KRPAN

Catalyze

Preparing project proposals for European Research Council (ERC) calls

22 and 23 September 2025

Presenters: Mithila Burute, PhD & Helen Pothuizen, PhD

50 years University of Maribor

REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

NOO | THE RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE PLAN

Funded by the European Union
NextGenerationEU

The event is organized within the KRPAN project – Strengthening Research Support and Activities for Progress in European Research Projects, co-funded by the Republic of Slovenia, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, and the European Union – NextGenerationEU

Agenda

DAY 1	1.1	**Introduction** • Meet the Catalyze trainers • Participants' ERC challenges & learning goals	30min	9.00 – 9.30
	1.2	**ERC Call – Key aspects** • Why apply to ERC?- Types of grants • Eligibility criteria • Info sources	30 min	9.30 – 10.00
		Coffee break	15 min	10.00 – 10.15
	1.3	**ERC Call – Evaluation:** • Evaluation criteria & process • Resubmission rules • Know your audience (exercise) • Tips & tricks for project and PI excellence	60 min	10.15 – 11.15
	1.4	**Assess fit with ERC StG/CoG** - Are you ready?- (exercise)	45min	11.15 – 12.00
		Lunch break	45 min	12.00 – 12.45
	1.5	**How to write an ERC application** – Part 1 • Key components (Part A, B) - • Timeline- B2 part: storyline, objectives, work plan- • Risks, mitigation, budgeting	60 min	12.45 – 13.45
		Coffee break	15 min	13.45 – 14.00
		CONSULTATIONS 1:1		14.00 -16.00

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Agenda

DAY 2	2.1	**How to Write an ERC Application – Part 2** • B1 part: storyline & structure- Drafting an effective CV (exercise) • Part A: abstract & keywords- Final prep tips & reviewer feedback	60 min	9.00 – 10.00
	2.2	**Interview Preparation** • Key points for ERC interview success • Strategies and pitfalls	30 min	10:00 – 10.30
		Coffee break	15 min	10.30 – 10.45
	2.3	**Ethics and Data Management aspect** Project office support	30 min	10.45 – 11.15
	2.4	ERC Adv and ERC SYG - Promising opportunities	45 min	11.15 – 12.00
		Lunch break	45 min	12.00-12.45
		NCP support	15 min	12:45:13:00
	2.5	**Q&A Session + Wrap-Up** • Final discussion, Common challenges and clarifications	45 min	13.00- 13.45
		Coffee break	15 min	13.45 – 14.00
		CONSULTATIONS 1:1		14.00 -16.00

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Meet the presenter

Helen Pothuizen, PhD

MSc. Medical Biology (Neuroanatomy)
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam | 1995 - 2000

PhD Natural Sci (Behav. Neuroscience)
ETH Zürich Switzerland | 2001 - 2005

Post-doc (Behav. Neuroscience)
Cardiff University, United Kingdom | 2005 - 2009

Scientist (Behav. Neuroscience)
ETH Zürich Switzerland | 2009 - 2011

Business development
Delta Phenomics BV | 2011 - 2014

Consultant / Sr Consultant
Life Sciences and Health
Catalyze | 2015 - 2017

Managing Consultant
Catalyze | 2017 - present

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THE INNOVATION CONSULTANTS

- 10+ years grant writing experience
- Co-developed >170 applications
- Raised >€90M in subsidy funding
- Business intelligence & quality control
- Expert reviewer academic applications - life sciences, health, green sustainable innovations, chemistry and applied physics
- Workshops and webinars on grant writing
- Strategic funding advice and coaching
- Horizon Europe & ERC expert

erc

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

Horizon Europe

eurostars

eic European INNOVATION Council BETA

Meet the presenter

Mithila Burute, PhD

MSc. Biotechnology
University of Pune, India| 2007 - 2009

PhD, Cancer Biology
University Joseph Fourier, France| 2012 - 2016

Post-doc, Neuron cell biology
Utrecht University, Netherlands | 2016 - 2022

Innovation Consultant
Life Sciences and Health
Catalyze | 2022 - 2024

Senior Consultant
Life Sciences and Health
Catalyze | 2024- present

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THE INNOVATION CONSULTANTS

- Co-developed >70 multisector projects in life sciences and health
- Raised >€35 million non-dilutive funding for clients (EU Horizon RIA, Eurostars, ERC, EIC accelerator) and Dutch national programs (NWA-ORC).
- Expert reviewer academic applications - life sciences, health, green sustainable innovations
- Workshops and webinars on grant writing
- MSCA & ERC expert

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Catalyze

+ offices in Spain and India

“For more than 20 years, we have helped innovative academics and entrepreneurs to reach their full potential.”

Catalyze | Founded by researchers and entrepreneurs

The Innovation Consultants for Life Sciences, Sustainability, and Digital & Industrial deep tech innovations

Catalyze

Catalyze services

We support our clients throughout their Innovation Journey, enabling them to make maximum impact

Fund

Helping innovators gain access to (non) dilutive funding for their development.

Strategy

Providing strategic and business consulting services to academics and early-stage companies.

Manage

Supporting successful delivery of multi-partner projects and maximizing societal impact.

Invest

Helping innovators become investor ready and find and attract investors.

Accelerating innovations that have a positive impact on the world.

Our industries

Accelerating disruptive innovations across three key industries

Life Sciences & Health Innovations

Contributing to a healthier world by accelerating new innovations to reach patients, combating disease, and saving lives.

Green & Sustainable Innovations

Supporting innovators that are passionate about making a real impact in creating a more sustainable world for generations to come.

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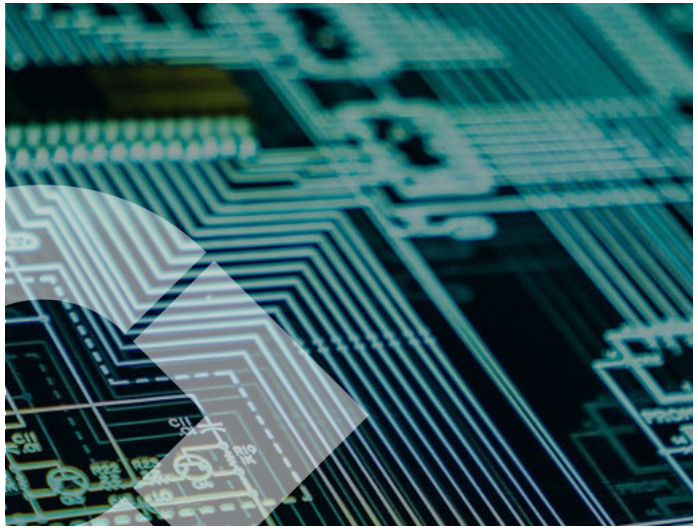
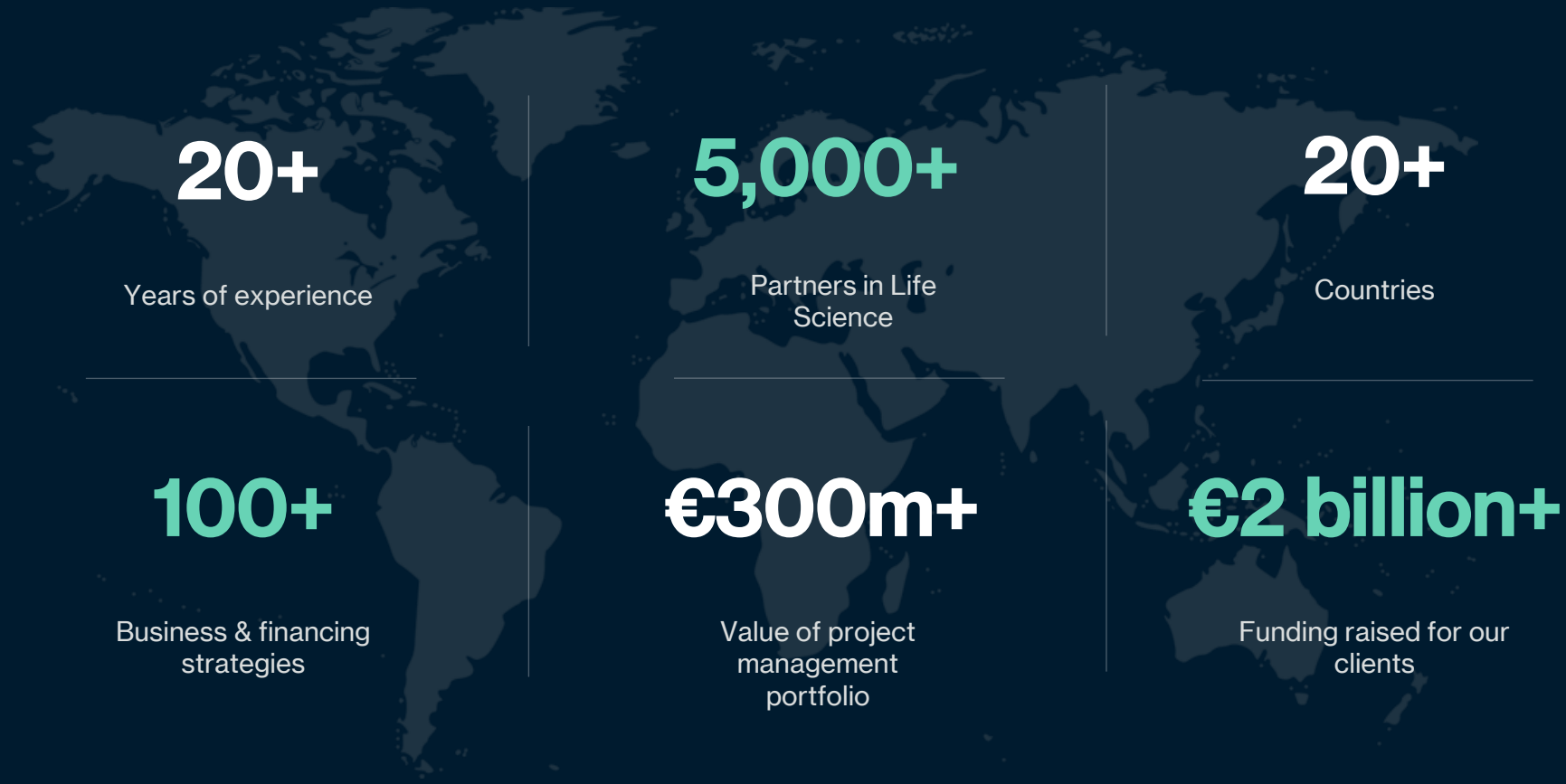


Digital & Industrial Technologies

Passionately supporting the new wave of deep tech innovations for emerging future industries.

Key figures

What we've done so far



20+

Years of experience

5,000+

Partners in Life Science

20+

Countries

100+

Business & financing strategies

€300m+

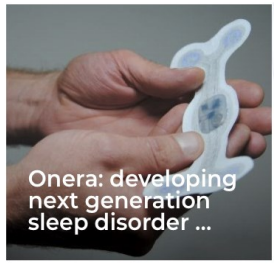
Value of project management portfolio

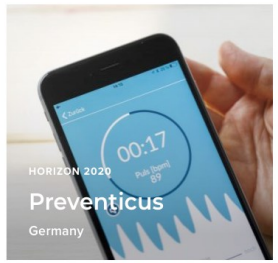
€2 billion+

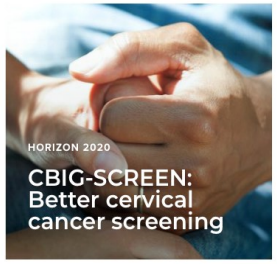
Funding raised for our clients

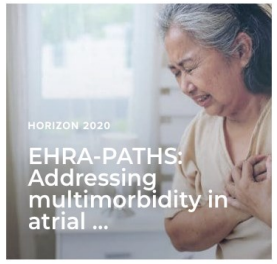
Our success stories

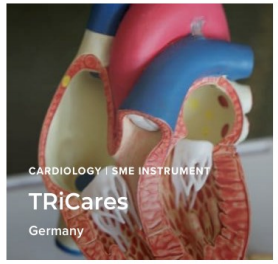
Each year Catalyze serves 600+ high potential clients

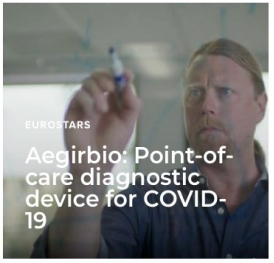


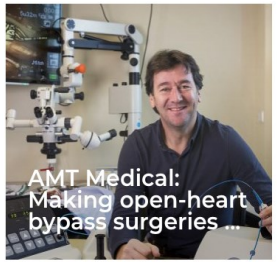


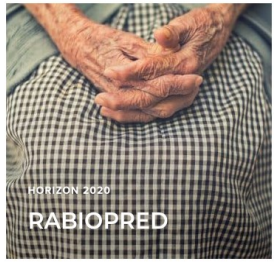












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Join at menti.com | use code 6152 3072

Mentimeter

What is your experience level with ERC grants?

- It is all new to me
- I am familiar with it, but I have never applied
- I have applied but unsuccessful

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Mentimeter

What is your biggest challenge in writing an ERC grant?

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Learning goals for this workshop

1. Gain insights in the key ERC rules and application procedures.
2. Being able to evaluate the strength of your project idea & track record.
3. Learn how to develop a competitive ERC proposal.

The ERC calls - key aspects

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European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

Promote ‘frontier science’

ERC’s mission: *encourage the highest quality research in Europe through competitive funding and to support investigator-driven frontier research across all fields, based on scientific excellence.*

Frontier science refers to scientific ideas that are relatively new and have not yet been supported by years of scientific evidence.

Main objective: **to be at the forefront of technology and innovation.**

Think off:

- Research that explores challenging questions which are unlikely to be answered without unconventional approaches, and which involves a high level of uncertainty regarding its success.
- Projects that tackle issues marked by substantial controversy within the scientific community

Success story: COVID-19 mRNA vaccine

- **Uğur Şahin** is a Professor at the University Mainz and the CEO of BioNTech. He gained worldwide recognition for the **historical development of the first COVID-19 mRNA vaccine**, the "Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine", which went from laboratory development to conditional approval within an unprecedentedly short eleven months.
- in 2017, Uğur Şahin, **secured an ERC grant** to enhance the viability of mRNA vaccines for cancer treatment, employing data analysis to monitor tumour progression and predict mutations in patients.
- This innovative approach harnesses RNA-based vaccines, a cornerstone of immunotherapy, offering the potential for personalised cancer vaccines and broader disease control, exemplified during the COVID-19 crisis.

Aim & scope of the ERC

ERC overarching aim:

To provide attractive, **long-term funding** to support excellent investigators and their research teams to pursue **groundbreaking, high-gain/high-risk research** *("push the boundaries of science")*.

Scope of the ERC research calls:

- Applications can be made in any field of research.
- Academic research should bring fundamental advances to the field and society.
- "Bottom-up" approach without predetermined priorities.
- Multi- or interdisciplinary proposals, addressing new and emerging fields of research or introducing unconventional, innovative approaches and scientific inventions are encouraged.
- Applications can be made by independent researchers of any age and nationality, whose host institutions are in the EU or in one of the Associated Countries.

ERC research grants

StG

Starting Grants (StG) support researchers at the early stage of their careers to become independent research leaders

CoG

Consolidator Grants (CoG) support researchers who are at the early stage of their careers and are often already working with their own group

AdG

Advanced Grants (AdG) support outstanding and established research leaders to continue their work in expanding the frontiers of scientific knowledge

SyG

Synergy Grants (SyG) enable small groups of researchers to bring together complementary skills, knowledge and resources to address ambitious research problems

PoC

Proof of Concept Grants (PoC) support ERC grantees in bridging the gap between their research ideas and potential social or commercial innovation

The ERC program

Largest European Frontier research program - statistics

EUR **16 billion**
ERC budget in Horizon Europe (2021-2027) = 17%

94 nationalities
ERC Grantees

>250,000
Publications reported by ERC projects

EUR **2.81 billion**
ERC 2024 budget, fully committed

36 countries
(EU and associated) hosting ERC projects

>110,000
Researchers hired in ERC grants

2024 round	StG	CoG	AdG	SyG	PoC
Number of projects awarded	493	329	255	57	245
Total EU contribution	**€779 million**	**€679 million**	**€543 million**	**€571 million**	**€37 million**

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Competitive calls, but not more than other subsidy programs

Success rate is on average: ~14-17%

2024	Submitted (eligible)	Funded	Success rate
ERC Starting	3434	493	14.4%
ERC Consolidator	2262	329	14.5%
ERC Advanced (2023)	1530	255	16.7%
ERC Synergy	541	57	10.5%
ERC PoC	698	245	35% (previous years ~50%)

Update ERC work programmes 2026, 2027

For 2026 programme:

- Part B2 (Part II): limited to 7 pages for StG/CoG/AdG and 10 pages for SyG (budget justification excl.)
- Part B1 (Part I) (5 pages); now excludes feasibility details.
- Feasibility assessment moved entirely to Step 2 of evaluation.
- Step 1 evaluates only Part I + CV + Track Record for scientific ambition.
- No changes to overall application structure, but clearer separation between strategy (Part B1) and implementation (Part B2).

For 2027 Programme:

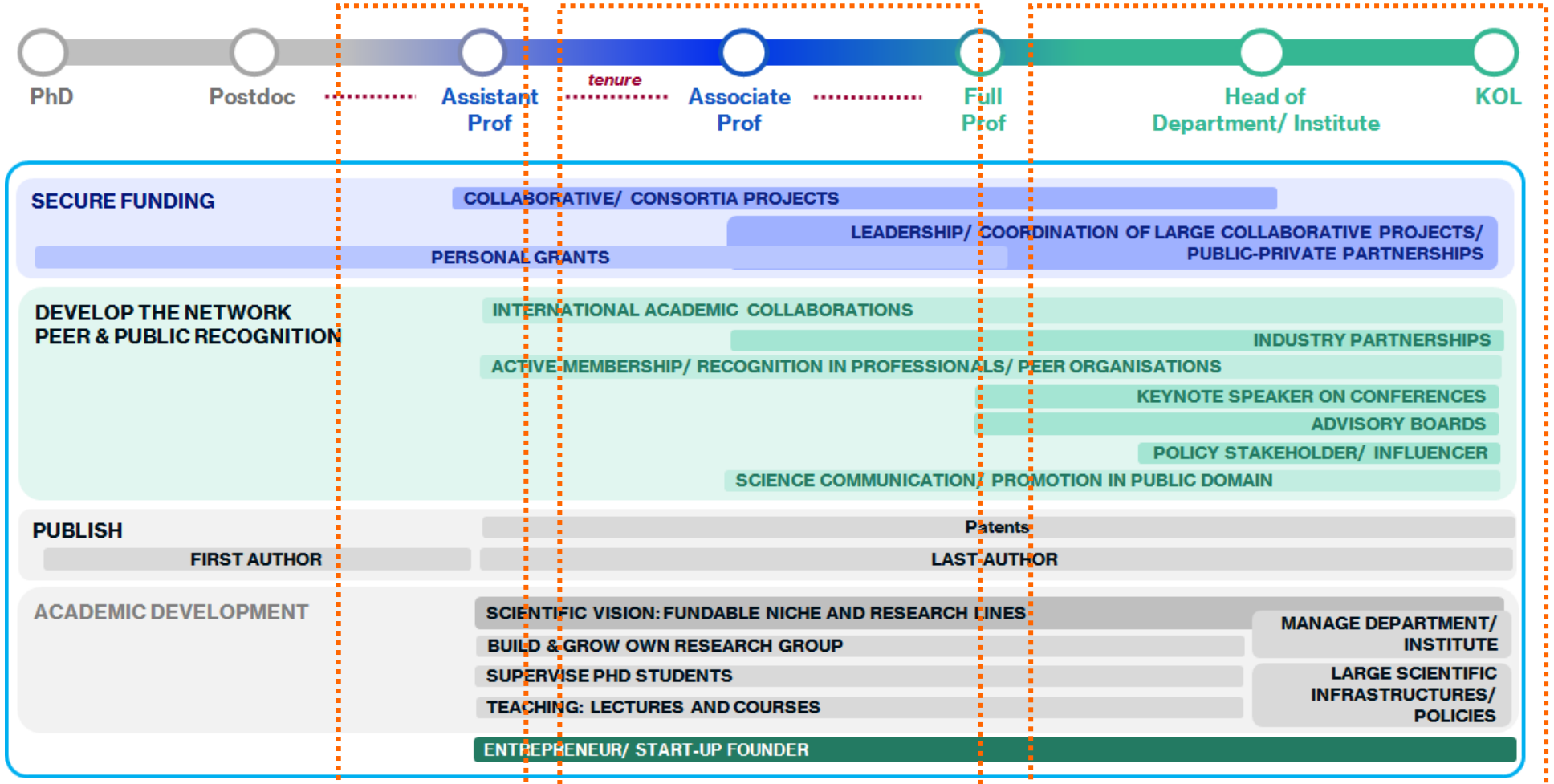
- Eligibility period extended for StG and CoG
- New funding instrument: Choose Europe for Science (“ERC Super Grant” – 7 yrs grant + additional relocation funding)

