Annual Report on the ERC activities and achievements in 2025

Prepared under the authority of the ERC Scientific Council

European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

European Commission

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Annual Report on
the ERC activities and achievements in 2025

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chapter one

Foreword

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Commissioner's message

> *In a rapidly evolving geopolitical and technological context, the ERC continues to play a central role in ensuring that Europe remains a world leader in scientific excellence*

The publication of the European Research Council's Annual Report for 2025 provides an opportunity to reflect on a year in which frontier research once again proved essential to Europe's strength, resilience, and global competitiveness. In a rapidly evolving geopolitical and technological context, the ERC continues to play a central role in ensuring that Europe remains a world leader in scientific excellence — the foundation upon which breakthrough innovation depends.

By supporting investigator-driven research, the ERC empowers outstanding scientists and scholars to pursue bold ideas and pioneering discoveries, leaving them free to follow curiosity wherever it may lead. This freedom remains essential for high-quality, trustworthy research that underpins innovation and solutions to global challenges. It is not only a core value, but also a strategic necessity for competitiveness and for attracting and retaining world-class talent.

To uphold scientific freedom and provide a safe haven for researchers to pursue their work without political interference, as part of the "Choose Europe" initiative, the ERC has strengthened its support for grantees relocating to Europe. The top-up for relocating grantees has been increased from €1 million to €2 million this year. In addition, a new grant scheme "ERC Plus" will be launched in 2026, mobilising greater, sustained investment to retain top EU researchers and to make Europe more attractive to world-class researchers. At the same time, the ERC contributes to

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the broader European policy objective of reinforcing the long-term competitiveness of Europe and its research and innovation system. These efforts are particularly important as we look ahead to the next Multiannual Financial Framework and the next Horizon Europe programme.

In 2025, ERC-funded projects have delivered important advances across fields ranging from health and climate science to artificial intelligence, engineering, and the social sciences — reinforcing the value of curiosity-driven research as a foundation for societal and economic progress. And ERC grant holders continue to create innovative start-ups based on the results of their scientific discoveries, many of them successful in receiving further funding from the European Innovation Council. These are promising first steps in what must become a long-term, sustained effort to put startups at the heart of Europe's economy thanks to the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy.

The achievements highlighted in this report are made possible by the dedication of grantees and reviewers across Europe and beyond. I extend my sincere gratitude to the Scientific Council and to all who contribute to the ERC's mission. Together, we are investing in knowledge that will shape Europe's future and benefit generations to come.

Ekaterina Zaharieva
Commissioner for Start-ups, Research and Innovation
European Commission

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President's message

> *The proposed doubling of the ERC budget is a welcome and much needed prospect that would strengthen Europe's capacity to fund more excellent science in Europe*

Science and technology saw important advances in 2025, fuelled in part by widespread adoption of AI, but the world of research was also affected by geopolitical turbulence, shifting technological priorities globally, as well as cuts in funding for curiosity-driven science and weakening academic freedom in parts of the world.

Against this backdrop, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen launched the "Choose Europe for Science" initiative in May last year to promote Europe as a destination for leading researchers. As part of this effort, the ERC introduced measures to contribute to attracting scientists from further afield and keeping skilled researchers here. A new funding instrument was launched, the ERC Plus Grant, offering larger and longer-term funding for individual researchers who propose a truly ambitious project and vision that cannot be achieved with the standard ERC grants. And we increased funding for those moving to Europe with an ERC grant to set up their research groups.

The strategic importance of research and innovation is also recognised by the European Commission in its proposal for the next EU long-term budget (2028-2034). Securing the proposed EUR 175 billion budget for the next framework programme, Horizon Europe, will also require extensive negotiations between the parties involved over the next two years. The proposed doubling of the ERC budget is a welcome and much needed prospect that would strengthen Europe's capacity to fund more excellent science in Europe and to safeguard the attractiveness of ERC grants by restoring their purchasing power. Currently, 40% of the top-rated grant applications in our competitions are left unfunded purely due to our budgetary limitations - a loss for Europe! It is furthermore a clear priority to protect the autonomous governance of the ERC as the European funder "for scientists by scientists".

Sustained investment in curiosity-driven research is a strategy for facing the tidal forces of technological disruption and geopolitical competition. To reinforce Europe's global leadership in R&I, funding

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excellent research and promoting closer collaboration between academia and industry are some of the measures that emerged from an ERC workshop held in April 2025, at which leaders in policy-making, industry and research reflected on Europe's capacity to compete globally in line with the Draghi report on competitiveness. Similar views were expressed at the ERC event in the context of Denmark's EU Presidency, at our European Business Summit session, and at the event on competitiveness and sustainability that we held together with the European Parliament's Panel for the Future of Science & Technology (STOA).

Good news for European cooperation came with the signing of the association agreement between Switzerland and the EU. The Swiss-based applicants immediately performed very well in the 2025 ERC calls, which demonstrates that we are stronger together as a continent. And we are happy to welcome Egypt-based applicants in our competitions following Egypt association to Horizon Europe.

We are proud that also in 2025 several ERC grantees were recognised at the highest level for their contributions, winning awards such as the Wolf Prize, the Balzan Prize, the Lasker Prize and the EMBO Gold Medal. Philippe Aghion, co-author of the Draghi report and recipient of two ERC grants, shared the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, with Peter Howitt and Joel Mokyr.

With more than 11,000 grant proposals evaluated, it was one of the more demanding years for ERC peer review evaluations. While this high demand reflects the scientific community's trust in the ERC, it also puts significant strain on evaluation panels and operations. That is why the Scientific Council modified some aspects of the evaluation process. These include measures to reduce the workload of our peer reviewers and a new format for the research proposal that is better tailored to the needs at each evaluation stage. In addition, the Scientific Council addressed a recurring request from the scientific community by adjusting the eligibility windows for the Starting and Consolidator Grants to fit the diverse career structures across Europe and scientific disciplines.

The Scientific Council also took a closer look at the initiatives that enhance the participation of researchers in parts of Europe that perform less well in ERC calls. One example is the use of structural funds to support top-rated but unfunded ERC proposals, an option that Lithuania has pioneered.

