

# Webinar 2024 Work Programme, 20 September 2023

## Questions

### General Questions

Zahra Raissi Question: Would adding a section to ERC that refers to equal opportunity be possible?

The ERC places great emphasis on providing equal opportunities to all applicants. The ERC Working Group on Gender and Diversity is continuously working to ensure that the evaluation process at the ERC is fair and unbiased and considers the multitude of backgrounds and circumstances of its applicants. Finally, the ERC Work Programme (WP) states that beneficiaries of ERC funding must take all necessary measures to promote equal opportunities throughout their projects, as well as produce a Gender Equality Plan or provide a similar strategic document that outlines how issues of equality and diversity are tackled within the organisation.

Star Gear Entertainment: It appears that the ERC application process is considerably slower in comparison to similar processes. What steps are being taken to streamline the process, making it more attractive to researchers?

The evaluation cycle of the ERC main grant (Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants) is planned for roughly 10 months from the proposal submission deadline until the applicants receive their final evaluation outcome. The evaluation process is scheduled as a single submission followed by a two-step evaluation procedure, which is different to most other programmes. This planning allows that the second evaluation round, where applicants are invited for an interview with their evaluation panel, is launched immediately after the step 1 panel meetings. For the ERC Synergy call, the evaluation cycle is slightly longer, since it entails an additional evaluation step (interviews are conducted in step 3).

Each ERC call receives thousands of applications, which in fairness to all our applicants has to be treated with equal attention. The remote reviewing process comprises high level experts acting as panel members, but in step 2 also makes use of additional experts with specific expertise in the area of each proposal. These experts only work remotely. After the step 1 panel meetings, a fixed interview schedule has to be put in place for each ERC panel with all step 2 applicants, which is a complex procedure as we usually conduct between 800 and 1200 interviews over three weeks for a call. This altogether explains the complexity and time spent for the ERC evaluations.

Marija Edinborough: In one step evaluation, the interview is still included? Thanks.

The ERC has a two-step evaluation process (three-step for Synergy Grant) with interviews at the final step. The only ERC scheme that has a one-step evaluation and no interviews is the Proof of Concept Grant, which is awarded to existing ERC grant holders.

EDN1982: Will the CoG deadline in 2024 be again in december, or februari 2025 like before?

The deadline of the 2025 ERC Consolidator Grant call has not yet been published. The deadline of the call can only be confirmed once the 2025 ERC Work Programme has been published (expected to happen beginning of July 2024).

Daniele Venturi: Will the results of step 2 for CoG 2023 be before the submission deadline for CoG 2024?

As always, we will do our best to release the results earlier than the official date but we cannot guarantee it. The official date for communicating the CoG 2023 results is the 8th of December 2023, but we will try to send them out end of November, so that applicants will have time to consult their evaluation reports well before the CoG 2024 deadline of 12th of December 2023.

Zsuzsa Baranyai: When will the "Guide for Peer Reviewers: Starting and Consolidator Grant Calls" 2023 version be released?

The current [link](#) on the ERC Website refers to the Guide for Peer Reviewers (GfPRs) related to WP2023. The GfPRs related to WP2024 (with all the changes applying to the 2024 calls, for example SH8 panel and changes in LS3 and LS5, and other points related to the evaluation criteria) will be available early October 2024.

## UK Eligibility

Sophia Xenophonos: Are UK applicants for the ERC Consolidator Grant with a deadline 12 Dec 2023, eligible to receive funding from the ERC or will they receive funding from the UK Horizon Financial Guarantee instead?

Yes, UK applicants to ERC Consolidator Grant 2024 (ERC-2024-CoG), with the application deadline of 12 December 2023, shall be eligible to receive funding from the ERC.

The recent political agreement reached on the UK participation in the HE programme will apply as of 1 January 2024. Until then, transitional arrangements will continue to apply i.e. proposals with HIs established in the UK will be evaluated but cannot be awarded funding from the EU budget. Successful applicants can make use of the portability feature of ERC grants or apply for Horizon Europe guarantee funding set up by the UK government.

