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ANNEX

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ERC Work Programme 2023



European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

About this document

This document is the annual Work Programme for the European Research Council (ERC) funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

It is the legal document which sets out how the ERC will allocate its funding for the corresponding year.

It is established by the ERC Scientific Council and subsequently adopted by the European Commission.

The rules applying to the submission and peer review and evaluation of proposals, as well as to the award of grants to successful legal entities are set out in "The European Research Council Rules of Submission, and the related methods & procedures for peer review and proposal evaluation relevant to the specific programme implementing Horizon Europe", referred to in this document as "ERC Rules of submission and evaluation under Horizon Europe", and available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/erc-rules-for-submission-and-evaluation_he-erc_en.pdf

How to apply for ERC grants

Principal Investigators who wish to apply for ERC grants need to do so through the EU Funding & Tenders Portal, which contains all information on each call, as well as details of National Contact Points who can provide information and personalised support in different languages:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

More information on the ERC in general, including its mission and organisation, a description of its funding schemes, a step-by-step application guide and details on funded projects is available at:

<http://erc.europa.eu/>

Summary of main features in 2023

This ERC Work Programme is the third under the 2021-2027 Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation of the European Union ('Horizon Europe').

Considering the Union's interest to retain, in principle, relations with the countries associated to the predecessor programme to Horizon Europe, Horizon 2020, most third countries associated to Horizon 2020 have already, or are expected to be, associated to Horizon Europe, while association agreements with certain countries have now started producing legal effects. For the purposes of the eligibility conditions, applicants established in Horizon 2020 Associated Countries or in other third countries negotiating association to Horizon Europe will be treated as entities established in an Associated Country, if the Horizon Europe association agreement with the third country concerned applies at the time of signature of the grant agreement. Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grants will be available under this Work Programme. ERC Principal Investigators funded under one of these grants under prior Work Programmes will also be able to apply for complementary funding, via the Proof of Concept Grants.

Restrictions on applications will apply to the 2023 calls based on the outcome of the evaluation of previous calls – see restrictions on submission of proposals under "Admissibility and eligibility criteria". Submission restrictions for Principal Investigators who served as panel members under previous calls apply. The members of ERC panels alternate to allow panel members to apply to the ERC calls in alternate years.

For ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants, as from 2023, the reference date towards the calculation of the eligibility period is the certified date of the successful defence (and not the award) of their PhD degree.

In addition to the previously existing grounds for extension of the PhD eligibility window for Starting and Consolidator Grants, the documented time of applicant Principal Investigator's inability to work before the call deadline due to a natural disaster or for seeking asylum, which occurred after the date of successful PhD defence, might be considered – see detailed rules under section "Admissibility and eligibility criteria"

The evaluation elements of the Proof of Concept Grant have been slightly modified.

Finally, as from 2021, it is no longer possible for applicants to opt out of the submission of Research Data Management plans.

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Objectives and Principles of ERC Funding

The fundamental activity of the ERC, via its main frontier research grants¹, is to provide attractive, long-term funding to support excellent investigators and their research teams to pursue ground-breaking, high-risk/high-gain research.

Research funded by the ERC is expected to lead to advances at the frontiers of knowledge and to set a clear and inspirational target for frontier research across Europe.

Excellence is the sole criterion on the basis of which ERC frontier research grants are awarded

The ERC also awards complementary funding for the Principal Investigators funded by its main grants, in order to fulfil its mission of supporting new ways of working in the scientific world, and to raise the profile of frontier research in Europe, as well as the visibility of ERC programmes to researchers across Europe and internationally.

The ERC's main grants, as well as other Principal Investigator-led actions, are evaluated based on the sole criterion of excellence, comprising a set of detailed evaluation elements decided by the ERC Scientific Council based on the specific objectives of the grant.

The evaluation of applications to the ERC's main grants is conducted by peer review panels composed of renowned scientists and scholars selected by the ERC Scientific

¹ Starting Grant, Consolidator Grant, Advanced Grant and Synergy Grant, also referred to in this Work Programme as "main grants".

Council. The panels may be assisted by independent external experts working remotely.

The ERC's peer review evaluation process has been carefully designed to identify scientific excellence irrespective of the gender, age, nationality, or institution of the Principal Investigator and other potential biases, and to take career breaks, as well as unconventional research career paths, into account². The evaluation process ensures that Principal Investigators have the professional competences and qualifications required to complete their proposed action³. The evaluations are monitored to guarantee transparency, fairness, and impartiality in the treatment of proposals. ERC calls are expected to be highly competitive.

² Regarding negative impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak on a Principal Investigator's curriculum vitae or track record, see the section "Evaluation criteria".

³ Applicants whose proposals are recommended for funding are deemed to fulfil the operational capacity requirements of Article 198(3) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 966/2012 (OJ L 193, 30.07.2018, p. 1) (the 'Financial Regulation').

Applications can be made in any field of research

The ERC's frontier research grants⁴ operate on a 'bottom-up' basis without predetermined priorities.

The ERC puts particular emphasis on the frontiers of science, scholarship, and engineering. It encourages proposals of a multi- or interdisciplinary nature, which cross the boundaries between different fields of research, pioneering proposals addressing new and emerging fields of research, or proposals introducing unconventional, innovative approaches and scientific inventions.

ERC funding may also enable new ways of working in the scientific world, with the potential to create breakthrough results and facilitate commercial and social innovation potential of funded research⁵.

Independent researchers of any age and career stage can apply for attractive long-term funding

The ERC awards funding to excellent investigators looking to set up or consolidate their own independent

research team or programme, as well as to already established research leaders.

The ERC awards flexible, long-term funding for a period of up to five years for the Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants, and up to six years for the Synergy Grants. The Scientific Council reviews funding conditions regularly to make sure that grants remain competitive both at the European and at the international level.

The maximum grant amount varies by grant type. An ERC grant can cover up to 100% of the total eligible direct costs of the research plus a contribution towards indirect costs, in accordance with the conditions set out in the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions.

ERC grants are portable⁶ as described in the Model Grant Agreement.

The ERC aims to use procedures that maintain the focus on excellence, encourage initiative, and combine simplicity and flexibility with accountability⁷. The ERC is continuously looking for ways to improve its procedures in order to fulfil these principles.

⁴ 'ERC frontier research action' means a principal investigator-led research action, including ERC Proof of Concept, hosted by single or multiple beneficiaries receiving funding from the European Research Council (ERC).

⁵ If requested by the granting authority, additional obligations to grant non-exclusive licenses for the exploitation of results apply to the beneficiaries of ERC frontier research grants in case of a public emergency (see Annex 5 of the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions).

⁶ *Portability* means that Principal Investigators may request to transfer their entire grant, or part of it, to a new beneficiary, under specific conditions included in the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions. These conditions may include provisions for the transfer of equipment purchased and used exclusively for the implementation of the project.

⁷ Beneficiaries of ERC research grants are not required to submit a plan for the exploitation and dissemination of the results during project implementation.

Principal Investigators from anywhere in the world can apply for an ERC grant

ERC grants are open to researchers of any nationality who may reside in any country in the world at the time of the application.

The ERC is particularly keen to encourage excellent proposals from Principal Investigators based in non-associated third countries wishing to carry out a project with a host institution in the EU or in one of the Associated Countries.

The host institution must be established in a Member State or an Associated Country. However, the team members of any Principal Investigator, as well as one of the Principal Investigators in a Synergy Grant Group⁸ may be based outside of the EU or an Associated Country⁹ (see “Eligible host institution”).

The ERC frontier research grants aim to empower individual researchers and provide the best settings to foster their creativity

The Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grants will support projects carried out by individual teams, which are headed by a single Principal Investigator. ERC Synergy

⁸ See “Profile of the Synergy Grant Group”.

⁹ Further guidance on tackling various security aspects and mitigating associated risks in research has been published by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation: Tackling R&I Foreign Interference: Staff Working Document, 2022

<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/513746>

Grants will support small groups of two to four Principal Investigators and their teams with a designated Corresponding Principal Investigator.

The constitution of the research teams is flexible. Depending on the nature of a project, the research team may involve team members from other research organisations situated in the same or in a different country (see “Eligible host institution”). ERC Synergy Grant Groups are neither networks nor consortia of undertakings, universities, research centres, or other legal entities (see “Profile of the Synergy Grant Group”).

The ERC supports individual Principal Investigators. Support for consortia is provided by other calls under Horizon Europe.

Host institutions must provide appropriate conditions for the Principal Investigator to independently direct the research and manage its funding

An ERC grant is awarded to the institution that engages and hosts the Principal Investigator(s)¹⁰. Grants are awarded to

¹⁰ Normally the Principal Investigator will be employed by the Host Institution, but cases where, for duly justified reasons, the Principal Investigator's employer cannot become the host institution, or where the Principal Investigator is self-employed, can be accommodated. The specific conditions of engagement will be subject to clarification and approval during the granting procedure, or during the amendment procedure for a change of host institution.

the host institution with the explicit commitment that this institution offers appropriate conditions for the Principal Investigator(s) to independently manage the ERC funded research. It is expected that Principal Investigators will be able to start their project within six months of receiving an invitation letter from the ERC.

In the case of Synergy Grants with more than one host institution, each of the host institutions will offer support to the Principal Investigator(s) hosted by them for the duration of the grant.

The host institutions must engage the Principal Investigators for at least the duration of the grant.

The conditions¹¹ offered by the host institution or institutions, including the '*portability*' of the grant, are the subject of a supplementary agreement between the Principal Investigator(s) and the host institution(s)¹² and must ensure that the Principal Investigator is able to:

- apply for funding independently;
- manage the research and the funding for the project, and make appropriate resource allocation decisions;

¹¹ These conditions are consistent with “The European Charter for Researchers” and “The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers” available at: https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/am509774cee_en_e4.pdf.

¹² This is supplementary to the ERC Grant Agreement and is described in the ERC Model Grant Agreement.

- publish independently as main author and include as co-authors only those who have contributed substantially to the reported work;
- select and supervise the work of team members, including doctoral candidates or others;
- have access to appropriate space and facilities for conducting the research;
- meet the time commitments described in the grant agreement¹³.

Public or private institutions, including universities, research organisations, and undertakings can host the Principal Investigator and their team as long as the principles indicated above are respected and the Principal Investigator is not constrained by the research strategy of the entity.

*The ERC welcomes applications from Principal Investigators **hosted by private for-profit research centres**, including industrial laboratories.*

¹³ Time commitments will be monitored, and in cases where the actual commitment is below the minimum levels set out in this Work Programme (see "Minimum Time Commitment"), or the levels indicated in the grant agreement (see "Proposal description" in the section "Main Frontier Research Grants"), appropriate measures may be taken, up to and including grant reduction, suspension or termination in accordance with the grant agreement.

Host institutions are expected to make all appropriate efforts to provide the conditions to attract and retain scientists and scholars of the calibre to be awarded an ERC grant, within the framework provided by the Model Grant Agreement and any other available administrative and legal possibilities.

