The European Research Council

An introduction to the ERC

Martin Penny

Building ERC - Competitive Research:
Lessons from Croatia

European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

European Commission

ERC is part of 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

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 Scientific Council

Life Sciences


Emmanuelle Charpentier
Microbiology


Dirk Inzé
Plant Biology


Leszek Kaczmarek
Neurobiology


Luke O'Neill
Biochemistry and Immunology


Eleftheria Zeggini
Human Genetics


Liselotte Højgaard
Vice-President
Medicine


Maria Leptin
ERC President
Cell Biology


Torsten Persson
Vice-President
Economics


Nicola Spaldin
Vice-President
Materials Theory

Social Sciences and Humanities


Harriet Bulkeley
Geography


Kateřina Králová
History


Karin Roelofs
Neuroscience


Susana Narotzky
Social Anthropology


Giovanni Sartor
Law

Physical Sciences and Engineering


Conny Aerts
Astrophysics


Michel Campillo
Geophysics


Tom Henzinger
Computer Science


Maarit Karppinen
Chemistry


Sylvie Lorente
Mechanical Engineering


Björn Ottersten
Electrical Engineering


Tomaž Prosen
Physics


András Stipsicz
Mathematics

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ERC basics



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INDIVIDUAL RESEARCHERS
FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD
LONG TERM
GRANTS
TO PIONEERING PROJECTS
IN ANY FIELD OF FRONTIER RESEARCH

- Life Sciences
- Physical Sciences and Engineering
- Social Sciences and Humanities

Why apply for an 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 grant schemes



Starting Grants
Researchers (0-10 years after PhD)
up to €1.5 million for 5 years



Consolidator Grants
Researchers (5-15 years after PhD)
up to €2 million for 5 years



Advanced Grants
Researchers with track-record of significant research achievements. Lump Sum up to €2.5 million for 5 years



Synergy Grants
2-4 Principal investigators
up to €10 million for 6 years
1 PI can be based outside EU/Associated Countries



ERC Plus Grants
Principal investigators at all career stages with a vision for transformative research. Lump Sum up to €7 million over 4-7 years



Proof of Concept
For ERC grantees
bridging gap between research and earliest stage of marketable/social innovation.
Fixed Lump Sum of € 150 000 for 18 months

Starting/Consolidator Grant: 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 occurrence that happened 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;
- Major disaster (natural or human-caused such as armed conflicts)
- Seeking asylum
- Gender-based violence or any other form of violence

Evaluation

Excellence

is the sole evaluation criterion

Excellence of the Research Project

- Ground-breaking nature
- Ambition

Excellence of the Principal Investigator

- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity

Evaluation panel structure

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

Applying for a ERC grant

- Competitive calls

Only outstanding proposals stand a chance to be funded

- Apply only when your proposal is ready

Critically assess your proposal's quality, ambition, and readiness before submitting

- Equal success rates across panels

Submission numbers vary greatly across panels. Fewer granted proposals in a panel simply reflect a lower submission rate.

Strong competitive proposals

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
- The success rate is not linked to academic age
- Publication record is not decisive in selection decisions
- The Host Institution is not an evaluation criterion



ERC in figures



Over **14,000**
top researchers funded since the ERC creation in 2007



Over **120,000**
researchers and other professionals employed in ERC research teams



Over **2,500**
patents and other IPR applications generated by ERC funding



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



Over **270,000**
articles from ERC projects published in scientific journals



Over **950** research institutions hosting ERC grantees – universities, public or private research centres in the EU or Associated Countries



95
nationalities of grant holders



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

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