In 2025, four new members — Conny Aerts, Maarit Karppinen, Tomaž Prosen and András Stipsicz —joined the ERC Scientific Council. At the end of the year, we bade farewell to the three Vice-Presidents, Jesper Svejstrup, Eystein Jansen, and Gerd Gigerenzer, and to the members Geneviève Almouzni, Mercedes García-Arenal, Chryssa Kouveliotou and Milena Žic Fuchs, whose mandates came to an end. We thank them for their dedication and outstanding service to the ERC and the community.

I invite you to explore this report and discover in greater detail the key developments, achievements and challenges that marked the work of the ERC in 2025.

Maria Leptin
President
European Research Council

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chapter two

Strategy and Governance

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ERC **Mission**

Pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge

Encourage the highest quality research in Europe through competitive funding and support investigator-driven frontier research across all fields, based on scientific excellence.

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

ERC **Strategy**

Excellence

Provide attractive long-term funding, awarded on the sole criterion of excellence.

The ERC operates on a “bottom-up” basis without predetermined priorities and its grants are open to individual researchers of any age, gender or nationality, and from any country in the world, working in Europe. Priority is given to assisting the best young researchers starting out with excellent ideas to make the transition to independence by providing adequate support at the critical stage when they are setting up or consolidating their own research team or programme.

The ERC aims to foster healthy competition across Europe based on robust, transparent and impartial evaluation procedures which address, in particular, potential gender bias.

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

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

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

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

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

ERC **Scientific Council**

The Scientific Council has the responsibility to establish the overall scientific strategy of the ERC, the Work Programme and, from a scientific perspective, positions on the implementation and management of calls for proposals, evaluation criteria, peer-review processes and proposal evaluation.

It continuously monitors the quality of the operations and implementation, reviews and assesses the ERC's achievements and impact and contributes to raising the global profile and visibility of the ERC.

The Scientific Council is made up of members of the scientific community at the highest level, who are knowledgeable about the European research scene, and who act independently of political or other interests.

Its composition allows the Scientific Council to be independent, combining wisdom and experience with vision and imagination and reflect the broad disciplinary scope of research.

The 22 individual members are selected based on their undisputed reputation as leaders and for their independence and commitment to research, following a transparent procedure by an independent committee of six highly respected personalities in European research.

They are appointed by the European Commission for a term of office limited to four years, renewable once, on the basis of a rotating system which ensures the continuity of the work of the Scientific Council.

Maria
LEPTIN
(Biology)
ERC President

Gerd
GIGERENZER
(Psychology)
Vice-President

Eystein
JANSEN
(Earth Science)
Vice-President

Jesper
SVEJSTRUP
(Biology)
Vice-President

Conny
AERTS
(Astrophysics)

Geneviève
ALMOUZNI
(Biology)

Harriet
BULKELEY
(Geography)

Mercedes
GARCÍA-ARENAL
(History)

Thomas
HENZINGER
(Computer Science)

Liselotte
HØJGAARD
(Medicine)

Dirk
INZÉ
(Plant Biology)

Leszek
KACZMAREK
(Neurobiology)

Maarit
KARPPINEN
(Chemistry)

Sylvie
LORENTE
(Mechanical Engineering)

Luke
O'NEILL
(Biochemistry & Immunology)

Björn
OTTERSTEN
(Electrical Engineering)

Torsten
PERSSON
(Economics)

Tomaž
PROSEN
(Physics)

Giovanni
SARTOR
(Law)

Nicola
SPALDIN
(Materials Theory)

András
STIPSICZ
(Mathematics)

Milena
ŽIC FUCHS
(Linguistics)

Standing **Committees**

The Scientific Council may set up, from amongst its members, standing committees, working groups and other structures to address specific tasks.

The Scientific Council has three Standing Committees dedicated to specific topics:

The Standing Committee on Panels deals with the selection of evaluation panellists. The committee met three times in 2025.

The Standing Committee on Conflict of Interest, Scientific Misconduct and Ethical Issues (CoIME) provides guidance on conflict of interest, scientific misconduct and ethical issues.

In 2025, the CoIME discussed cases of alleged scientific misconduct online and gave advice in writing on 26 of them. The committee also met once.

The Standing Committee for Programme Impact Monitoring and Evaluation (PRIME) provides guidance on how the ERC monitors the quality of operations, evaluates programme implementation and achievements and makes recommendations for future actions. The committee met three times in 2025.

Working Groups

The members of the Scientific Council also meet in working groups that carry out analyses and contribute to the scientific strategy of the ERC through proposals to be adopted by the Scientific Council on specific issues.

In 2025, there were four Working Groups dedicated to the following topics, which are of particular interest to the ERC:

Innovation, to develop ERC positions on the socio-economic impact of ERC-funded research and to establish relations with other parts of the Framework Programme dealing with innovation issues and policies.
The working group met three times in 2025.

Gender and diversity issues, to ensure that the ERC is at the forefront of best practices with regard to gender balance in research, promotes diversity and prevents any form of discrimination in its structures and operations. The working group met three times in 2025.

Widening European participation, to strengthen participation in ERC calls by researchers from the EU's less research-performing regions, to capitalise on the full European potential for frontier research without departing from the ERC's principle of excellence. The working group met four times in 2025.

Open Science, to develop an ERC position on issues related to open access to publications, research data management and sharing and open science more broadly. The working group met once in 2025 after which the Scientific Council decided to move to an Ambassador model to inform it about open science matters.

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ERC **President**

The role of the President is to chair the ERC Scientific Council and ensure its leadership, to work closely with the ERC Executive Agency (ERCEA) and to act as an ambassador for the ERC in the world of research.

The President, an internationally renowned and respected scientist or scholar, is expected to be a prominent advocate of frontier research and an ambassador of European science within and beyond Europe. The President is appointed by the European Commission following a transparent recruitment procedure based on the recommendations of an independent, dedicated search committee and with the approval of the ERC Scientific Council.

ERC President Maria Leptin took office on 1 November 2021 and is the ERC's fifth President. A developmental biologist and immunologist, Maria Leptin was previously the Director of the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) from 2010 to 2021.

Steering **Committee**

The ERCEA Steering Committee is the body that oversees the operations of the ERCEA and adopts decisions necessary for ERCEA's functioning. These encompass, among others, the ERCEA's annual work programme, its annual activity report, its organizational structure, its administrative budget and its annual account, as well as decisions related to the Staff Regulations.

