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of Research, Technology
and Space

NKS ERC

The European Research Council - Funding opportunities and application process

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Agenda

1 ERC Basics

2 Application Procedure and Evaluation

3 General Hints

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ERC Basics

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ERC: EUR 16 billion
= 17% of HE total budget

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Horizon Europe Programme Structure (2021-2027)

Pillar 1
Excellent Science

European Research Council

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

Research Infrastructures

Pillar 2
Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness

Clusters
- Health
- Culture, Creativitiy and Inclusive Society
- Civil Security for Society
- Digital, Industry and Space
- Climate, Energy and Mobility
- Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Enviroment

Joint Research Centre

Pillar 3
Innovative Europe

European Innovation Council

European innovation ecosystems

European Institut of Innovation and Technology

Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area

Widening participation and spreading excellence

Reforming and Enhancing the European R&I system

What is the ERC‘s mission?

The ERC funds

- **investigator-driven frontier research**
- **based on scientific excellence**
- **for all career stages**
- **across all fields**

How the ERC works: core principles

ERC funding gives researchers the freedom to explore ambitious ideas – on their own terms.

- **Excellence first**
- **Open to all excellent researchers**
- **Open topic research**
- **Fair and transparent process**
- **Open science and ethics**
- **Portable grants**

ERC target groups

Starting Grants: excellent PIs at the career stage at which they are starting their own independent research team/programme

Consolidator Grants: excellent PIs at the career stage at which they may still be consolidating their own independent research team/programme

Advanced Grants: excellent PIs at the career stage of already established research leaders with a recognised track record of research achievements

Before you start

- Do have an outstanding idea? Develop your idea, do literature research, discuss it with mentors/peers
- Can you proof that you are you among the best in your field?
- Are you convinced and can you convince others that your idea really is innovative and groundbreaking?
- Are you passionate about your idea and eager to proof that it works?

If the answer is yes, then go for it!

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Expected profile of ERC grantees

StG
potential for research independence & evidence of maturity; promising track record of early achievements

CoG
research independence & evidence of maturity; promising track record of early achievements

AdG
10 year track-record of significant research achievements

SyG
Competitive track records as appropriate to the career stage; successfully bring together those elements necessary to address the scope and complexity of the proposed research question.

ERC Grant Schemes (I/II)

	Starting Grants	Consolidator Grants	Advanced Grants	Synergy Grants	Proof of Concept
Target group	scientists 2-7 years after PhD	scientists 7-12 years after PhD	Established scientists	2-4 scientists	ERC Grantees
Max. duration	5 years	5 years	5 years	6 years	18 months
Max. budget	1.5 Mio. € (2.5 Mio.€)*	2 Mio. € (3 Mio.€)*	2.5 Mio. € (3.5 Mio.€)*	10 Mio. € (14 Mio. €)*	150 000 €

* Additional costs in case of high equipment costs or PI from Third Country, other major experimental and field work costs, excluding personnel costs

ERC Grant Schemes (II/II)

	Starting Grants StG	Consolidator Grants CoG	Advanced Grants AdG	Synergy Grants SyG	Proof of Concept
PI Time commit-ment project	50%	40%	30%	30%	
PI Time commit-ment in EU/AC*	50%	50%	50%	50%	

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ERC Consolidator Grants – Overview for 2026

Target group	**7-12 years after PhD** (extensions possible in exceptional cases; special rules for MD)
Funding	**Max. EUR 2 million for max. 5 years** + additional funding (= max. EUR 1 million) (+ max 2 million for third country applicants*)
Host institution	In EU Member State or Associated Country
Time commitment	≥ 40% (≥ 50% in Europe)
Procedure	Single submission of full proposal, two-step evaluation (incl. interview)
Call	annually

* Additional funding of up to EUR 2 million for applicants re-locating to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere

ERC Advanced Grants – Overview

Target group	Established researchers having a track record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years
Funding	Max. EUR 2.5 million lump sum for up to 5 years (exception: + EUR 1 million for major equipment or for PIs from Third Countries)
Host institution	In EU Member State or Associated Country
Time commitment	≥ 30% (≥ 50% in Europe)
Procedure	Single submission of full proposal, two-step evaluation (incl. interview)
Call	annually

ERC Synergy Grants – Overview

Target group	2 – 4 researchers with a common highly ambitious research goal that can only be achieved together
Funding	Max. EUR 10 million for up to 6 year (exception: + EUR 4 million for major equipment or for PIs from Third Countries)
Host institution	In EU Member State or Associated Country (exception: 1 PI from Third Country)
Time commitment	≥ 30% (≥ 50% in Europe)
Procedure	Single submission of full proposal, three-step evaluation (incl. interview)
Call	annually