ERC Research Calls – documents

Part A	Part B1	Part B2	Other

• Online administrative form
• Resources & Time Commitment (budget justification): 2 p
	• Part I of the Scientific proposal: 5 p
	• Curriculum Vitae: 2 p
	• Track-record: 2 p
		• Part II of the Scientific proposal
		- For 2026 call:
		  • 7 p (StG, CoG, AdG)
		  • 10 p (SyG)
		• Annex - Funding ID: (any current grants) no page limit
			• Ethics assessment
			• Budget section
			• Host institution support letters
			• Proof of extension of eligibility (if applicable)

Position of the ERC in the landscape of academic funding



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ERC Research Calls – Eligibility requirements

	Starting Grant	Consolidator Grant	Advanced Grant	Synergy Grant
Call deadline	*14 October 2025 (ERC-StG-2026)*	*~January 2026* (ERC-CoG-2026)*	28 August 2025 (ERC-AdG-2025)	*5 November 2025 (ERC-SyG-2026)*
Target	PIs starting their own independent research team.	PIs consolidating their own independent research team.	PIs already established as research leaders with a recognized track record of research achievements.	2-4 PIs addressing an ambitious research problems that could not be addressed by the individual PI working alone.
Eligibility period	2-7 years after PhD *(will be extended 2027)*	7-12 years after PhD *(will be extended 2027)*	No criteria	No specific criteria
Max. budget	€1.5M + €1M (ex.)	€2M + €1M (ex.)	€2.5M + €1M (ex.)	EUR 10M + €4M (ex.)
Duration	5 years	5 years	5 years	6 years
Commitment	50% + 50%-time EU	40% + 50%-time EU	30% + 50%-time EU	30% + 50%-time EU
	Single applicant			**Consortium**

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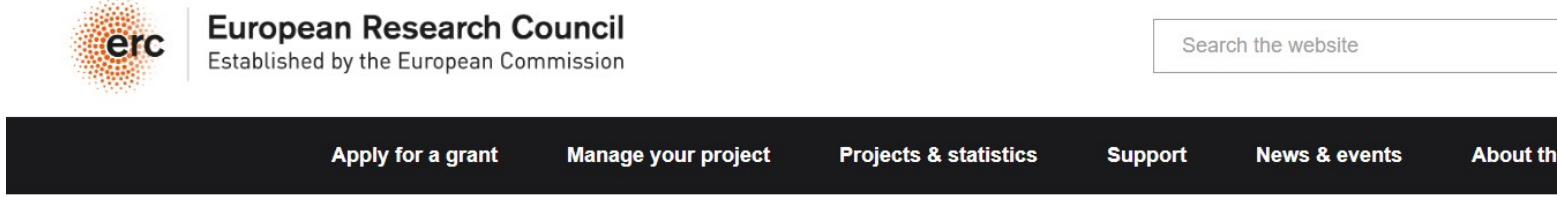
** Deadline to be announced – based on previous years*

Where to find information?

ERC website

https://erc.europa.eu/

- News & events
- ERC work programme
- Information for Applicants
- Panel structures
- Statistics – ERC Dashboard
- Science stories
- Support material (video's)



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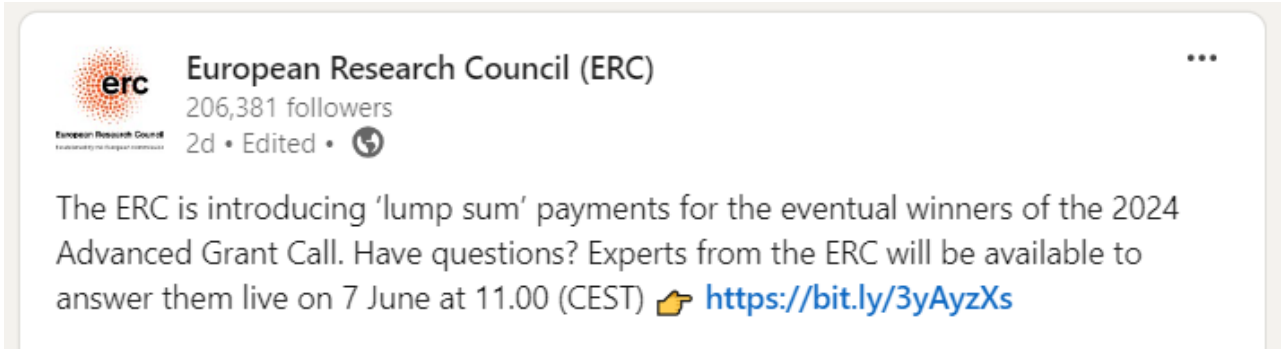

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Where to find information?

ERC dashboard

Insights in previous project data, ERC trends – can help to refine your own proposal

Dashboard of ERC funded projects and evaluated proposals

Funded Projects | Evaluated Proposals

Grant Type | Countries | Domain | Panel | Year

Data last reloaded: 02 June 2024 07:16:20

For any feedback or assistance, please write to the following address: erc-webmaster@ec.europa.eu

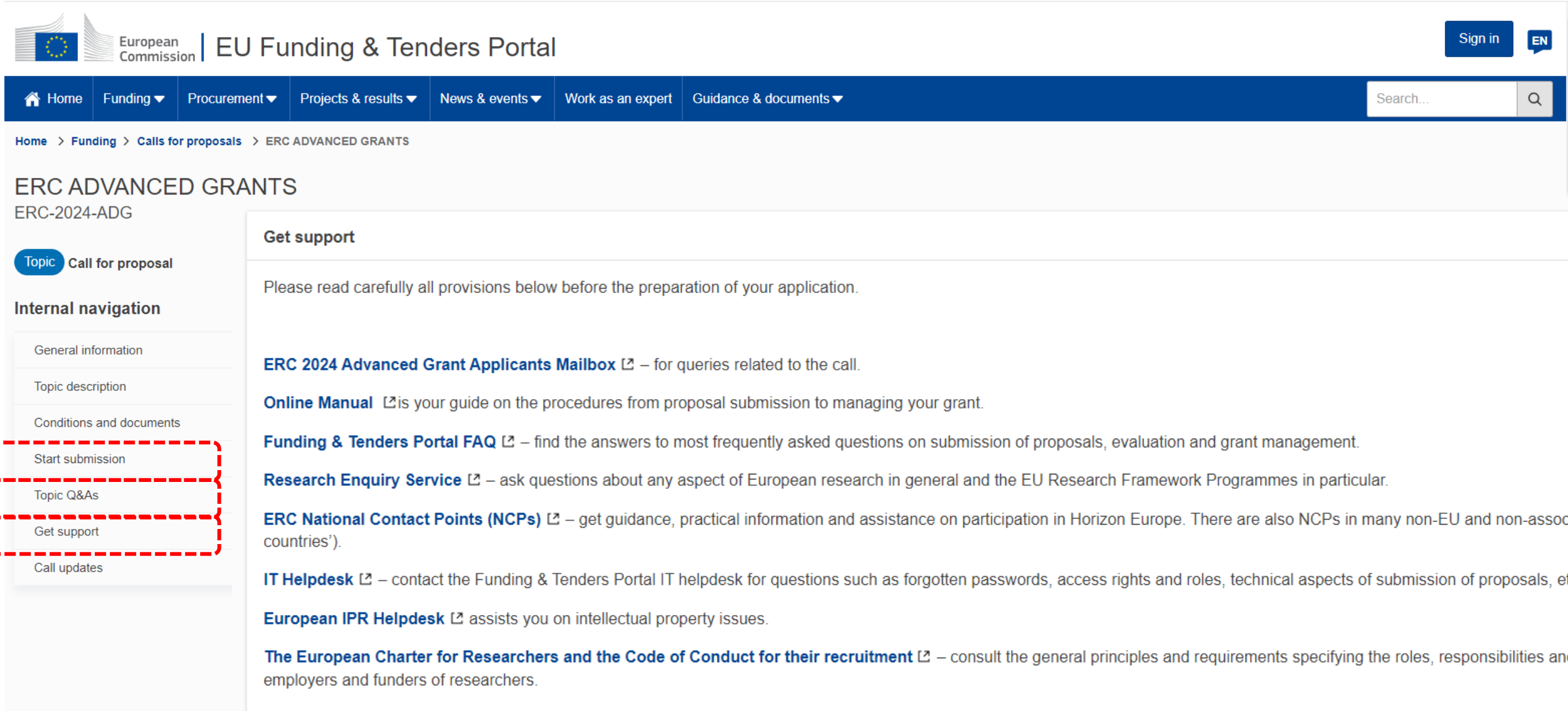
EU contribution	Projects	Countries	Host institutions	Nationalities
€27,077M	15,762	35	1,086	97
Funding received for the projects	*Number of funded projects*	*Host institution countries*	*Number of host institutions*	*Number of principal investigator nationalities*

List of funded projects

Programme	Projec…	Acronym	Project Title	Abstract	Researcher(s)	
Horizon Europe	101118656	4D-BioSTEM	4D scanning transmission electron microscopy f…	Electron Microscopy (EM) has transformed resea…	Carsten Sachse, Henning Stahlberg, Knut Müller-Caspary	Ecole Poly
Horizon Europe	101118631	Archean Park	Relicts of Ancient Cellular Biochemistry in High-…	The biological conversion of inorganic to organi…	Alexander Probst, Ivan Berg, Jens Kallmeyer, Kai-Uwe Hinrichs	Helmholtz
Horizon Europe	101118739	AxoBrain	Mapping the axolotl brain and its regeneration	The Axolotl is an extraordinary model system to …	Barbara Treutlein, Elly Tanaka, Kevin Briggman	Eidgenoes
Horizon Europe	101118919	BATPROTECT	Learning from Bats: New Strategies to Extend He…	The medical, financial, and emotional costs imp…	Bjoern Schumacher, Emma Teeling, Linfa Wang, Michael Hiller	Klinikum [
Horizon Europe	101118999	Cat4CanCenter	Catalysis for Cancer Treatment.	The increased incidence and mortality of tumor…	Alexander Kros, Joost Reek, Leila Akkari	Stichting H
Horizon Europe	101118977	D2Smell	Digitising Smell: From Natural Statistics of Olfac…	This proposal is framed by a technological goal: …	Danica Kragic Jensfelt, Johan Lundstrom, Jonathan Williams, Noam Sobel	Karolinska
Horizon Europe	101118756	DELTA-LANG	The Delta of Language	Mental life fluctuates, changing from moment t…	Brita Elvevåg, Iris Sommer, Philipp Homan, Wolfram Hinzen	Academis
Horizon Europe	101118768	DEMI	Directed Evolution of Metastable Electrocatalyst…	It is our aim to transform the research field of el…	Alfred Ludwig, Jan Rossmeisl, Karl Mayrhofer, Matthias Arenz	Forschung
Horizon Europe	101118866	DynaTrans	Transcription in 4D: the dynamic interplay betw…	During mammalian embryogenesis, key events i…	Denis Duboule, Gasper Tkacik, Thomas Gregor	College De
Horizon Europe	101118626	EndoTheranostics	Multi-sensor Eversion Robot Towards Intelligent…	Colorectal cancer (CRC) represents a significant …	Alberto Arezzo, Bruno Siciliano, Kaspar Althoefer, Sebastien Ourselin	C.R.E.A.T.E
Horizon Europe	101118521	EPIC	Unravelling the eukaryotic post-transcriptional r…	Genomes encode instructions for cells to regula…	Julien Gagneur, Kevin Verstrepen, Vicente Pelechano	Karolinska
Horizon Europe	101118931	GRAIL	Time-resolved imaging of membrane transporte…	Without biological membranes, there would be …	Arwen Pearson, Dirk Slotboom, Irene Fernandez-Cuesta, Wiktor Szymanski	Academis

Where to find information?

Funding and Tender portal



Where to find information?

Got more questions?

Contact:

Research Support Office

Slovenian National Contact Point for ERC

Time for a short break

Back 10:15h

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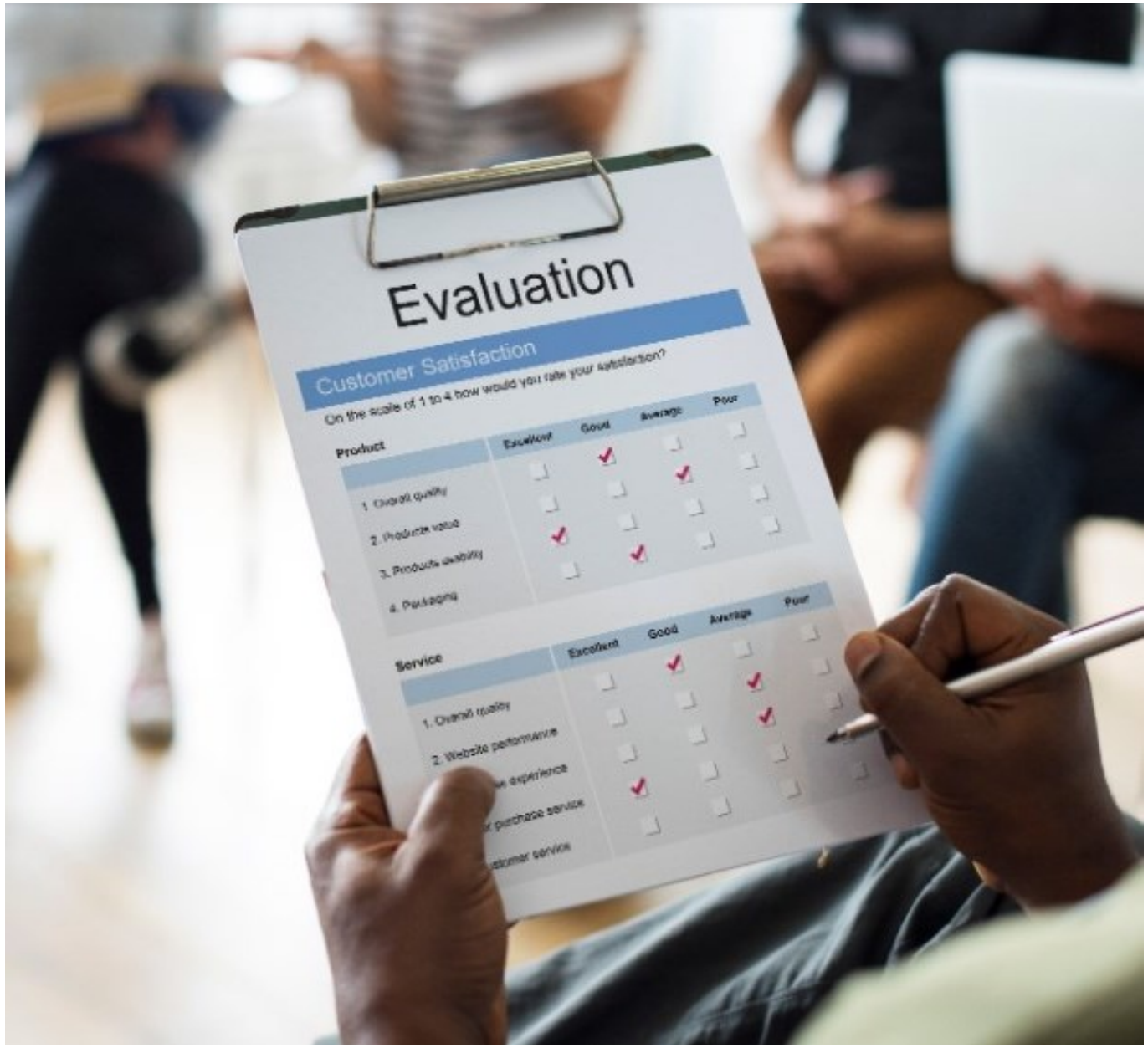
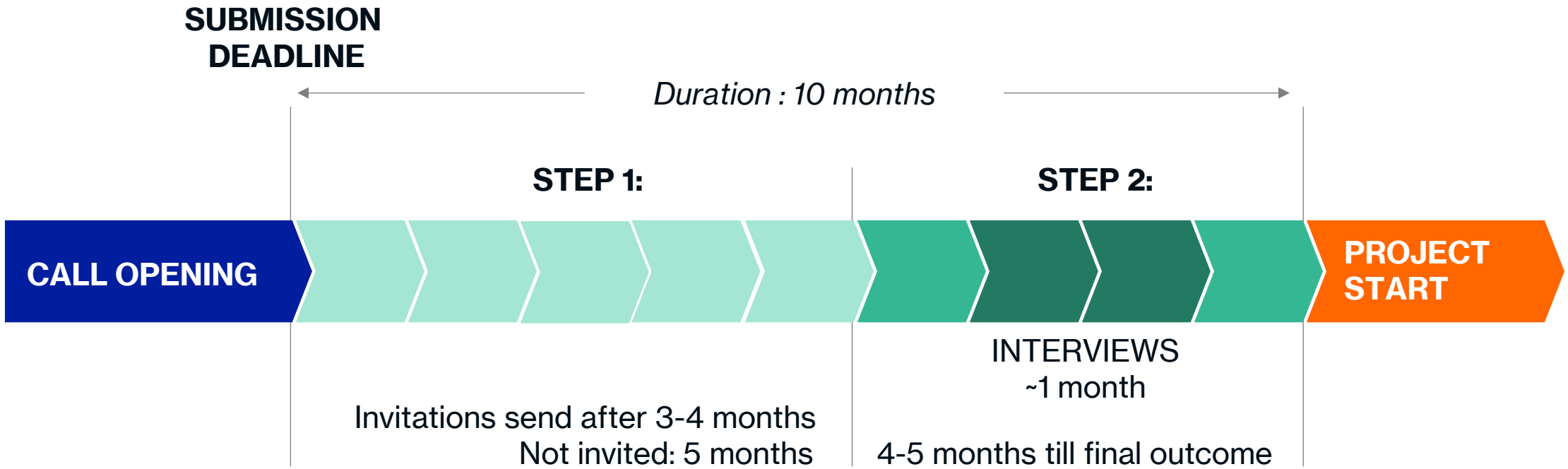
Know your audience



ERC – evaluation process

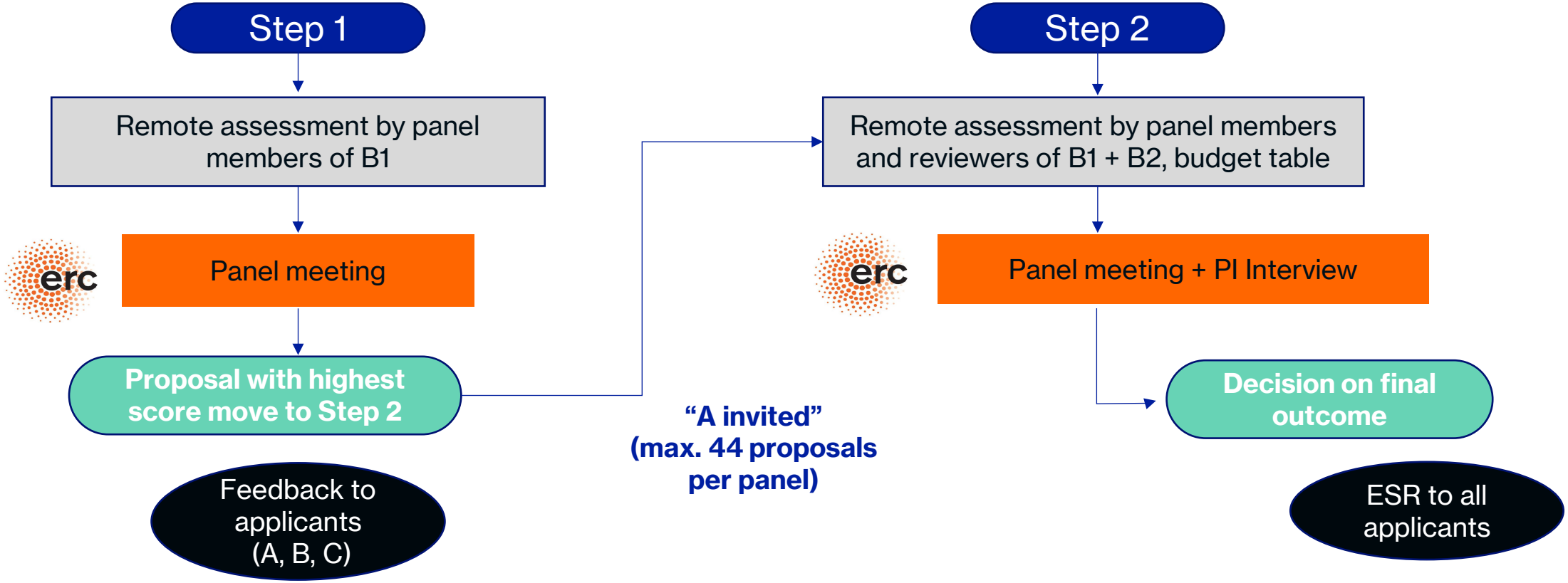
You need to be patient...



