

The European Research Council

Information session on ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants

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European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

Overview

- ERC and ERC Grant Schemes
- Eligibility
- Submission and Evaluation Process
- Tips and Tricks

ERC is part of Horizon Europe

HORIZON EUROPE



EUR 16 billion
ERC budget in Horizon Europe



17%
of the entire
Horizon Europe budget



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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; it implements the ERC strategy as set by the Scientific Council and manages ERC operations

ERC's mission

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.

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



Why to apply for ERC grant?

ERC offers independence, recognition & visibility to:

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



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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**
 - StG2026:** 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2023
 - CoG2026:** 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2018
 - *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 StG2026 and CoG2026 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**



PhD eligibility reference date (since WP 2023)

New “PhD eligibility reference date” rule:

*The reference date towards the calculation of the eligibility period shall be the **certified date of the first 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 before the call deadline

- **Maternity leave:** +18 months for each child born before/after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Paternity/parental 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;
- **Disability:** Extension corresponding to the reduced amount of working time (including leave taken) and/or the degree of disability as documented by the applicant
- **Clinical training:** documented amount of clinical training received **after** the reference date of the 1st eligible degree, **up to a maximum of 4 years**;
- **Major disaster** and for **seeking asylum**.



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Evaluation panel structure

ERC Panels and panel descriptors available in the [Information for Applicants](#) document:
28 panels (2024 → 8 SH Panels)

- Provides **guidance to applicants**;
- Not a complete scientific classification; descriptors are not exhaustive;
- Panel titles, subtitles, and descriptors don't set priorities; All topics/fields are welcome, regardless of panel mention;
- PIs can flag a "Secondary Review Panel" for cross-panel proposals. Ensure to justify why a proposal is "cross-panel" in Part B1. Reviewers from both panels are utilized if needed
- ERC budget is allocated based on demand per scientific panel. Success rate is consistent across panels. Select the panel that aligns best with your proposal's focus.

Proposal Structure

➤ **Part A:**

- Administrative form
- Proposal Budget (evaluated at step 2)

➤ **Part B: Scientific Proposal**

- Part 1: Synopsis, CV and Track Record (evaluated at step 1 and step 2)
- Part 2: Scientific proposal (evaluated at step 2)

➤ **Host Institution support letter**

➤ **PhD certificate**

Annexes: Extension request documents, ethics docs, etc

Proposal templates

Part A:

- Online form with many sections
- All fields need to be completed; many fields are mandatory => proposal cannot be submitted without completing them

Part B1 and B2:

- Always use the templates applicable for the year and call (downloaded from the submission system)
- Some changes introduced since 2024 calls, e.g. CV and Track Record section, Funding ID now included in part B2 (do not reuse old templates!)
- Respect the page limits and read the guidelines in the 'information for the applicants' document applicable to the call



CV and Track Record (since 2024 Calls)

No prescriptive Principal Investigator profiles

1. **Personal details:** education, employment
2. **Research achievements and peer recognition** (*applicants can provide a short, factual narrative on the significance of the listed achievements and recognitions in relation to the research field and the proposed project*)
 - Research outputs (≤ 10):
 - ✓ demonstrating advancement in the field
 - ✓ emphasis on more recent achievements
 - Peer recognition: prizes, fellowships, academy membership, etc.
3. **Additional information:**
 - career breaks, diverse career paths, life events
 - other contributions to research community



Proposal budget (WP 2025)

Core funding (up to €1.5M for StG and €2.0M for CoG):

- PI and team member salaries, equipment, consumables, travel and publication costs, etc.
- Can include additional beneficiaries (team members working at different universities etc.)
- + 25% overheads (indirect costs)

Additional funding (up to €1M) can be requested to cover specific cost categories (WP2025):

- *"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*
- *the purchase of major equipment and/or*
- *access to large facilities and/or*
- *other major experimental and field work costs, excluding personnel costs.*

Excellence

is the sole evaluation criterion

Excellence of the Research Project

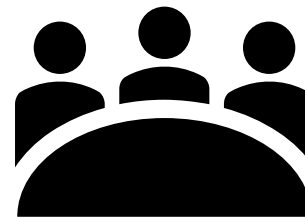
The panels will primarily evaluate the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of the research project.