HIs established in the UK will be eligible for EU funding from calls of the [ERC Work Programme 2024](#) onwards. The year of the call can be determined by the year in the call identifier e.g. ERC-2024-CoG is a call under Work Programme 2024, even if the deadline is in 2023.

Laura Yerekesheva: Hello! Can UK scholars/host institutions participate in Synergy Grant 2024?

Yes, they can fully participate and be granted as any other EU or Associated Country applicants. This means that it is possible to have more than one PI based in the UK in a Synergy Grant proposal and/or one PI based in the UK being the Corresponding PI.

Sze Sing Lee Question: May I confirm that UK institution/university is eligible to serve as a Host for CoG?

Yes, UK institutions will be eligible to serve as a Host for CoG in 2024 (i.e. ERC-2024-CoG) as well as any other calls under [ERC Work Programme 2024](#).

COSTANZA demergasso: Will UK applicants be eligible to apply to the next ERC 2024 calls (deadline end of 2023), as UK will be already consider an AC?

UK applicants have already been able to apply to all ERC calls of Horizon Europe; however, in the absence of an association agreement, UK Host Institutions have not thus far been eligible for funding. This is set to change on the 1 January 2024, with UK becoming an associate country to Horizon Europe. HIs established in the UK will then be eligible for EU funding for all calls from the 2024 budget (as outlined in the [ERC Work Programme 2024](#)). The year of the call can be determined by the year in the call identifier e.g. ERC-2024-CoG is a call under Work Programme 2024, even if the deadline for applications is in 2023.

## **Application: Eligibility PI/Hi**

Lucas de Oliveira Paes: In some countries, the date of Ph.D. first defense is not the same date of Ph.D. official approval. What should be the date of reference for calculating eligibility?

The reference date used for calculation of the eligibility period should be the date of the successful defence/viva of the first PhD (or equivalent doctoral degree). If the PhD defence was not successful and following the PhD defence, corrections were required, the date when the corrections to the PhD thesis were approved will be the reference date used for the calculation of the eligibility.

Rafael Galupa(1): Are there discussions to change the rules about no. of years post-PhD for eligibility? maybe time should be counted from when people start their labs rather?

The ERC Scientific Council regularly discusses its funding policies, including eligibility. So far the PhD is considered the most suitable reference point and benchmark across different fields of research.

Kaushal Parikh: Does the ERC account for gaps in CV due to bureaucratic processes such as waiting for visas etc in the time post-phd criteria?

No. Reasons such as waiting for visa may not be counted as grounds for the eligibility extension. However, the applicants may describe their career breaks, diverse career paths or life events to provide context for evaluators when assessing applicants' research achievements related to their career stage.

The reasons for extending the eligibility are: maternity, paternity, reduced working time due to disability, long-term illness, national service, clinical training, natural disaster, and seeking asylum. For more detailed information, please see [ERC Work Programme 2024](#), p. 24 – 26.

Dr. Ela Laelasari: Is it possible from Asian countries to apply? and do we have to find UK or Europe universities as collaborator?

Researchers from Asia and any part of the world can apply but the HI must be based in the EU or a country associated to HE in StG, CoG and AdG. In the case of Synergy grants, a Host Institution can be in Asia if the others are in the EU or countries associated to the Framework Research Programme.

Alebel Bayrau: Is African Applicants Eligible to ERC grant?

Researchers from Africa and from any part of the world can apply but the HI must be in the EU or a country associated to HE. In the case of Synergy grants, a Host Institution can be in Africa if the others are in the EU or countries associated to the Framework Research Programme.

Simon Gregersen Echers: Will e.g. industrial work be considered for extension of the eligibility period? Or only leaves related to the criteria stated on p25-26?