The ERCEA Steering Committee is made up of three senior managers of the Directorate-General (DG) for Research and Innovation, two members of the ERC Scientific Council as well as one observer form the Central Services of the Commission and one from the ERC Scientific Council.

The ERCEA Steering Committee in office in 2025 was chaired by the Director-General of the DG Research and Innovation, Marc Lemaître. The two other members of the Committee from the DG were deputy Director-General Joanna Drake (Vice-Chairperson of the ERCEA Steering Committee) and Matthias Will, Director of the Common Implementation Centre. The members representing the ERC Scientific Council were Milena Žic Fuchs and Dirk Inzé. The observers were ERC President Maria Leptin and Marco Umberto Moricca, Director for Careers and Staff Development in the DG for Human Resources.

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ERC **Executive Agency**

The ERCEA is the Dedicated Implementation Structure that supports the ERC Scientific Council in the conduct of all its tasks.

It operates on the basis of the powers delegated to it by the European Commission, which has the ultimate political responsibility for the specific programme implementing the Framework Programme Horizon Europe.

The organisation of the ERCEA follows its operational and horizontal objectives and has the following structure:

- Support to the Scientific Council. The unit supports the ERC Scientific Council to establish the overall research funding and management strategy of the ERC, including the ERC annual work programme. The Unit leads on the assessment, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and statistical analysis of the activities of the ERC.
- Communication. The unit assists the ERC Scientific Council and the ERCEA in their communication strategy towards the scientific community, public authorities, media and the public at large. It also advises and assists the President in terms of communication activities, including media interviews.
- Scientific Management. The Department sets up the calls for applicants, works with the Scientific Council on the identification and recruitment of experts, ensures expert payment, administers the scientific evaluation; processes redress requests from applicants, performs the ethics review and ethics checks on proposals selected for funding and carries out the scientific monitoring of grants.
- Grant Management. The Department is in charge of concluding grant agreements with selected beneficiaries, has responsibility for the execution of the relevant budget planned for the grants and for business process management concerning grant amendments; and it ensures the follow-up of the recommendations from audits.
- Resources and Support. The Department has responsibility for the administrative budget, IT solutions and services, human resources and legal affairs and internal control.
- Accounting Officer, responsible for signing off the annual accounts of the ERCEA, certifying reasonable assurance that they present a true and fair view of the financial situation.

Laurence Moreau has been the director of the ERCEA since 31 May 2022.

ERC Executive Agency management team

Front row (from left to right):

Soudaina Wala, Philippe Cupers, Lino Paula, Josefina Enfedaque, Laurence Moreau, Anita Kucharska, Pascale Cid, Raluca Ionescu, Philippe Vijghen

Back row (from left to right):

Katja Meinke, Nikola Car, Martin Penny, Alban Kellerbauer, Niki Atzoulatou, Eleni Zika, Mila Bas Sanchez, Pablo Perez-Illana, Gwennael Joliff-Botrel, Claire Levacher, Carmen Garcia Fernandez, Christian Oswald

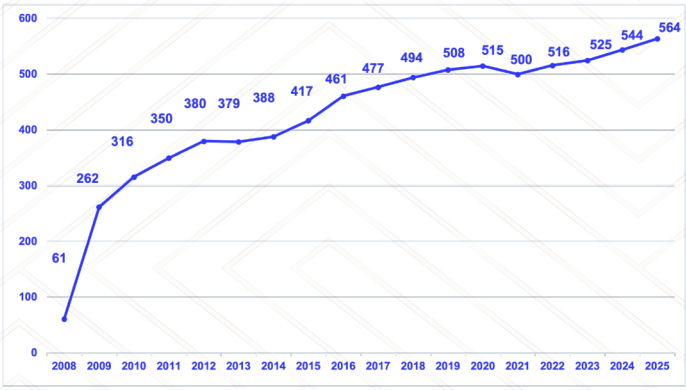
Absent:

Carole Micmacher, Athanasia Papathanasiou

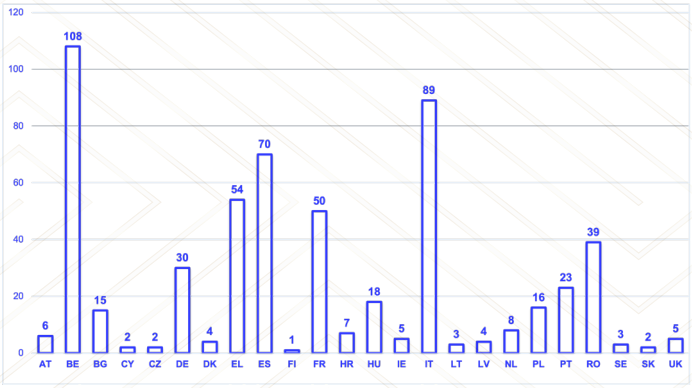
Jose Labastida, Alejandro Martin Hobdey, Angela Liberatore and Anisoara Ulceluse-Pirvan retired during 2025.

ERCEA staff

Number of staff



Staff nationalities



Staff by category and gender

Seconded Temporary Agents are European Commission officials seconded to ERCEA in high responsibility management positions.

Temporary Agents have positions of responsability in key scientific, operational and administrative posts.

Seconded National Experts are national civil servants seconded temporarily to ERCEA to assist in the execution of high-level tasks.

Contract Agents perform administrative, audit, advisory, executive, clerical, secretarial and other equivalent technical tasks.

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2025 in Review

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ERC in figures

EUR 16 billion

ERC budget in Horizon Europe

17%

of the entire Horizon Europe budget

EUR 3.10 billion

ERC 2025 budget, fully committed

EUR 2.66 billion

payment credits fully executed in 2025
(EUR 0.46 billion for Horizon 2020
and EUR 2.20 billion for Horizon Europe)

> 18,000

projects of all types funded
by the ERC since 2007

95

nationalities
(ERC grantees)

35

EU and Associated Countries
hosting ERC projects

> 270,000

publications
from ERC projects
reported

> 2,500

patents and other
IPR applications
from ERC projects
reported

> 120,000

researchers and other
professionals hired
in ERC teams

ERC supports emerging **scientific ideas**

To explore its footprint on the progress of research in recent years, the ERC conducted focused thematic and longitudinal studies on 23 highly dynamic fields in which significant discoveries have been made — referred to as "hot" research areas (HRAs). These studies, carried out by independent external experts in 2022 and 2024, provide insights into the knowledge generated through ERC funding. Using a common methodology across the three ERC scientific domains (Life Sciences, Physical Sciences and Engineering, and Social Sciences and Humanities), experts assessed ERC impact, evaluating contributions to scientific breakthroughs through both qualitative insights and quantitative analysis. Results for some HRAs were briefly presented in previous Annual Reports.