Open science

Open science is a core principle of the ERC. The ERC is committed to the principle of open access to the published output of research, including, in particular, peer-reviewed articles and monographs. It also supports the basic principle of open access to research data and data-related products such as computer code, algorithms, software, workflows, protocols, electronic notebooks, or any other forms of research output. The ERC considers that providing free online access to all these materials can be the most effective way of ensuring that the results of the research it funds can be accessed, read and used as the basis for further advancement.

Under Horizon Europe, beneficiaries of ERC grants must ensure immediate open access to all peer-reviewed scientific publications¹⁴ relating to their results as set out in the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions. Open access has to

¹⁴ This includes peer-reviewed book chapters and long-text publications such as monographs, edited collections, critical editions, scholarly exhibition catalogues, or PhD theses.

be provided with full re-use rights¹⁵. Beneficiaries must ensure that they or the authors retain sufficient intellectual property rights to comply with their open access requirements. Publishing costs can be considered as eligible costs provided that the publishing venue (e.g. journal, book) is fully open access.

In addition, beneficiaries of ERC grants funded under this Work Programme will be covered by the provisions on research data management as set out in the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions. In particular, whenever a project generates research data, beneficiaries are required to manage it in line with the principles of findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reusability as described by the FAIR principles initiative¹⁶, and establish a data management plan within the first six months of project implementation. Open access to research data should be ensured under the principle ‘as open as possible, as closed as necessary’. These provisions are designed to facilitate access, re-use and preservation of the research data generated during the ERC funded research work.

Gender balance

Under Horizon Europe, beneficiaries of ERC grants must take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the implementation of the action, and aim for a gender balance

¹⁵ For monographs and other long-text formats, commercial re-use and derivative works may be excluded.

¹⁶ <https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2016.18>

at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, including at supervisory and managerial level, as set out in the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions. ERC Principal Investigators should also determine the relevance of integrating sex and gender analysis into their research. Specific activities promoting equal opportunities or gender balance, or covering the gender dimension of research funded by the ERC can be considered as eligible costs where these costs are necessary for the implementation of the action.

Ethical principles

The proposed research and innovation activities must comply with ethical principles and relevant national, Union and international legislation, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights and its Protocols. Particular attention must be paid to the principle of proportionality, the right to privacy, the right to the protection of personal data, the right to the physical and mental integrity of a person, the principle of non-discrimination, and the need to ensure high levels of human health protection. The proposed research and innovation activities must have an exclusive focus on civil applications.

Funding of human embryonic stem cell research is possible within the ethical framework set out in Article 18 of

Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council¹⁷.

¹⁷ Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 (OJ L 170 , 12.5.2021, p. 1).

Security

ERC actions must comply with applicable security rules and, in particular, rules on the protection of classified information against unauthorised disclosure, including compliance with any relevant Union and national law¹⁸.

Research integrity

Research integrity is a core principle of the ERC. It is essential to maintain and promote a culture of research integrity at all stages of the evaluation and granting process to make ERC competitions fair and efficient, and to maintain the trust of both the scientific community and society as a whole.

Cases of scientific misconduct such as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or misrepresentation of data that may arise during the evaluation or throughout the life cycle of an ERC funded project will be addressed vigorously by the ERC within the applicable legal and procedural framework. Any breach of research integrity by Principal Investigators, team members, or beneficiaries may be sanctioned by measures such as the rejection of proposals from evaluation, requests for measures to be taken by the host institution, reduction of the grant, and suspension or termination of grants.

¹⁸ See the rules for protecting EU-classified information set out by Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53), Article 20 of Regulation (EU) 2021/695 and Annex 4 to this Work Programme.

The host institutions that engage and host ERC Principal Investigators have the primary responsibility for the detection of scientific misconduct, and for the investigation and adjudication of any breaches of research integrity that may arise. Therefore, host institutions are expected to have working structures in place to uphold research integrity, and to make all appropriate efforts to verify that no allegations of scientific misconduct are pending against any Principal Investigator applying for or participating in an ERC grant, and to bring to the attention of the ERC any such allegations or cases of scientific misconduct.

The ERC applies the same rigour to ensuring that its evaluation process is governed by principles of research integrity, in particular through rules on confidentiality and conflict of interest.

Main Frontier Research Grants

Indicative summary of calls from the 2023 budget¹⁹

	<i>Starting Grant</i>	<i>Consolidator Grant</i>	<i>Advanced Grant</i>	<i>Synergy Grant</i>
<i>Call identifier</i>	ERC-2023-StG	ERC-2023-CoG	ERC-2023-AdG	ERC-2023-SyG
<i>Call opens</i>	12/07/2022	28/09/2022	08/12/2022	13/07/2022
<i>Call deadline</i>	25/10/2022	02/02/2023	23/05/2023	08/11/2022

¹⁹ These dates are indicative. The Director of the European Research Council Executive Agency may open a call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged opening date. The Director may delay the envisaged call deadline by up to two months. The budget amounts for 2023 are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the draft budget for 2023 after the adoption of the budget for 2023 by the budgetary authority, or if the budget is not adopted, as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths.

	<i>Starting Grant</i>	<i>Consolidator Grant</i>	<i>Advanced Grant</i>	<i>Synergy Grant</i>
<i>Budget million EUR (estimated number of grants)</i>	628 (407)	595 (300)	597 (246)	300 (30)
<i>Planned dates to inform applicants after each step</i>	26/05/2023 25/08/2023	07/07/2023 08/12/2023	19/01/2024 19/04/2024	04/05/2023 04/09/2023 14/11/2023
<i>Indicative date for signature of grant agreements</i>	23/12/2023	06/04/2024	17/08/2024	02/04/2024

Grants

Objectives, maximum amount and duration

The objectives, maximum amount, and duration of the main frontier research grants awarded by the ERC are given in the table below.

The maximum amount of the grants is reduced *pro rata temporis*²⁰ for projects of a shorter duration²¹.

Additional funding²² up to the amounts set out in the table below can be requested in the proposal to cover the following eligible costs when these are necessary to carry out the proposed work: (a) "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 (b) the purchase of major equipment, and/or (c) access to large facilities, and/or (d) other major experimental and field work costs, excluding personnel costs.

Additional funding is not subject to *pro rata temporis* reduction for projects of shorter duration.

All funding requested is assessed during evaluation.

The profiles expected of applicant Principal Investigators for each main grant are described below.

²⁰ For example, a maximum amount of EUR 2 500 000 for a duration of 5 years corresponds to a maximum amount of EUR 2 000 000 for a duration of 4 years.

²¹ This does not apply to ongoing projects.

²² Additional funding costs of the main grants are a separate cost category in the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions.

Grant	Objectives	Maximum amount and duration of the grant
Starting Grant	<p>Support for excellent Principal Investigators at the career stage at which they are starting their own independent research team or programme.</p> <p>Principal Investigators must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of their research proposal.</p>	<p>Up to EUR 1 500 000 for a period of 5 years.</p> <p>Additional funding up to EUR 1 000 000.</p>
Consolidator Grant	<p>Support for excellent Principal Investigators at the career stage at which they may still be consolidating their own independent research team or programme.</p> <p>Principal Investigators must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of their research proposal.</p>	<p>Up to EUR 2 000 000 for a period of 5 years.</p> <p>Additional funding up to EUR 1 000 000.</p>
Advanced Grant	<p>Support for excellent Principal Investigators at the career stage at which they are already established research leaders with a recognised track record of research achievements.</p> <p>Principal Investigators must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of their research proposal.</p>	<p>Up to EUR 2 500 000 for a period of 5 years.</p> <p>Additional funding up to EUR 1 000 000.</p>
Synergy Grant	<p>Support for a small group of two to four Principal Investigators to jointly address ambitious research problems that could not be addressed by the individual Principal Investigators and their teams working alone. Synergy projects should enable substantial advances at the frontiers of knowledge, stemming, for example, from the cross-fertilisation of scientific fields, from new productive lines of enquiry, or new methods and techniques, including unconventional approaches and investigations at the interface between established disciplines. The transformative research funded by Synergy Grants should have the potential of becoming a benchmark on a global scale.</p> <p>Principal Investigators must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of their research proposal. Principal Investigators must also demonstrate that their group can successfully bring together the scientific elements necessary to address the scope and complexity of the proposed research question.</p>	<p>Up to EUR 10 000 000 for a period of 6 years.</p> <p>Additional funding up to EUR 4 000 000.</p>

Profile of the ERC Starting Grant Principal Investigator

A competitive Starting Grant Principal Investigator must have already shown the potential for research independence and evidence of maturity, for example by having produced **at least one important publication as main author or without the participation of their PhD supervisor**. Applicant Principal Investigators should also be able to demonstrate a promising track record of early achievements appropriate to their research field and

career stage, including, e.g. significant publications (as main author) in major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals, or significant publications in the leading international peer-reviewed journals of their respective field, or research monographs. They may also demonstrate a record of invited presentations in well-established international conferences, granted patents, awards, prizes, or any other scientific achievements they deem relevant in relation to their research field and project.

Early achievements track record

In the Track record (see “Proposal description”), the applicant Principal Investigator should list (if applicable, and in addition to any other scientific achievements deemed relevant by the applicant in relation to their research field and project):

- 1. Up to five publications in major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals and/or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals, peer-reviewed conferences proceedings and/or monographs of their respective research fields, highlighting those as main author or without the presence as co-author of their PhD supervisor (properly referenced, field relevant bibliometric indicators²³ may also be included); 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);***
- 2. Research monographs and any translations thereof;***
- 3. Granted patent(s);***
- 4. Invited presentations to internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools;***
- 5. Prizes, awards, academy memberships.***

²³ Except the Journal Impact Factor.

Profile of the ERC Consolidator Grant Principal Investigator

A competitive Consolidator Grant Principal Investigator must have already shown research independence and evidence of maturity, for example by having produced **several important publications as main author or without the participation of their PhD supervisor**. Applicant Principal Investigators should also be able to demonstrate a promising track record of early achievements appropriate to their research field and career stage, including, e.g. significant publications (as main

author) in major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals, or significant publications in the leading international peer-reviewed journals of their respective field, or research monographs. They may also demonstrate a record of invited presentations in well-established international conferences, granted patents, awards, prizes, or any other scientific achievements they deem relevant in relation to their research field and project.

Early achievements track record

In the Track Record (see “Proposal description”), the applicant Principal Investigator should list (if applicable, and in addition to any other scientific achievements deemed relevant by the applicant in relation to their research field and project):

- 1. Up to ten publications in major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals and/or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals, peer-reviewed conferences proceedings and/or monographs of their respective research fields, highlighting those as main author or without the presence as co-author of their PhD supervisor (properly referenced, field relevant bibliometric indicators²⁴ may also be included); 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);***
- 2. Research monographs and any translations thereof;***
- 3. Granted patent(s);***
- 4. Invited presentations to internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools;***
- 5. Prizes, awards, academy memberships.***

²⁴ Except the Journal Impact Factor.