No. The reasons for extending the eligibility are limited to the following: maternity, paternity, reduced working time due to disability, long-term illness, national service, clinical training, natural disaster, and seeking asylum. For more detailed information, please see [ERC Work Programme 2024](#), pp. 24 – 26.

Industrial work might be part of a diverse career path; this is a context, not a reason for extending eligibility. In many cases, research is also done within industry, so not all diverse career paths involve a suspension of research work. However, the applicants may include the information on their career breaks, diverse career paths or life events in their CV and Track Record to provide context for evaluators when assessing applicants' research achievements related to their career stage.

Ersilia Incelli: Can associate professors apply?

Yes. There are no restrictions based on the applicant's current professional position/role.

Marta Cavo: What is the definition of 'main author' in the eligibility conditions? Are corresponding authors included in the definition?

Being the 'main author' of a publication (i.e. habitually thought of as the person that has contributed the most to the publication) is not an eligibility condition, neither is it an evaluation criterion. However, in the context of ERC Starting Grant it is one of the ways the Principal Investigator can show their potential for research independence. Another example of research independence can be publishing without their PhD supervisor.

Zahra Raissi: In Iran one can get a Ph.D. certificate if they work for the government, due to this issues many people (including me) get a second PhD. Would you consider the second Ph.D. for the timeline?

No. The reference date used for calculation of the eligibility period should be the date of the successful defence/viva of the first PhD (or equivalent doctoral degree). For more information on PhD equivalency see Annex II of the [ERC Work Programme 2024](#).

## **Application: Scientific Areas/Panels**

Maduranga Withanawasam: I am Maduranga. Can we do research on higher education?

Yes, you can. The ERC accepts applications in any field of research and welcomes proposals of an interdisciplinary nature, proposals in new and emerging fields, and those addressing new innovative approaches.

Thomas Gargot: Can the ERC grant pay for development and test of innovation in a medical device development led by a MD-PhD ?

Yes, the ERC accepts applications in any field of research and welcomes proposals addressing new innovative approaches. Moreover, the ERC Proof of Concept Grants (awarded to ERC main grant holders) aim to facilitate exploration of the commercial and social innovation potential of ERC funded research.

Francesca Maria Toma: How is the ERC adapting the panel structure to the research becoming more interdisciplinary and what is the guidance (beyond maximum overlap of keywords) on how to choose the right panel?

The ERC ScC is continuously reviewing the ERC panel structure. For example, for the 2024 calls, the ERC Scientific Council decided to add one new panel, namely SH8 – Studies of Cultures and Arts, and to modify the remit of some other SH panels accordingly.

When choosing the panel, applicants should take careful note of the panel details and ERC keywords in the Annex of the Information for Applicants document.

Applicants should choose a primary evaluation panel and may also indicate a secondary evaluation panel. The applicant should also indicate if they believe that the proposal is of cross-panel nature (within or across research domains).

The initial allocation of the proposal to a panel will be based on the preference expressed by the applicant. However, when necessary due to the expertise required for the evaluation, a proposal may be reallocated to a different panel with the agreement of both panel chairs concerned. In such cases, applicants are informed of the reallocation of the proposal through the notification for the invitation to the interview (if applicable) or in the Evaluation Report attached to the information letter with the final outcome of the evaluation of their respective proposal.

The composition of the ERC evaluation panels is by nature multi-disciplinary. The primary panel will determine if additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional remote experts are needed to evaluate the proposal.

## **Application: HI**

Sarmistha Mahanty: While team up in CoG is it possible to include industrial partners as well?

The ERC welcomes applications from Principal Investigators hosted by private for-profit research centres, including “industrial laboratories”, and it is up to the PIs to include any beneficiary(-ies), e.g. industrial, if they consider it necessary for the proper implementation of their frontier research project. However, there is usually one main host institution that is the primary beneficiary of the project.

