competition)
- ✓ Goals realistic? Think about risk mitigation
- ✓ Be concise & clear (also for generalists)
- ✓ Feasibility (scientific approach)

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.

I have been invited for an interview .. now what?

➢ Have **clear and representative** slides and focus on **SCIENCE**! Don't try to make a business presentation – you are talking to scientists.

- ▪ Get panel interested in **YOUR ideas** & proposal

- ▪ Present & defend YOUR ideas (panels want to see that these are your ideas)

- ▪ Don't over-explain your CV!

➢ **Anticipate questions**

➢ Know the **details of your proposal** and methods, as well as your **research area** – who are your main competitors/collaborators?

➢ **Practice** thoroughly, several (many?) times; **Keep the time**; typically a 5-10 minute presentation followed by 15-20 minutes of questions

Key points:

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 (avoid: spelling mistakes, grammatical slips, exceeding the word and page limits)

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)

o A submitted proposal can be revised until the call deadline by **submitting a new version and overwriting** the previous one.

Key points:

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

o Proposals **shorter than five years** are welcome. The content of the proposed research determines its budget (*max. award is reduced pro rata temporis for projects of shorter duration*);

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

o **Publication record is not decisive** in funding decisions;

o The **success rate is not linked to academic age**.

Key points:

- Be ambitious and "daring", **think big**

- **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**.

Anyone from anywhere in the world can apply

Opportunities for researchers outside EU/Associated Countries:

- **Additional "start-up" funding** for researchers moving to Europe (€ 1 Mio irrespective of grant scheme)

- Grantees can **keep affiliation with home institute outside Europe** ("significant part" of work time in Europe: at least 50%)

- **Team members can be based outside Europe**

- Grantees can **move within Europe with the grant**

Some final messages

- Don't exclude yourself from participating in ERC calls;

- If you have an idea that you think will make a significant change in your field of research or some other area, consider writing it down and apply to ERC;

- Take risks, explain your project's high scientific impact if you reach your aims, and provide evidence that you can do it;

- Consider the balance between addressing generalists and specialists, and the difference between part B1 and part B2 of the written proposal;

- If you fail, try again! Gain experience from evaluation. Panel feedback is useful and resubmissions have higher success rate (typically 1.5 times higher).

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 (ERC homepage)

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!](#)

Thank You!

More information: erc.europa.eu
National Contact Point: erc.europa.eu/national-contact-points
Sign up for news alerts: erc.europa.eu/keep-updated-erc
Funding & Tender Opportunities: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home

Follow us on social media

@ERC_Research

European-Research-Council

European Research Council

ERC_Research

YouTube
European Research Council