Profile of the ERC Advanced Grant Principal Investigator

A competitive ERC Advanced Grant Principal Investigator is expected to be an active researcher and to have a track record of significant research achievements **in the last 10 years**, which must be presented in the application.

A competitive Advanced Grant Principal Investigator must have already shown a record, which identifies them as an exceptional leader in terms of originality and significance of their research contributions.

Thus, in most fields, Principal Investigators of Advanced Grant proposals will be expected to demonstrate a record of achievements appropriate to the field, and at least matching one or more of the following benchmarks:

- 10 publications as main author (or in those fields where alphabetical order of authorship is the norm, joint author) in major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals, and/or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals, and/or peer-reviewed conferences proceedings of their respective field;
- 3 major research monographs. This benchmark is relevant to research fields where publication of monographs is the norm.

Other alternative benchmarks that may be considered (individually or in combination)

as indicative of an exceptional record and recognition in the last 10 years:

- 5 granted patents;
- 10 invited presentations in well-established internationally organised conferences and advanced schools;
- 3 research expeditions led by the applicant Principal Investigator;
- 3 well-established international conferences or congresses where the applicant was involved as a member of the steering and/or organising committee;
- International recognition through scientific or artistic prizes/awards or membership in well-regarded Academies or artefact with documented use (for example, architectural or engineering design, methods or tools);
- Major contributions to launching the careers of outstanding researchers;
- Recognised innovation leadership.

If a Principal Investigator so chooses, their achievements over a longer period than the past ten years can be considered in the following circumstances, which should be highlighted in their CV:

For maternity, the track record considered can be extended by 18 months, or by the amount of leave actually taken before the call deadline, if longer, for each child born **before or during** the last ten years. For

paternity leave, the track record considered can be extended by the amount of paternity leave actually taken before the call deadline for each child born **before or during** the last ten years.

For long-term illness²⁵, clinical qualification, or national service, the track record considered can be extended by the amount of leave actually taken before the call deadline, and clearly explained in the career break section of their CV, for each incident which occurred **during** the last ten years.

For applicant Principal Investigators who have been unable to work due to a natural disaster²⁶, the track record considered can be extended by the amount of leave actually taken before the call deadline for each incident which occurred **during** the last ten years²⁷, and is clearly explained in the career break section of their CV.

For applicant Principal Investigators, who have been unable to work due to seeking asylum, the track record considered can be extended by the documented time of the Principal Investigator's inability to work **during** the last ten years²⁸ and

clearly explained in the career break section of their CV.

²⁵ Over 90 days for the Principal Investigator or a close family member (child, spouse, parent or sibling).

²⁶ Large-scale geological or meteorological events that have the potential to cause loss of life or property.

²⁷ For a minimum of 30 days.

²⁸ The possible period of extension runs from the start date of asylum/refugee application to the date of decision on the applicant Principal Investigator's refugee status and/or receipt of specific residence permit.

Ten-year track record

In the Track Record (see “Proposal description”), the applicant Principal Investigator should list (if applicable, and in addition to any other scientific achievements deemed relevant by the applicant in relation to their research field and project):

- 1. **Up to ten representative publications as main author** (or in those fields where alphabetical order of authorship is the norm, joint author) in **major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals** and/or in the **leading international peer-reviewed journals and peer-reviewed conference proceedings** of their respective research fields (properly referenced, field relevant bibliometric indicators²⁹ may also be included); 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);*
- 2. **Research monographs and any translations thereof;***
- 3. **Granted patents;***
- 4. **Invited presentations to internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools;***
- 5. **Research expeditions** that the applicant Principal Investigator has led;*
- 6. **Organisation of international conferences** in the field of the applicant (membership in the steering and/or organising committee);*
- 7. **Prizes, awards, academy memberships;***
- 8. **Major contributions to the early careers of excellent researchers;***
- 9. **Examples of innovation leadership.***

²⁹ Except the Journal Impact Factor.

Profile of the ERC Synergy Grant Group

Applications must be submitted by a group of a minimum of two and a maximum of four innovative and active Principal Investigators, referred to as the 'Synergy Grant Group', with competitive track records as appropriate to their career stage. Each Principal Investigator must present as part of the proposal an early achievement track-record or a 10-year track-record, whichever is most appropriate for their career stage (see the profiles of the Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant Principal Investigators and the section "Proposal description").

Synergy Grant Groups are expected to demonstrate that they can successfully bring together those elements – such as skills, knowledge, experience, expertise, disciplines, methods, approaches, teams, access to infrastructures – necessary to

address the scope and complexity of the proposed research question. Applicants are expected to describe the contribution of each PI, their team, and the resources to achieve the objectives proposed.

One of the Principal Investigators must be designated as the Corresponding Principal Investigator.

At any one time, one Principal Investigator per Synergy Grant Group, except the Corresponding one, may be hosted and engaged by an institution outside of the EU or Associated Countries.

The ERC expects the composition of a Synergy Grant Group to remain unchanged throughout the lifetime of the grant. If a Principal Investigator leaves a Synergy Grant Group, the grant may continue only exceptionally, subject to a scientific evaluation, and provided that all eligibility criteria will continue to be met.

Funding

Maximum amount of the grant, grant assessment, and Union contribution

The maximum grant amount varies depending on the grant type (see "Grants").

During the peer review evaluation, evaluation panels will assess the funding requested by the applicant, including any request for additional funding (see "Objectives, maximum amount, and duration"), against the needs of the project before making any recommendation for funding.

The funding requested must be fully justified by an estimation of the real project cost. The panels may suggest modifications to the indicative budgetary breakdown in the application, particularly where they consider funding requests not to be properly justified. In such cases, they must explain in writing any such suggested modification.

The project budget is provided in EUR. Eligible project costs will be reimbursed at a funding rate of 100% for direct costs plus a flat-rate of 25% for indirect costs³⁰. Reimbursements will be budget-based and

will cover actual costs or unit costs³¹ depending on the cost category. The amount of the awarded grant represents a maximum overall figure – the final amount to be paid must be justified on the basis of the costs incurred for the project and it may be lower than the budget requested.

Purchases of equipment, infrastructure, or other assets used for the action must be declared as depreciation costs. Moreover, an applicant can request to include in the Grant Agreement equipment, infrastructure or other assets purchased specifically for the action (or developed as part of the action tasks) that may exceptionally be declared as full capitalised costs³².

Call budgets

For the Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grant calls, an indicative budget will be allocated to each panel in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals in order to equalise the success rate across panels.

³⁰ Excluding the direct eligible costs for subcontracting and internally invoiced goods and services.

³¹ Costs for internally invoiced goods and services directly used for the action may be declared as unit costs.

³² Where needed for the viability of the action (including its financial viability), and recorded under a fixed asset account of the beneficiary in compliance with international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual cost accounting practices.

Admissibility and eligibility criteria

The beneficiaries (and their actions) must remain eligible for the entire duration of the action. Costs and contributions will be eligible only as long as the beneficiary and the action are eligible. Applicants and beneficiaries must immediately inform the services of the European Research Council Executive Agency (ERCEA) at any point in time of any events or circumstances, which would be likely to affect the fulfilment of the eligibility criteria.

The Principal Investigator will have the flexibility to modify the budgetary breakdown during the course of the project. Requests to modify the budgetary breakdown of additional funding³³ may be accepted only provided that such modifications remain within the objectives for which the additional funding was awarded.

Admissible and eligible proposals

All proposals must be complete, readable, and accessible. They must be submitted by eligible Principal Investigators as defined below before the relevant call deadline. A complete proposal needs to include all parts or sections (see “Proposal submission and description”). Proposals which do not meet these criteria may be declared inadmissible.

³³ As defined in the section "Objectives, maximum amount and duration".

The content of the proposal must relate to the objectives and to the grant type set out in the call, as defined in this Work Programme. If a proposal is considered not to relate to the objectives of the grant and/or call for proposals, it will be declared ineligible.

Applications where the Principal Investigator proposes to commit less time in the EU or an Associated Country, or to the project than the minimum percentages set out in the section "Minimum time commitment" will be declared ineligible.

If it becomes clear before, during, or after the peer review evaluation phase that one or more of the admissibility or eligibility criteria have not been met, the proposal will be declared inadmissible or ineligible, and it will be rejected.

Where there is a doubt on the admissibility or eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision following an admissibility and eligibility review committee³⁴.

³⁴ For further information, see applicable ERC Rules of submission and evaluation under Horizon Europe, which can be found on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal.

Eligible Scientific Fields

All scientific fields are eligible for ERC funding³⁵.

Eligible Principal Investigators

The ERC actions are open to researchers of any nationality, who intend to conduct their research activity in any EU Member State or Associated Country³⁶. Principal Investigators may be of any age and nationality, and may reside in any country in the world at the time of the application.

Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grant proposals are submitted by the Principal Investigator(s) taking scientific responsibility for the project, on behalf of the host institution. There are specific eligibility criteria for a Principal Investigator applying to the Starting or Consolidator Grants based on the date of the successful defence of their first PhD (or equivalent doctoral degree³⁷) as set out in the table below. This “streaming” allows applicants to be compared with researchers at a similar career stage.

Groups of Principal Investigators applying for the ERC Synergy Grant must fulfil the conditions specified under “Profile of the ERC Synergy Grant Group”.

³⁵ Research proposals within the scope of Annex I to the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications, must be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom Research & Training Programme.

³⁶ See Annex 3.

³⁷ See ERC Scientific Council's note on 'PhD and Equivalent Doctoral Degrees' in Annex 2, including specific provisions for holders of medical degrees.

Eligibility period: Principal Investigator(s) who have successfully defended their first PhD		
Starting Grant	Consolidator Grant	Advanced and Synergy Grant
> 2 and ≤ 7 years prior to 1 January 2023 Cut-off dates: Successful defence of PhD between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2020 (inclusive)	> 7 and ≤ 12 years prior to 1 January 2023 Cut-off dates: Successful defence of PhD between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2015 (inclusive)	No specific criteria

The date of the first PhD considered for the calculation of the eligibility period is the date of the successful defence of the PhD degree.

The eligibility periods set out in the table above can be extended beyond 7 and 12 years for the Starting and Consolidator Grants, respectively, for the following properly documented circumstances³⁸, provided they started before the call deadline:

- **Maternity:** 18 months extension for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree. If the applicant can document a longer total maternity leave, the eligibility period will be extended by the documented amount of actual leave(s) for all children taken before the call deadline.
- **Paternity:** extension by the documented time of paternity leave taken before the call deadline for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.
- **Long-term illness³⁹ or national service:** extension by the documented amount of leave taken by the Principal Investigator before the call deadline for each incident, which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.
- **Clinical training:** extension by the documented amount of clinical training received by the Principal Investigator **after** the reference date of the first eligible degree and before the call deadline, **up to a maximum of 4 years.**

³⁸ For applicants whose first eligible degree is their medical degree such incidents can be considered from the date of completion of their medical degree.

³⁹ Over 90 days for the Principal Investigator or a close family member (child, spouse, parent or sibling).

- **Natural Disaster**⁴⁰: extension by the documented time of a Principal Investigator's inability to work⁴¹ before the call deadline due to a natural disaster, which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.