Areti DAMALA: Hello, in the case of the Synergy grants, it is possible to have a double affiliation. Do both institutions need to have an account created on the platform used for submissions?

In all ERC grants it is possible for applicants to have double affiliations. However, at submission only one institution (usually the one that pays the salary) should be designated as a Host institution. The double affiliation can be explained in part B2 of the proposal, and if the proposal is selected for funding, it will be clarified at granting stage. Note, that the Host institution with which the PI applies must provide a support letter at the time of submission.

Michel Prestat: Can researchers in private sector, who cannot publish much, apply for a Synergy grant if they couple up with 2-3 top-notch academic researchers? Or is this an "almost-no-chance" case?

The group of Principal Investigators is assessed as a whole. In general, it is advisable that each Principal Investigator has a CV and track record that is competitive at an individual level. Researchers having diverse careers, with alternative research careers are welcome to apply. The new CV and track record template gives ample opportunity to describe a variety of profiles, giving background information on the contribution of the applicant to the research community.

## Application: Budget

Santanu Sabhapandit: Hi, must all proposals be for 5yrs duration?

No, not all proposals need to be of a 5-year duration. Proposals can be of a shorter duration; however, the maximum amount of the grant is reduced pro rata temporis for projects of a shorter duration. Additional funding, as defined in the [Work Programme](#) (i.e start-up costs, major equipment, access to large facilities, other major experimental and field work costs), is not subject to pro rata temporis reduction for projects of shorter duration.

Lea Mueller-Funk: ERC StG: Question about the possibility to apply for additional funding of up to €1 million - can you say something about how often this has been granted for major fieldwork costs in the past?

Around 19% of projects funded by the ERC in Horizon 2020 have been awarded additional funding. Unfortunately, we do not have more detailed statistics on the category of additional funding awarded.

In general, every applicant is entitled to apply for additional funding, provided its necessity is properly justified in the research proposal (see also answers to the next question by Cinzia Ceccarelli).

Cinzia Ceccarelli: Additional budget for major equipment: how detailed should the description/justification be? could you give some suggestions?

Additional funding costs of ERC frontier research grants are a separate cost category in the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions. These costs will be eligible if they fulfil the eligibility conditions set out in the Model Grant Agreement for this cost category, if they are incurred for the activities and objectives for which the additional funding may be awarded, and if they are in line with the specific eligibility conditions for the other relevant cost categories as set out in the Model Grant Agreement (e.g. costs related to a purchase of major equipment must also fulfil the specific eligibility conditions for the cost category for "Equipment").

Explain and describe in detail any additional funding requested for the project (the requested additional funding must be included in the budget table). Include a short technical description of any requested equipment, why you need it and how much you plan to use it for the project.

Cinzia Ceccarelli: Should the researcher provide a plan B in case the request for an additional budget for major equipment is rejected?

The applicant is supposed to explain in detail the budget as proposed in the proposal and has to provide a very robust justification for the additional funding request. If the justification is not convincing, the Panel may modify and reduce the requested budget.

Sarmistha Mahanty: How many post-docs or Ph.D. candidates can be supported in a COG grant, while budgeting?

The number of post-docs or PhD candidates supported by a grant will depend on the needs of the project, on the one hand, and the cost of resources in the host country on the other. The ERC does not impose any limits on recruitment of post-docs or PhDs.

George A Iordachescu: Hi, Is it preferable to hire postdocs/research assistants for 100% and have a smaller team, or hire some members part time and have larger teams? I'd like to avoid precarious positions. Thank you!

Your aim of avoiding the creation of precarious positions is commendable. At the same time, only the Principal Investigators and their Host Institutions can define the most appropriate hiring approach in terms of the expertise needed for the project, as well as the availability and cost of the resources in the host country and institution.

## **Application: Time Commitment**

Tomislav Maric: How do we define commitment in the StG when an industrial research institution is planned as a Host Institution? Is the split of 80% for StG and 20% for an association at a University sufficient?