Proof of Concept – Overview

Target group	ERC grant-holders (StG, CoG, AdG, SyG)
Aim	Exploration of the innovation potential of an idea drawn from an ERC project
Funding	EUR 150,000 lump sum for 18 months maximum
Funding can be used for	Market analysis, proof of concept, technical tests and validation, outline for a business plan
Procedure	One-step submission and evaluation
Call	Annually with 2 cut-off dates

Eligibility Period Work Programme 2026

Starting Grant	Consolidator Grant
> 2 and ≤ 7 years prior to 1 January 2026 Cut-off dates: Defence from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2023 (inclusive)	> 7 and ≤ 12 years prior to 1 January 2026 Cut-off dates: Defence from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2018 (inclusive)

Call closed

Eligibility periods will be changed for calls as of 2027!

ERC Starting & Consolidator Grants – New Eligibility Windows as of WP 2027

- Only **one StG** and **one CoG** per person – ever!
- Existing **extension rules** (e.g. parental leave) still apply
- **Aim**: more flexibility & fairness across career paths

PhD equivalence for Medical Doctors

Enspire.Science: ERC eligibility calculator

- German "Dr. med." is not considered equivalent to a PhD
- If holding a "Dr. med.“, you need:
  - Proof of an appointment that requires PhD equivalency/research position (Postdoc Fellowship, Professorship, etc.)
  - Proof of research experience in the CV

➢ **Eligibility window** is shifted by two years after the **3rd state exam**

- Clinical training is recognized to extend the eligibility window by a maximum of 4 years

Extensions of the eligibility period

- **Maternity** before/after PhD: 18 months per child
- Extension by the documented time:
  - **Parental leave** before/after PhD defence
  - **Military/civil service** after PhD defence
  - **Clinical training** after the award of the first eligible degree (up to 4 years)
  - Long-term **illness** of the PI or a close family member (>90 days) after PhD defence
  - **Disability**
  - Major **disasters** (natural or man-made)
  - Seeking **asylum** after PhD defence
  - Gender-based or any other form of **violence**

Which costs are eligible?

- Direct eligible costs, 100%
  - Salary of PI and project team (Postdocs, PhD Students, Technicians etc.) (partly/full)
  - Consumables
  - Equipment Costs (depreciation rates apply)
  - Travel Costs
  - Publications Costs (including open access)
  - Subcontracts and other
- Indirect costs, 25% of direct costs

- Revised provisions for additional funding

Get in touch with your institution for budget planning!

Revised Provisions for Additional Funding

Additional funding EUR 1 Mio. for PIs
based in EU/ associated countries
(EUR 2 Mio. for PIs re-locating to EU from outside EU/ AC)

- can be requested to cover **further eligible costs** (incl. personnel)
- has to be **duly justified** in the proposal
- grant amount & additional funding are **assessed during evaluation**
- no pro rata temporis **reduction** for projects of shorter duration
- **re-allocation** is possible

Changes as of ERC Work Programme 2026

New scientific proposal structure - Part I

max. 5 pages (references do not count)

1. present the **overall approach/ research strategy** you propose to use to reach the project goals.
2. lay out the **current state of knowledge**
3. explain the **scientific question** and the **objectives** of the project

Feasibility of the scientific approach will no longer be assessed at Step 1

Changes as of ERC Work Programme 2026

New scientific proposal structure – Part II

max. 7 pages (10 pages for Synergy Grant)

Lay out the **project implementation** and include

- research methodology and work plan,
- risk assessment and mitigating measures,
- justification for the requested budget and resources
- any further necessary background not included in Part I

No need to repeat sections of Part I in Part II

Call Calendar Work Programme 2026

Funding line	Call Opening	Deadline 5 p.m. (local time Bruxelles)	Results
Starting Grants	09.07.2025	**14.10.2025**	Aug. 2026
Consolidator Grants	25.09.2025	**13.01.2026**	Dec. 2026
Advanced Grants	28.05.2026	**27.08.2026**	June 2027
Synergy Grants	10.07.2025	**05.11.2025**	March 2027
Annual calls within similar timeframe			

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*Statistics show that **success rate** is equal throughout most of the eligibility window*