- **Seeking Asylum**: extension by the documented time of the Principal Investigator's inability to work before the call deadline due to seeking asylum⁴², which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.

⁴⁰ Large-scale geological or meteorological events that have the potential to cause the loss of life or property.

⁴¹ For a minimum of 30 days.

⁴² The possible period of extension runs from the start date of asylum/refugee application to the date of decision on the applicant Principal Investigator's refugee status and/or receipt of specific residence permit.

Minimum time commitment

Principal Investigators funded through the main ERC grants must spend a minimum percentage of their working time on the ERC project, and a minimum percentage of their working time in a Member State or Associated Country⁴³, as set out in the table below.

Minimum percentage of the working time of a Principal Investigator that must be spent	Starting Grant	Consolidator Grant	Advanced Grant	Synergy Grant
On the ERC project	50%	40%	30%	30% for each Principal Investigator
In a Member State or Associated Country⁴⁴	50%	50%	50%	50% for each Principal Investigator engaged and hosted by an institution in the EU or Associated Countries

⁴³ For further guidance, see the Annotated Model Grant Agreement on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal at: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/reference-documents;programCode=HORIZON>.

⁴⁴ See section "Eligible Host Institutions" regarding field work.

Eligible Host Institution

The host institution (Applicant Legal Entity⁴⁵) must engage and host⁴⁶ the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the project, as defined in the grant agreement. It must either be established in a Member State or Associated Country⁴⁷ as a legal entity created under national law, or it may be an international European research organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), or any other entity created under EU law. In a Synergy Grant, one host institution, except the corresponding host institution, may be an international organisation or a legal entity established outside the European Union or an Associated Country, subject to any restrictions provided in Annex 3 to this Work Programme.

International organisations with headquarters in a Member State or Associated Country will be deemed to be

⁴⁵ The applicant legal entity must have stable and sufficient resources to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects. Information on financial capacity checks is provided in the ERC Rules for Submission. Applicants that are subject to the administrative sanction of exclusion or are in one of the exclusion situations set out by the Financial Regulation are banned from receiving EU grants and can NOT participate. Please see Articles 136 and 141 of the Financial Regulation, as well as important information on possible exclusion and registration of economic operators in the Commission's Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) on the final page of this Work Programme.

⁴⁶ See footnote ¹² above.

⁴⁷ See Annex 3.

established in that Member State or Associated Country. Any type of legal entity, public or private, including universities, research organisations and undertakings can host Principal Investigators and their teams.

To be eligible, legal entities from a Member State or an Associated Country that are public bodies, research organisations, or higher education institutions (including private research organisations and private higher education institutions) must have a gender equality plan or an equivalent strategic document in place for the duration of the project. The gender equality plan or equivalent must fulfil the mandatory requirements listed in Annex 5 to this Work Programme.

It is expected that the research project will be implemented within the territory of the Member States or Associated Countries⁴⁸. This does not exclude field work or other research activities in cases where these must necessarily be conducted outside the European Union or the Associated Countries in order to achieve the scientific objectives of the project/activity⁴⁹.

It is also expected that the host institution will be the only participating legal entity in the case of a Starting, Consolidator, or

⁴⁸ With the exception of Synergy Grant projects, when a Principal Investigator is hosted and engaged by an institution outside of the EU or Associated Countries (see "Profile of the ERC Synergy Grant Group").

⁴⁹ Time spent on such field work or other research activities may count as time spent in the EU or the Associated Countries for the purpose of the Principal Investigator's time commitment.

Advanced Grant. In a Synergy Grant, up to four Host Institutions may engage Principal Investigators.

Where they bring scientific added value to the project, additional team members may also be hosted by additional legal entities⁵⁰, which may be established anywhere, including outside the European Union or Associated Countries, or international organisations, subject to any restrictions provided in Annex 3 to this Work Programme.

Legal entities established outside the European Union or an Associated Country are eligible for funding when they are one of the host institutions in a Synergy Grant at any one time⁵¹, or when they host additional team members, provided that they are not excluded from participation or covered by Council restrictive measures as set out in Annex 3 to this Work Programme.

Other legal entities established outside the European Union or Associated Countries may be eligible for funding provided that their participation is deemed essential for carrying out the action, and that they are not excluded from participation or covered by Council restrictive measures as set out in Annex 3 to this Work Programme.

Please also refer to Annex 3 - Countries Associated to Horizon Europe and Restrictions Applying to Some Legal Entities.

⁵⁰ Consortium agreements are not required for ERC multi-beneficiary grants.

⁵¹ See “Profile of the ERC Synergy Grant Group”.

Restrictions on submission of proposals

Thousands of high-quality proposals are received each year and only outstanding proposals are likely to be funded. In order to maintain the quality and integrity of ERC’s evaluation process, the Scientific Council decided to introduce restrictions on applications from 2009. These restrictions were extended from 2015.

The following restrictions apply:

- A researcher may participate as Principal Investigator⁵² in only one main frontier research grant at any one time⁵³;
- A researcher participating as Principal Investigator in one of the main frontier research grants may not submit another proposal for a main ERC grant, unless the existing project ends⁵⁴ no more than two years after the call deadline;
- A Principal Investigator who is a serving Panel Member for a 2023 ERC call or who served as a Panel

⁵² Including all Principal Investigators supported under the Synergy Grant.

⁵³ A new main frontier research grant project can only start after the duration of the project fixed in a previous grant agreement for one of the main frontier research grants has ended.

⁵⁴ According to the duration of the project fixed in the previous grant agreement of the main frontier research grant.

Member for a 2021 ERC call may not apply to a 2023 ERC call for the same type of grant⁵⁵;

- A Principal Investigator may submit proposals to different main frontier research grant calls published under the same Work Programme, but only the first eligible proposal will be evaluated.

Further restrictions for submission under the ERC Work Programme 2023 are set out in the table below. **The Scientific Council may decide in the light of experience that different or comparable restrictions will apply in subsequent years.**

The restrictions related to the outcome of the evaluation in previous calls are designed to allow unsuccessful Principal Investigators the time necessary to develop a stronger proposal.

The year of an ERC call for proposals refers to the Work Programme under which the call was published and can be established by its call identifier. A 2023 ERC call for proposals is therefore one that was published under the Work Programme 2023 and will have 2023 in the call identifier (for example ERC-2023-StG).

Inadmissible, ineligible or withdrawn proposals do not count against any of the restrictions in the table below.

⁵⁵ As an exception to this rule, Principal Investigators who are not serving as Synergy Grant 2023 panel members can apply to the 2023 Synergy Grant call even if they served as Panel Members for the 2020 Synergy Grant call. The members of the ERC panels alternate to allow panel members to apply to the ERC calls in alternate years.

Call to which the Principal Investigator applied under previous ERC Work Programmes and proposal evaluation outcome		2023 ERC calls to which a Principal Investigator is <i>not</i> eligible
2021 and 2022 Starting, Consolidator, Advanced Grant or 2022 Synergy Grant	Rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity	Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grant
2021 Starting, Consolidator, or Advanced Grant	C at Step 1	Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grant
2022 Synergy Grant	A or B at Step 3	No restrictions
	B at Step 1 or 2	No restrictions
	C at Step 1	Advanced and Synergy Grant
2022 Starting, Consolidator, or Advanced Grant	A or B at Step 2	No restrictions
	B or C at Step 1	Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grant

Proposal submission and description

Proposal submission

Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grant proposals are submitted by the Principal Investigator, who has scientific responsibility for the project, on behalf of the host institution.

Synergy Grant proposals are submitted by a Corresponding Principal Investigator who will be the administrative contact point for the group. Together, all the Principal Investigators have scientific responsibility for the group's project on behalf of the host institution, or host institutions, which are the applicant legal entities.

Proposal submission is made electronically. Early registration and submission is strongly recommended and should be done as early as possible before the call deadline.

For each call, Information for Applicants⁵⁶ is published on the ERC website and the EU Funding & Tenders Portal, which describes in detail how the electronic forms should be completed.

⁵⁶ As well as other relevant documents, including the ERC Rules of submission and evaluation under Horizon Europe.

Proposal description

A complete proposal consists of the following elements⁵⁷, with the following page limits⁵⁸ for Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant proposals.

Extended Synopsis: 5 pages

Curriculum Vitae: 2 pages for each Principal Investigator

Track Record: 2 pages for each Principal Investigator

Scientific Proposal: 14 pages

Resources and Time Commitment: 2 pages

Host Institution Binding Statement of Support

Ethics Review Table

PhD record and supporting documentation for eligibility checking (for Starting and Consolidator Grants only).

⁵⁷ The Extended Synopsis, Curriculum Vitae, Track Record, Scientific Proposal, Resources and Time Commitment are collectively referred to in this Work Programme as the “research proposal”. Proposals will not include a plan for the exploitation and dissemination of the results, including communication activities, in the sense of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

⁵⁸ Incomplete proposals may be declared inadmissible, see “Admissibility and eligibility criteria”. References and the funding ID section are not counted towards these page limits.

For Synergy Grant proposals, the page limits above apply except that the page limit for the Scientific Proposal is 15 pages and the Resources and Time Commitment section is not limited to 2 pages.

Only the material that is presented within these limits will be evaluated (peer reviewers will only be asked to read, and will be under no obligation to read beyond, the material presented within the page limits).

The host institution must confirm its association with, and its support to, the project and the Principal Investigator. As part of the application, the institution must provide a binding statement that the conditions of independence are already fulfilled or will be provided to the Principal Investigator if the application is successful, according to the template provided in the Information for Applicants. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement may be declared inadmissible.

Extended Synopsis: This should be a concise presentation of the scientific proposal, with particular attention to the ground-breaking nature of the research project and the feasibility of the outlined scientific approach. At step 1, the scientific proposal is not assessed, so all essential information must be covered in the synopsis. The applicant will choose a primary evaluation panel and may also indicate a secondary evaluation panel. The applicant should indicate when he or she believes that the proposal is of a cross-panel or cross-domain nature. In the case

of Synergy Grant applications, only keywords, and not panels, should be indicated.

Curriculum Vitae: The CV should include the standard academic and research record as well as a succinct "funding ID" which must specify any current research grants and their subject, and any on-going application for work related to the proposal. Any research career gaps and/or unconventional paths should be clearly explained so that they can be fairly assessed by the evaluation panels.⁵⁹

Track Record: Each Principal Investigator must provide a list of achievements reflecting their track record⁶⁰. The type of achievements expected for Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grant applicant Principal Investigators are set out in the relevant profiles above. Principal Investigators applying to the Synergy Grant call can be at any of these career stages.

Scientific Proposal: This should be a description of the scientific and technical aspects of the project, demonstrating the ground-breaking nature of the research, its potential impact, and research methodology.

⁵⁹ In the context of the Covid-19 outbreak, any specific situation caused by the pandemic with a negative impact on the curriculum vitae or track record should be mentioned under this element. See section "Evaluation criteria".

⁶⁰ A short narrative describing the scientific importance of the research outputs and the role played by the Principal Investigator in their production may be included.