An applicant hosted by an industrial research institution can spend 100% of their time working for an industrial research institution. An academic affiliation is not necessary for the purposes of the time commitment to the project. Further details on how to calculate the time commitment can be found in the Annotated Grant Agreement.

Diego Armando Badillo: 9. If as PI I dedicate 75% of time to the ERC-StG project, the other 25% can be added into the budget as indirect cost?

No, the overheads are calculated as a flat rate of 25% of the direct eligible costs. Therefore, in the example provided, the PI can claim the 75% of his salary plus 25% of the charged salary. However, the HI is free to allocate the indirect costs as deemed necessary.

Mayank Mishra: If in ERC, researcher has only one ERC project and no teaching and is not receiving any money from anywhere.. can he claim 100% salary coming from ERC and 100% commitment?

Yes, an applicant can be solely working on an ERC grant, and it can be the only source of funding.



## **Application: CV and Track Record/Part B1/B2**

Laura Barrachina Porcar: I saw in StG proposals from previous years that part B1 starts with 1-page 'overview' section. This subheading is not in the template this year, was it mandatory previous years and removed this year?

The cover page of the Part B1 template has not changed for the 2024 calls. The Part B1 cover page should list the name of the Principal Investigator and the Host Institution, the title, acronym and abstract of the proposal as well as the project duration (in months). The abstract should be half a page and must be a copy/paste of the abstract from the submission form (Section 1 General Information). For inter-disciplinary/cross-panel proposals, please indicate the additional ERC review panel(s) and explain why the proposal needs to be considered by more than one panel.

Cinzia Ceccarelli: please could you give us tips/suggestions to fill in the new CV template? should we give explanation per each research achievement?

In the new format of the CV and Track Record templates, applicants are able to add short narrative descriptions to explain the information provided. Applicants are also be invited to explain career breaks or unconventional career paths and to describe noteworthy contributions to the research community. For example, you may provide relevant additional information on your research career to provide context to the evaluation panels when assessing your research achievements and peer recognition. However, it is not mandatory to fill in all sections of the narrative CV.

Lea Mueller-Funk: ERC Starting Grant: How much flexibility/freedom is there in writing the narrative CV this year? Could I insert a narrative section on research vision?

In the new format of the CV and Track Record templates, applicants are able to add short narrative descriptions to explain the information provided. Applicants are also be invited to explain career breaks or unconventional career paths and to describe noteworthy contributions to the research community. For example, you may provide relevant additional information on your research career to provide context to the evaluation panels when assessing your research achievements and peer recognition. However, it is not mandatory to fill in all sections of the narrative CV.

Laura Barrachina Porcar: For part B1b (CV+track record) in StG: with the new format released in 2024, is it still okay to provide some personal statement or some part more narrative and where could it be placed?

In the new format of the CV and Track Record templates, applicants are able to add short narrative descriptions to explain the information provided. Applicants are also be invited to explain career breaks or unconventional career paths and to describe exceptional contributions to the research community. For example, you may provide relevant additional

information on your research career to provide context to the evaluation panels when assessing your research achievements and peer recognition. However, it is not mandatory to fill in all sections of the narrative CV.

Laura Barrachina Porcar: For part B1b (CV+track record): is there a limit for achievements to include under peer recognition, as it is of 10 for research achievements?

No, there is no limit to the number of examples of peer recognition.

Laura Bacete Cano: Q: I read in the guidelines to reviewers that Masters/PhD supervision isn't assessed when evaluating the excellence of StG applicants. Is teaching assessed? Or what elements should appear in the CV?

The 2024 Guide for Peer Reviewers document is not published yet. It will be made available soon on the ERC website. As for the CV and track record of the PI, please note that there is a new template (for more information, please see the 2024 Information for Applicants). For more information see also the ERC Scientific Council decision on changes to the ERC's application forms and evaluation procedures: Evaluation of ERC grant proposals: what to expect in 2024.