Core (high citation) vs seminal (high impact) publications

Expert studies show that bibliometric analyses have significant limitations in certain research areas. While they effectively capture publications impacting immediate applications or related to large-scale data releases, they may miss fundamental insights with longer-term impact. Publication dates can also be misleading when tracing the flow of ideas in fields where research evolves rapidly, preprints are posted on online archives, and conference presentations serve as the primary dissemination mechanism.

This is precisely why the methodology — combining bibliometric data with expert knowledge and thorough field reviews — is particularly valuable across diverse research areas experiencing recent breakthroughs.

To quantify this effect across the HRAs, the proportion of top-cited publications (hereafter "core") among the impactful publications (hereafter "seminal") driving recent breakthroughs, as identified by the experts, was determined (Fig. 1). The findings indicate that in most HRAs, fewer than 30% of core publications were identified by the experts as impactful, while in nine

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HRAs, 70% or more of core publications were also seminal. This reflects two key observations: bibliometric analysis alone cannot readily identify truly impactful work, regardless of domain; and experts slightly adapted their methods for identifying seminal publications to account for field-specific publication practices.

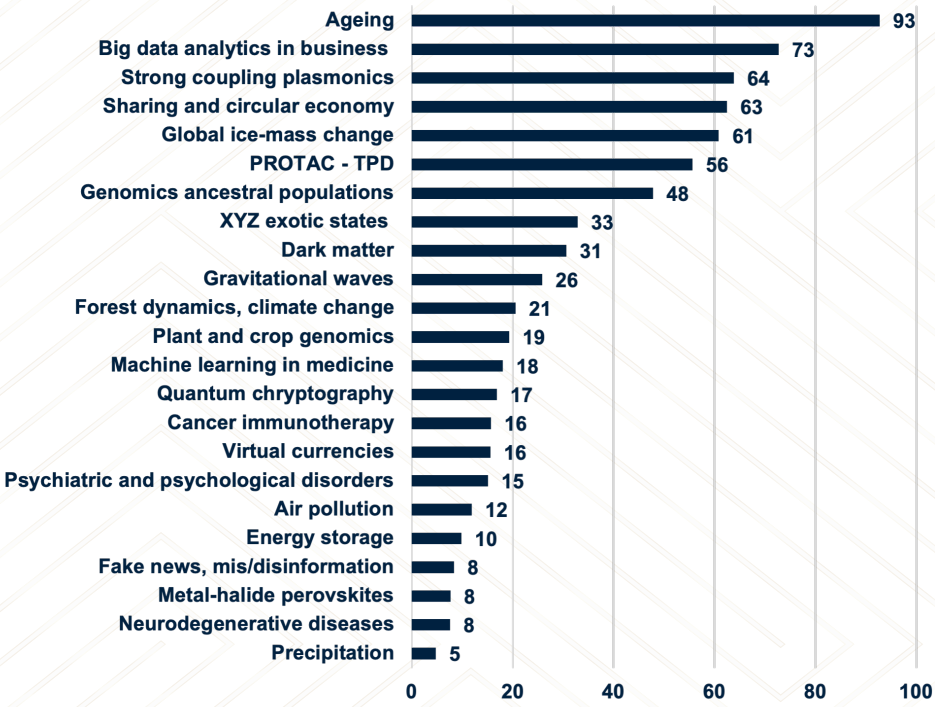

Figure 1 - Share of core publications among seminal publications (%)

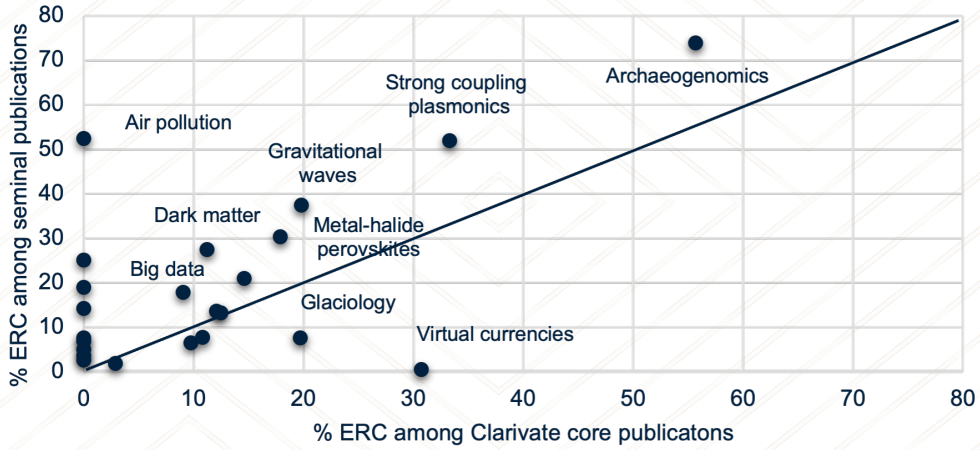

Figure 2 - The ERC share of core against seminal publications (%)

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Building on these results, ERC contributions among top-cited publications ("core") were compared with those among seminal publications driving breakthroughs in their respective fields (Fig. 2). The data clearly show that in most HRAs, ERC presence is substantially higher among seminal publications than among top-cited ones. It is therefore concluded that relying solely on citation metrics to assess ERC impact on breakthroughs would underestimate ERC contributions across most research areas, regardless of domain.

Overall ERC contributions to impactful publications

In the table below, the 23 HRAs are listed and grouped under broader scientific fields, with the year in which the expert study was carried out indicated in parentheses. Fig. 3 illustrates the ERC contribution identified in each HRA, by scientific domain.