Excellence of the Principal Investigator

Intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment with a focus on the extent to which the Principal Investigator(s) has the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project.

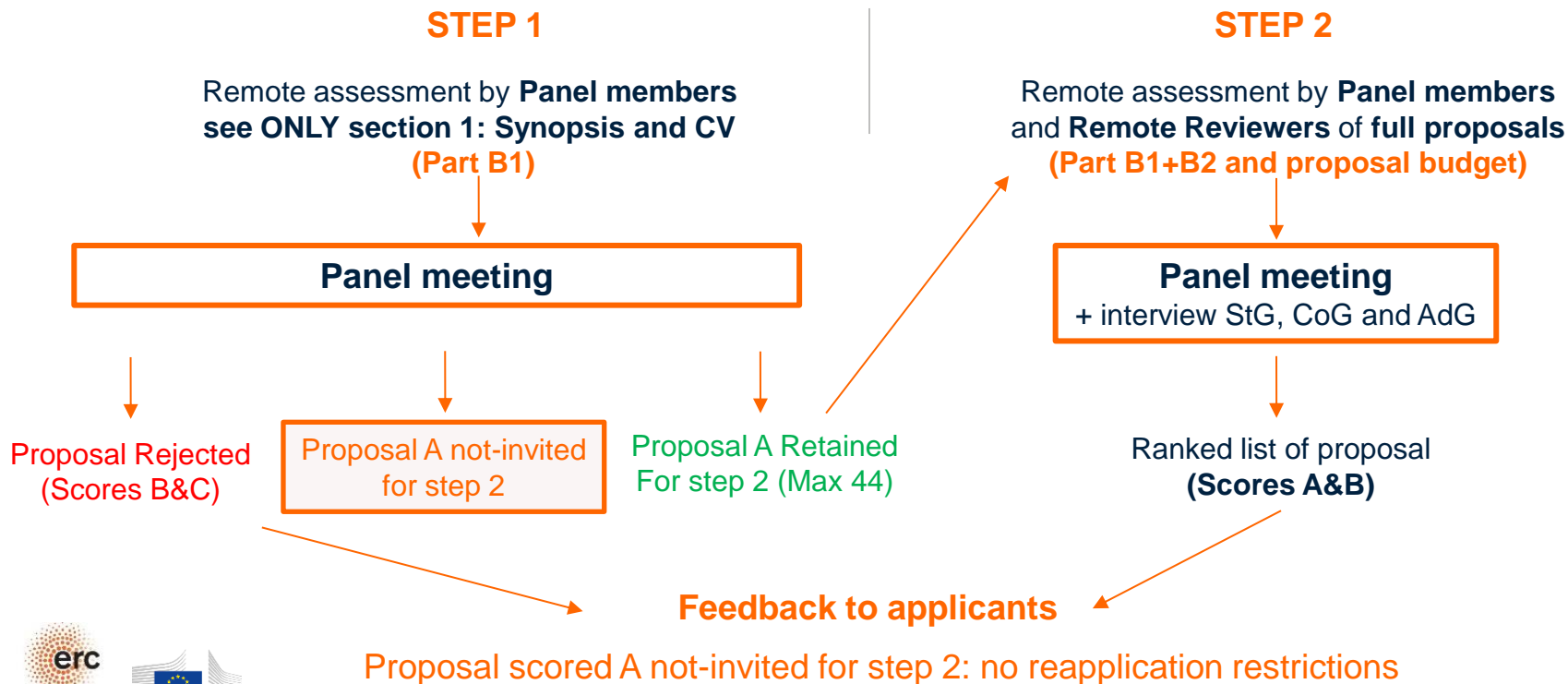
Evaluation panel composition

- Nomination: responsibility of the Scientific Council
- Well before submission deadline
- Typically 14 – 18 Panel Members
- Aim: maximize expertise coverage
- Constraints to ensure diversity
- Panel Members from other calls and years can support if needed



Evaluation: process

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



Preparing your proposal

- **In Step 1: Panel members** see only **Part B1** of the proposal (prepare it accordingly!)
 - ✓ Innovative? Beyond state-of-art? Realistic/feasible?
 - ✓ Goals realistic? Think about risk mitigation
 - ✓ Be concise & clear (also for generalists)