ERC NCP Cadieux, Denmark: does the CV changes discourages applicants from mentioning the total number of publications, including how many senior author/correspond publications or is the focus on advancements in a narrative CV?

While the ERC templates are not strictly prescriptive, the ERC Scientific Council does indeed wish to discourage the use of simple metrics. Review panels are briefed explicitly not to base their judgements on such metrics.

Jos Kleijne: When publications are submitted, can it help to put them on a preprint server, to be able to mention them in an ERC proposal? Or will they be ignored anyway?

Yes, preprints may be included, if freely available from a preprint server. Preprints should be properly referenced and either a link to the preprint or a DOI should be provided.

Laura Barrachina Porcar: very specific question but cannot find it in applicant's instructions: can the font size be smaller than 11 points for tables you include in B1 and B2?

In fairness to all applicants, the instructions regarding font type and size should be respected through all parts of the proposal.

Maria Venegas Carro: Hi, could you explain what is the difference between Key Intermediate Goals and Milestones/Deliverables (which are not expected in the proposal)?

The ERC does not require the applicant to structure their proposal along the lines of intermediate goals, milestones, or deliverables. Hence, the applicant is free to structure their research idea in any way they see fit and use terminology that is commonly accepted in their field.

## Evaluation: Criterion and Procedure

Monica Favaro: last year the SC announces that the research idea would weigh more than the PI profile. In ERC WP2024 this point is not clearly addressed. Has the SC decision implemented or not for ERC 2024 calls?

Through this change in WP2024, the ERC ScC gives an explicit instruction to ERC evaluation panels to put the focus primarily on the research proposal, and to also consider the excellence of the Principal Investigator. This principle has already been used in practice, but the ERC Scientific Council now establishes it formally in the [Work Programme 2024](#).

There is no fixed ratio of proposal vs. CV, which was also a conscious decision. The ERC Scientific Council did not want to introduce a numerical weighting between the two, but rather encourage a holistic and fuller account of the project idea on the one hand, and the research careers and contributions of applicants on the other.

Our hope is that in this way, applicants will provide, and evaluation panels will see and take into account, both the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of the research project in the first place, and also the intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment of applicant Principal Investigators.

Of course, proposals will continue to be evaluated by peer review panels composed of leading scientists and scholars using the sole criterion of scientific excellence.

FB: How is the selection made about which projects - equally excellent, as I understood - are to be funded in the next round?

Panels will rank the A proposals on the basis of the Step 1 evaluation questions published in the Work Programme and the 44 highest ranked A proposals (if there are more than 44 As) will pass to the second step. To be noted that the new score 'A not invited' -which means no restriction to application for the following year- only applies beyond the cap of 44 as either the applications are considered worth inviting to the second step, or they aren't (and in such case receive a B or C score).

Ankit Butola: what are the selection criteria in the first round or B1 part of the proposal?

Scientific excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation. In assessing excellence, the following criteria (applicable to both steps) are considered:

- the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of the research project, and
- the intellectual capacity, creativity, and commitment of the Principal Investigator(s), with a focus on the extent to which the Principal Investigator(s) has the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project.

These are then translated into the following evaluation questions that peer reviewers have to answer:

### 1. Research Project

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grants):

- To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?
- To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines)?

Scientific Approach:

- To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the ground-breaking nature and ambition of the proposed research (based on the Extended Synopsis)?
- To what extent does the proposal go beyond what the individual Principal Investigators could achieve alone (for Synergy Grants, based on the Extended Synopsis)?
- To what extent do the Principal Investigators succeed in proposing a combination of scientific approaches that are crucial to address the scope and complexity of the research questions to be tackled (for Synergy Grants, based on the Extended Synopsis)?
- To what extent are the proposed research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project (based on the research proposal)?
- To what extent are the proposed timescales, resources, and PI commitment adequate and properly justified (based on the research proposal)?