Following the establishment of expert-defined, field-specific metrics to track the evolution of research in the selected HRAs, the ERC contribution to field evolution and breakthroughs was assessed and evaluated according to additional quantitative and qualitative considerations: the type and degree of contributions; impact assessment of ERC PIs and team members; and subsequent ERC grants obtained shortly after seminal publications.

The experts further highlighted that ERC funding has long-term effects that are not fully visible in standard metrics. Many important ideas emerge only after researchers — especially postdoctoral researchers — have left the original ERC team or after the grant has formally ended. Consequently, later publications often no longer acknowledge ERC support, even though ideas and concepts take time to mature. As a result, relying solely on publications acknowledging ERC support undervalues the ERC's real contribution and true impact.

Scientific Field	Hot Reseach Area (year of study)
Emerging Technologies in Science and Engineering	Perovskite Solar Cells (2022) Strong Coupling Plasmoinics (2022) Quantum Cryptography (2022) Energy Storage Lithium Metal (2024)
Advancements in Health and Longevity	AI Machine Learning in Medicine (2024)
	Cancer Immunotherapy (2022) Ageing (2022) Psychological Disorders - Social Isolation (2022) Neurodegenerative Diseases (2024)
	PROTACs & Targeted Protein Degradation (2024)
Innovative Genomic and Proteomic Technologies	Plant & Crop Genomics (2022) Ancient Genomics (2024)
Digital Transformation and Societal Impact	Sharing & Circular Economy (2022) Virtual Currencies (2022) Big Data Analytics in Business Management (2022) Fake News Misinformation Disinformation (2024)
Global Climate Change and Environmental Dynamics	Global Change Precipitation (2022) Global Change Forest Dynamics (2022) Global Change Air Pollution (2024) Glaciology & Ice Melting (2024)
Fundamental Physics and Astronomy	Gravitational Waves (2022) Dark Matter (2024) The XYZ Exotic States (2024)

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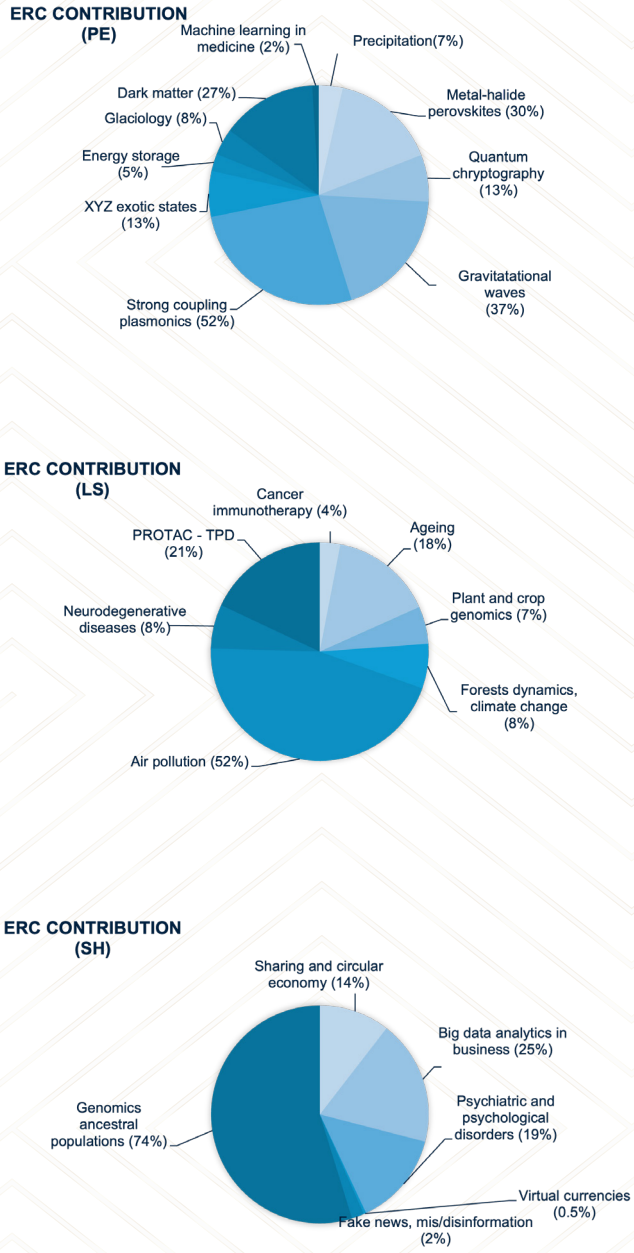

Figure 3 - ERC-funded contributions to seminal publications in all 23 research areas, by domain

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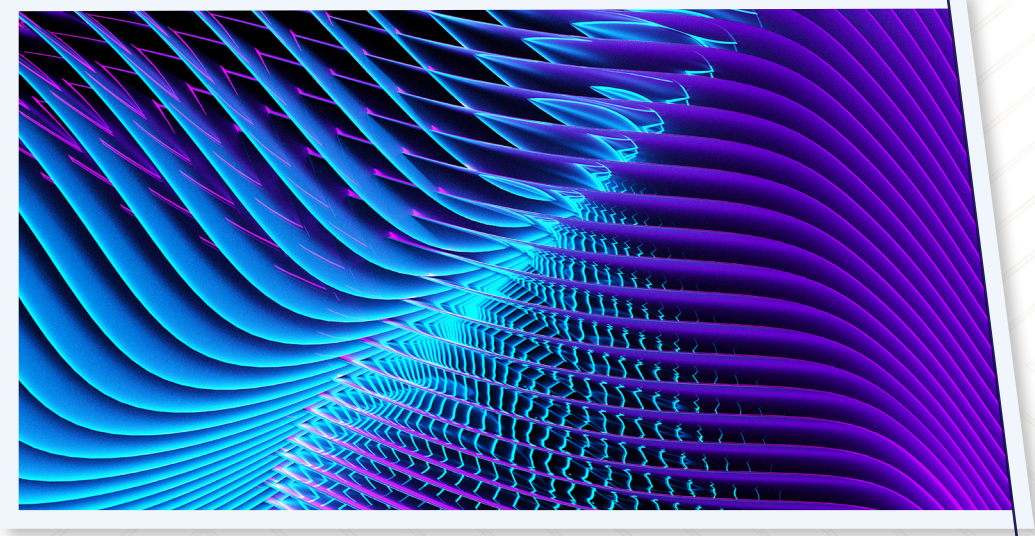

Workshop on research and innovation **for a competitive Europe**

On 10 April, the ERC convened a workshop addressing Europe's competitiveness challenges. Stakeholders from research, industry, and policymaking were brought together to identify and discuss concrete policy options for enhancing European competitiveness through research and innovation.