- **In Step 2: Part B1 and B2 and Budget section** are evaluated by Panel Members & Remote Referees
 - No repetition of synopsis
 - 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

Evaluation elements: read the evaluation questions in the work programme



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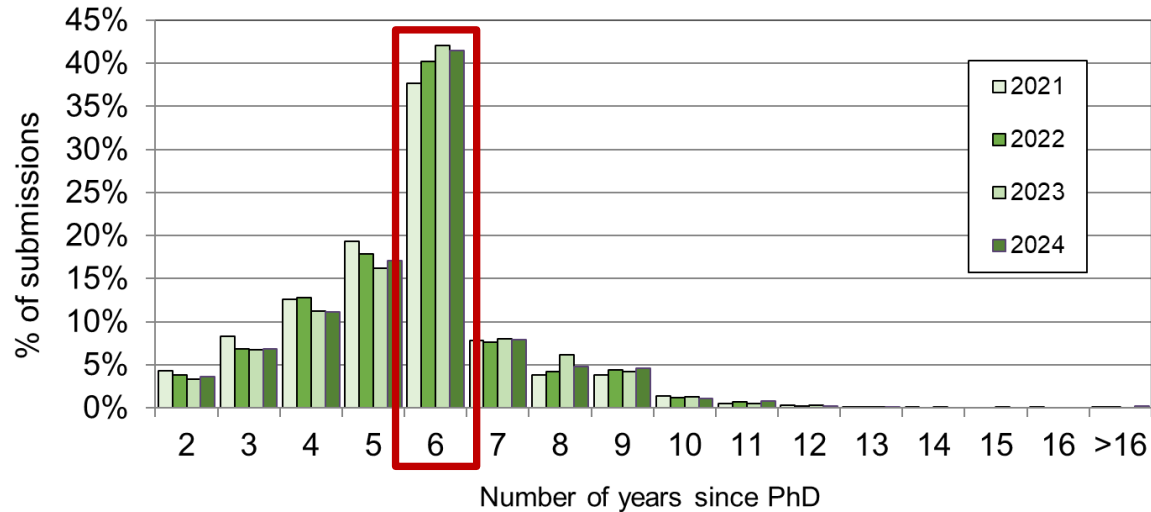
Contrary to what you may think

- 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.