### 2. Principal Investigator(s)

Intellectual capacity and creativity (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grants)

- To what extent has/have the PI(s) demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?
- To what extent does/do the PI(s) provide evidence of creative and original thinking?
- To what extent does/do the PI(s) have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

Synergy Grant Group (Synergy Grants)

- To what extent does the Synergy Grant Group successfully demonstrate in the proposal that it brings together the know-how – such as skills, experience, expertise, disciplines, teams – necessary to address the proposed research question (based on the Extended Synopsis)?

These criteria can also be found in the [ERC Work Programme](#).

Maria Luisa Simoes, Associate Professor, Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp, Belgium:  
Question to Jose: can you please give us an idea of what questions the reviewers have to answer to? Thank you.

The evaluation questions are outlined above (see reply to question by Ankit Butola), as well as published in the [ERC Work Programme](#).

Paulina Strzelecka: Are the questions evaluators need to answer during the evaluation process publicly available?

Yes, the evaluation questions are published in the [ERC Work Programme](#) and outlined above (see reply to question by Ankit Butola).

sahba mobini: Where we can find the evaluation criteria- questions for the reviewers?

The evaluation questions are published in the ERC Work Programme.

francesca valenti: If a PI who applies for ERC Starting Grant has not had experience in running projects as PI but just as participant, is the lack of "capacity for running proposal" as PI penalizing for his evaluation?

The Experts will base their evaluation on the information that the PI has included in their CV and track record to assess Intellectual capacity and creativity of the PI. Please note that the template for indicating your CV and track record has changed (2024 Information for Applicants). For more information on the change see also the ERC Scientific Council decision on changes to the ERC's application forms and evaluation procedures: Evaluation of ERC grant proposals: what to expect in 2024.

alod83: How much does the PI's scientific production influence the success of the proposal? For example, can a PI with a low H-Index but experience in the research field still have a chance of success?

In line with the current debate surrounding research assessment, the ERC has taken steps to redefine its approach to assessing scientific productivity. To that end it is moving away from the use of metrics towards a more holistic approach, encouraging applicants to provide a narrative of their achievements and experience, and how these have advanced knowledge in their respective field.

Maria Papadopouli: How do you assess the excellence of the researcher in advanced ERC, especially when the PI develops a proposal in a new interdisciplinary area without having many publications in that field.

In line with the current debate surrounding research assessment, the ERC has taken steps to redefine its approach to assessing scientific productivity. To that end it is moving away from the use of metrics towards a more holistic approach, encouraging applicants to provide a

narrative of their achievements and experience, and how these have advanced knowledge in their respective field. In that context, applicants are able to emphasize how their former research experience and achievements put them in a position to develop a proposal in a new area, or explain how team members and collaborators would bring in the necessary knowledge and experience to complement the applicants' skills set.

Sinead King: Will the PI be penalised if the topic of the starting grant is somewhat of a follow on from the topic the same PI/applicant received had funding via a Marie Curie grant?

As long as the applicant can demonstrate the novelty, the ground-breaking nature, and the ambition of the proposed project, previous research in the field shall not be an obstacle.

João Frade Synergy Grant: Which the range of Technologic Readiness Level for applying to this kind of grant? Is it an advantage if the PIs were previously granted by the ERC in other schemes (StG, CoG, etc...)?

The ERC does not require the applicant to demonstrate a certain Technological Readiness Level (TRL) of their research to be eligible. Any research idea is considered for evaluation irrespective of its potential for application, and any proposal is judged on its merits, irrespective of whether the applicant has already benefitted from ERC funding.

## **Evaluation: Resubmission Restrictions**

Alex Vañó Viñuales: Does the blocking mechanism from StG, CoG and AdG affect applications in Synergy grants?

No, applicants who were scored B or C in StG, CoG and AdG in 2022 or 2023 can still apply to Synergy Grants 2024.