For Synergy Grants, the research methodology section should also describe and justify the collaborative arrangements enabling the Synergy Grant Group to carry out the proposed joint work.

Resources and Time Commitment: The proposal should clearly specify the percentage of the applicant's working time that will be spent in the EU or an Associated Country, and the percentage of the applicant's working time that will be devoted to the project⁶¹, as well as a full estimation of the real project cost⁶², including a breakdown of personnel costs, whenever possible by team members category.

⁶¹ For further guidance, see the Annotated Model Grant Agreement on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal at: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/reference-documents;programCode=HORIZON>

⁶² For Synergy Grants, the estimation will be presented by each Principal Investigator.

Evaluation procedure and criteria

Evaluation procedure⁶³

For Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grants

A **single submission of the proposal** will be followed by a **two-step evaluation**. The evaluation will be conducted by means of a structure of high-level peer review panels as listed in Annex 1. The panels may be assisted by independent external experts working remotely.

The applicant Principal Investigator can request during the electronic proposal submission that up to three specific persons should not act as an evaluator in the evaluation of their proposal⁶⁴.

At step 1, the extended synopsis and the Principal Investigator's track record and CV will be assessed. Proposals will be retained for step 2 based on the outcome of the evaluation at step 1 and a budgetary cut-off level of up to three times the panel's indicative budget.

At step 2, the research proposal will be assessed.

The allocation of the proposals to the various panels will be based on the

⁶³ Procedural aspects that are not specified in this Work Programme are established in the ERC Rules of submission and evaluation under Horizon Europe.

⁶⁴ The persons identified may be excluded from the evaluation of the proposal concerned, as long as it remains possible to have the proposal evaluated.

expressed preference of the applicant Principal Investigator (see “Proposal description” above). Proposals may be allocated to a different panel with the agreement of both Panel Chairs concerned.

The panel to which a proposal is allocated may request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional remote evaluators.

*The ERC strongly encourages **multi- and interdisciplinary research proposals**. Proposals of this type are evaluated by ERC's regular panels with the appropriate external expertise.*

Principal Investigators, whose proposals are retained for step 2 of the evaluation, will be invited for an interview to present their proposal to the evaluation panel meeting.

For Synergy Grants

A **single submission of the proposal** will be followed by a **three-step evaluation**, including interviews. The evaluation will be conducted by means of a structure of dedicated panels. The panels may be assisted by independent external experts working remotely.

The applicant Corresponding Principal Investigator can request, on behalf of the group, during the electronic proposal submission, that up to four specific

persons should not act as an evaluator in the evaluation of their proposal⁶⁵.

At step 1, the extended synopsis of the scientific proposal and the Principal Investigators' track records and CVs will be assessed. Proposals will be retained for step 2 based on the outcome of the evaluation at step 1 and a budgetary cut-off level of up to seven times the panel's indicative budget.

At step 2, the research proposal will be assessed. Proposals will be retained for step 3 based on the outcome of the evaluation at step 2 and a budgetary cut-off level of up to four times the panel's indicative budget.

At step 3, the most competitive of the retained proposals will be identified, and their Principal Investigators will be invited for an interview to present their proposal at the meeting of the evaluation panel.

The structure and membership of the panels at each step is not predefined but will be decided dynamically in relation to the proposals received. Step 1 panels will be formed from approximately 85 panel members and chairs. Five step 2 panels will be formed after the step 1 filtering to ensure the best expertise for a group of proposals. The five step 2 panels will be composed using the step 1 panel members, grouping them into panels of around 17 experts each. The panel to which a proposal is allocated may request additional reviews by appropriate

⁶⁵ The persons identified may be excluded from the evaluation of the proposal concerned, as long as it remains possible to have the proposal evaluated.

members of other panel(s) or additional remote evaluators. At step 3, the interview panels may be reconfigured to ensure the best expertise for the proposals.

Evaluation criteria

For all of the main grants, **scientific excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation**. It will be applied in conjunction to the evaluation of both:

- the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of the research project, and
- the intellectual capacity, creativity, and commitment of the Principal Investigator(s).

In the case of a Synergy Grant application, the peer reviewers will need to see that the collaborative working arrangements between the Principal Investigators, described as part of the research methodology, can ensure scientific excellence.

During the evaluation, the phase of the Principal Investigator's transition to independence, possible breaks in the research career of the applicant and/or unconventional research career paths should be taken into account by the peer review panels. Synergy Grant Principal Investigators applying as part of a group for a Synergy Grant will be evaluated according to their individual career stage.

In the context of the Covid-19 outbreak, applicants may mention in their research proposal (Curriculum Vitae) any specific situation caused by the pandemic that had

a negative impact on their CV or track record.

In general, projects wholly or largely consisting in the collation and compilation of existing material in new databases, editions, or collections are unlikely to constitute ground-breaking or "frontier" research in themselves, however useful such resources might be to subsequent original research. Such projects are

therefore unlikely to be recommended for funding by the ERC's panels.

Plagiarism detection software may be used to analyse proposals submitted to the ERC.

The detailed evaluation elements applying to the excellence of the research project and the Principal Investigator are set out below.

1. Research Project

Ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility

Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project

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)?

To what extent is the proposed research high risk-high gain (i.e. if successful the payoffs will be very significant, but there is a high risk that the research project does not entirely fulfil its aims)?

Scientific Approach

To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the extent that the proposed research is high risk-high gain (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 does the proposal involve the development of novel methodology (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 and Consolidator

To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?

To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking?

To what extent does the PI have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

Intellectual capacity and creativity

Advanced and Synergy

To what extent has/have the PI(s) demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?

To what extent does/do the PI(s) has/have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

*To what extent has the PI demonstrated sound leadership in the training and advancement of young scientists (**for Advanced Grant applicants**)?*

Synergy Grant Group

Synergy

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)?

Evaluation outcome

For Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grants

At each evaluation step, each proposal will be evaluated and marked for each of the two main elements of the proposal: the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of the research project; and the intellectual capacity, creativity, and commitment of the Principal Investigator.

At the end of each evaluation step, the proposals will be ranked by the panels on the basis of the panels' overall appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses, taking into account the marks they have received.

At the end of **step 1** of the evaluation, the proposal will receive one of the following scores:

- A. is of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;
- B. is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;
- C. is not of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation.

At the end of **step 2** of the evaluation, the proposal will receive one of the following scores:

- A. fully meets the ERC's excellence criterion and is recommended for funding **if sufficient funds are available**;

- B. meets some but not all elements of the ERC's excellence criterion and will not be funded.

For Synergy Grants

At the end of **step 1** of the evaluation, the proposal will receive one of the following scores:

- A. is of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;
- B. is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;
- C. is not of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation.

At the end of **step 2** of the evaluation, the proposal will receive one of the following scores:

- A. is of sufficient quality to pass to step 3 of the evaluation;
- B. is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to step 3 of the evaluation;

At the end of **step 3** of the evaluation, the proposal will receive one of the following scores:

- A. fully meets the ERC's excellence criterion and is recommended for funding **if sufficient funds are available**;
- B. meets some but not all elements of the ERC's excellence criterion and will not be funded.

Once the evaluation of their proposal has been completed, applicants to all grants will receive an evaluation report, which

will include the final panel score and ranking range, the panel comment, and the assessment of the evaluation elements by each individual independent external expert.

Projects recommended for funding will be funded by the ERC if sufficient funds are available. Proposals will be funded in priority order based on their rank.

Applicants may also be subject to restrictions on submitting proposals to future ERC calls based on the outcome of the evaluation. Applicants will need to check the restrictions in place for each call (for 2023 calls, see restrictions on submission of proposals under section “Admissibility and eligibility criteria”).

Complementary Funding for ERC Principal Investigators

The grants and prizes actions described in this chapter are designed by the ERC Scientific Council as part of its implementation task of establishing the overall scientific strategy for the ERC and developing the ERC's mix of support measures in line with it.

Complementary funding measures aim, in particular, at fulfilling the Horizon Europe Specific Programme mandates to:

- support new ways of working in the scientific world, including the open science approach, with the potential to create breakthrough results, and facilitate commercial and social innovation potential of funded research;
- raise the profile of frontier research in Europe and the visibility of ERC programmes to researchers across Europe and internationally.

Summary of complementary funding with indicative budget and timetable⁶⁶

	<i>Proof of Concept Grant</i>
<i>Call identifier</i>	ERC-2023-PoC
<i>Type of action</i>	ERC frontier research grant
<i>Opening of the call</i>	20/10/2022
<i>Cut-off dates</i>	24/01/2023
	20/04/2023
	14/09/2023
<i>Budget EUR (estimated number of grants)</i>	30 000 000 (200)

⁶⁶ The dates in this table are indicative. The Director of the European Research Council Executive Agency may open a call or contest up to one month prior to or after the envisaged opening date. The Director may delay the envisaged cut-off date or deadline by up to two months. The budget amounts for 2023 are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the draft budget for 2023 after the adoption of the budget for 2023 by the budgetary authority, or if the budget is not adopted as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths.

	<i>Proof of Concept Grant</i>
<i>Planned dates to inform applicants</i>	10/05/2023 27/07/2023 20/12/2023
<i>Indicative date for signature of grant agreements</i>	07/09/2023 24/11/2023 19/04/2024

Proof of Concept Grant

Objectives

Frontier research often generates radically new ideas that drive innovation and business inventiveness, and tackle societal challenges. The ERC Proof of Concept Grants aim at facilitating exploration of the commercial and social innovation potential of ERC funded research, and are therefore available only to Principal Investigators whose proposals draw substantially on their ERC funded research.

Ethical principles

All proposals recommended for funding will be subject to ethics review.

Admissibility and eligibility criteria

Eligible Principal Investigator

All Principal Investigators⁶⁷ in one of the main grants are eligible to participate and apply for an ERC Proof of Concept Grant. Principal Investigators in an ongoing main grant, or Principal Investigators in a main grant that has ended⁶⁸ less than 12

⁶⁷ Applicants that are subject to the administrative sanction of exclusion or are in one of the exclusion situations set out by the Financial Regulation are banned from receiving EU grants and can NOT participate. See articles 136 and 141 of the Financial Regulation, as well as important information on possible exclusion and registration of economic operators in the Commission's Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) on the final page of this Work Programme.

⁶⁸ Where the duration of the project fixed in the ERC grant agreement has ended.

months before 1 January 2023, are eligible to apply.

Principal Investigators may submit only one proposal under the Work Programme 2023 Proof of Concept call. If further submissions are made at different cut-off dates, only the first admissible and eligible proposal will be considered.

A Principal Investigator whose proposal was rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity in the calls for proposals under Work Programmes 2021 or 2022 may not submit a proposal to the ERC-2023-PoC call.

Synergy Grant Principal Investigators are eligible to apply to the ERC-2023-PoC call only with the written consent of all Principal Investigators in the same Synergy Grant project.