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Facts & Figures

Starting Grant	Consolidator Grant	Advanced Grant
Call 2024 • 3474 Proposals • 494 Grants • Success rate: 14,2 %	Call 2024 • 2313 Proposals • 328 Grants • Success rate: 14,2%	Call 2024 • 2534 Proposals • 281 Grants • Success rate: 11,1%
Call 2025 • 3928 Proposals • 478 Grants • Success rate: 12,2 %	Call 2025 • 3.121 Proposals • 349 Grants • Success rate: 11,3 %	

Synergy Grant
Call 2025 • 712 Proposals • 66 Grants • Overall PI Success rate: 11,1%

ERC Dashboard: Explore Projects, Statistics, and Insights

ERC plus – new funding instrument

Grant **max. EUR 7 million for max. 7 years**

- to be amended to work programme 2026
- excellence-based // designated to open new fields of research or radically transform fields of research
- lump-sum scheme /no pro rata cuts (min. 4 years)
- open to all career stages & granted once in a lifetime
- presumably call will open in June & close in September 2026

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Application Procedure and Evaluation

Main documents to be used

- ERC Work Programme – every year: 2026
- ‚Information for Applicants' – call specific, available here: Apply for ERC Grants | European Research Council
- Proposal templates – call specific, updated for 2026 calls!

→ Familiarize yourself early with the electronic submission system

Proposal Parts

- Administrative Forms/
  Proposal Submission Forms
- 1 - General Information
- 2 - Participants & Contacts
- 3 - Budget
- 4 - Ethics
- 5 - Call-specific questions

B1	B2
Extended synopsis	Scientific proposal
CV und Track record (4 S.)	

Annexes

- Host Support Letter (Host Institution Binding Statement of Support)
- PhD-Certificate
- Further documents (if applicable)

New in Work Programme 2026

- Revised application structure and page limits
- New evaluation focus: ambition first, feasibility later
- Additional funding of up to €2 million for researchers from third countries
- Extended eligibility for victims of violence
- Parental leave explicitly included as eligibility extension
- “ERCplus" (planned): up to 7 years, lump-sum scheme, excellence-based, open to all career stages

Proposal Basics

- **Online submission -** process is started via the call page in the Funding & Tenders Portal
- A submitted proposal can be revised until the call deadline by submitting a new version that overwrites the previous one
- Stick to the structure of the **proposal templates** (new for WP 26!), adhere to the formatting rules, page limits, and provided guidance
- While preparing the proposal, take the **evaluation elements** into account

Evaluation in Work Programme 2026

- Scientific proposal part I: max. 5 pages
- CV & track record: max. 4 pages

evaluated in step 1

- Scientific proposal part II: max. 7 pages
- Resources & time commitment: max. 2 pages
- Appendix: current grants & grant applications
  (does not count towards the page limit)

evaluated in step 2

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One Evaluation Criteria: Excellence

1. Research Project	2. Principal Investigator
Ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility • Address important challenges • Ambitious objectives & beyond the state of the art • ambitious research Scientific Approach • Feasibility • Appropriateness of research methodology to achieve goals • Timescales, resources & time commitment	• Ability to conduct ground-breaking research • Evidence of creative independent thinking • Scientific expertise & capacity to execute the project

Evaluation Procedure

Single submission – two-step evaluation

Step 1:
Part I by panel „generalists“

Not passed to step 2 / Resubmission:
Restriction with a B & C
- B: wait 1 call year
- C: wait 2 call years
- A not invited: no restriction

Step 2:
„A invited“- proposals only, max. 44 per panel:
- **Parts 1 & 2** by panel & external specialists,
- **Interview** with panel

- **A funded**
- **No restrictions** for A not funded & B

Evaluation elements for Step 1 – Scientific Part I

Ground-breaking nature & ambition

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

*"…convince the evaluation Panel that the proposal presents an original and **creative idea addressing an important question** in the research field(s). It should explain 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**."*

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Evaluation elements for Step 1 – CV & Track Record

Experience, capacity & creativity to successfully run ground-breaking research

- Research achievements (max. 10 outputs),
  Demonstrating advancement in the field & Emphasis on recent achievements
- Provide a short, factual narrative
- Peer recognition, such as prizes or awards
- Other noteworthy contributions to the research community
  Not evaluated: Mobility, grant income, supervision/mentoring

Evaluation elements – Step 2

- To what extent are the **research methodology** and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?
- To what extent are the **timescales & resources** adequate and properly justified?