Evaluation process

ERC – evaluation process (StG, CoG, AdG)

After eligibility check, the evaluation process is based on two steps*:



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* (SyG – 3 step procedure)

Know the audience

Discussion: Who are we writing the application for?

- What is their background/ profile/level of expertise?

Who is going to review the proposal?

Panel members (can be non-experts in your topic)

- Panel members are selected based on **scientific excellence**: ~375 members/call, ~14% outside EU.
- Each panel is lead by a **Panel Chair (published)**; conformed by **11-16 members (not published)**. No more than 2 members from the same country are allowed.
- Panel members change between consecutive years, but **~25% members repeat** every other year.
- In case of **cross-panel** the proposal will be evaluated by members of selected panels.

External reviewers (independent external scientific experts)

- Reviewers are recruited by panel members based on the **topics of proposals**: ~2000 reviewers/call.
- Up to **3 reviewers can be excluded** from the evaluation: add names and affiliations in Part A.

ERC – evaluation panel structure

There are in total **28 panels**, divided in **3 domains**: **11 panels in Physical Sciences and Engineering (PE)**, 9 panels in Life Sciences (LS), and 8 panels in Social Sciences and Humanities (SH)

Physical Sciences and Engineering

- PE1 Mathematics
- PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter
- PE3 Condensed Matter Physics
- PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences
- PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials
- PE6 Computer Science and Informatics
- PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering
- PE8 Products and Processes Engineering
- PE9 Universe Sciences
- PE10 Earth System Science
- PE11 Materials Engineering

ERC – evaluation panel structure

There are in total **28 panels**, divided in **3 domains**: 11 panels in Physical Sciences and Engineering (PE), **9 panels in Life Sciences (LS),** and 8 panels in Social Sciences and Humanities (SH)

Life Sciences

- LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions
- LS2 Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems
- LS3 Cell Biology, Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration
- LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing
- LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System
- LS6 Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy
- LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases
- LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution
- LS9 Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering

ERC – evaluation panel structure

There are in total **28 panels**, divided in **3 domains**: 11 panels in Physical Sciences and Engineering (PE), 9 panels in Life Sciences (LS), and **8 panels in Social Sciences and Humanities (SH)**

Social Sciences and Humanities

- SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations
- SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems
- SH3 The Social World and Its Interactions
- SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity
- SH5 Texts and Concepts
- SH6 The Study of the Human Past
- SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space
- SH8 Studies of Cultures and Arts

ERC – evaluation scores

Step 1:

A invited = proposal is of excellent quality and will pass to Step 2

A not invited = proposal is of excellent quality but not ranked sufficiently high to pass to Step 2

B = proposal is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to Step 2

C = proposal is not of sufficient quality to pass to Step 2

Step 2:

A = proposal fully meets the ERC's excellence criterion and is recommended for funding. project will be funded on a priority order based on its rank, if sufficient funds are available.

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

Evaluation process

ERC evaluation score & resubmission eligibility

Restrictions on resubmission: **outcome scores affect eligibility to submit:**

	Step 1 Outcome	Eligibility in current call (2026)	Step 2 outcome	Eligibility in current call (2026)
-2 year call (2024)	**A**	Yes	**A**	Yes, if not funded
	B	Yes	**B**	Yes
	C	No		
-1 year call (2025)	**A**	Yes	**A**	Yes, if not funded
	B	No	**B**	Yes
	C	No		

*Scoring **A in Step 1** ensures participation in next year call, in case the project is not awarded in the current call, otherwise a restriction period of 2 years applies.*

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Evaluation process

ERC StG/CoG/AdG – evaluation criteria (2026-2027)

1. RESEARCH PROJECT - *Ground-breaking nature and ambition of the research project*

Step 1:

- To what extent does the proposed research address scientific questions?
- To what extent are the objectives ambitious and will it advance the frontier of knowledge?

Step 2:

- To what extent does the research address important scientific questions?
- To what extent are the objectives ambitious and will it advance the frontier of knowledge?
- To what extent are research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?
- To what extent are the timescales, resources adequate and properly justified?

-> Reviewers provide written feedback to support the evaluation/score.

ERC StG/CoG/AdG – evaluation criteria (2026-2027)

2. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR - *Intellectual capacity and creativity of the PI*

Step 1 & 2:

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

-> Scored as Exceptional/Excellent/Very Good/Good/Non-competitive

Evaluation process

Evaluation report

[Panel: LS9, Page 1, 14072023]

Step 2 Evaluation Report

CONFIDENTIAL

Call reference	ERC-2023-STG
Activity	HORIZON ERC Grants
Funding scheme	ERC STARTING GRANTS
Panel name	
Proposal No.	
Acronym	
Applicant Name	
Title	

PANEL SCORE AND RANKING RANGE

Final panel score: A (fully meets the ERC's excellence criterion and is recommended for funding if sufficient funds are available)	**Ranking range*:** 44%-46% For your information, only the top 35% of the proposals evaluated in panel LS9 in Step 2 were funded.

* Ranking range of your proposal out of the proposals evaluated by the panel in Step 2, in percent, from 1% for the highest ranked proposals to 100% for the lowest ranked.

PANEL COMMENT

This evaluation report contains the final recommendations and score awarded by the ERC review panel during the second step of the ERC Starting Grant review and the ranking range. The discussion of the panel was conducted within the context of prior reviews submitted by ERC panel members and external referees and the interview with the applicant.

The panel closely examined all the individual review reports and, while not necessarily subscribing to each and every opinion expressed, found that they provide a fair overall assessment. The comments of the individual reviewers are included in this report.

Includes:

- Overview panel score and ranking
- Panel comment
- Individual reviewer feedback (n=7-8)

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Common reasons for Rejections

Common reasons for rejection at Step 1:

- Eligibility criteria not met
- Research sounds incremental and not ground-breaking
- The scope of the project is not clearly focused, either too narrow or too broad
- PI's track record and scientific independence are not sufficient
- The description of the challenges that are addressed is not clear, and how this research could help to address these challenges is not explicitly described
- Objectives are not clearly defined, or ambitious

Common reasons for rejection in Step 2:

- The project is not high-risk gain
- Evaluators are not convinced of the feasibility of the project
- Risk management is insufficient
- Resources are not justified
- The work plan is not detailed
- The novelty and impact of the project are moderate
- No information was provided on the recruitment of personnel for the project
- The timeline is too ambitious to achieve all objectives
- Limited insights into scientific approaches and methods
- The project does not promise to produce lot of valuable insights

Training exercise

Understanding evaluator comments

- Take 3-min to reflect on the evaluator's comments (next slide):
  - *How will you address each of these comment from evaluators and improve your application for resubmission?*
- Let's discuss our recommendations

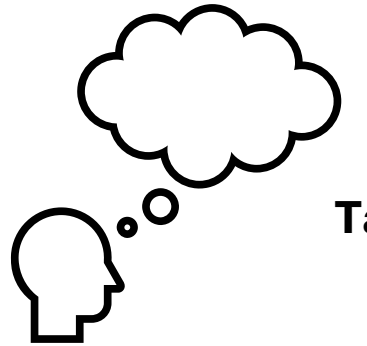
Exercise: Understanding evaluators comments

Reason for rejection
For research proposal
1. The scope is too narrow.
2. The scope is too broad
3. Incremental sounding research
4. The work is not detailed enough
5. Insufficient risk management
For PI track record
6. Insufficient track record
7. Insufficient (potential for) independence

How will you address each of these comment from evaluators and improve your application for resubmission?

E.g.

- Will you focus on B1 or B2?
- Will you focus on changing on Objectives or work packages?



Take 3 minutes to think about it

Exercise answers:

Common reasons	How to improve
For research proposal	
Scope is too narrow	Broaden the objectives. Explain how the project outcomes will have great impact (in developing new concept, techniques) for the scientific field, how other areas of research will benefit also in the long-term
Scope is too broad	Rethink the aims of the project and define clear research questions. Include testable hypothesis with follow-up concrete objectives that align with delivering concrete deliverable.
Incremental sounding research	Rethink the big picture, avoid make the proposal sound as mere follow-up on previous research. Use wording like “first-time”, “novel”, “innovative” etc
The work is not detailed enough	Add in detailed WP-tables, provide sufficient detail and importantly, define milestones (enables the evaluator to assess feasibility of your plans). Add a timeline figure (Gannt table)
Insufficient risk management	Describe risks clearly, add multiple risks (1-2 per WP) and add for each risk a convincing mitigation strategy.
For PI track record	
Insufficient track record	In case key publication is not yet in press/published: consider applying when key publication manuscripts as first-author or corresponding author are submitted or close to being published
Insufficient (potential for) independence	Highlight leadership skills (mentoring students, post-docs etc), showcase any projects led as PI, try to differentiate from the PhD- and Post-doc supervisor

Evaluation process

How to win the evaluator

- Exciting new idea, unexpected result/insight --- **Wow factor!**
- Compelling rational, **high scientific impact**
- Well organized and structured (**evaluator/reader can find information easily**), easy to read

<u>More general (proposal)</u>

- Focused application, testing original ideas, clearly defined objectives
- Expected outcomes clearly defined – potential impact clearly described and supported with data
- Good match with call requirements / what the subsidy program wants
- Feasible work plan (includes solid risk assessment)
- **Confidence in PI** (this is *the* person to do this)
- **Confidence in project plan** – preliminary data is shown,
  all expertise is there, budget is realistic

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Assess fit with ERC

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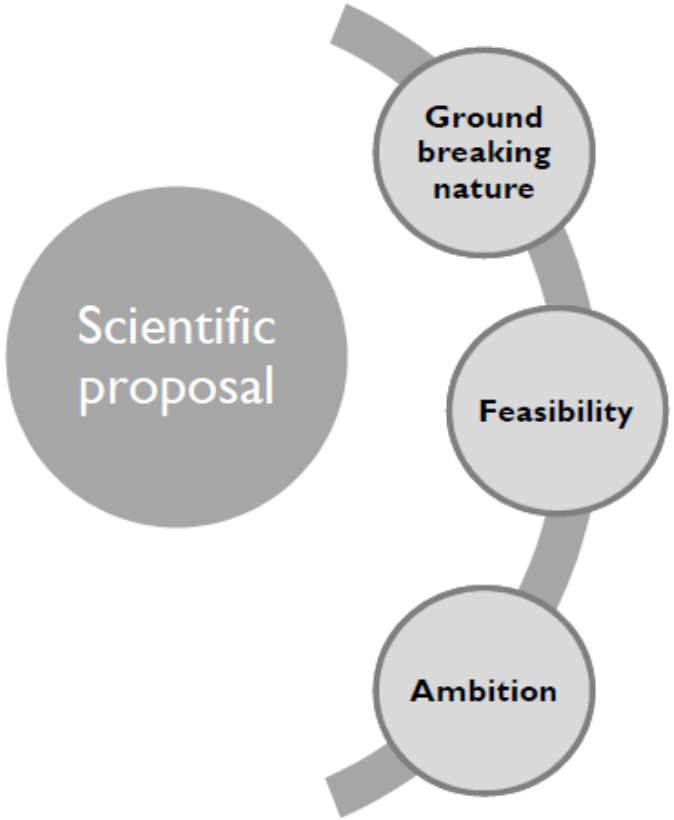
How do I know if I am ready?

ERC – key elements to assess fit



Ground-breaking research:

- Will the project outcome change the scientific field dramatically and addresses important scientific questions?

Ambition:

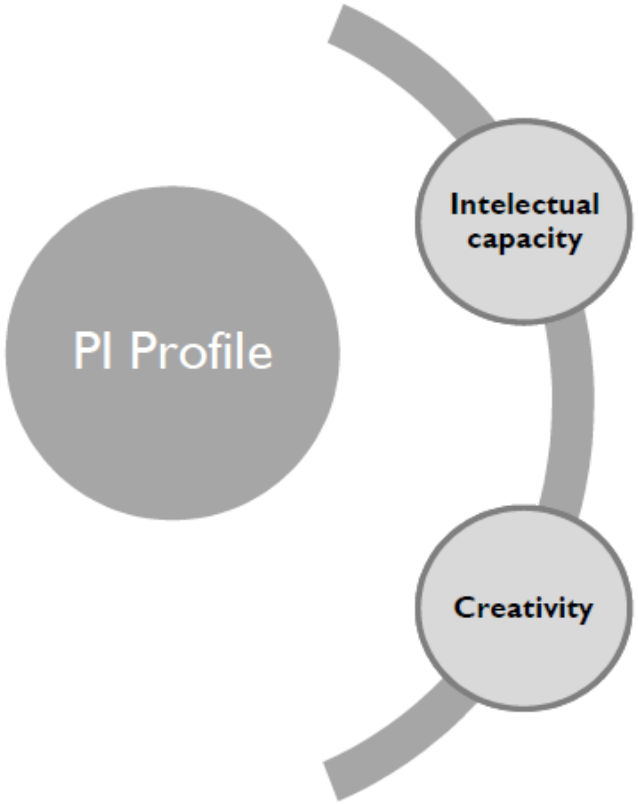
- Are the objectives of the project ambitious (beyond the state-of-the-art)?
- Will the project advance the frontier of knowledge?

Feasibility:

- Are the proposed research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?
- Are the timeline, resources adequate?

How do I know if I am ready?

ERC – key elements to assess fit



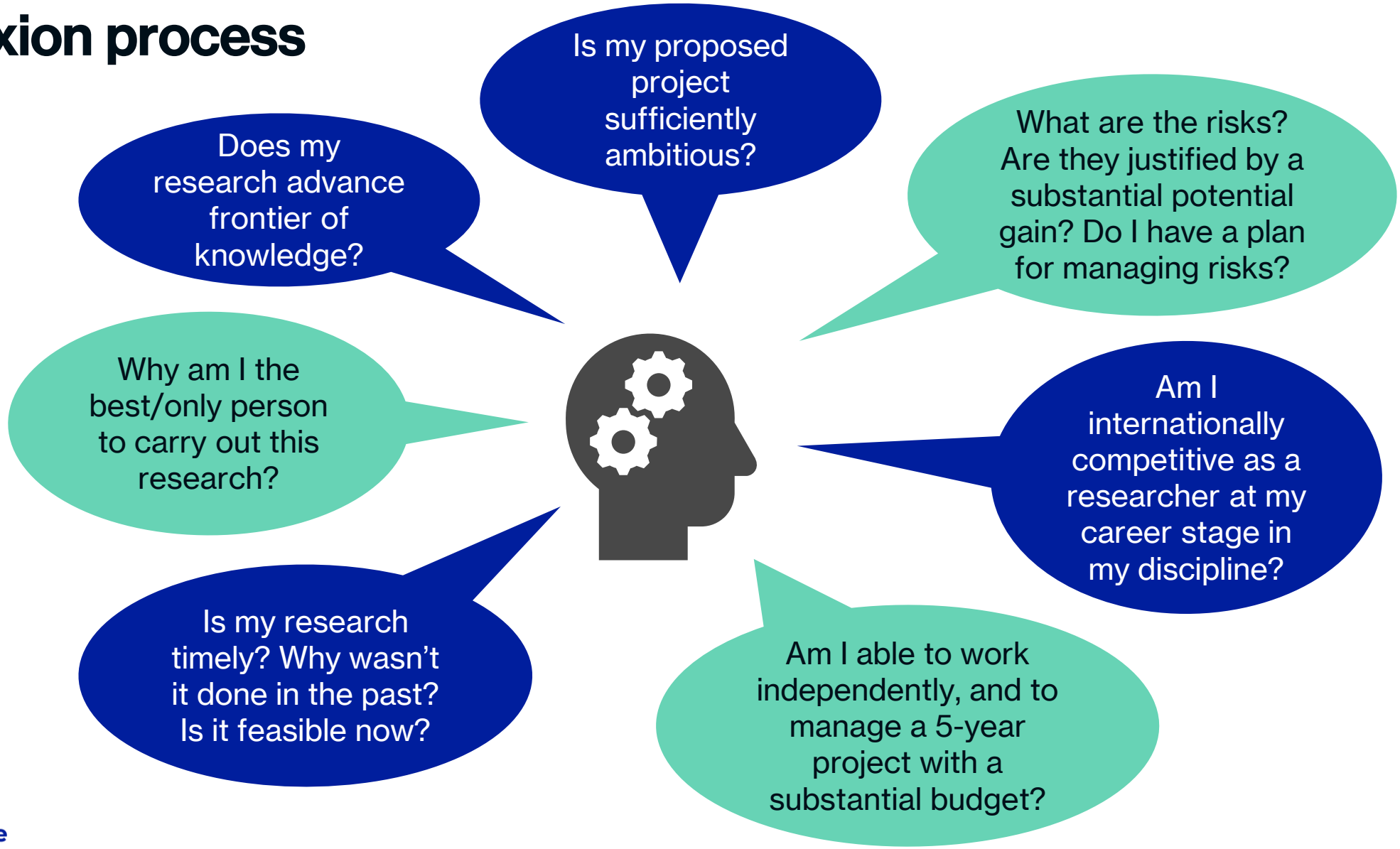
PI's Track Record:

Are you the best/only person to carry out this research?

- Show your ability to conduct ground-breaking research that goes beyond the state-of-the-art, implementing new ideas and methods
- Show that you are independent and are creative / an original thinker
- Show that you have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project

How do I know if I am ready?

Reflexion process



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Tool to assess the fit

Conduct a SWOT analysis

STRENGTHS

Groundbreaking concept (ERC hallmark)

Strong novelty compared to the state-of-the-art

Unique track record or access to specialized data, infrastructure, or networks

Interdisciplinary angle that positions the project as pioneering

WEAKNESSES

Research plan too incremental or descriptive rather than ambitious.

Preliminary data insufficient to convince reviewers of feasibility.

Weak risk mitigation strategies (important since ERC embraces high risk).

OPPORTUNITIES

Scientific community is ready for disruption in this area

Urgency / relevance (societal)

Scientific field is at an inflection point (e.g. recent advances in AI opens entirely new directions for hypothesis testing)

THREATS

Strong international competition with similar project ideas

Rapidly evolving field – risk of being scooped before or during project

How do I know if I am ready?

SWOT-analysis - list of categories to consider

Categories	Example question to ask yourself
Scientific idea	*Is my research idea incremental or groundbreaking?* *Will it go beyond the state-of-the-art in my field – advance frontier of knowledge?*
Methodology/infrastructure	*How will I tackle my research question?* *Are my plans feasible? What do I need to make them work?*
Trends in research	*What is the current state-of-the-art in my field?* *How will my project distinguish itself from my direct competitors?* *Why has my project not been done in that past?*
Urgency	*What important challenges are currently going on in my scientific field and society?* *What elements make that this is the right time for my proposal?*
Impact	*What is the impact of my research (within the field and broader impact)?* *What are the gains of my research if successful? (high gain?)* *Who will benefit from my research project?*

How do I know if I am ready?