Admissible and eligible projects

The beneficiaries (and their actions) must remain eligible for the entire duration of the action. Costs and contributions will be eligible only as long as the beneficiary and the action are eligible. Applicants and beneficiaries must immediately inform the services of the ERCEA at any point in time of any events or circumstances, which would be likely to affect the fulfilment of the eligibility criteria.

All proposals must be complete, readable, accessible, and be submitted before the relevant deadline. Incomplete proposals may be declared inadmissible (see ERC

Proof of Concept Grant proposal submission and description below).

The content of the proposal must relate to the objectives and to the grant type set out in the call, as defined in this Work Programme. If a proposal is considered not to relate to the objectives of the grant and/or call for proposals, it will be declared ineligible.

Where there is a doubt on the admissibility or eligibility of a proposal, the evaluation may proceed pending a decision following an admissibility and eligibility review committee. If it becomes clear before, during, or after the evaluation phase, that one or more of the admissibility or eligibility criteria have not been met, the proposal will be declared inadmissible or ineligible and it will be rejected.

Applicants need to demonstrate the relation between the idea to be taken to proof of concept and their main grant.

A maximum of three Proof of Concept Grants may be awarded per main grant project, except for Synergy Grant, in which case a maximum of six Proof of Concept Grants may be awarded per ERC funded project.

Proof of Concept Grants may run in parallel provided they comply with the eligibility conditions set out in the Work Programme under which they have been awarded.

Eligible Host Institution

The host institution (Applicant Legal Entity⁶⁹) must engage the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the proof of concept project, as defined in the grant agreement, and must be established in a Member State or an Associated Country as a legal entity created under applicable national law⁷⁰.

To be eligible, legal entities from a Member State or Associated Country that are public bodies, research organisations, or higher education institutions (including private research organisations and private higher education institutions) must have a gender equality plan or an equivalent strategic document in place for the duration of the project. The gender equality plan or equivalent must fulfil the mandatory requirements listed in Annex 5 to this Work Programme.

Please also refer to Annex 3 - Countries Associated to Horizon Europe and Restrictions Applying to Some Legal Entities.

⁶⁹ Please see important information on possible registration of economic operators in the Commission's Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) on final page.

⁷⁰ It may also be an international organisation with headquarters in a Member State or Associated Country. Any type of legal entity, public or private, including universities, research organisations as well as undertakings can host the Principal Investigator and their team.

Grant amount, duration, and assessment

The financial contribution will be awarded as a lump sum of **EUR 150 000**⁷¹ for a period of **18 months**. The ERC expects that, normally, proof of concept activities should be completed within 12 months. However, to allow for those projects that require more preparation time, the grant agreements will be signed for 18 months. Extensions of the duration of proof of concept projects may be granted only exceptionally.

The lump sum will cover the beneficiaries' direct and indirect eligible costs for the project: if the project is implemented properly, the amounts will be paid regardless of the costs actually incurred. The lump sum has been designed to cover the beneficiaries' personnel costs, subcontracting costs, purchase costs, other cost categories, and indirect costs.

The indicative budget for the ERC-2023-PoC call is **EUR 30 000 000**.

ERC Proof of Concept Grant proposal submission and description

⁷¹ In accordance with the Decision authorising the use of lump sums for the European Research Council Proof of Concept actions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation
https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/lc-decision_he-erc-poc_en.pdf

Proposal submission

Proposals are submitted by a single Principal Investigator, who has responsibility for the proposed activities, on behalf of the host institution which is the applicant legal entity.

Applications can be submitted at any time from the opening date of the call until the final deadline. Applications will be evaluated and selected in three rounds, based on three specific cut-off dates. A Principal Investigator may submit only one application per call. Inadmissible, ineligible, or withdrawn applications do not count against this limit.

*Proposal submission is made electronically. **Early registration and submission is strongly recommended and should be done as early as possible before the call deadline.***

Proposal description

The proposal will provide detailed descriptions of the project, its objectives, planning, execution, and required resources. It will comprise the following required elements:

- A short **description of the idea** to be taken to proof of concept. This should include an indication of the ERC-funded project, from which the idea is substantially drawn, and briefly demonstrate the relation between the idea and the ERC-funded project in question.
- An outline of the **innovation potential** of the idea to be taken to

proof of concept. This should include a clear description of how the idea will eventually lead to an innovation, as well as a description of the novelty and ambition of the expected outcomes compared to existing solutions.

- A description of how the project will make **progress on the path from ground-breaking research towards innovation**⁷². This may include: testing, experimenting, demonstration, validation, and further research covering these and other exploitation aspects; conducting research required to carry out the above activities and to address the weaknesses uncovered by them; clarification of IPR protection or knowledge transfer strategy; plans for involvement of potential stakeholders able to translate research results into innovation (e.g. industry partners, societal or cultural organisations, policy-makers or any other). If such contacts already exist, include supporting documentation like letters of support or intent from the relevant stakeholders; assessment of potential “end users” of the innovation.

⁷² Experience shows that the path from research to innovation may take different forms: e.g. patenting, creation of spin-outs, licensing agreements, research contracts, research collaborations, consultancy agreements, informal advice, public engagement, policy reports/contributions to policy, and more.

- A reasonable and plausible **plan of the activities** demonstrating the feasibility and effectiveness of the project, including a description of the timescale and resources⁷³ planned for the implementation of the proposed project⁷⁴. A budgetary breakdown by cost for each activity should not be submitted.
- Demonstration of the PI’s strategic lead (or clear vision) to organise the management of the project, and that the activities will be conducted by persons well qualified for the purpose.
- **Host Institution Binding Statement of Support.**
- **Ethics Review table.**

⁷³ Non-financial resources needed for project implementation, such as staff working on a task, equipment, consumables, or staff travel requirements.

⁷⁴ Applicants are not required to submit a plan for the exploitation and dissemination of the results including communication activities, in the sense of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

The host institution must confirm its association with and its support to the project and the Principal Investigator. As part of the application, the institution must provide a binding statement that the conditions of independence are already fulfilled or will be provided to the Principal Investigator if the application is successful, according to the template provided in the Information for Applicants. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement may be declared inadmissible.

*To ensure fairness to all applicants a **strict limit of ten pages** will be applied to the length of proposals. Only the material that is presented within this limit will be evaluated (reviewers will only be asked to evaluate, and will be under no obligation to read beyond, the material presented within the page limit).*

ERC Proof of Concept Grant evaluation

A single-stage submission and single-step evaluation procedure will be used. The evaluation will be conducted by independent external experts.

These experts may work remotely and may, if necessary, meet as an evaluation panel, as set out below on the application of excellence as the sole criterion of evaluation.

Evaluation criterion

Proof of Concept Grants are awarded in relation to an ERC-funded project under one of the main grants. The activities to be funded will draw substantially on this ERC-funded research.

The funding will cover activities aimed at exploring the pathway from ground-breaking research towards innovation, including social innovation or socially valuable proposition. This includes work required to prepare the translation of the idea into application, as well as research required to test, validate, and develop the idea further towards exploitation.

The evaluation of admissible and eligible proposals will look into ideas stemming from ERC-funded projects and will select among them the most competitive for further development towards an innovation.

For ERC Proof of Concept grants, excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation. It will be applied in conjunction to the evaluation of both:

- the breakthrough innovation potential, approach, and methodology of the project;
- the strategic lead and project management of the Principal Investigator.

The detailed evaluation elements applying to the excellence of the project and the Principal Investigator are set out below:

1.a Breakthrough innovation potential

- Does the proposed idea have the potential to drive innovation and business inventiveness and/or tackle societal challenges?
- Are the proposed expected outcomes innovative or distinctive compared to existing solutions?
- Is the proposed idea high risk-high gain?
 - If successful, will the outcome result in a breakthrough innovation?
 - Is there a risk that some aspects are difficult to overcome?

1.b Approach and methodology

- Are the proposed activities and planning appropriate and effective to explore the pathway from ground-breaking research towards innovation? Activities may include:
 - testing, experimenting, demonstrating and validating the idea;
 - conducting research required to carry out the above activities and to address the weaknesses uncovered by them;
 - clarifying IPR protection or knowledge transfer strategy;
 - involving industry partners, societal or cultural organisations, policymakers, or any other potential stakeholder supporting the translation of research results into innovation;
 - assessing potential “end users” of the expected innovation.
- Are the proposed timescales and resources adequate for the implementation and feasibility of the project, and properly justified? Will the activities be conducted by persons well qualified for the purpose?

1.c. Principal Investigator - strategic lead and project management

- Does the PI demonstrate a clear vision on how to organise the management of the project, the consolidation of information and data needed to take strategic decisions and implement the proposed plan, including risk and contingency measures?

Evaluation outcome

Experts will evaluate independently each admissible and eligible proposal and mark it as "very good", "good", or "fail" for each of the three evaluation elements (1.a, 1.b, and 1.c)⁷⁵.

In order to be considered for funding, proposals will have to be awarded a pass mark ("very good" or "good") by a majority of experts on each of the evaluation elements. A proposal which fails one or more of the elements will not be ranked and will not be funded.

If there is not enough budget to fund all the proposals which pass all three evaluation elements, those proposals which pass all three evaluation elements will be ranked according to the marks which they received from experts, sorted by the order in which the evaluation elements appear above. Proposals will be funded in order of this ranking.

If necessary, experts will meet as an evaluation panel, in order to determine a priority order for proposals which have the same ranking.

A Seal of Excellence⁷⁶ will be awarded to proposals that have received a pass mark

in all three of the evaluation elements set out in this Work Programme, but cannot be funded due to lack of budget available to the call.

⁷⁵ Applicants whose proposal is recommended for funding are deemed to fulfil the operational capacity requirements provided for in Article 198(3) of the Financial Regulation.

⁷⁶ Information on funding bodies that recognise and support Seal of Excellence projects is available at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/seal-excellence/>

Other Actions

The different actions described in this chapter aim at enabling the Scientific Council of the ERC to carry out its duties and mandate, including its obligations to establish the ERC's overall strategy, and to monitor and quality control the programme's implementation from the scientific perspective.

Support to call and programme monitoring and evaluation

1. Qualitative evaluation of frontier nature of ERC funded research

The ERC will continue the work carried out under Horizon 2020 to analyse the scientific output of its funded projects, with a particular focus on the frontier nature of the research, and any potential research breakthroughs and discoveries. During this analysis the ERC will be assisted by independent external experts.

Type of action: Expert contract action.

Indicative budget: EUR 1 000 000 from the 2023 budget.

2. Evaluation of proposals and project monitoring

The ERC draws upon appointed independent external experts during the evaluation of proposals and the preparation of the ERC calls for ethics review, and for the monitoring of ongoing projects.

Type of action: Expert contract action.

Indicative budget: EUR 17 420 000 from the 2023 budget.

3. Support to programme monitoring and evaluation

The ERC Scientific Council is tasked with reviewing and assessing the ERC's achievements and the quality and impact of the research funded by the ERC. For the performance of this task, the Scientific Council has adopted a monitoring and evaluation strategy. As part of this strategy, experts will be contracted to perform:

- Thematic analyses and longitudinal studies on specific research areas in order to detect the footprint of ERC-funded activities on scientific progress;
- Case studies on how ERC-funded research has influenced and contributed to the development of a selection of major innovations.