External Reviews in Step 2

- Proposals are sent to experts in your field
- From all over the world
- Chosen by the panel members
- Written feedback with open questions
- Questions likely to be asked in Q&A Session of the interview

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Panel Structure 2026

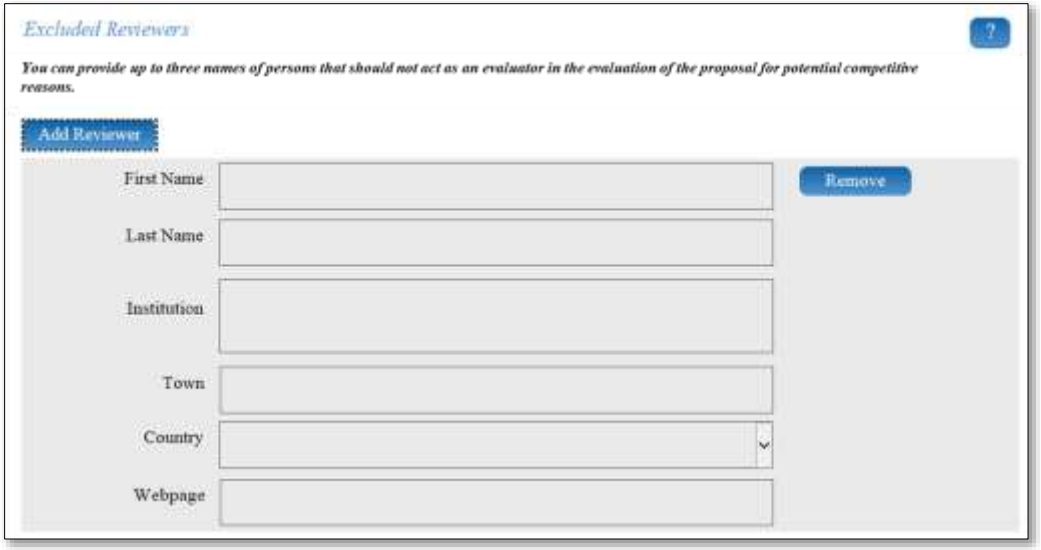
28 Panels in 3 Domains:

Life Scienses (LS),
Social sciences & humanities
Physical Sciences & Engineering

- Panel = 1 chair + 10-16 members
- Panel chairs published before the deadline
- Full list of members published after evaluation
- **Do NOT contact the panels!**