SWOT-analysis - list of categories to consider

Categories	Explanatory Question
Character	*What drives me as a researcher? As a person?* *Why am I the best/only person to carry out this research?*
Track record | CV	*Is my track record/CV competitive at my career stage in my discipline?* *Are there other elements that define me – that show I contribute to my field/to my*
Lab position	*Am I able to work independently, and manage a long project? – what would I need for this?*
Output	*Is my track record competitive at my career stage in my discipline?* *Are there other outputs (than publications) that define me as a researcher e.g. a patent application, public outreach activities, science education activities?*
Assets	*Is there state-of-the-art lab facility at my host institute that I can include in my project?*
Collaborations	*Is there particular expertise that is new to me, for which I will need to find collaborators?* *Am I collaborating sufficiently independently from my supervisor?*

Training exercise

Project outline check

- Take 5-min to reflect on the SWOT analysis done by your co-worker (next slide):
  - *What would be your advice for your co-worker?*
  - *Would you go for it?*
- Let’s discuss our recommendations

SWOT analysis of your co-worker (potential ERC-proposal idea) – *Would you go for it?*

STRENGHT

Topic (new insights)

(Unique) position of the project

Institute (unique facilities)

WEAKNESS

Lack of prelim data

Collaborators

Lack of high-impact publications

Poor previous achievements (academic)

S **W**

T **O**

THREAT

Existing funding (low)

Institute (not top-of-class)

OPPORTUNITY

Urgency

Topic (relevance for society)

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Time for lunch

Back 12:45h

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Writing an ERC application

Key Aspects

-timeline
-concept building

ERC Research Calls – documents

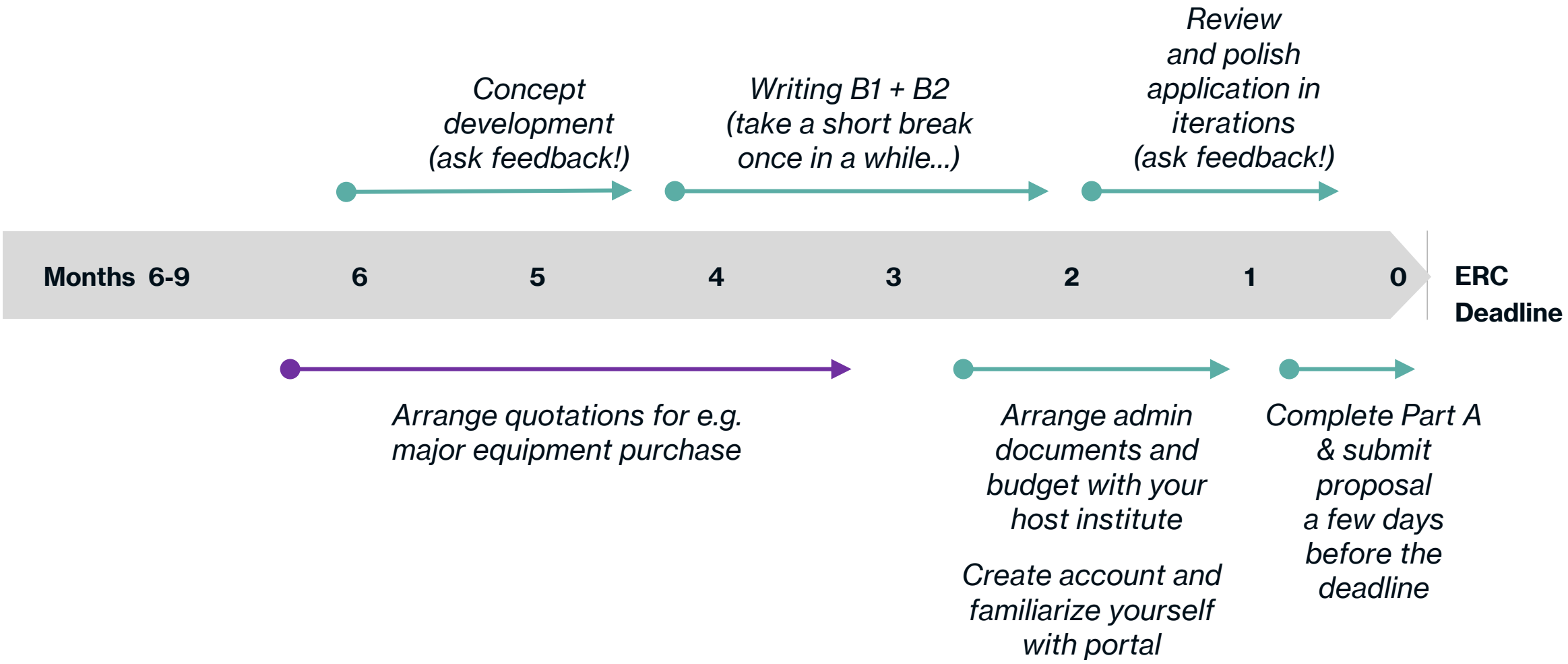
Part A	Part B1	Part B2	Other

• Online administrative form
• Resources & Time Commitment (budget justification): 2 p
	• Part I of the Scientific proposal: 5 p
	• Curriculum Vitae: 2 p
	• Track-record: 2 p
		• Part II of the Scientific proposal
		- For 2026 call:
		  • 7 p (StG, CoG, AdG)
		  • 10 p (SyG)
		• Annex - Funding ID: (any current grants) no page limit
			• Ethics assessment
			• Budget section
			• Host institution support letters

Start preparing early!

- Start 5-6 months in advance
- Prepare a detailed planning, inform the people involved about it, and update when needed
- Develop a concept/outline of your proposal (bullet-point draft or mind map of the key elements of your proposal); ask colleagues, mentors, peers for feedback
- Start with the administration-part early and get in touch with those you need at your HI early (grant office, finance)
- Ask (friendly) reviewers (e.g. mentors, colleagues, or ERC advisors at your host institute)
- Submit well before the deadline

Suggested timeline for application preparation



Key tips before starting writing

- **Use ERC datahub strategically:** explore previous ERC projects to benchmark your proposal, identify successful patterns, and discover interdisciplinary opportunities. Tip: search by panel, year, or keywords to align your proposal with what ERC panels favour.
- **Leverage gender equality incentives:** support for women PIs is growing. ERC offers 18-month eligibility extensions per child for women who took parental leave. 2023 saw a record 43% starting grants awarded to women! Tip: highlight parental leave and share your narrative – it matters.
- **Choose your panel wisely:** panel fit can make or break you. Analyze panel compositions from past years (2–4 cycles back). Talk to past awardees in your field for insights. Tip: For cross-disciplinary proposals, weigh dual-panel evaluation carefully – it offers reach but adds complexity.
- **Use additional budget if necessary:** You can request additional funding up to €1 or 4 million beyond the set limits for start-up costs and major equipment purchases.

Concept building

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Show original thinking, relevance, feasibility and link to impact

Global problem and challenges (WHY?)
Supports: Urgency, relevant, and ambition.

Solution to tackle scientific Challenge (HOW?)
Supports: Excellence (vision), fit, and ambition.

Overall Aim – Hypothesis to objective to research plan (WHAT? WHY YOU?)
Supports: timeliness, excellence (approach), originality, unique position / skills.

Approach – demonstrating feasibility (HOW REAL?)
Supports: timeliness, excellence (approach), feasibility

Impact (WHAT'S NEXT).
Supports: Relevance, impact.

Project results

Developing ambitious objectives

Objectives: DOs and DONTs

- ✓ **Make them concise and high-level** – focus on what will be achieved, not on detailed tasks.
- ✓ **Use strong, active verbs** – e.g., develop, establish, demonstrate, uncover, validate.
- ✓ **Show progression** – objectives should build logically toward impact (e.g., Design → Develop → Validate).
- ✓ **Highlight novelty** – use words that strike novelty in your field.
- ✓ **Keep them bold yet achievable** – ambitious enough to push beyond the state-of-the-art, but still feasible in scope.

- x **Writing them as Tasks or methods** – e.g., “test X samples” or “run Y experiments”
- x **Don’t mix outcomes with activities**: e.g.: “transform drug development” is an outcome not activity;
- x **Too many objectives** – stick to ~3–5 strong ones; too many looks unfocused.
- x **Too broad in scope**– e.g. develop, optimize and validate in one objective

ERC concept development

How project goes beyond state of the art

Explain the **current state-of-the-art** and its **limitations**

- Technical
- Conceptual

Project's **solution** and **project objectives**

Aspects that **go beyond state-of-the art** (novel elements, ground-breaking)

Gap analysis

Technological gap- e.g. Lack of sensitive assay

Knowledge gap – e.g. Lack of known molecular targets

Align gap analysis with value proposition of the innovation

Novel and ground-breaking elements

- New diagnostic assay with unprecedented sensitivity
- First biomarker panel to predict disease occurrence
- Identification of novel molecular targets

- Emphasize where the project will really make the difference!
- Focus: beyond the project (directly after + many years after)

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Key differences in focus: B1 vs B2 (2026-2027)

B1
Ground-breaking idea and overall approach

“is this a great idea that would be worth pursuing?”

- The current state of knowledge
- Scientific question and the objectives of the project
- The overall approach or research strategy to reach the goals of the project
- Beyond state-of-the-art aspects
- Explain how the expected results of the project will advance the field, change the thinking about it, or open new avenues.

B2
Implementation plan and feasibility

“can this idea be pursued realistically, and if so, in the way and with the approach that the applicant proposes?”

- The implementation, with details of the research methodology
- Experimental plan - work package description
- Potential hurdles and risks, and suggestions for contingency plans
- Justify the approaches and methods and give background on those where necessary

Example B1: *Self-Disinfecting Water Bottles*

Ground-breaking idea and overall approach

- **Global Problem:** Unsafe drinking water → >500,000 deaths/year.
- **Challenges: Broader:** Current approaches (filter/chemicals) don't work. **Specific:** Antimicrobials- promising avenue but having high durability, efficacy, scalability is a technically challenging
- **Vision:** Self-disinfecting reusable water bottle using antimicrobial coatings
- **Hypothesis**: Antimicrobial coatings + UV sterilization can ensure continuous microbial safety.
- **Approach/aim/Objectives: 1)** Create antimicrobial + UV prototypes. 2)Demonstrate chemical-free, continuous disinfection. 3) Establish eco-friendly, scalable platform.
- **Novelty / Beyond State-of-the-Art:** Current solutions = filters/chemicals; assays for microbial ones lacking- here → active biomaterials + embedded UV for continuous disinfection.
- **Impact:** Paradigm shift in water safety, reduced disease burden & plastic waste. Also opening new avenues for other scientific domains..

➢ *B1 tells "***the big vision and paradigm-shifting strategy"** using advanced biomaterials for safe drinking water everywhere

Example B2: *Self-Disinfecting Water Bottles*

Feasibility and implementation plan

- **Briefly scientific hurdle in solving problem:** Lack of microbial assays, material stability testing missing, limited toxicity profiling
- **Technical / Implementation Challenges:– 1)** Coating degradation under repeated use.2) Energy efficiency of miniaturized UV-LEDs.–3) Preventing nanoparticle/metal leaching.–
- **Approach / Workplan (Link to objectives)**
  - WP1: Prototype design (UV-cap + coatings). – links to Obj1
  - WP2: Lab efficacy (E. coli, Salmonella).- links to Obj2
  - WP3: Durability, biofilm resistance, toxicity.- links to Obj 3
  - WP4: Field validation.- link to Obj 4
- **Timeline/Deliverables/Milestones:** Prototype (Y1), durability (Y2), field validation (Y3).
- **Risk Mitigation:–** UV weak → add photocatalytic nanoparticles.– Coating unstable → hybrid polymer blends.– Low usability → ergonomic redesign.

➢ *B2 tells **the "how":** detailed methodology, structured workplan, and feasibility*

Research plan -> Objectives

Remember, it should all link together...

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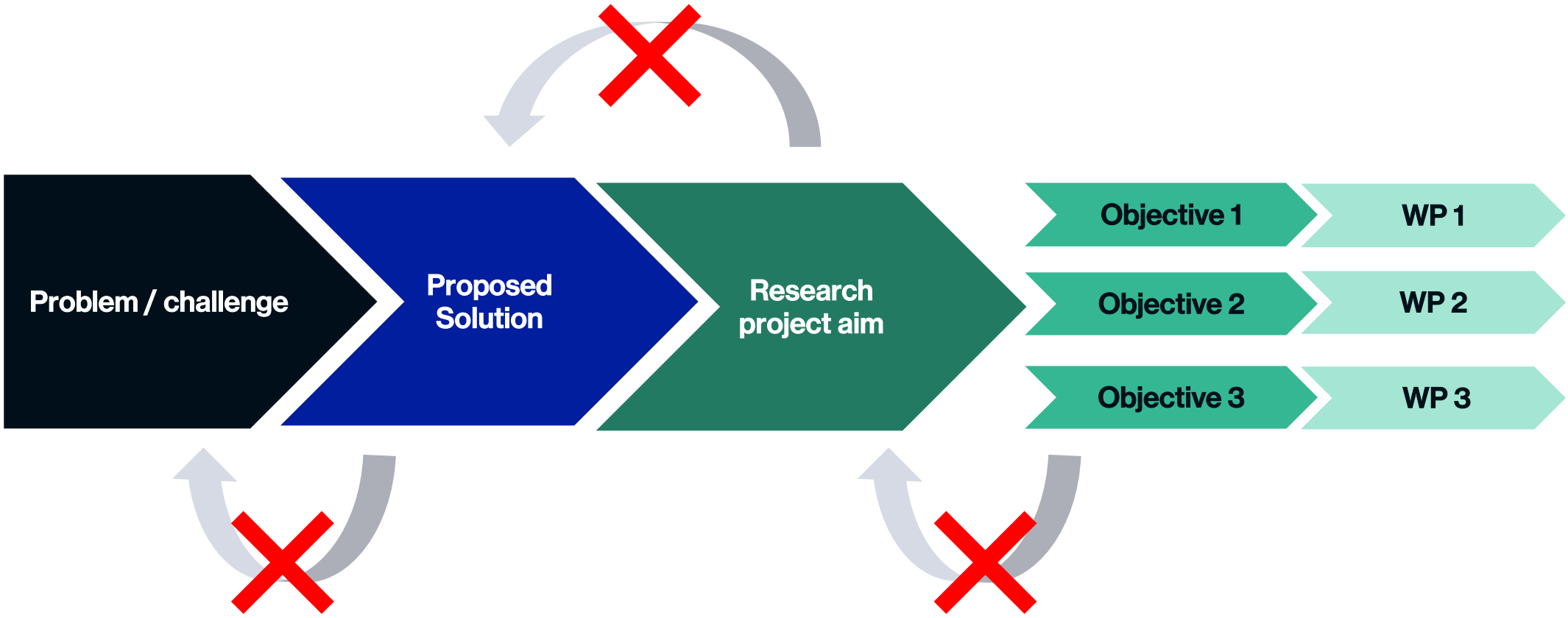
Research plan -> Aim & Objectives

Where we see it often goes wrong



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Building the ERC storyline – B2

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Part B2

Section a & Section b

Template instructions are minimal. Only: it can be max 7 pages, excluding references.

ERC Starting Grant 2026
Part B2[1]
(not evaluated in Step 1)

Sections (a) and (b) of Part B2 should not exceed 7 pages. References do not count towards the page limits.

Text highlighted in grey should be deleted.
Please respect the following formatting constraints: Times New Roman, Arial or similar, at least font size 11, margins (2.0 cm side and 1.5 cm top and bottom), single line spacing.

Section a. State-of-the-art and objectives

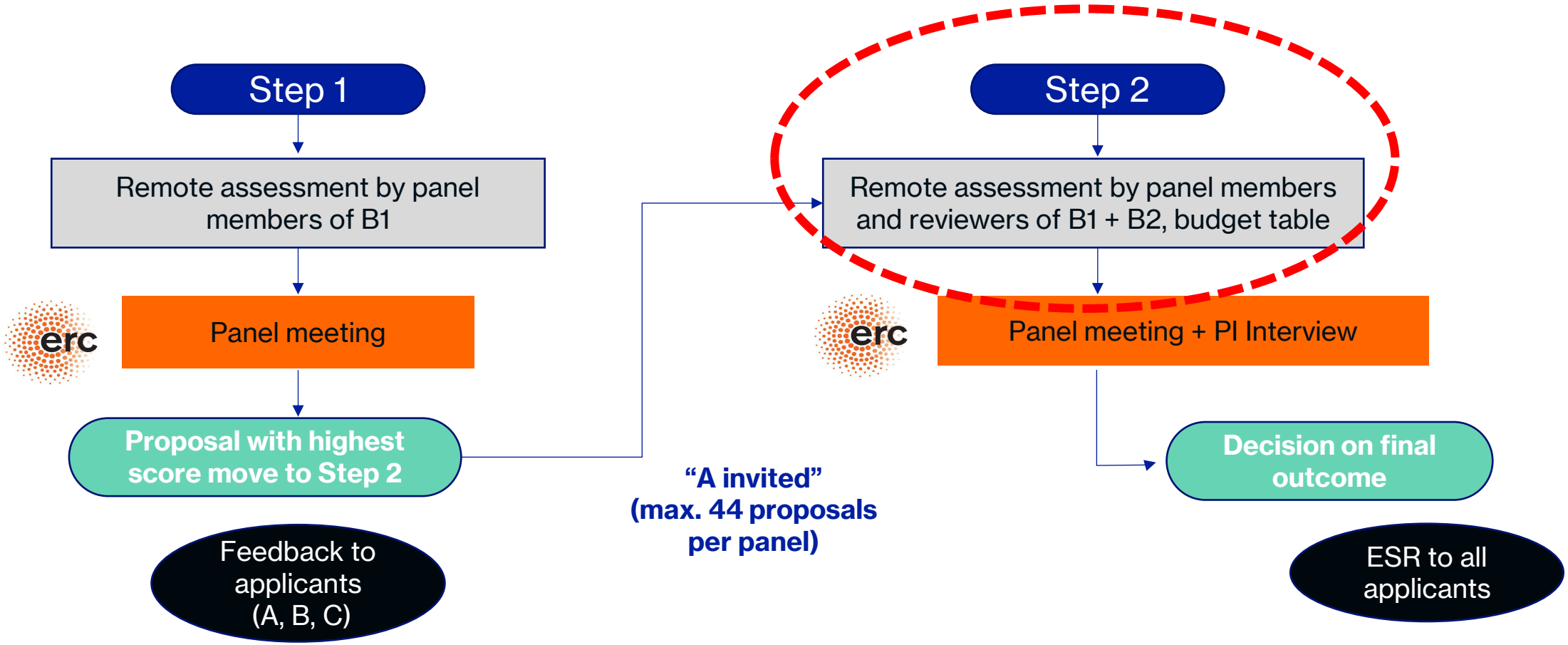
Section b. Methodology

Only two subheadings provided:

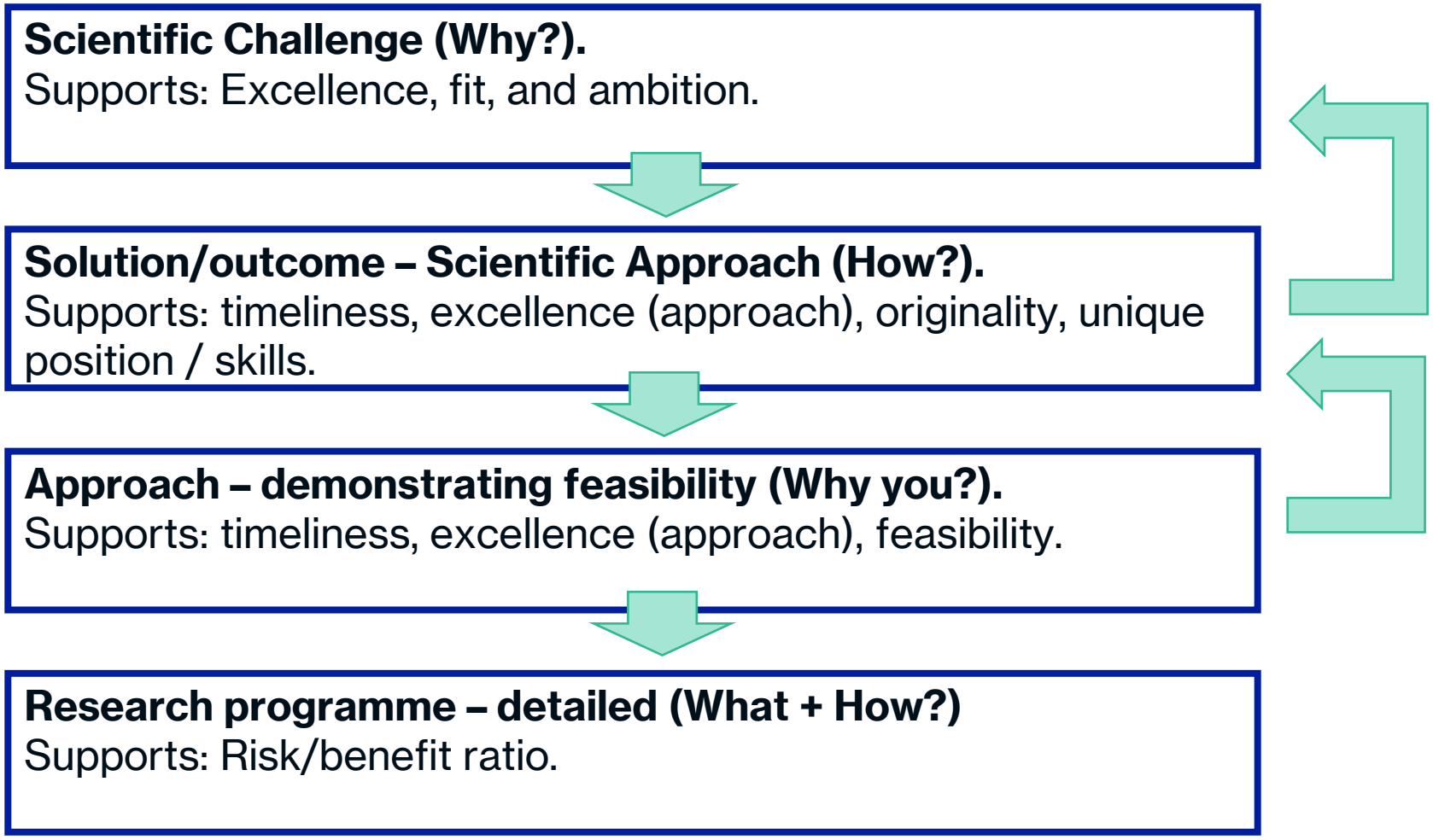
you can go freestyle!