Type of action: Expert contract action.

Indicative budget: EUR 300 000 from the 2023 budget.

Support to the ERC Scientific Council

4. ERC Scientific Council Standing Identification Committee

Future members of the Scientific Council will be appointed by the Commission following an independent and transparent procedure for their identification, agreed with the Scientific Council, including a consultation of the scientific community and a report to the European Parliament and the Council. For this purpose, a high level standing Identification Committee of

independent experts has been set up as a special expert group with special allowances of EUR 450 per day charged to the operational budget allocated to the ERC.

Type of action: Expert contract action. This activity will be directly implemented by the Commission services (DG RTD).

Indicative budget: EUR 40 000 from the 2023 budget.

5. Support to the Vice-Chairs

Support will be provided to the three Vice-Chairs of the Scientific Council to ensure adequate local administrative assistance at their home institutes for their tasks of assisting the President of the ERC in representing the ERC and organising its work. For this purpose, the ERC Executive Agency will provide a grant to an identified beneficiary. The evaluation committee assessing proposals under this call will be fully composed of representatives of Union institutions or bodies. The maximum duration of this grant will be 12 months.

Type of action: Coordination and support action – Grant awarded without a call for proposals in accordance with Article 195(e) of the Financial Regulation.

Form of funding: Grant to an identified beneficiary.

Legal entities⁷⁷: Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, Burgemeester Oudlaan 50,

⁷⁷ This grant will be awarded without call for proposals in line with Article 195(e) of Regulation

3062 PA Rotterdam, The Netherlands as well as the two other legal entities, which shall be the respective host institutions of the two other Vice-Chairs, chosen among the Scientific Council members appointed by the Commission and serving their mandate under the ERC Work Programme 2023.

Indicative budget: EUR 300 000 from the 2023 budget.

6. Honoraria and meeting expenses for Scientific Council members

In recognition of their personal commitment, the Scientific Council members will be compensated for the tasks they perform by means of an honorarium for their attendance at Scientific Council plenary meetings, reflecting their responsibilities and benchmarked against similar provisions in similar entities and Member States. The honoraria and those travel and subsistence expenses related to the performance of tasks of the Scientific Council will be charged to the operational budget allocated to the ERC.

Type of action: Expert contract action.

Indicative budget: EUR 555 000 from the 2023 budget.

(EU, Euratom) No 1046/2018 (the 'Financial Regulation') and with the Horizon Europe Regulation.

Support to communication activities

7. ERC Science Journalism Initiative

The ERC wishes to support an organisation or a consortium of organisations to set up a funding scheme that would facilitate 3-5-month stays of journalists at research institutions in order to give them access (for example, through ERC grantees) to a better understanding of frontier research, while respecting journalistic independence.

The holder of this coordination and support action would be expected to among others:

- design the support programmes,
- set up high-level media advisory committee to ensure credibility and independence vis-a-vis journalists' community,
- prepare conditions to carry out the actions, especially establish relations with ERC grantees and host institutions' press offices to make sure the fellowships and placements are well organised and useful both to the journalists and to researchers,
- launch calls for applications or proposals for fellowships or placements,
- evaluate the proposals,
- provide funding to journalists or researchers,
- monitor the implementation,
- organise meetings, networking opportunities for the participating journalists and researchers

- report to the ERC on the performance of the programme.

The maximum duration of the project will be 48 months. One proposal will be selected.

Type of action: *Coordination and Support Action*

This ERC call allows for Financial support to third parties (FSTP). Those applicants that foresee implementation of actions by providing FSTP must clearly detail the objectives of the action and the expected results, as well as meet the specific conditions on the use of FSTP as set out in the Model Grant Agreement⁷⁸.

Indicative timeline: opening date - 15 September 2022; deadline - 15 December 2022; date to inform applicants - 28 February 2023; indicative date for the start of the project - 1 May 2023.

Indicative budget: EUR 1 500 000 from the 2023 budget.

Other Actions Grants: Union Contribution

The project budget is provided in EUR. The financial contribution for the Support to the Vice Chairs action will be awarded as a budget-based lump sum⁷⁹, which will

⁷⁸ Article 6.2.D.1 and Article 9 of the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement

⁷⁹ In accordance with the Decision authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025)

cover direct and indirect eligible costs for the project: if the project is implemented properly, the amounts will be paid regardless of the costs actually incurred.

For the ERC Scientific Journalism action, the project budget is provided in EUR. Project costs will be reimbursed at a funding rate of 100% for direct costs plus a flat-rate of 25% for indirect costs⁸⁰. Reimbursements will be budget-based and will cover actual costs, or unit costs, depending on the cost category. The level of the awarded grant represents a maximum overall figure – the final amount to be paid must be justified on the basis of the costs incurred for the project, and it may be lower than the budget requested.

Other Actions Grants: Proposal Evaluation

The project proposals for grants under this part will be evaluated as follows.

Admissibility and Eligibility Criteria: The proposals under this part must be focused on requirements specified under this Work Programme and/or the respective call for proposals.

Actions under this part are open to legal entities⁸¹ established in a Member State

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf

⁸⁰ Excluding subcontracting costs, financial support to third parties, and exempted specific cost categories, if any.

⁸¹ Please see important information on possible exclusion and registration of economic operators in the Commission's Early Detection and Exclusion

or an Associated Country as a legal entity created under national law, international European research organisations (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), or an entity created under EU law

Please also refer to Annex 3 – Countries Associated to Horizon Europe and Restrictions Applying to Some Legal Entities.

All proposals must be readable, accessible, complete, and be submitted before the relevant deadline. A complete proposal entails all requested elements. An incomplete proposal may be declared inadmissible.

The content of the proposal must relate to the objectives of the grant or the respective call for proposals, as defined in this Work Programme and/or the respective call for proposals. If the proposal is considered not to relate to the objectives of the grant, it will be declared ineligible.

Where there is a doubt on the admissibility or eligibility of the proposal, the evaluation may proceed pending a decision following an admissibility and eligibility review committee. If it becomes clear before, during, or after the evaluation phase, that one or more of the admissibility or eligibility criteria has not been met, the proposal will be declared inadmissible or ineligible and will be rejected.

System (EDES) respectively in Annex 4 and on final page of this Work Programme.

Evaluation Criteria

1. Excellence related to the objectives of the grant:

- Are the objectives of the proposed project consistent with the requirements specified in the Work Programme and/or call for proposals?
- Do they, where appropriate, correspond to, or go beyond, best current practice?

2. Impact:

- Will the project have a substantial impact in the context of the ERC objectives?

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation:

- Is the proposed methodology and work plan effective in reaching the goals of the project?
- Do they ensure the highest quality and/or utility of results?

Application of Evaluation Criteria

Each evaluation criterion will be marked on a scale of 0 to 5 and an overall quality threshold of 80% will be used to establish the retained list of proposals, which will be ranked in order of priority for funding⁸².

⁸² Applicants whose proposal is marked above the 80% quality threshold are deemed to fulfil the operational capacity requirements of article 198(3) of the Financial Regulation.

Public Procurement

Support to ERC call management

Under Horizon Europe, the ERCEA is set to continue using the European Commission's corporate IT eGrants suite which was used under Horizon 2020. At the same time, the ERC needs to customise these applications to ERC requirements following the guidance of the ERC Scientific Council, in line with the Council Decision establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe⁸³.

In the transition of the ERC from Horizon 2020 to Horizon Europe, the European Commission is planning to introduce changes to eGrants IT applications, which will require the ERC to ensure the continuity of its operations by customising corporate IT tools in light of the Horizon Europe specific programme requirements and of Scientific Council decisions on ERC implementation.

In the context of the corporate governance of the European Commission's IT solutions, the ERCEA and the European Commission have committed to a co-development and co-editing approach of corporate eGrants such that the ERCEA is able to respond to the ERC Scientific Council's strategic decisions in an agile manner, while contributing to the common needs of the corporate eGrants suite.

Technical assistance will be required in order to customise IT tools to ERC requirements in support of call publication, proposal submission and evaluation.

Type of action: Public procurement.

Indicative budget: €800 000 from the 2023 budget.

⁸³ Council Decision (EU) 2021/764 of 10 May 2021 establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and repealing Decision 2013/743/EU, (OJ L 167I , 12.5.2021, p. 1).

Indicative Budget

	<i>2023 budget in EUR million (rounded)</i>
Main Frontier Research Grants	
ERC-2023-StG	628
ERC-2023-CoG	595
ERC-2023-AdG	597
ERC-2023-SyG	300
Complementary funding for ERC Principal Investigators	
ERC-2023-PoC	30
Other Actions	
Experts	19.3 ⁸⁴
Grants to identified beneficiaries	0.3
Other calls for proposals	1.5
Public procurement	0.8
Estimated total budget	2,172

The budget amounts for 2023 are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the draft budget for 2023 after the adoption of the budget for 2023

by the budgetary authority or if the budget is not adopted as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths.

⁸⁴ EUR 17.4 million of this amount corresponds to the cost of experts involved in the evaluation of proposals and project monitoring.

Budgetary figures given in this Work Programme are indicative. Unless otherwise stated, final budgets may change following the evaluation of proposals.

The final figures may change by up to 20% compared with the total budget indicated in this Work Programme. Cumulated changes to the allocations to specific actions not exceeding 20% of the maximum Union contribution set in this Work Programme will not be considered to be substantial for the purposes of

Article 110(5) of the Financial Regulation, where those changes do not significantly affect the nature of the actions and the objective of the Work Programme.

If additional credits become available, the Scientific Council will set the rules by which they will be allocated to the calls based on a judgement of the scientific need, number of applications and predicted success rates of the calls.

The budget figures given in this table are rounded to two decimal points.

Annexes

Annex 1

Primary panel structure

Physical Sciences & Engineering

PE1 Mathematics

All areas of mathematics, pure and applied, plus mathematical foundations of computer science, mathematical physics and statistics.

PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter

Particle, nuclear, plasma, atomic, molecular, gas, and optical physics.

PE3 Condensed Matter Physics

Structure, electronic properties, fluids, nanosciences, biological physics.

PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences

Analytical chemistry, chemical theory, physical chemistry/chemical physics.

PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials

New materials and new synthetic approaches, structure-properties relations, solid state chemistry, molecular architecture, organic chemistry.

PE6 Computer Science and Informatics

Informatics and information systems, computer science, scientific computing, intelligent systems.

PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering

Electrical, electronic, communication, optical and systems engineering.

PE8 Products and Processes Engineering

Product and process design, chemical, civil, environmental, mechanical, vehicle engineering, energy processes and relevant computational methods.

PE9 Universe Sciences

Astro-physics/-chemistry/-biology; solar system; planetary systems; stellar, galactic and extragalactic astronomy; cosmology; space sciences; astronomical instrumentation and data.

PE10 Earth System Science

Physical geography, geology, geophysics, atmospheric sciences, oceanography, climatology, cryology, ecology, global environmental change, biogeochemical cycles, natural resources management.