Submission restrictions (blocking mechanisms) apply only to PIs who were scored C in Synergy 2022 and Synergy 2023 calls.

Virginia Llopis Hernández: In the ERC starting grant, is there a penalty of not been able to apply to the next year round if the evaluation is not favorable?

Due to the large number of applications it receives, the ERC has put in place certain resubmission restrictions. Current restrictions linked to the quality of proposal are as follows:

If an applicant has obtained a score of C in Step 1 of the evaluation in either the StG, CoG, or AdG schemes in a particular year, they cannot apply to the StG, CoG, or AdG schemes for the next two years. E.g. if one has obtained a Step 1 – C score in ERC-2022-StG they cannot apply to any of the following – ERC-2023-StG, ERC-2023-CoG, ERC-2023-AdG, ERC-2024-StG, ERC-2024-CoG, ERC-2024-AdG.

If an applicant has obtained a score of B in Step 1 of the evaluation in either the StG, CoG, or AdG schemes in a particular year, they cannot apply to the StG, or CoG, or AdG schemes the following year.

These restrictions are subject to change; the restrictions applicable to a particular call year are outlined in the [ERC Work Programme](#) of that year.

## **Grant Management: Funding/Costs**

Rada Sucur: Can we have partners or does only the Host institution participate? Is the entire amount of money paid to the Host institution and how are researchers from abroad hired?

One HI normally in individual grants (2 to 4 in SyG). However, additional participants can be funded, if hosting team members whose participation is bringing added value to the project, or if their participation is deemed essential to the project. HI can recruit researchers from anywhere in the world as they wish.

Paula Menezes: What type of costs the funding covers and which it doesn't?

The funding covers up to 100% for eligible direct costs plus a flat rate of 25% for indirect costs. The eligibility conditions are set out in Article 6 of the [Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement](#).

Diego Armando Badillo: 6. How is managed the health insurance and pension scheme under the ERC-StG?

According to the Supplementary Agreement, compliance with the health insurance and pension scheme must be ensured by the Host Institution.

Diego Armando Badillo: 8. If the grant is moved to the UK, the tot money is converted equally (1£=1€) (ERC-StG)?

The grant can be transferred to the UK if under a call of Work Programme 2024 and onwards. In such a case, the conversion will be based on the following grant agreement provisions: "Beneficiaries with general accounts established in a currency other than the euro must convert the costs recorded in their accounts into euro, at the average of the daily exchange rates published in the C series of the Official Journal of the European Union (ECB website), calculated over the corresponding reporting period."

Yeshui Zhang: Could you please elaborate more how the major equipment to be declared as depreciation costs? For example, if the EU is only covering 50% , is the evaluator make the judgement?

The panel will evaluate the need of the equipment and whether the estimated cost for this major equipment is appropriate (i.e. not excessive). At granting stage, if the proposal is successful, the eligibility of the costs composing the EC contribution is assessed, including the equipment depreciation, which must be in line with the depreciation policy of the HI, and in conformity with international accounting standards.

## **Grant Management: Open Access Costs**

Diego Armando Badillo: 7. There is an agreement with the editorials to have an open access “golden access” to be paid or that must be done by the HI (ERC-StG)?

The European Commission does not have any agreements with specific publishers for gold open access publishing. You may want to inquire with your institution whether or not there are any local or national agreements in place that might help to cover open access publishing charges.

You can find the Open Access requirements on the ERC’s website:

<https://erc.europa.eu/manage-your-project/open-science>

Bear in mind that, for EU grant funded from the Horizon Europe framework programme, only open access fees for full open access publication venues can be reimbursed. You can publish in hybrid or non-open access journals as long as you respect the Open Science rules, e.g. making the accepted manuscript available through an Open Access repository, with a CC-BY licence and without any embargo periods. However, you will need to find other funding sources to cover such Open Access fees.