Part B2

Writing of B2 - remember the audience!



Objective of B2 is to show feasibility and the “how”



Section a - suggested flow (1)

Compared to B1, focus in B2 = more on the describing the scientific challenge and knowledge gaps;
target audience is your scientific peer (the expert)!

Section a: State-of-the-art and objectives

a.1. Challenge and state-of-the-art

Scope of the challenge (max. 1 page)

Answer the questions below with one short paragraph for each:

- *What is the current (scientific/societal) challenge?*
- *What happens if we do not address this challenge?*
- *Are there any examples you can give to demonstrate the importance of this problem?*
- *What is the key gap in the current knowledge - Explain which major bottleneck that hampers further development in the field (the one that you will provide an answer for with your project)*

Challenge statement (in text box):

Summarize in 1 sentence the core challenge that you aim to solve

- *How do you suggest solving this problem?*

State of the art description

Critical section: the opportunity to differentiate the project and show it is not incremental, but a major leap forward!

Important:

- Provides **relevant overview** of the current state in your field. Include **references** to e.g. recent publications – it provides credibility that you know your stuff. But it is not a review article!
- Highlight what is missing (**knowledge / technological gaps**, limitations, or unresolved challenges in the field.
- **Novelty & uniqueness**: *proposed project goes beyond the state-of-the-art in x, y, z aspect* -- List elements that set the proposed project apart from existing work – i.e. its **Ground-breaking aspects**

  Tricky: critical balance between strong foundation of preliminary/previous research ***VS*** showcase of novel / transformative / ground-breaking character
- **Clarity and detail**: specific examples, no vague or overly general statements. The more specific, the easier it is for evaluators to understand the goal of the project is and believe in it

Section a - suggested flow (2)

Focus in B2 = much more in-depth description of scientific SOTA and knowledge gaps; target audience is your scientific peer (the expert)!

State of the art (~1 page)

- *What is the current state of research?*
- *What kind of solutions (e.g. technologies, insights, models) are in development?*
- *Why has it so far been impossible to solve the challenge.*
  - *Describe current key knowledge gaps (what knowledge or technology is lacking and hampers further scientific/technological advancement to solve challenge indicated above?)*
    Knowledge gap 1: x
    Knowledge gap 2: x

Proposition statement (~0.5 page):

introduce **your unique, breakthrough proposition** *How do you suggest solving the problem*

- *Showcase how your approach will bring a fresh and new perspective to the problem*
- *Show preliminary data that support you proposition/theory or the feasibility of the technology*
- *How has your research been contributing to this field so far?*

Section a - suggested flow (3)

a.2. Objectives and ground-breaking nature (~1 page)

Hypothesis

- *Define your main hypothesis* [I hypothesize that ...]

Key research questions

- *List key unanswered research questions to validate your hypothesis, considering the state-of-the-art in your field*

Objectives

- Statement of **main aim of the project (in text box)**
- List your objectives - To achieve this overall aim, this project pursues the following objectives:
  - Objective 1: [objective] – [list WP nr]
  - Objective 2: [objective] – [list WP nr]
  - Objective 3: [objective] – [list WP nr]
  - etc

Section b - suggested flow (1)

Section b: Methodology

b.1. Overall research strategy (max. 1 pages)

Approach

- Briefly describe your overall strategy/approach (high-level description of your work plan)
- Unique methodologies: Explain any methods/models developed by you that will be used during the project, and why these methods/techniques open new possibilities – or any other things that you bring into the project

Research environment

- Describe the key features of your institute/department, and of your own group/team; and why they are unique and essential for your project
- Describe the collaborative partners (national, international) that will help you and why they are essential
- Describe the infrastructure you have access to

When working with a collaborator, clearly outline the division of work + how their work will be funded, and provide contingencies for the possibility of their failure

Section b - suggested flow (2)

b.2. Experimental plan (~2-3 pages)

Add for each WP a description/table including:

WP1. < TITLE OF WP> - Include start & end month (M01-12).

Rationale *– describe why this WP (how it links to the Objective)*

Methodology

Task 1.1: *add task description*

Task 1.2: *add task description*

Task 1.3: *add task description*

Deliverables –

D1.1 - *add description, add month of delivery*

D1.2 - *add description, add month of delivery*

These experiments will provide insight into:

- xx
- xx
- xx

Each WP is ~0,75-1 page.
Provide sufficient technological detail so that the scientific expert can follow your plan.
In particular:
Group sizes, power analyses (when relevant).

Remember, it should all link together...

Key elements of workplan

- Work Packages
  - Tasks
  - Expected outcomes / Deliverables
  - Milestones
- Timing of the project (Gantt chart)
- Logical progression and dependencies (PERT chart)

Work plan is integral part of GA

Reporting is done on deliverables/milestones (continuous) and via reports (technical progress report including risks, financials)

Definitions

Deliverable is a tangible or intangible good produced as a **result of a project.**
For example: a manuscript, a report, a design, etc.

Not too many deliverables per project (~2-3 per WP) – high pressure to deliver! Spread over project

Milestones are **checkpoints** in the project that help you chart progress throughout the course of the project.

These control points help identify that a number of tasks or key deliverables have been completed allowing you to move on to the next phase of your project.

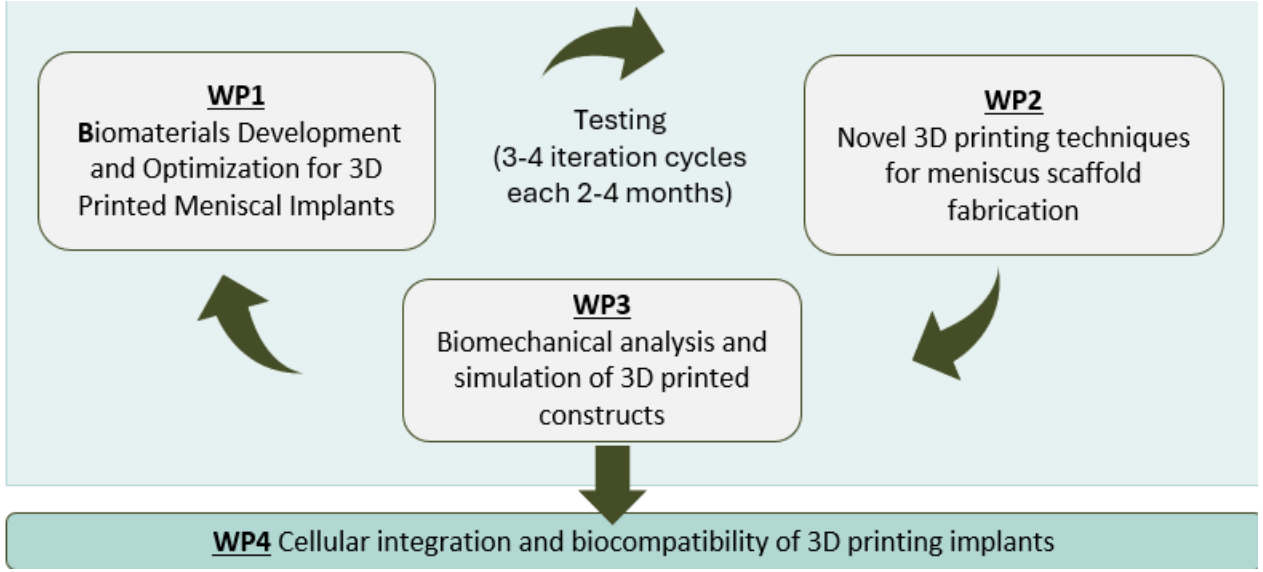
Funding providers may link payment to reaching of milestones.

Per WP max. 1-2 milestones. Write them in such a way that you are always in control of achieving it, e.g. “submission of manuscript” (not “manuscript accepted”)

Methodology section

Visuals

Add a PERT chart to illustrate relationship between WPs



Add a simple version of Gannt table to illustrate project timeline

Workpackages		Duration (month)	Year				
			2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
WP1	New assay workflow	18					
WP2	Bladder Cancer Kinome development	24					
WP3	Methodology Development and Synthesis	24					
WP4	Kinase-screening using proteomic analysis	21					
WP5	Ex-vivo Validation	15					

Consider adding major milestones & staff involved

Risks and mitigation strategies

Key aspects the evaluator want to assess:

- *What major things can go wrong and how will they jeopardize your progress?*
- *How are you planning to solve these issues if they arise?*

Risk and mitigation section is important!
It helps evaluator to assess:

- feasibility of the work plan / your approach
- your creativity as PI

"We've considered every potential risk except the risks of avoiding all risks."

Definitions

Critical risk = plausible event/issue that may have a high adverse impact on achieving project objectives.

Level of likelihood (Low/medium/high): Estimated probability the risk will occur even after taking account of the mitigating measures in place.

Level of severity (Low/medium/high): Relative seriousness of the risk and the significance of its effect.

Mitigation methods are used to prevent risks from occurring.

Contingency methods are used to address risks that have already occurred.

Example - BBQ party

Risk **– Not enough food**
Likelihood- low
Impact- high
Mitigation method- store food in deep freezer
Contingency- order pizzas

Risk **– There is fire**
Likelihood- high
Impact- high
Mitigation method- give equipment instructions at the start of the BBQ party
Contingency- extinguish the fire, use back-up cooking method/order pizzas

Risks and mitigation strategies

Tip: include a table:

Description of the Risk (likelihood/severity: Low-Medium-High)	WP	Proposed risk-mitigation measures
Resources and configurations for fully arbitrary xyz are too demanding. (Med/Med)	1	Restrict the space of z parameters using abc properties and use only relevant yxz states.
Quality (resolution and contrast) of holograms produced by the cascade modulators too low. (Low/High)	1	Improve the hologram quality with a feedback-based hardware- and xyz.
Low homogeneity for large scale test results. (Med/Med)	2	Combined real-time xyz inspection to accurately align adjacent regions by moving the sample or the illumination patterns.

Section b - suggested flow (3)

b.4. Impact (~0.5 page)

Impact on the scientific community

- *Describe how the results of this project will contribute to the scientific community*
- *For whom it will be relevant to? Why?*

Impact on society (& other impacts when relevant)

- *Describe how project will benefit society*

Translational relevance/valorisation of results

- *Describe your plan to disseminate your results and how to create awareness*
- *When relevant describe securing of IPR (patent) – perhaps establishing a spin-off company*

Impact on own career

- *Describe how this project will allow you to become future leader*
- *How it can open new horizon in terms of your future research lines*
- *Describe your plan to secure funding for follow-up research (next subsidy application?)*

Focus here in particular on how this project will help you towards future research directions (what's your research ambition after the ERC project?)

Part B2

Appendix – Funding ID

Appendix: All current grants and on-going / submitted grant applications of the PI (Funding ID)

Mandatory information (does not count towards page limits)

Current research grants (Please indicate "No funding" when applicable):

Project Title	*Funding source*	*Amount (Euros)*	*Period*	*Role of the PI*	*Relation to current ERC proposal*[2]

On-going / submitted grant applications (Please indicate "None" when applicable):

Project Title	*Funding source*	*Amount (Euros)*	*Period*	*Role of the PI*	*Relation to current ERC proposal*[2]

When large number of current grants: make sure time-commitment % claimed for ERC project is realistic! (consider lowering 70% to e.g. 60%)

Options for Role of the PI: Principal investigator, PhD co-promotor, Team member, WP lead, etc

See you tomorrow!

Catalyze

KRPAN

Catalyze

Preparing project proposals for European Research Council (ERC) calls

22 and 23 September 2025

Presenters: Mithila Burute, PhD & Helen Pothuizen, PhD

50 years University of Maribor

REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

NOO | THE RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE PLAN

Funded by the European Union
NextGenerationEU

The event is organized within the KRPAN project – Strengthening Research Support and Activities for Progress in European Research Projects, co-funded by the Republic of Slovenia, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, and the European Union – NextGenerationEU

Agenda

DAY 2	2.1	**How to Write an ERC Application – Part 2** • B1 part: storyline & structure- Drafting an effective CV (exercise) • Part A: abstract & keywords- Final prep tips & reviewer feedback	60 min	9.00 – 10.00
	2.2	**Interview Preparation** • Key points for ERC interview success • Strategies and pitfalls	30 min	10:00 – 10.30
		Coffee break	15 min	10.30 – 10.45
	2.3	**Ethics and Data Management aspect** Project office support	30 min	10.45 – 11.15
	2.4	ERC Adv and ERC SYG - Promising opportunities	45 min	11.15 – 12.00
		Lunch break	45 min	12.00-12.45
		NCP support	15 min	12:45:13:00
	2.5	**Q&A Session + Wrap-Up** • Final discussion, Common challenges and clarifications	45 min	13.00- 13.45
		Coffee break	15 min	13.45 – 14.00
		CONSULTATIONS 1:1		14.00 -16.00

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Building the ERC storyline – B1

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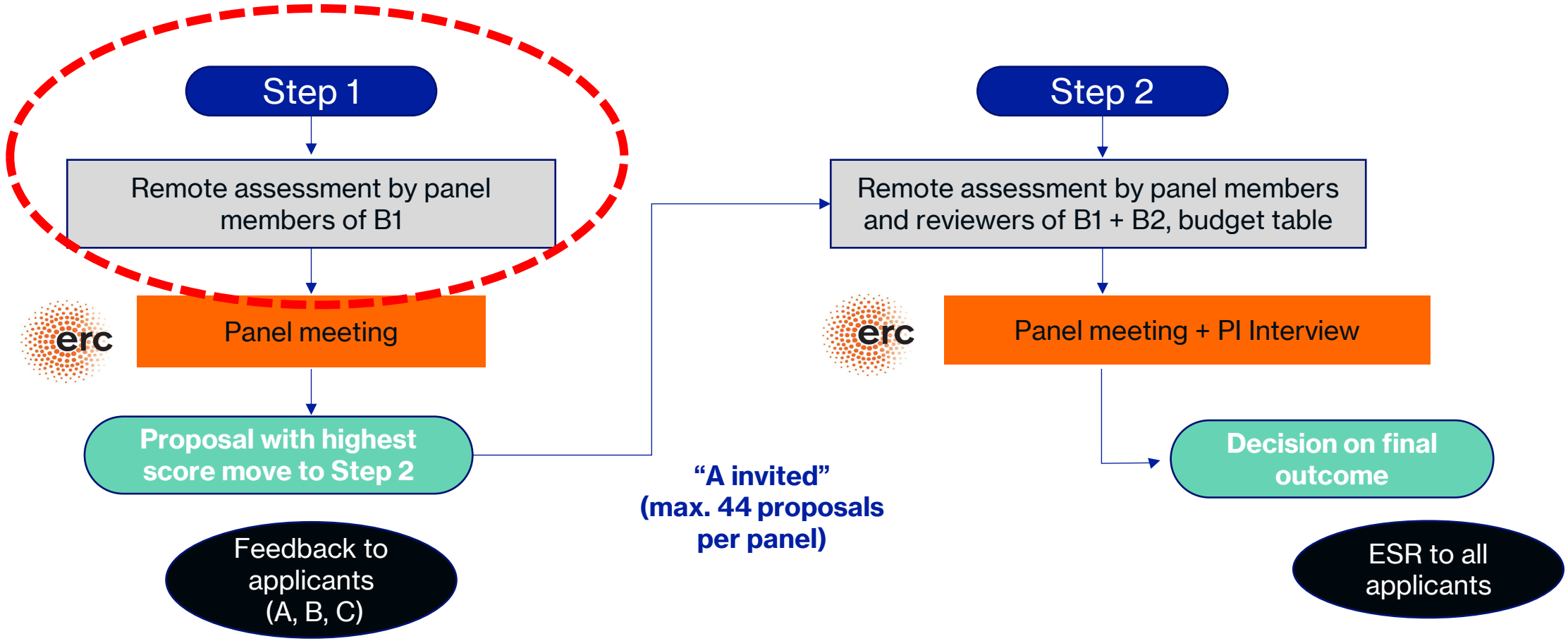
Part B1

Writing of B1 - remember the audience!