PE11 Materials Engineering

Advanced materials development: performance enhancement, modelling, large-scale preparation, modification, tailoring, optimisation, novel and combined use of materials, etc.

Life Sciences

LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions

For all organisms: Molecular biology, biochemistry, structural biology, molecular biophysics, synthetic and chemical biology, drug design, innovative methods and modelling.

LS2 Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems

For all organisms: Genetics, epigenetics, genomics and other 'omics studies, bioinformatics, systems biology, genetic diseases, gene editing, innovative methods and modelling, 'omics for personalised medicine.

LS3 Cellular, Developmental and Regenerative Biology

For all organisms: Structure and function of the cell, cell-cell communication, embryogenesis, tissue differentiation, organogenesis, growth, development, evolution of development, organoids, stem cells, regeneration, therapeutic approaches.

LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing

Organ and tissue physiology, comparative physiology, physiology of ageing, pathophysiology, inter-organ and tissue communication, endocrinology, nutrition, metabolism, interaction with the microbiome, non-communicable diseases including cancer (and except disorders of the nervous system and immunity-related diseases).

LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System

Nervous system development, homeostasis and ageing, nervous system function and dysfunction, systems neuroscience and modelling, biological basis of cognitive processes and of behaviour, neurological and mental disorders.

LS6 Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy

The immune system, related disorders and their mechanisms, biology of infectious agents and infection, biological basis of prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, innovative immunological tools and approaches, including therapies.

LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases

Medical technologies and tools for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of human diseases, therapeutic approaches and interventions, pharmacology, preventative medicine, epidemiology and public health, digital medicine.

LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution

For all organisms: Ecology, biodiversity, environmental change, evolutionary biology, behavioural ecology, microbial ecology, marine biology, ecophysiology, theoretical developments and modelling.

LS9 Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering

Biotechnology using all organisms, biotechnology for environment and food applications, applied plant and animal sciences, bioengineering and synthetic biology, biomass and biofuels, biohazards.

Social Sciences & Humanities

SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations

Economics, finance, management.

SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems

Political science, international relations, law.

SH3 The Social World and its Diversity

Sociology, social psychology, social anthropology, education sciences, communication studies.

SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity

Cognitive science, psychology, linguistics, theoretical philosophy.

SH5 Cultures and Cultural Production

Literary studies, cultural studies, study of the arts, philosophy.

SH6 The Study of the Human Past

Archaeology and history.

SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space

Human geography, demography, health, sustainability science, territorial planning, spatial analysis.

Annex 2

ERC policy on PhD and equivalent doctoral degrees

1. The necessity of ascertaining PhD equivalence

In order to be eligible to apply to the ERC Starting or Consolidator Grant, a Principal Investigator must have successfully defended a PhD or equivalent doctoral degree. First-professional degrees will not be considered in themselves as PhD-equivalent, even if recipients carry the title "Doctor". See below for further guidelines on PhD degree equivalency.

2. PhD degrees

The research doctorate is the highest earned academic degree. It is always awarded for **independent research** at a professional level in either academic disciplines or professional fields. Regardless of the entry point, doctoral studies involve several stages of academic work. These may include the completion of preliminary course, seminar and laboratory studies, and/or the passing of a battery of written examinations. The PhD candidate selects an academic adviser and a subject for the dissertation, is assigned a dissertation committee, and designs their research (some educators call the doctoral thesis a dissertation to distinguish it from lesser theses). The dissertation committee consists usually of 3-5 faculty members in the candidate's research field, including the adviser.

3. Independent research

Conducting the research and writing the dissertation usually requires one to several years depending upon the topic selected and the research work necessary to prepare the dissertation. In defending their thesis, **the PhD candidate must establish mastery of the subject matter, explain and justify their research findings, and answer all questions put by the committee.** A successful defence results in the award of the PhD degree.

4. Degrees equivalent to the PhD:

It is recognised that there are some other doctoral titles that enjoy the same status and represent variants of the PhD in certain fields. All of them **have similar content requirements.** Potential applicants are invited to consult the following for useful references on degrees that will be considered equivalent to the PhD:

- EURYDICE: "Examinations, qualifications and titles - Second edition, Volume 1, European glossary on education" published in 2004⁸⁵. Please note that some titles that belong to the same

⁸⁵ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6dc168d4-7a44-4a90-a247-4300e9769e47>

category with doctoral degrees (ISCED 6 – 1997 classification or ISCED 8 – 2011 classification⁸⁶) may correspond to the intermediate steps towards the completion of doctoral education and they should not be therefore considered as PhD-equivalent.

- List of research doctorate titles awarded in the United States that enjoy the same status and represent variants of the PhD within certain fields. These doctorate titles are also recognised as PhD-equivalent by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF)⁸⁷.

5. First professional degrees (for applicants holding a degree in medicine please see below):

It is important to recognise that the initial professional degrees in various fields are **first degrees, not graduate research degrees**. Several degree titles in such fields include the term "Doctor", **but they are neither research doctorates nor equivalent to the PhD**.

6. Applicants holding a degree in medicine:

A first degree in medicine will not be accepted by itself as equivalent to a PhD degree. To be considered an eligible Principal Investigator, applicants holding a degree in medicine need to provide **the certificates of both the medical degree and the PhD, or proof of an appointment that requires doctoral equivalency** (e.g. post-doctoral fellowship, professorship appointment). Additionally, candidates must also provide information on their research experience (including peer reviewed publications) in order to further substantiate the equivalence of their overall training to a PhD.

In these cases, the certified date of the medical degree completion plus two years is the reference date used for the calculation of the eligibility period established for Starting and Consolidator Grants in the section "Eligible Principal Investigator".

For applicants holding both a degree in medicine and a PhD, **the date used for the calculation of the eligibility period** (i.e. medical degree plus two years or the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree) **is the date of the earliest degree that makes the applicant eligible**.

⁸⁶

<http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>

⁸⁷

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-structure-us.html>

Annex 3

Countries associated to Horizon Europe and restrictions applying to some legal entities

Considering the Union's interest to retain, in principle, relations with the countries associated to Horizon 2020, most third countries associated to Horizon 2020 have already, or are expected to be, associated to Horizon Europe, while association agreements with certain countries have now started producing legal effects. In addition, other third countries may also become associated to Horizon Europe during the implementation of the programme. For the purposes of the eligibility conditions, applicants established in Horizon 2020 Associated Countries or in other third countries negotiating association to Horizon Europe will be treated as entities established in an Associated Country, if the Horizon Europe association agreement with the third country concerned applies at the time of signature of the grant agreement.

Please check the Horizon Europe List of Participating Countries on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal⁸⁸ for up-to-date information on the current position for Associated Countries.

Special rules apply to entities from certain countries (e.g. when entities are subject to EU restrictive measures under the Treaty

on the European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)⁸⁹. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

Some entities from third countries are covered by the EU restrictive measures in place and are not eligible to participate in Union programmes. Please see: the consolidated list of persons, groups and entities subject to EU financial sanctions⁹⁰.

Given the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the involvement of Belarus, there is currently no appropriate context allowing the implementation of the actions foreseen in this programme with legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine. Therefore, such legal entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity. Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for justified reasons and in line with EU restrictive

⁸⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

⁸⁹ www.sanctionsmap.eu Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website, it is the OJ version that prevails.

⁹⁰ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/fsd/fsf>

measures (see e.g. Article 5(2) of Regulation (EC) 833/2014). This criterion also applies in cases where the action involves financial support given by grant beneficiaries to third parties established in Russia, Belarus or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine (in accordance with Article 204 of the Financial Regulation No 2018/1046).

The exclusion does not affect researchers of Russian nationality in ERC calls.

Special rules also apply to entities covered by Commission Guidelines on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards⁹¹.

⁹¹ OJ C 205, 19.7.2013, p. 9.

Annex 4

Security

According to Article 20 of the Horizon Europe Regulation, actions carried out under the Programme shall comply with the applicable security rules. Projects involving classified and/or security sensitive information will have to go through a security appraisal process to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific security rules. Specific provision for EU-classified information (EUCI) and sensitive information (SEN) will be included in the grant agreement, as necessary and appropriate. The rules for protecting EUCI are governed by Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444.

Depending on the type of activity, facility security clearances or equivalent proofs may have to be provided before grant signature. The granting authority will assess this for each case and will establish their delivery date during grant preparation. In these cases, it is not possible to sign any grant agreement, until at least one of the beneficiaries has a facility security clearance or equivalent proof.

In certain cases, the project results might not require classification but they might be security sensitive and consequently

require restricted disclosure or limited dissemination due to security reasons, in accordance with the applicable security instructions in the Security Section of Annex 1 of the grant agreement. This means that, in principle, third parties should have no access to results subject to this type of restriction. Disclosure of this information is subject to prior written approval by the European Commission.

Further security recommendations may be added to the grant agreement in the form of security deliverables (for example: to create a Security Advisory Board, appoint a Project Security Officer, limit the level of detail, use fake scenario, etc.).

In addition, beneficiaries must ensure that their projects are not subject to national or third country security requirements that could affect the implementation or put into question the award of the grants (such as technology restrictions, national security classification, etc.). Any potential security issues must be notified immediately to the granting authority.

Annex 5

Gender equality plan

A gender equality plan of an Applicant Legal Entity must cover the following minimum process-related requirements:

- Publication: formal document published on the institution's website and signed by the top management.
- Dedicated resources: commitment of resources and gender expertise to implement it.
- Data collection and monitoring: sex/gender disaggregated data on personnel (and students for institutions concerned) and annual reporting based on indicators.
- Training: Awareness raising/training on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers.

Content-wise, recommended areas to be covered and addressed via concrete measures and targets are the following:

- work-life balance and organisational culture;
- gender balance in leadership and decision-making;
- gender equality in recruitment and career progression;
- integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content;
- measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

Other strategic documents such as a development plan, an inclusion strategy or a diversity strategy are considered as equivalent if they meet the requirements listed above.

Prior Information of Candidates, Tenderers, Grant Applicants, and remunerated experts - registration of information in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES).

The Commission operates the EDES, a system established under Articles 135, 142 and 143 of the Financial Regulation. The EDES is used for the early detection of risks related to candidates, tenderers, grant applicants, beneficiaries of contracts and grants and linked third parties, as well as remunerated external experts, with a view to protecting the EU's financial interests.

Candidates, tenderers, grant applicants, remunerated external experts and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations mentioned in Article 136(1) of the Financial Regulation⁹², their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the EDES, and communicated to the persons and entities referred to in Article 142 (1), (2), (4) and (5) of the Financial Regulation, in relation to the award or the execution of a procurement contract, a grant agreement or an expert contract.

NB: The EDES has replaced the Early Warning System (EWS) and the Central Exclusion Database (CED) as of 1 January 2016.

⁹² Applicants that are subject to the administrative sanctions of exclusion or are in one of the exclusion situations set out by the Financial Regulation are banned from receiving EU grants and can NOT participate.