Participants identified **four key challenges to European competitiveness**:

- **Market fragmentation** - Despite decades of single market development, substantial barriers persist: differing national implementations of EU legislation, lack of financial union, and incompatible standards prevent European businesses from achieving necessary scale, limit financing access, and result in duplicated efforts across Member States.
- **Risk-taking versus regulation** - Europe's precautionary principle creates tension with innovation requirements. While protective regulation ensures safety, overly cautious approaches discourage experimentation necessary for breakthrough innovation. Risk aversion manifests in over-cautious regulatory frameworks and funding mechanisms favouring incremental projects.
- **Insufficient R&D funding** - Private R&D spending in the EU (1.3% of GDP) lags behind the US (2.4%) and China (1.9%). The venture capital system remains underdeveloped, particularly for later-stage funding. Public funding in both fundamental and applied research lacks long-term, risk-tolerant funding models and mechanisms comparable to those that elsewhere have driven transformative innovation.
- **Data access barriers** - Despite rich data resources, Europe faces significant silos and difficult access. Examples include lack of standardisation in healthcare systems; foreign companies accessing European citizens' data with less barriers than European researchers and companies; national interpretations of the AI Act threatening EU regulatory leadership in AI; lack of funding for data management.

Participants then analysed **obstacles and developed actionable strategies for policy makers** who have to design strategies and policies to tackle these hurdles, notably in the context of the next Multiannual Financial Framework and Horizon Europe's successor programme:

> **Completing the single market** - Priority actions include regulatory sandboxes allowing innovation to be tested, reformed merger control policies, financial and capital market union, common data standards, and innovation policies aligned with industrial strategies. Rather than the need for new policies, political will to implement and enforce existing policies was identified as a barrier.

> **Research-industry collaboration** - Create physical open-innovation centres, industry engagement with startups, researcher mobility between academia and industry, establish professional technology transfer offices, building industry-research consortia focused on pre-competitive collaboration.

> **Fundamental research** - Increase funding for curiosity-driven research with longer timeframes and larger grants, create European centres of excellence, establish high-risk research funding mechanisms with higher tolerance for failure, improve researcher career paths, and develop focused initiatives on areas of societal importance.

> **Data infrastructure** - Develop centralised European data repositories, provide dedicated funding for data standardisation, create data sharing incentives, support open-source initiatives, and harmonise GDPR implementation.

> **Fostering risk culture and talent** - Reform education systems to encourage both entrepreneurship and STEM education, ensure gender and socio-economic diversity in innovation systems, stimulate risk-taking by supporting cross-sector mobility to broaden perspectives, and regulate to facilitate rather than hamper innovation.

Finally, participants suggested a series of priority implementation actions:

> **Support to research:** Establish stable long-term funding frameworks for fundamental research, extend successful existing funding models to European level, foster international research cooperation.

> **Researcher incentives:** Encourage researchers to engage more with industry, reward collaboration beyond publications, support academia-industry mobility, provide industry exposure for early-career researchers.

> **Innovation centres:** Create shared industry-academia spaces, provide equipment access for startups/SMEs, facilitate knowledge exchange between sector, encourage risk-taking, facilitate the emergence of successful regional innovation clusters.

> **Institutional, local and EU-level alignment:** Build coalitions in specific fields or geographies to move forward without having to wait for all Member States or sectors to agree; implement step-by-step processes, instead of aiming for large regulatory initiatives; distribute responsibilities across regulatory levels.

> **Data management:** Open data silos and stimulate cross-sharing, fund FAIR data management, provide expertise at research institutes to manage data effectively, develop EU quality controls for data quality and standards.

> **Equality measures:** Promote equality and diversity in research and innovation by addressing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) gender imbalance, ensuring educational opportunities regardless of background and gender, developing talent across all European regions.

Conclusion

Europe faces challenges to its competitiveness, yet it also benefits from strong foundations in science, education, and social systems. Achieving long-term success will require coordinated efforts across the EU, national governments, and institutions. The workshop spanned a broad range of topics and was not limited to a single issue such as industry-academia collaboration. Market fragmentation emerged as a central concern.

The primary aim of the workshop was to foster collaboration and dialogue, extending beyond the promotion of frontier research or its funding. Its broad scope emphasised the critical role of fundamental research as the bedrock of innovation. Industry representatives acknowledged that while companies focus on development, they rely heavily on academic institutions for groundbreaking discoveries. Several speakers recommended scaling up successful national funding models to the European level and suggested that concentrating resources in centres of excellence could enhance Europe's leadership in emerging areas. By tackling structural barriers and leveraging existing strengths, Europe can renew its competitive edge and secure sustainable prosperity through research and innovation.

A report summarising the findings and policy options identified during these discussions was published in July and distributed to stakeholders.

From frontier discovery to innovation: **Mapping the ERC Proof of Concept grants**

Funding curiosity-driven frontier research is the core mission of the ERC. Through the Proof of Concept (PoC) scheme, the ERC ensures that discoveries generated from its main grants can also explore pathways towards societal and economic impact. In 2025, a comprehensive mapping report examined the technological and sectoral landscape of ERC PoC projects funded between 2014 and 2023. It offers new insights into how frontier science can translate into innovation.

Over this period, 1,731 PoC projects were funded in 30 EU and Associated Countries, at a total value of EUR 259 million. These projects were led by Principal Investigators of 56 nationalities, 22% of whom were women.

Health-related innovation remains the most prominent application area. Projects in medical technologies and health biotechnology together account for 43% of the portfolio (Fig. 1). Yet these initiatives rarely operate in isolation. They frequently integrate advances in artificial intelligence, materials science, advanced manufacturing, photonics and quantum technologies, illustrating the cross-sectoral character of ERC-funded innovation.