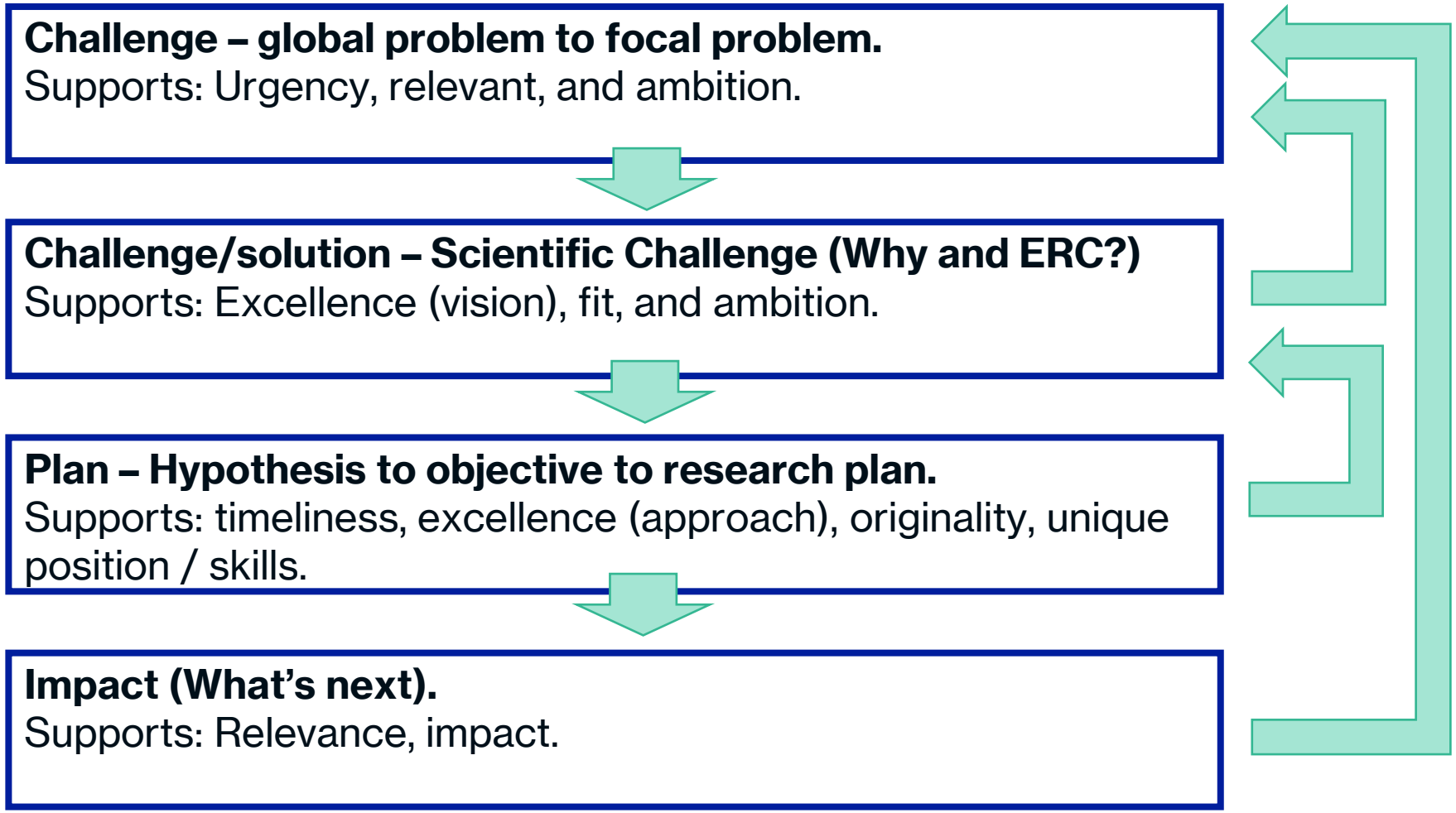
B1 template instructions (2026)

Part I of the Scientific Proposal *should present the envisaged research and it should:*

- ♣ *lay out the current state of knowledge,*
- ♣ *explain the scientific question and the objectives of the project, and*
- ♣ *present the overall approach or research strategy to reach the goals of the project.*

Part I should convince the evaluation Panel that it presents an original and creative idea addressing an important question in the respective research field(s). Furthermore, it should substantiate how the project will advance the frontier of knowledge, and what contribution it will make to the research field(s) i.e. what may be changed, opened, challenged or how the results of the work will alter the current understanding of the field.

Objective of B1 is to show original thinking, relevance, impact, and excellence



Section a - suggested flow (1)

Use paragraph headings that include key words from the evaluation criteria, e.g. Challenge

Section a: Extended Synopsis of the scientific proposal

a.1 Scientific relevance and challenges *(1 page)*

Background

- *Introduce the topic of your project and its background from different perspectives: scientific, societal (when relevant: environmental, clinical)*

The challenge

- *Zoom in on the (scientific/societal) challenge(s).*
- *Explain which major bottleneck hampers further development in the field (the one that you will provide an answer for with your project)*
- *End with Challenge statement (in text box): summarize in 1 sentence the core challenge that you aim to solve*

> Due to the inherent risks and considerable costs of xyz implantation, detailed evaluation of the patient's risks and benefits of having such a surgery is required on a case-by-case basis (leading to a personalised rather than a "one-size-fits-all" treatment approach). To do so, a patient stratification tool based on risk prediction is urgently needed that can guide clinical decision making.

Section a - suggested flow (2)

State-of-the-art

- *Explain the current state of the art (SOTA) in the field and why it has so far been impossible to solve the challenge.*
- *Describe limitations of current SOTA – conceptually, technologically*

***Proposition statement:** introduce here your unique, breakthrough proposition.*

- *How do you suggest solving the challenge/problem:* "I propose to address this by ....."
- *If relevant, provide here preliminary data that support you proposition/theory*

Scientific relevance

- *Describe current key knowledge gaps -- what knowledge/technology is lacking and hampers further scientific/technological advancement to solve challenge indicated above?*

  Gap 1: There is a lack of molecular risk factors to identify early....etc

  Gap 2: ...

Align gap analysis with proposition statement

Section a - suggested flow (3)

a.2 Hypothesis and objectives (0.5-1 page)

- *State your ambition with the project and define your main hypotheses / research questions*

"My ambition with the <Acronym> project is to fill these knowledge gaps and realize a paradigm shift in the way we are currently assessing factor X in process Y. Using an innovative and multidisciplinary approach, I will challenge the following hypotheses:
1 – Factor X is not continuously involved in process Y but dependent of ABC
2 – Factor X is…."
Etc.

- *State **main aim of the project** (in text box)*

The overarching aim of <Acronym> is to delineate Disease Z heterogeneity through the characterisation of Factor Y patterns, which will advance our understanding of Disease Z pathophysiology and lay the foundation of evidence required for developing targeted prevention strategies.

- *List your **objectives***

To achieve this overall aim, the <Acronym> project pursues the following objectives:

- Objective 1: To ….[objective]
- Objective 2: To ….[objective]
- Objective 3: To ….[objective]

Section a - suggested flow (4)

a.3 Overall research strategy (2-3 pages)

- Conceptual framework: how the project is structured to address the scientific questions
- How different disciplines or techniques are integrated
- Novel approaches proposed used in research plan- new models, new methods Scientific rationale for each Work Package (e.g., WP1 develops the technical foundation for downstream biological validation)
- Research plan
    - How objectives are divided into work-packages
    - Really high-level description, Around ¾ to 1 page per WP
    - **Explain how** *how work packages interact)*
    - Key results/gains and their releavance
    - Crucial models, techniques or datasets that are used in the WPs need to be introduced here
    - Add visuals to illustrate methodological approach
    - Any preliminary data related to building block of your hypothesis and proposed work

Research plan -> Objectives

Remember, it should all link together...

Key elements of workplan

- Work Packages
  - Tasks
  - Deliverables
  - Milestones
- Timing of the project (Gantt chart)
- Logical progression and dependencies (PERT chart)

in B2 full work plan

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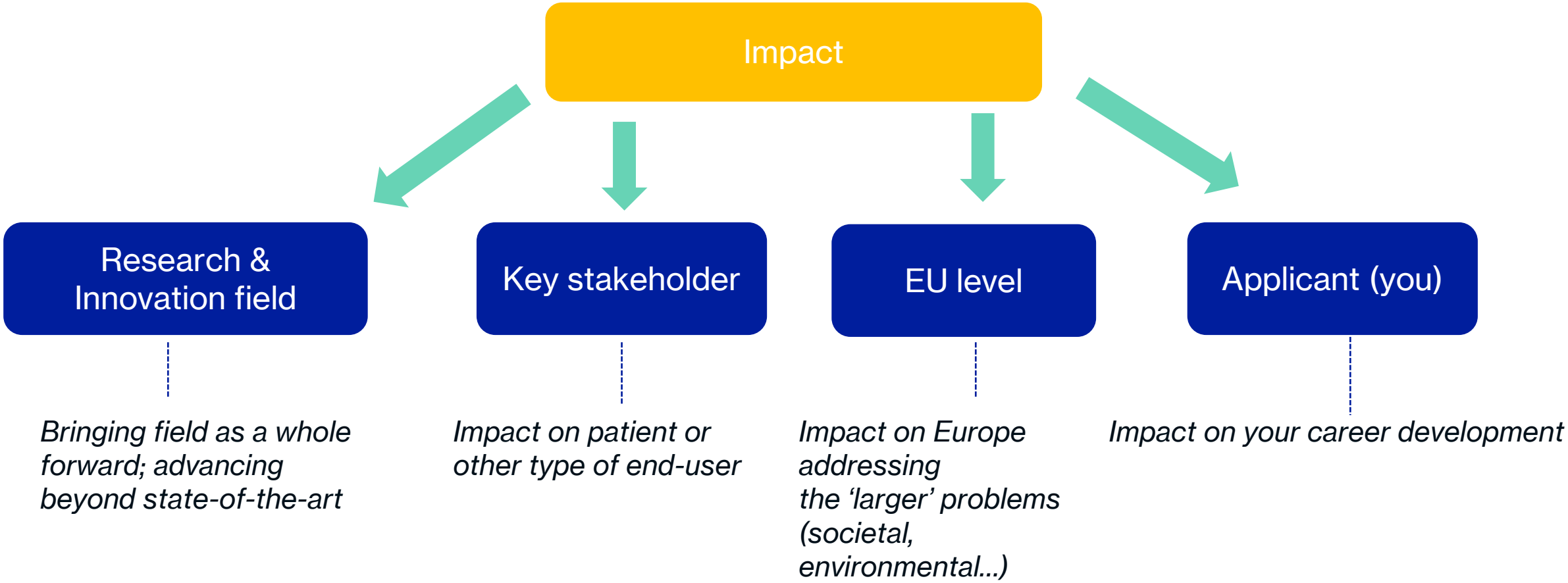
Storyline B1

Describe impact of your ERC project at multiple levels



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Storyline B1

Different impacts

It is useful to think about the dimensions of impact and break these down.

Often the following categories are used:

Scientific	Technological / economical	Societal	Own career development
Advancing research in X area	Reduced costs to healthcare systems and/or HCPs	Improved health (patients, citizens)	Becoming future EU/global leader in your field
Creation of a scientific frontier in Europe on X topic	Cheaper treatments	Reducing carbon footprint	Build/expand your team (with <n>Fte)
Generation of novel IP	New model / new tool / new guidelines	Creation of jobs and skills	Establish a new research line/direction

CV & Track record

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ERC is a competitive world...

Think of all the elements that will set you apart from other applicants!

Training exercise

Track record reviewing

- Take 3-min to reflect on the following track record (next slide):
  - *What are the weaknesses?*
- Let’s discuss our recommendations

Exercise: Track record reviewing

Example:

Research Achievements

- Smith J, et al. (2017) *Regulation of virulence genes in E. coli. Journal of Microbial Research.
- Brown L, et al. (2018) Bacterial adhesion mechanisms in the gut epithelium. International Journal of Infection Biology.
- Patel R, et al. (2020) Novel resistance plasmids in hospital isolates. Pathogens & Immunity.
- Tanaka M, et al. (2023) Interaction between bacterial toxins and host immune cells. Journal of Medical Microbiology.

Conferences and community engagement:

- ASM Microbe (2017, 2019, 2022)
- European Congress of Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases (ECCMID, 2018, 2021)
- Gordon Research Conference on Microbial Pathogenesis (2019)
- Symposium on Antimicrobial Resistance (2025)

Supervision and teaching:

- I have supervised several students at Master's and PhD level and contributed to teaching within my department.

Take 3-min to reflect on this track record and identify weaknesses

Tips for presenting your track record / CV

- Include a short ‘bio’ of your career so far (narrative style):
  - **What drives you as a researcher?** What is your **passion**?
  - **Highlight other contributions**: e.g. your teaching experience; your public outreach activities, activities to valorise your results – e.g. working together with industry
- Include a short overview of your **publication track record**.
  - *“<n> publications of which <n> as first author / <n> as corresponding author demonstrating my growth towards being an independent researcher”*
- Add per research output (publication):
  - Short description of the output/work, e.g. “*This work demonstrates the experimental realisation of concept z”*
  - **Relevance/significance** (why is it important?) e.g . *“For the first time the use of xxx in yyy…”.*
  - **Your role/responsibility**, e.g. ”*I took full responsibility of this project, from writing the proposal and get funding, perform the experimental part, and disseminate the results (wrote manuscript).”*
- Think of **other types of outputs** (next to publications):
  - patent/IP, outreach to the public (popular article, social media activity), guideline, protocol development

Peer Recognition

For example :

- *Invited speaker in meeting x, y, z*
- *Organization of scientific meetings or a session at a conference*
- *Selected fellowship and awards, e.g. publication award, particular grant/fellowship, collaborative grant*
- *Institutional responsibilities: e.g. member doctoral school, advisory board, data steward, international committee member for a PhD defence etc*

Contribution to Research community

For example :

- *Reviewer for scientific journals*
- *Reviewer for national and international funding organisations*
- *Patent application*
- *Public outreach, e.g. contributing to events for the public (to inform them out science); volunteer at science festivals; social media content'; radio show; news paper article etc.*

Part A

ERC proposal

Part A

In **Funding & Tender portal** – online form:

Part A (structured data)

Table of contents

Section	Title
1	General information
2	Participants
3	Budget
4	Ethics and security
5	Other questions

Part A – keywords

Choose wisely: **keywords** are used to select the **panel and reviewers** that will evaluate the proposal!

E.g. inclusion of “AI” may mean you get an expert-reviewer in AI...

Important:

- Do not include keywords because they are fancy/sound nice
- It is your chance to influence the review process

Part A - Abstract

Abstract is used for internal communication at ERC and public – include no confidential information!

Max 2,000 characters

Tips on structure:

1. Introduce the project's topic and highlight the main scientific gap it addresses to captivate readers and showcase its novelty
2. Include your proposition to resolve the identified knowledge gap
3. Briefly outline the research approach, including key components and methodologies to achieve the project's objectives.
4. Describe significance of the potential outcomes and project potential long-term impact; while emphasizing the project's high-risk, high-gain nature

Examine abstracts of previously funded ERC projects within your research domain to draw inspiration and learn effective techniques for writing a compelling abstract

ERC proposal

Part A - Budget

Beneficiary Short Name	PI	Senior Staff	Postdocs	Students	Other Personnel costs	A. Total personnel costs/€	B. Subcontracting Costs/€ (No indirect costs)	C.1 Travel and subsistence	C.2 Equipment - including major equipment	Consum-ables incl. fieldwork and animal costs	Publications (incl. Open Access fees) and dissemination	Other additional direct costs	C.3 Total other goods, works and services	Total Purchase costs/€	D. Internally invoiced goods and services/€ (No indirect costs)	E. Indirect Cost/€	Total Eligible Costs	Requested EU contribution /€
Wu	374354	0	353728	519685	0	1247767.00	0	30000	720000	191000	10000	6062	207062.00	957062.00	18000	551207.00	2774036.00	2399637.00
Total	374354	0	353728	519685	0	1247767.00	0	30000	720000	191000	10000	6062	207062.00	957062.00	18000	551207.00	2774036.00	2399637.00

Section C. Resources (Maximum 8000 characters allowed)

ERC proposal

Budget

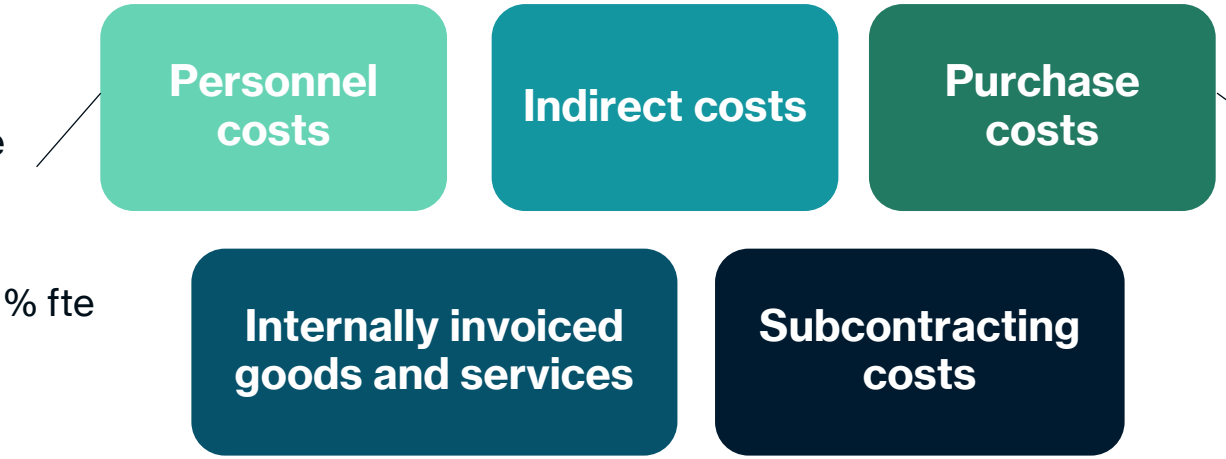
Budget table and Description of resources (Part A) are evaluated in Step 2!
Unjustified budgets will be reduced.

ERC funds up to 100% of the total eligible costs

Indirect costs: 25% flat-rate (not on subcontracting & internally invoiced G&S) – automatically calculated

Cost categories:

Principal Investigator -% fte
Post docs – 1 fte
PhD students - fte
Support staff (technician) - % fte



Travel and subsistence
Depreciation of equipment
When relevant: major equipment
consumables (including fieldwork and animal costs)
publications (including Open Access fees) and dissemination etc

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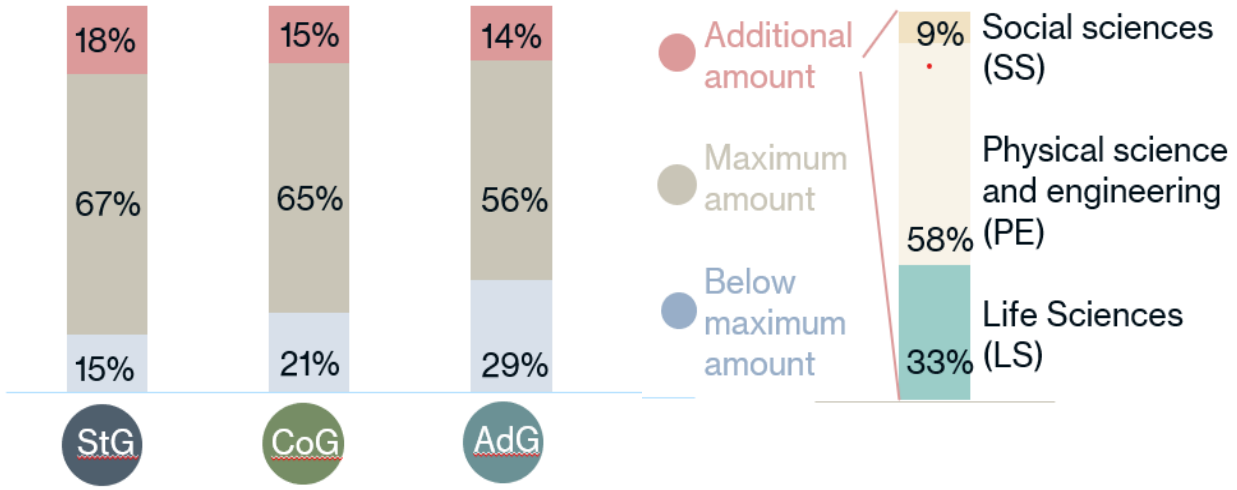
Requesting additional budget

It happens often:



If your host institute lacks the necessary equipment for your ERC project, apply for extra budget (max. EUR 1M) to cover moving to EU costs, **purchase major equipment** like microscopes, mass spectrometers, etc, or **access to large facilities, field work**.

- Get quotes from multiple vendors upfront to maximise your investment and utility
- Justify in proposal why you need this budget (e.g. not available at HI or not full-time) and that there are no alternative options (e.g. contracting ‘task’ as a service)

ERC proposal

Part A – Resources justification

Text box, max. 8,000 characters – see Guide for Authors for clear instructions.