Tip: Panel structure stays stable
– check the **ERC Panel Member Dashboard**

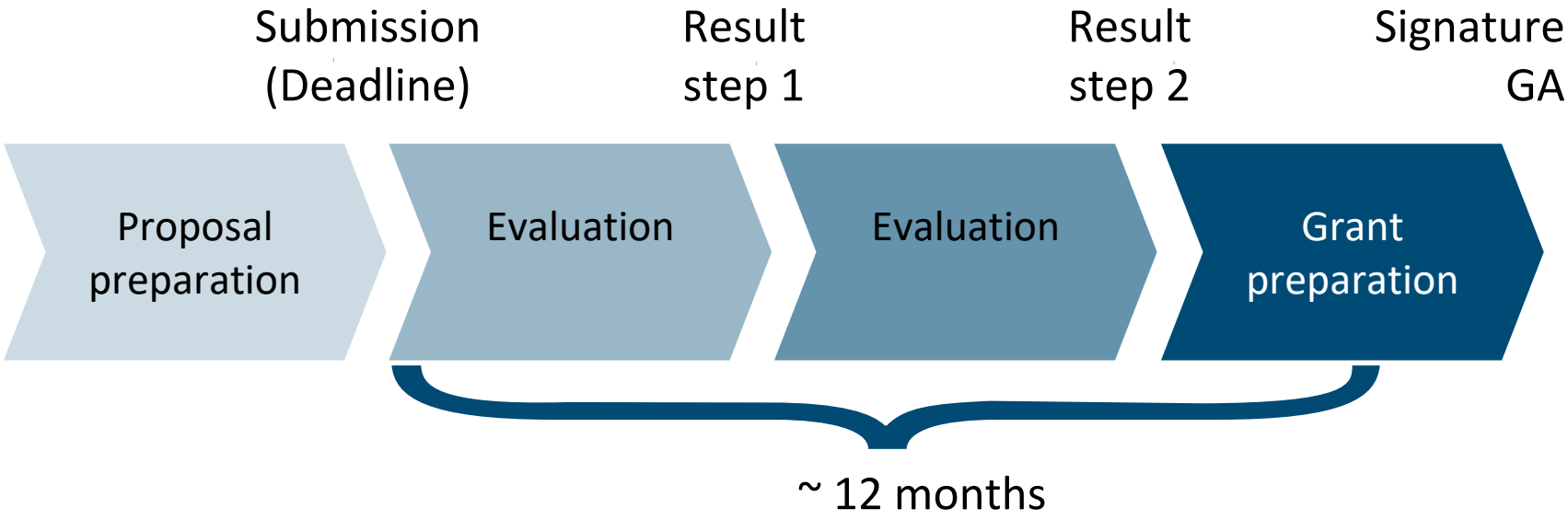
Exclusion of reviewers



The Interview

- Online with all panel members
- Project presentation plus Q&A
- Might influence the position on the ranking list
- Generally friendly atmosphere with a focus on scientific questions
- NCP ERC provides interviews trainings

From Submission to Funding



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Resubmission

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Application under Previous ERC Work Programme Calls and Outcome of Evaluation[45]		Applicants are Ineligible for the Following Calls under Work Programme 2026
Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, or Synergy Grant 2024 and 2025	Rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity[46]	Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grant 2026
Starting, Consolidator, or Advanced Grant 2024	C at Step 1	Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grant 2026
Starting, Consolidator, or Advanced Grant 2025	B or C at Step 1	Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced Grant 2026
Synergy Grant 2024	C at Step 1	Synergy Grant 2026
Synergy Grant 2025	B or C at Step 1	Synergy Grant 2026

General Hints

Final thoughts on your proposal

- ✓ Follow the official templates and guidance carefully
- ✓ Make sure each part answers the right evaluation criteria
- ✓ Remember: Part I and Part II have different purposes & audiences
- ✓ Panel members read **many proposals** — help them understand yours quickly!

Some thoughts on your proposal

- Can you explain your project idea briefly and concisely?
- Are the goals and the novelty clear from the beginning?
- Which important challenges will you tackle?
- Which are the ground-breaking or novel aspects?
- What makes the project ambitious/high risk but feasible?
- What is the expected impact on your research field?
- Why are you the right person to carry out the project?

→ Propose a project that comes from your heart & be excited about it!

→ Use the expertise of your EU office and the NCP ERC!

Think about:

Yourself	Position / salary	Career prospects	Teaching
	Overhead 25%		
Team	Recruitment	Contract/ salary	Premises
Equipment	Depreciation	co-financing	purchase
	After the project		
Third Parties	Subcontracts		

Get in touch with your institution for budget planning

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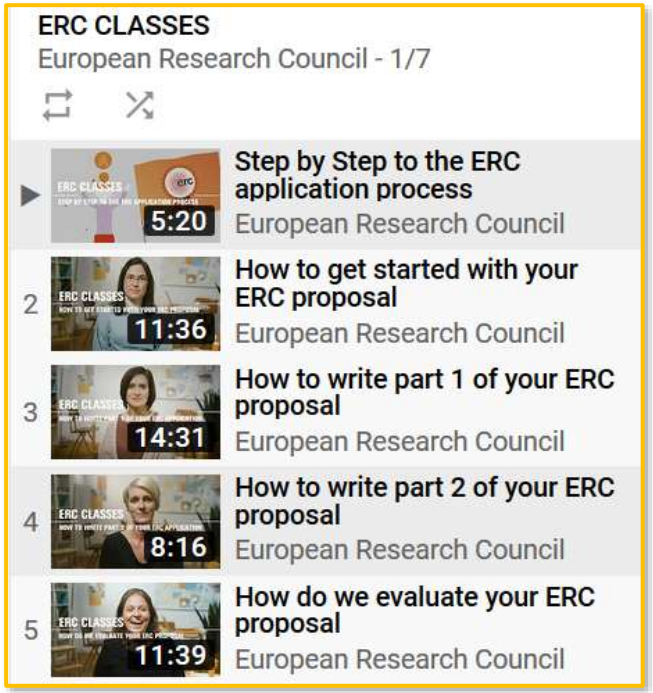
ERC National Contact Point : Our Services

- General information on the ERC
- Advice on grant application and grant management
- Individual proposal check
- Events & professional trainings
- Newsletter & website (DE)/(EN)
- Website www.erc-germany.de

Further Information

- Apply for ERC Grants | European Research Council
- ERC CLASSES - YouTube
- Host Institution/ EU Grants Officers



Check out funded ERC Projects

→ ERC Website

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KOWI Kooperationsstelle EU der Wissenschaftsorganisationen

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