Beyond health, 17% of PoC projects address advanced manufacturing and advanced materials, 13% focus on AI, data and ICT, and 12% fall within quantum technologies, advanced computing and semiconductors. Green innovation, including energy and environmental technologies, accounts for 10%. This diversity reflects the breadth of the ERC portfolio and shows how breakthroughs in frontier research feed into multiple strategic sectors central to Europe's competitiveness and resilience.

The report also highlights serendipitous trajectories. Technologies originally developed for astronomy were repurposed for cancer detection; advances in astrophysics were adapted for medical imaging and hadron therapy; and algorithms designed for space observation

now support autonomous navigation systems. These examples demonstrate how curiosity-driven research can generate applications far beyond its initial scientific domain.

The mapping exercise further reveals strong interconnections between sectors (Fig. 2). Energy projects are often intertwined with advanced materials research; digital technologies increasingly intersect with social innovation and the creative industries; and photonics and quantum technologies frequently converge with manufacturing applications. Such patterns underscore the dynamic, interdisciplinary nature of ERC PoC projects.

At least 130 PoC projects under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe have already generated patent applications. 12% of PoC projects funded in 2022 had already led to spin-off companies by the time of final reporting.

The PoC scheme also functions as a launchpad for further investment. ERC PoC alumni account for nearly half of the successful applicants to the European Innovation Council Transition instrument between 2021 and 2024, securing more than EUR 200 million in follow-on funding.

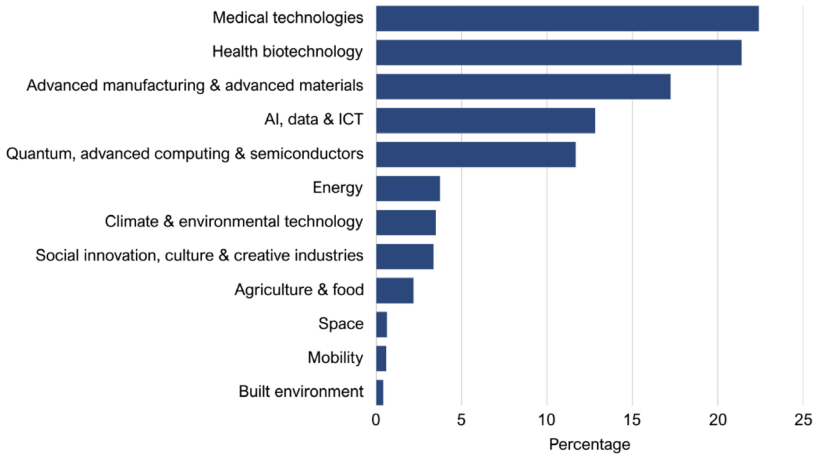

Figure 1 - Percentage distribution of ERC PoC projects across economy sectors

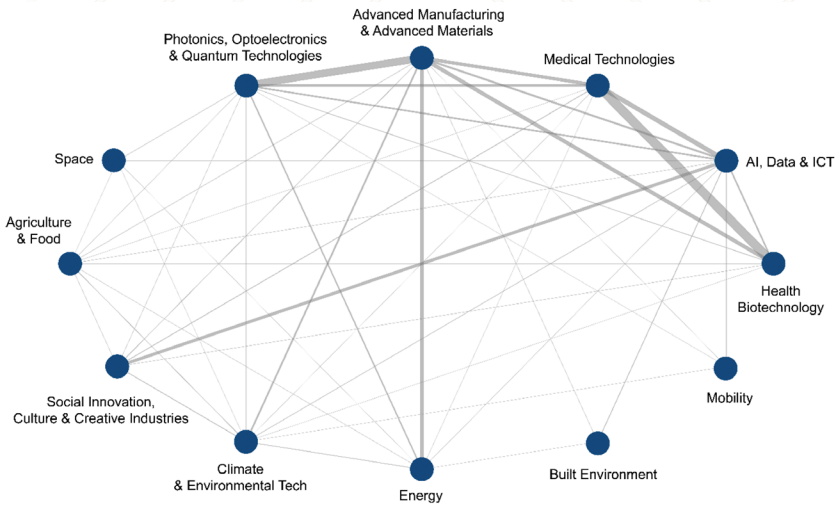

Figure 2 - Cross-sector connections of ERC PoC projects

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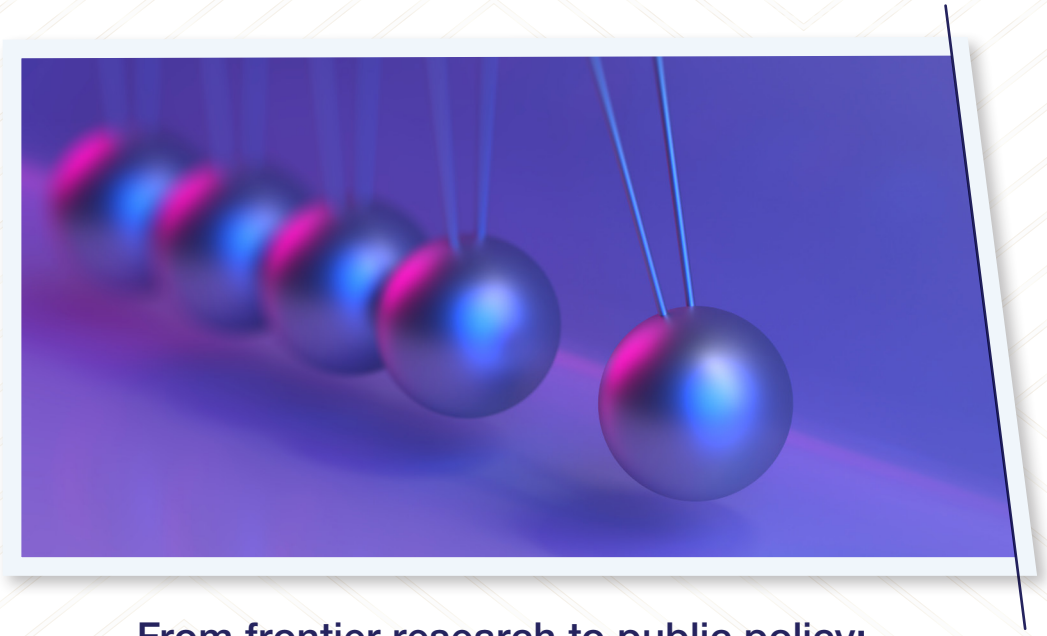