In short, describe:

- *Requested EU contribution: x,xxx,xxx €*
- *Request for additional funding (when relevant): xxx,xxx €*
- *Justification for additional funding: the purchase of major equipment.*
- *% of PI's working time dedicated to the project: 60%*
- *Describe size and nature of the team - incl. number of staff you will hire, staff type: PhD/Postdoc/etc, their aimed expertise. In case team member is engaged by other HI, justify their involvement (why do they add scientific value)*
- *Overview personnel costs, duration on project and planned fte*
    - *In particular specify 'Other Personnel costs' category (technician e.g.)*
- *Travel costs – explain how total is built up*
- *Equipment – when relevant explain why large equipment is needed*
- *Other goods & services – explain how total is built up*
- *Open access costs*
- *'Other additional direct costs' post – explain how total is built up*
- *Use of infrastructure and equipment not requiring funding but used in project (at HI)*

Ask your institution's administration and finance department for help
– e.g. to provide salary tables and guidance/review

Time for a short break

Back 11:00h

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ERC proposal

Part A - Ethics & security

Ethics Self-Assessment

Check box (y/n) then a written component that is mandatory for all ethical issues selected ‘yes’,

Provide description (5,000 characters max each)

1. Ethical dimension of the objectives, methodology and likely impact
2. Compliance with ethical principles and relevant legislations

Security issue table - Check box (y/n) on:
EU Classified information, Misuse, Other security issues

- Human embryonic stem cells / embryos
- Humans
- Personal data
- Animals
- Non-EU countries
- Environment, health & safety
- Artificial intelligence

ERC

Ethics self-assessment

Guidance:

- **EU Guide** on how to complete the Self Assessment
- **ETHICS GUIDELINES FOR TRUSTWORTHY AI**
  High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence
- **Data Protection Decision Tree**
- ERC has an **Ethics team**

Ethics processes before grant-signature

The ERC caries out the ethics process with the assistance of independent and highly qualified ethics experts.

A good self-assessment speeds up the ethics process

-> Endpoint: “ethics clearance for grant signature”

Human embryonic stem cells / embryos

Humans

Personal data

Animals

Non-EU countries

Environment, health & safety

Artificial intelligence

Data management (ethics)

Types of personal data	* racial or ethnic origin * political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs * genetic, biometric or health data * sex life or sexual orientation * trade union membership
Data subjects	* children * vulnerable people * people who have not given their explicit consent to participate in the project
Scale or complexity of data processing	* large-scale processing of personal data * systematic monitoring of a publicly accessible area on a large scale * involvement of multiple datasets and/or service providers, or the combination and analysis of different datasets (i.e. big data)
Data-collection or processing techniques	* privacy-invasive methods or technologies (e.g. the covert observation, surveillance, tracking or deception of individuals) * using camera systems to monitor behaviour or record sensitive information * data mining (including data collected from social media networks), 'web crawling' or social network analysis * profiling individuals or groups (particularly behavioural or psychological profiling) * using artificial intelligence to analyse personal data * using automated decision-making that has a significant impact on the data subject(s)
Involvement of non-EU countries	* transfer of personal data to non-EU countries * collection of personal data outside the EU

Critical aspects to consider:

- What kind of data
- pseudonymisation or anonymisation
- Informed consent to data processing
- Adherence to GDPR
- Who has access to the data?
    - e.g. non-EU: Switzerland, UK, Norway

ERC proposal

Part A – Other questions

PhD Reference date

Applicants holding a Medical degree (Y/N)

Extension Requests (Y/N)

Working time commitment

ERC eligibility requirements

Consent obtained from participant and researchers

Sharing evaluation data

Must match with date on PhD certificate submitted as annex

Make sure you indicate a realistic percentage here, esp. with other ongoing grants/projects

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Tips & Tricks

ERC

Open Science

ERC: commitment to open science, including open access to the published output of research, as well as access to research data and related products

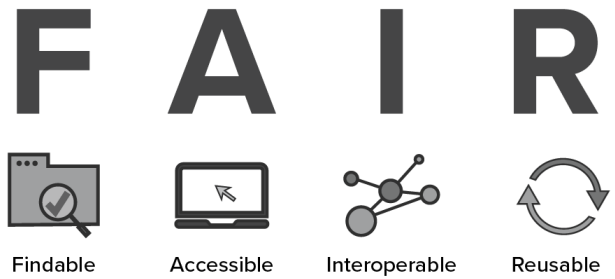
How can a research project benefit from taking an Open Science approach?

- By bringing added visibility and attention to the work
- It can spur other/new collaborations
- Increase the uptake of the results since they will get more exposure
- Ultimately increase the impacts of the project's work and outcomes
- Ultimately accelerate science, technology and research in relevant fields

Catalyze

ERC

Tips - Open Science



- Describe **which Open science practices** will be implemented e.g.
  - *open access publications* - which ones?
  - *data repositories,*
  - *sharing training materials online,*
  - *citizen involvement*
- Make a few statements about the **project's commitment toward Open Science and FAIR principles.** How will it to maximise the project's scientific and other impacts?
  - *I will work under the principle "as open as possible and as closed as necessary", e.g. embargoing data release until it has been patented or published in open-access journals*
- Consider including a task in the workplan that explores options to make data widely available via a trusted repository / other platform

Tips & tricks

Writing the proposal - important to consider

Two aspects are important:

Tips & tricks

Writing style - important to consider

	Grant application	Academic paper
Audience	Funding organisation	Scientific community
Message	Establish potential impact	Communicate scientific findings
Goal of document	Get money to run project	Accurately describe scientific findings and ideas
Audience' aim	Successful programme	Gain new knowledge

A grant is written to raise funds. **You need to sell your idea!**

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Writing style

- ERC is a personal grant: **use "I"-perspective** at relevant places instead of the 'we", e.g. "I propose", "I hypothesise", "I envision", "My post-doctoral research showed that", "My team and I will develop this technique." etc.
- **Be ambitious and realistic**. Avoid promises that cannot be delivered within the chosen timeframe, budget or approach.
- Do not tell (educate) but ***sell!*** Do not shy away from using power words like 'first-time', innovative' 'transformative' etc.
- Show **credibility** of your proposed work, by means of adding details and data
- **Spark curiosity** to read further
- Leave a **good long-lasting impression** - leave the reader with something to remember
    - E.g. cleverness of your scientific idea/concept
- Avoid unnecessary technical details and scientific jargon (**Keep it simple**!) – Especially in B1

Writing style

Length of sentences (scientific article)

240 words
7 sentences
~34 words per sentence

The nucleus accumbens can be subdivided into at least two anatomically distinct subregions: a dorsolateral 'core' and a ventromedial 'shell', and this distinction may extend to a functional dissociation. Here, we contrasted the effects of selective excitotoxic core and medial shell lesions on impulsive-choice behaviour using a delayed reward choice paradigm and a differential reward for low rates of responding (DRL) test, against a form of salience learning known as latent inhibition (LI). Core lesions led to enhanced impulsive choices as evidenced by a more pronounced shift from choosing a continuously reinforced lever to a partially reinforced lever, when a delay between lever press and reward delivery was imposed selectively on the former. The core lesions also impaired performance on a DRL task that required withholding the response for a fixed period of time in order to earn a reward. Medial shell lesions had no effect on these two tasks, but abolished the LI effect, as revealed by the failure of stimulus pre-exposure to retard subsequent conditioning to that stimulus in an active avoidance procedure in the lesioned animals. As expected, selective core lesions spared LI. The double dissociations demonstrated here support a functional segregation between nucleus accumbens core and shell, and add weight to the hypothesis that the core, but not the shell, subregion of the nucleus accumbens is preferentially involved in the control of choice behaviour under delayed reinforcement conditions and in the inhibitory control of goal-directed behaviour.

Pothuizen et al 2005

Writing style

Length of sentences (grant)

285 words
12 sentences
~24 words per sentence

Sudden cardiac death (SCD) is a major public health problem accounting for ~20% of all deaths in Europe with an estimated yearly incidence of ~350-700,000, often in patients with previous myocardial infarction (MI). In SCD, the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating. If untreated, the patient dies within minutes, but SCD can be successfully prevented by an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (ICD). The ICD is highly effective, but is associated with potentially severe complications and high healthcare costs. Based on historical evidence, guidelines recommend prophylactic ICD implantation in post-MI patients with left ventricular ejection fraction (LVEF)≤35% to prevent SCD. However, only a minority of these patients will ever need the device. In addition, in absolute numbers the majority of SCD cases occurs in patients with LVEF>35% who are currently not considered for prophylactic ICD. Due to the inherent risks and considerable health care expenditures, a personalised treatment approach for ICD implantation is urgently required. Using state-of-the-art methods and large clinical datasets from established international cohorts and registries across different European geographies, this project will develop a clinical decision support tool (risk score) to predict the individual SCD risk and identify those post-MI patients that will optimally benefit from an ICD. Two parallel randomised clinical trials will validate implementation of the risk score to determine ICD implantation, while health economic analyses will assess its economic impact on health care systems. A software tool for clinical use of the risk score will be implemented, and a pilot run in 3 European regions with participation of insurance companies and authorities. The unique composition of the consortium with key opinion leaders, patient organisations, large hospital chains, payers, policy makers and state authorities across Europe, will ensure implementation into routine clinical practice.

Writing style

Tips

- Use short/powerful sentences and active words. Keep it as simple as possible
- Be concise: no long intro, no bridging sentences. Say what you need to say - nothing more
- No empty wording

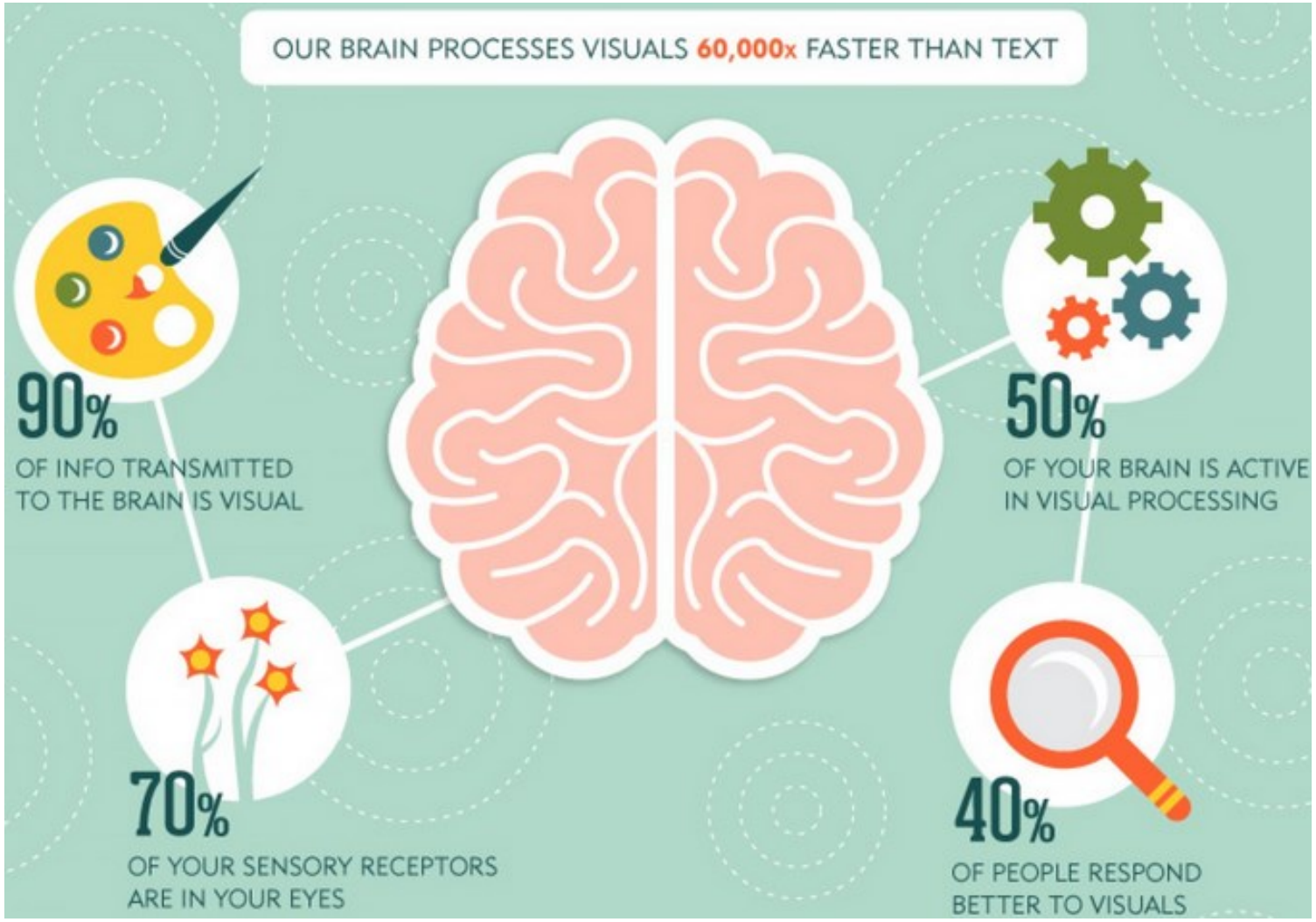
  Avoid: *“The proposed technology is an aid to society as a whole”*

- Point the evaluator to other sections in your proposal, especially to deliverables/tasks/WPs where concrete measures to conduct the activities you are describing are in place
- Quantify, refer to data, be specific

Vague	Specific
Many people die from cancer every year	Approximately 10 million people die from cancer every year worldwide
Most patients develop recurrent disease due to drug resistance	50% of patients develop recurrent disease due to drug resistance
This reaction works better at higher temperatures	This reaction is most effective at temperatures between 85°C - 95°C

Tips & tricks

Importance of visuals



Source: https://florienvanbasten.nl/ontdek-de-kracht-van-quotes/the-importance-of-visuals/

Tips & tricks

Importance of figures

A good figure ‘says’ more than a 1,000 words!

What figures to include:

1. **Concept figure** (challenge, your proposition) - high level enough (it can be understood without needing to read the text) & providing enough depth to make it compelling -> Especially in B1
2. **Figure with (preliminary) data** -> Especially in B2 (important for ERC Consolidator application)
3. **Methodology figure** (~2-3 in B2) to explain e.g. study design/approach
4. **Gannt (timeline) and PERT**

Important: limit use of text, prevent making figure too complex. Ask colleague/friend for feedback!

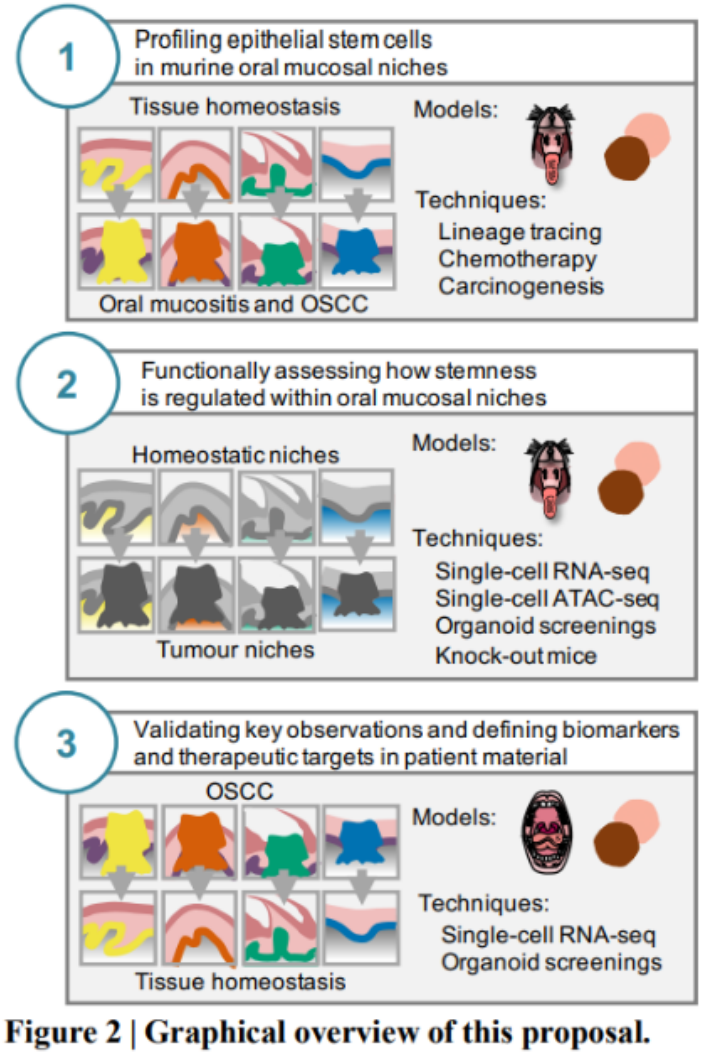


Figure 2 | Graphical overview of this proposal.

Using AI in grant writing

ChatGPT

perplexity

Applicants remain fully accountable for all content submitted, including sections produced by AI

The ERC Scientific Council recognises that researchers regularly seek input from AI technologies or human third parties, for example to brainstorm or generate ideas, to search the literature, and to revise, translate or summarise text.

The Scientific Council emphasises that use of external help in preparing a proposal does not relieve the author from taking full and sole authorship responsibilities with regard to acknowledgements, plagiarism and the practice of good scientific and professional conduct.

The ERC is following the fast developments in the area, and will renew its policies as needed.

Important to Note

Logic Fallacies

- Do not forget that ChatGPT is a large-language model (LLM), not a general AI. It basically takes a sequence of words and tries to predict the next most likely sequence. As such, it is still bad at logical reasoning. Always read, assess and humanize whatever ChatGPT writes.

Confidentiality

- Only upload data using a protected environment as it will otherwise share your data

References

- **Do not copy-paste references: - e.g.**

  https://www.bostonscientific.com/en-US/medical-specialties/interventional-radiology/interventional-oncology.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Hallucinations

- Beware that ChatGPT may still provide false or misleading information. This happens when token limit has been reached in the chat.

General tips when writing ERC

- **Do not just copy and paste parts of B2 into B1** – adjust them to level of the reader & evaluation focus
- Panel members will use the **acronym** to discuss the proposal, please make it easily-pronounced and catchy.
- **Learn from past examples & past winners**: ask colleagues who have successfully secured ERC grants for tips and their proposals for you to learn from. Analyse the proposal to gain insights into successful strategies and formatting.
- Ask a colleague to **proofread**. For B1: ideally, somebody not working in your field.
- Use **headings** (based on terms in evaluation criteria)
- Include **nice figures/visuals** – make the proposal attractive to read
- Caution: An anti-plagiarism software can be used to screen Parts B1 and B2

Feedback from ERC grant recipients

- Start early and plan thoroughly
- Show preliminary data
- Consider your technology and equipment needs

  “Collaborations are positive … but what needs to be absolutely clear is that your project can be successful even without [them]. I think probably one of the worst things is to make it appear as if you’re dependent on somebody more senior, for example, to achieve what you’re proposing.”

- Be prepared for detailed questions, even on non-scientific aspects

  “For the ERC interview, you really have to be prepared for detailed questions where people ask you about budget. They asked me about details about how am I going to spend money for publishing costs? How many papers will I publish? How do I recruit people? And so on and so forth.”

- Be resilient and adapt in the face of rejection

Decide on the right panel

- **Analyse past panel compositions** in your areas of interest, considering member turnover every two years for up to eight years (4 rounds).
    - When applying for the LS2 panel of the 2025 StG call, check LS2-panel members 2023 & 2021 to identify potential evaluators.