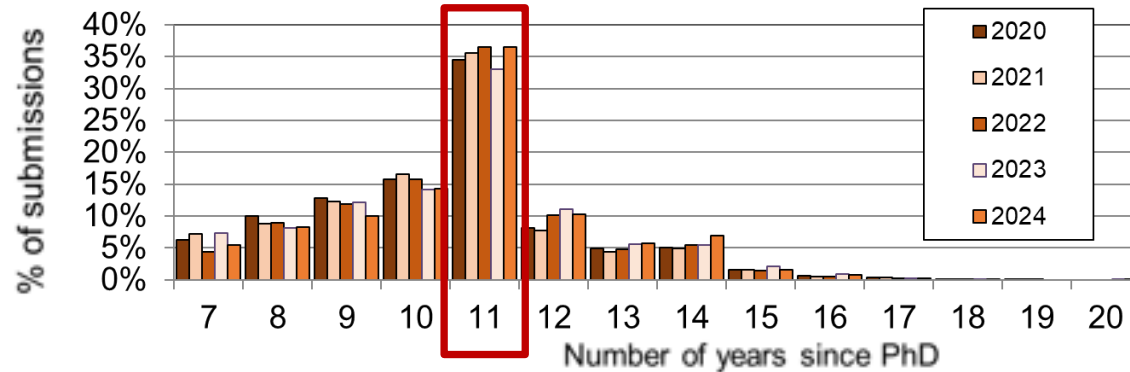


Submissions by years since PhD

STG 2021-2024



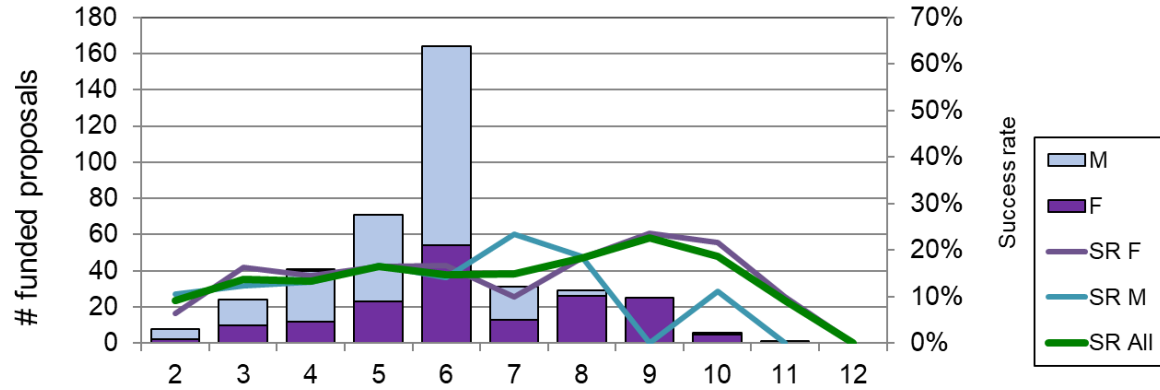
COG 2020-2024



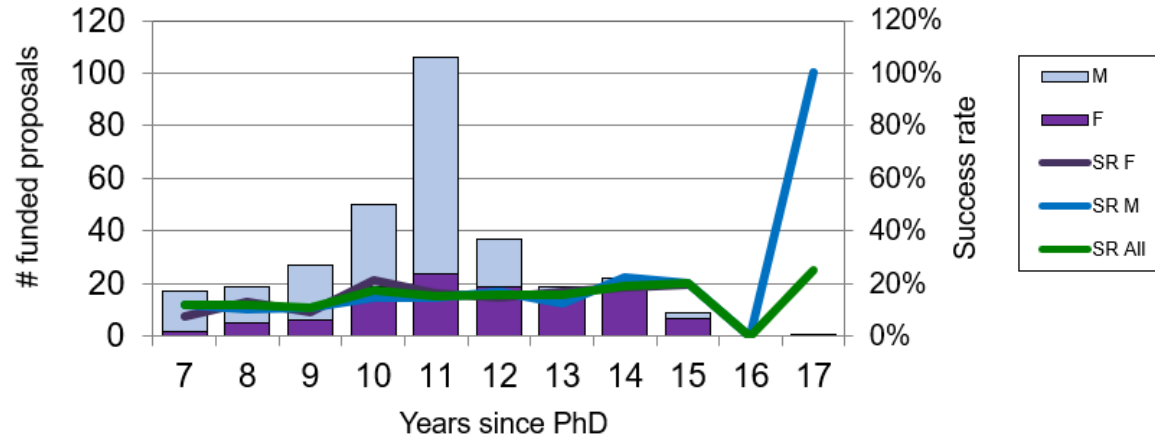
Shall I apply now or wait another year?

STG and COG 2023 - Results of step 2

STG 2023



COG 2023



Main tips, but no tricks!

1. Consult call documents (Work Programme, Information for Applicants, Guide for Peer Reviewers, etc)
2. Register early on the F&T Portal
3. Have your documentation ready
4. Look at funded projects in your field (search tool on ERC website), testimonials, tutorials ([ERC homepage](#))
5. Contact the ERCEA and ask all your questions well ahead of the submission deadline – dedicated mailboxes for each call ([ERC contacts](#))
6. Get the written consent of your collaborators before the submission deadline (a simple email exchange is OK)



Key points:

- Writing is hard and requires time: devote plenty of time to the “job”
- Writing a proposal = rewriting it many times
- Proofread and/or secondary read by a friend, colleague, family member (avoid: spelling mistakes, grammatical slips, exceeding the word and page limits)
- 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)
- A submitted proposal can be revised until the call deadline by submitting a new version and overwriting the previous one.

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
- Do not include unnecessary partners and collaborators; it is not a "consortium"
- **The success rate is not linked to academic age**
- **If you fail, try again!** Gain experience from evaluation. Panel feedback is useful and resubmissions have higher success rate (typically 1.5 times higher)



Thank You!

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