  The information on panel composition will help to understand what the point of focus is of the panel, and whether expertise in your topic is present in the panel or not.
- **Investigate what kind of projects have been funded by the panels in the past** (use ERC dashboard) to get insights on the panel's thematic preferences and trends.
- Ask colleagues who have won ERC funding in your field - they offer priceless insights.
- Consider these questions while selecting the panel:
    - *Which panel would be most receptive to the disruptiveness of my proposition and originality of my work?*
    - *Are the panel members likely to grasp my research's significance and broader implications?*
    - *Does my methodology exceed the standard within the selected panel's field?*

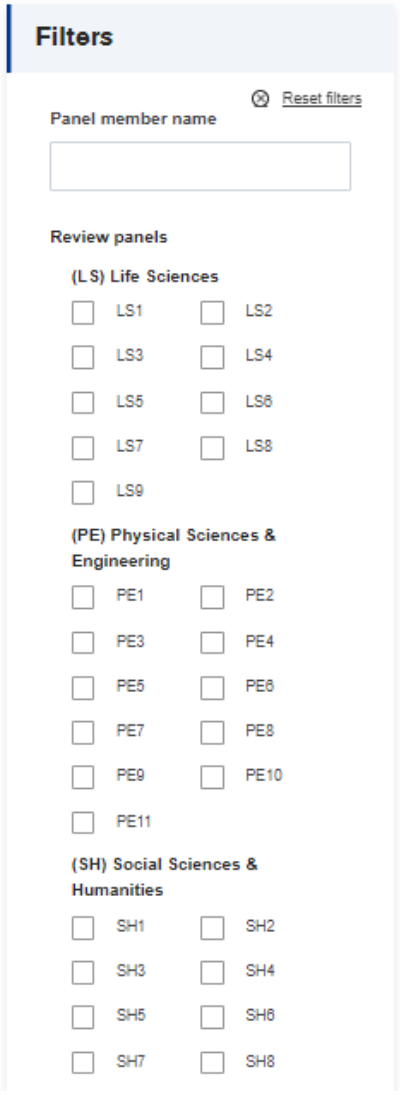
Tips & tricks

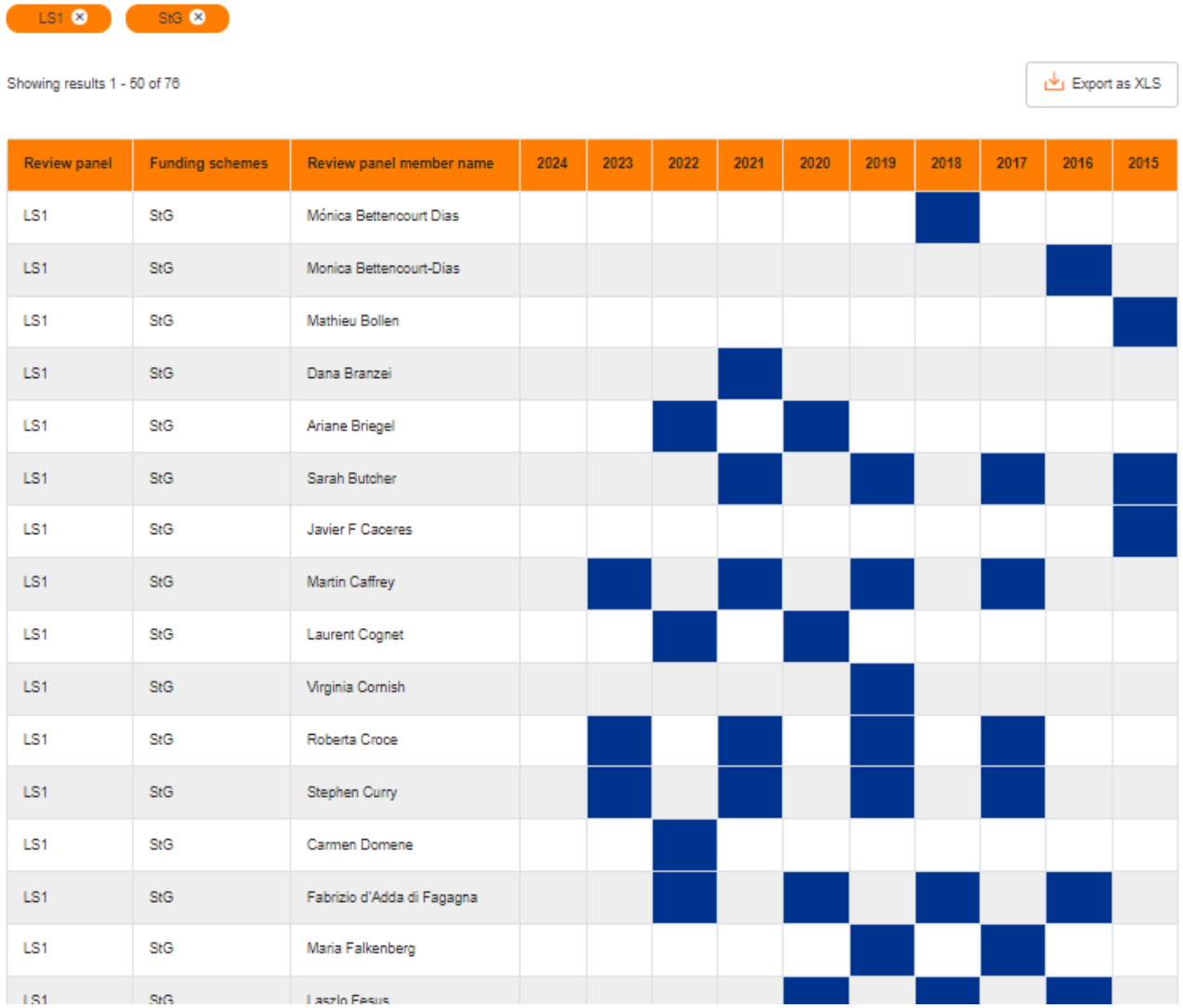
Decide on the right panel and check background panel members

ERC provides database of past panel members

But do not contact reviewers!

If you do, your applications will be rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity.





Review panel	Funding schemes	Review panel member name	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
LS1	StG	Mónica Bettencourt Dias							■			
LS1	StG	Monica Bettencourt-Dias									■	
LS1	StG	Mathieu Bollen										■
LS1	StG	Dana Branzei				■						
LS1	StG	Ariane Briegel			■		■					
LS1	StG	Sarah Butcher				■		■		■		■
LS1	StG	Javier F Caceres										■
LS1	StG	Martin Caffrey		■		■		■		■		
LS1	StG	Laurent Cognet			■		■					
LS1	StG	Virginia Cornish						■				
LS1	StG	Roberta Croce		■		■		■		■		
LS1	StG	Stephen Curry		■		■		■		■		
LS1	StG	Carmen Domene			■							
LS1	StG	Fabrizio d'Adda di Fagagna			■		■		■		■	
LS1	StG	Maria Falkenberg						■		■		
LS1	StG	Laszlo Fesus					■		■		■	

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Cross-panel projects

Most projects (and careers) are interdisciplinary and could fit into more than one of the ERC panels.

You have the opportunity to submit your proposal to more than one panel (‘cross-panel”), including a primary and a secondary panel.

➔ The **chair of the primary panel decides** whether your project is indeed interdisciplinary and warrants evaluation of experts in two panels.

Select only if your project really **cannot be understood in all its parts by one panel** alone.

-> By choosing one panel, you have a better handle on your audience, and can adjust the level of detail in your proposal to them, assuring the message will get across.

Tips & tricks

Last-minute improvements (last days before submission)

- Take time to distance yourself from the proposal
- Take time to look at the project from bird's eye view -> What's impression does the proposal give?
  - the panel members may not be specialists in your field, give them reasons to rank you highly
- Be detailed, address it all (follow the template)
- Ensure readability
  - remove repetitions, typo's, language errors, avoid long sentences and bridging explanations
- Check lay-out -> can reviewer find message easily?
  - Keywords in headers, use bold capitals, text boxes, tables
  - Figures/illustrations/pictures are sometimes better than words… (e.g. in WP-descriptions)

Tips & tricks

Last-minute improvements (last days before submission)

- Check figures/visuals: are they clear (ask help: review); add missing key figures
- First impression counts: Make sure the evaluator gets excited when reading the first pages
- Walk' once again in reviewer's shoes:
  - How well does the project respond to the ERC scope & requirements (frontier science)
  - Is the impression sufficiently given that I am the person that can credibly realize the objectives and impacts?
  - Are all evaluation criteria sufficiently addresses? - ask someone to do a mock-up evaluation, use the evaluation form (F&T portal)

Our experience:
- Most of the winning proposals have weaknesses, they are not perfect in all elements!

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Project support office

Wherever support is available, it is wise to engage the university project office early.

- Budget help and other financial input – e.g. to provide salary tables and guidance/review
- Proposal review (if offered) → feedback on structure, clarity & fit with ERC criteria
- Workshops & training → grant writing, evaluation insights, success stories
- Budget preparation → guidance on eligible costs & financial rules
- Portal & admin support → help with ERC online system, forms, institutional letters
- Other services (depending on institution) → CV templates, ethics checks, internal mock interviews

Interview preparations

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Interview phase

Preparing the presentation:

- **Do not attempt to summarize the full proposal in the presentation**. Time does not allow to cover everything. Focus on the aspects that make you and the proposal stand out in “ERC standards” and appeal to the evaluation panel members.
- **Do not overcrowd the slides with information**. Make sure the slides have a manageable amount of text and visuals. Be sure that the bottom line – the core message – is clear.
- **Make the presentation stand out**. Panel members will attend presentations of dozens of applicants, one after the other, over a few days. The main message: this is an exciting, timely, high risk, high gain project led by an excellent researcher.
- **Practise, practise, practise...** Really know your story, practise it many times and make sure you prevent the occurrence of potential technical difficulties (especially when presenting online). Work on your presentation skills.

Interview phase

Preparing the presentation:

- **Practise the Q&A.** Be well prepared for any type of question (scientific, your career plans etc). When rehearsing your presentation, preferably in front of various audiences (peers, students, ERC experts, etc.), ask your practise-audience to challenge you with all kinds of potential questions.
- **Study the background of the potential panel members that may participate in the interview.** Try to think what would intrigue them and what type of questions to expect from them, based on their background and research interests.
- **Answer questions clearly and to-the-point.** Over-elaborating on one answer might result in some unanswered questions by some of the panel members, which might not leave the best impression.

Examples of questions you can expect

Excellence /novelty

Why would you describe your project as groundbreaking research?

Why do you focus only on this (...), not on that (...)?

Would this research not better be funded by industry?

How can your results be useful for other scientific disciplines?

What are your contributions to your research field (so far)?

Why is this award critical for you to achieve career progression?

Resources/buget

How do you foresee to commit yourself to the required 50% of your time to this project given your other activities and obligations?

Can you explain why the costs of services are high?

Why do you need to hire a lab technician?

Examples of questions you can expect

Track record

What qualifies you to conduct this program as PI? Why are you the person to lead this project?

Where do you see yourself in 5 years? What will be your standing once the project is finished?

This person (... name...) often appears in your publications as co-author. What is his/her impact on your research?

Other ERC grants

ERC program

ERC Research Calls – Eligibility requirements

	Starting Grant	Consolidator Grant	Advanced Grant	Synergy Grant
Call deadline	*14 October 2025 (ERC-StG-2026)*	*~January 2026* (ERC-CoG-2026)*	28 August 2025 (ERC-AdG-2025)	*5 November 2025 (ERC-SyG-2026)*
Target	PIs starting their own independent research team.	PIs consolidating their own independent research team.	PIs already established as research leaders with a recognized track record of research achievements.	2-4 PIs addressing an ambitious research problems that could not be addressed by the individual PI working alone.
Eligibility period	2-7 years after PhD *(will be extended 2027)*	7-12 years after PhD *(will be extended 2027)*	No criteria	No specific criteria
Max. budget	€1.5M + €1M (ex.)	€2M + €1M (ex.)	€2.5M + €1M (ex.)	EUR 10M + €4M (ex.)
Duration	5 years	5 years	5 years	6 years
Commitment	50% + 50%-time EU	40% + 50%-time EU	30% + 50%-time EU	30% + 50%-time EU
	Single applicant			**Consortium**

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** Deadline to be announced – based on previous years*

ERC

Statistics

EUR **16 billion**
ERC budget in Horizon Europe (2021-2027) = 17%

94 nationalities
ERC Grantees

>250,000
Publications reported by ERC projects

EUR **2.81 billion**
ERC 2024 budget, fully committed

36 countries
(EU and associated) hosting ERC projects

>110,000
Researchers hired in ERC grants

2024 round	StG	CoG	AdG	SyG	PoC
Number of projects awarded	493	329	255	57	245
Total EU contribution	**€779 million**	**€679 million**	**€543 million**	**€571 million**	**€37 million**

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ERC

Success rate

Success rate is on average: ~14-17%

2024	Submitted (eligible)	Funded	Success rate
ERC Starting	3434	493	14.4%
ERC Consolidator	2262	329	14.4%
ERC Advanced (2023)	1530	255	16.7%
ERC Synergy	541	57	10.5%
ERC PoC	698	245	35% (previous years ~50%)

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ERC advanced grant

Scope of the subsidy call:

- ERC Advanced Grants are designed to Support for excellent researchers at the career stage when they are already established leaders with a recognised track record of research achievements. Academic research which will bring fundamental advances to the field and society
- The principal investigators must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of their research proposal.

Advanced Grant
28 August 2025 (ERC-AdG-2025)
PIs already established as research leaders with a recognized track record of research achievements.
No criteria
€2.5M + €1M (ex.)
5 years
30% + 50%-time EU

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ERC Advanced grant: a long-term opportunity

- **ERC Advanced Grant** – A Long-Term Opportunity
- **No eligibility limits** → open at any career stage once you have a strong track record.
- **Multiple grants possible** → researchers can hold more than one ERC Advanced Grant in tl
- **Bigger scale & ambition** → funding up to €2.5M (+ €1M top-up) for 5 years.
- **Recognition of leadership** → designed for world-class researchers shaping their fields.
- **A long-term goal** → something to work towards as you build your track record.

ERC Synergy grant

Scope of the call:

- 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 PIs** and their teams working alone with one corresponding PI (cPI)
- The project should enable substantial advances at the frontiers of knowledge, including unconventional approaches and **investigations at the interface between established disciplines**
- PIs of any career stage are welcome and must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of their research proposal
- PIs must also demonstrate that their group can successfully bring together the scientific elements **(skills, knowledge, experience, expertise, disciplines, methods, approaches, teams, access to infrastructures)** necessary to address the scope and complexity of the proposed research question

Synergy Grant
5 November 2025 (ERC-SyG-2026)
2-4 PIs addressing an ambitious research problems that could not be addressed by the individual PI working alone.
No specific criteria
EUR 10M + €4M (ex.)
6 years
30% + 50%-time EU

ERC Synergy grants - Unique possibilities

- **Host-institutes outside Europe can join:**

For 2024 work programme: 22 out of 57 **(38%)** of the groups include one researcher based outside Europe: in the US, Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea. The international aspect of this grant scheme helps to open top European research to the best scientific talent globally, creating further synergies.

- **Big questions that cannot be solved by individual PI's can be tackled:**

ERC SYG grants rings together remarkable researchers from many disciplines, countries and even continents, united by their ambition to tackle difficult research questions.

Examples of winning ERC SyG grants; Can we make concrete infrastructure both eco-efficient and durable? What is the nitrogen cycle of our oceans and its impact on the climate? Can digital technology help bring communities together?

ERC Synergy - A unique opportunity

- **Team science focus** → 2–4 PIs work together on one ambitious project.
- **Open to all career stages** → junior PIs can join forces with more senior leaders.
- **No formal eligibility limits** → it's about the quality of the *synergy* and project, not CV s
- **Empowers collaboration** → chance to complement your expertise with other disciplin
- **Large-scale funding** → up to €10M for 6 years, with extra flexibility of funds.
- **Career visibility** → even as a junior PI, you get ERC recognition and a leadership role.
- **High-risk, high-gain** → freedom to tackle questions too big for one PI alone.

*Think of Synergy as a way for junior PIs to l*everage ERC to scale up their ideas *by joining visionary teams and gaining ERC-level experience early on.*

ERC Proof of concept

Scope

- to facilitate the exploration of the commercial and social innovation potential of ERC funded research

- to verify the innovation potential of ideas arising from ERC funded projects.

What's in for researchers?

- €150k per grant
- 12-18 months
- Only previous ERC-grantee are eligible
- 3 ERC-PoC per each awarded ERC-grant

ERC-PoC deadlines

2 rounds per year:

- March
- September

ERC

Success rate

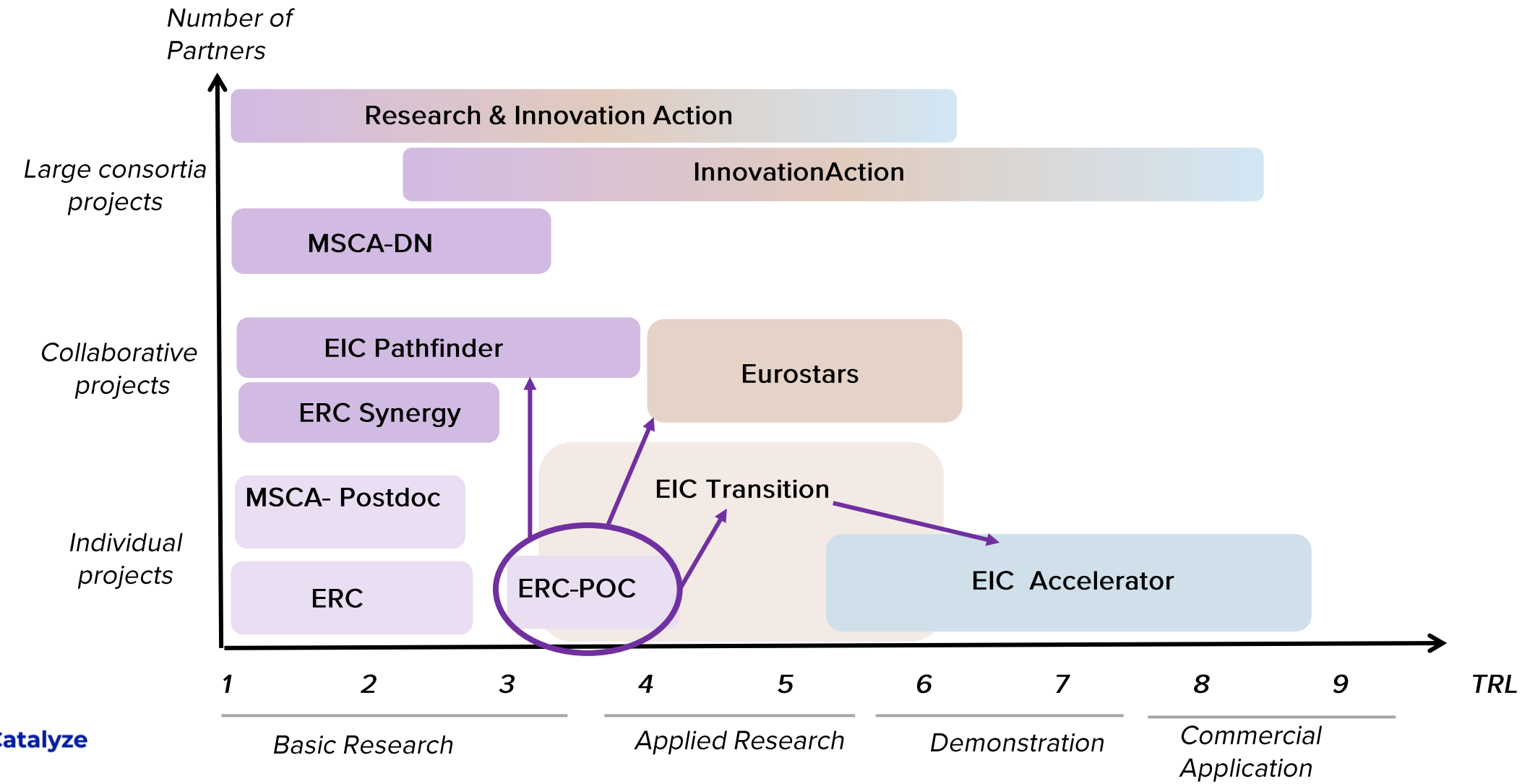
Success rate is on average: ~14-17%

2024	Submitted (eligible)	Funded	Success rate
ERC Starting	3434	493	14.4%
ERC Consolidator	2262	329	14.4%
ERC Advanced (2023)	1530	255	16.7%
ERC Synergy	541	57	10.5%
ERC PoC	698	245	35% (previous years ~50%)

ERC PoC grant

- Frontier research through ERC StG, CoG, AdG, SYG, often generates radically new ideas that drive innovation and business inventiveness and tackle societal challenges.
- The ERC PoC Grants aim at facilitating exploration of the commercial and social innovation potential of ERC funded research and are therefore available only to PIs whose proposals draw substantially on their ERC funded research.
- Proof of Concept Grants aim at maximising the value of the excellent research that the ERC funds, by funding further work (i.e. activities which were not scheduled to be funded by the original ERC frontier research grant) to verify the innovation potential of ideas arising from ERC funded projects.

ERC PoC: step towards driving innovation



Time for lunch

Back 12:45h

Catalyze | THE INNOVATION CONSULTANTS

Q&A session

Catalyze

More questions, do contact us

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Thank you!

Catalyze

Please take a moment to complete our survey:

https://forms.office.com/e/XBzFJXnveK

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