From frontier research to public policy: An exploratory analysis of the influence of ERC-funded research on policy

The ERC Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy considers “Impact beyond science” as one of the dimensions to assess, including the ex-post impact of ERC-funded publications on policy. In 2025, ERCEA finalised an exploratory, mixed-method analysis of how ERC-funded basic research contributes to public policy. This study showed that ERC-funded research in economics, business, political science, and environmental science plays a key role in influencing public policy. Publications from these fields accounted for the highest share of ERC-funded research citations in policy documents, with up to 38% of cited publications referring to ERC-funded work. The findings reveal the critical contribution of disciplines often underrepresented in impact narratives, showing their relevance in addressing complex societal challenges and informing evidence-based policymaking. The study is an exploratory, mixed-method analysis of how ERC-funded frontier research contributes to public policy. Rather than offering a comprehensive assessment of policy impact, this study aims to establish a foundation for future, more in-depth analyses. Quantitative citation data were complemented by qualitative interviews to better understand how frontier research funding translates into policy influence.

Quantitative analysis

Using Overton, a database of more than six million policy documents (in 2022), and Crossref, a digital platform that links citations through digital object identifiers (DOIs), the study measured how often ERC-acknowledging publications were cited in policy documents and compared these figures with those from other major research funders. The analysis used the taxonomy of OpenAlex to identify the scientific areas where ERC publications were mostly cited. Citation frequency (i.e. the number of times a given scholarly publication is cited within a policy document) were analysed and manual reviews were conducted for the most-cited scholarly publications and the policy documents in which they were referenced in. Lastly, the study used the BERTopic methodology to identify the main policy areas in

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which scholarly publications funded by the ERC were most frequently referenced. These different approaches helped pinpoint quantitatively the primary areas where ERC-funded research has influenced policy documents.

Qualitative analysis

Biodiversity was selected as a case study based on the quantitative findings and prior internal analyses. Highly cited ERC publications in this area were reviewed and semi-structured interviews with five influential ERC grantees were conducted. These interviews were transcribed and analysed to capture insights into the pathways and mechanisms of policy influence.

Results

Economics, business, political science, and environmental science are leading fields in policy relevance, ranging from 19% to 38% of ERC-cited research in policy documents. These disciplines also dominate the list of most-cited ERC-funded publications, emphasizing their role in influencing policy debates.

Findings in Context

The study revealed that 2.8% of ERC-funded research publications are cited in at least one policy document in Overton, a figure comparable with that for the U.S. National Science Foundation. Notably, simulation experiments showed that ERC publications are more likely to be cited than other publications of similar age and field. Although policy influence is not a goal of ERC funding, this shows the influence of frontier investigator-driven research on policy.

Insights from the Biodiversity Case Study

Interviews with five ERC grantees showed that their work had a direct influence on key international efforts, such as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment Report and Conference of the Parties (COP) conclusions. Their main contributions included:

> introducing new definitions, frameworks, and metrics in biodiversity science,

> elevating local and indigenous knowledge into global policy,

> training future policy advisors and consultants,

> enhancing scientific credibility and access to policymaking spaces via the prestige of ERC grants.

Interviewed grantees emphasised the need for institutional interfaces between science and policy, such as IPBES and interdisciplinary research institutions, noting that pathways to policy influence differ significantly from traditional academic channels. The interviewees also highlighted the importance of scientific communities, often supported by private foundations,

Conclusions

Although policy impact is not a goal of ERC funding, the emphasis on funding excellent, frontier research can lead to impactful contributions in policy-relevant areas, particularly in the social sciences and humanities domain. Interviewed researchers stressed the importance of bridging the gap between research findings and decision-makers. ERC funding can help generate influential ideas, build strong scientific networks, and train the next generation of policy-engaged scholars, especially in fields central to societal transformation.

Challenges of acknowledging ERC funding in scientific publications

A recent analysis of ERC-linked publications examines the challenges associated with accurately acknowledging ERC funding in scientific publications. It highlights critical issues affecting the integrity of funding acknowledgments across bibliometric databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. It identifies discrepancies, errors, and system limitations that compromise the reliability of ERC attribution in scholarly work.

The study analised a subset of 12,294 publications that Scopus identifies as ERC-funded, which contain funding text without a grant ID listed and are not reported in the ERC database (CORDA). We were able to link to ERC projects 66% of these. 4,111 publications were erroneously flagged as ERC-funded in Scopus, highlighting the risk of systematic inaccuracies when grant IDs are missing or incorrect. A portion of scientific papers inaccurately flagged as ERC-funded can be attributed to algorithmic metadata enrichment techniques, which are prone to errors. The acronym “ERC” shares associations with multiple entities, leading to false positives in funding attribution. Examples include misattributions involving the Korean Science & Engineering Foundation and the National Science Foundation (NSF) under programmes with similar acronyms, highlighting significant system limitations. Such misattributions emphasise the need for more refined text-mining and metadata cross-referencing procedures to reduce contamination and ensure ethical reporting practices.

The false positive rate varied significantly depending on the presence of a grant ID. For publications with a grant ID, the false positive rate was low at 1.6%. In contrast, publications without a grant ID exhibited a higher misattribution rate due to reliance on text-mining techniques without sufficient verification.

The study further reveals widespread issues arising from incomplete, vague, or incorrect acknowledgment of ERC funding. Authors often fail to mention grant numbers, types, or project names when referencing ERC support, leading to ambiguity and potential misattribution. Additionally, misattribution of funding sources occurs when ERC funding is confused with non-ERC grants, such as Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions and other

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EU programmes. These errors diminish the visibility and impact of funders by conflating funding sources.

The obstacles posed by incomplete texts or crude text-mining highlight the necessity for systematic methodologies for data extraction. To enhance the integrity of bibliometric databases, a collaborative effort among researchers, publishers, and funders is crucial. Authors must be encouraged to include proper funding details in their acknowledgments to maintain academic rigour.

The findings reveal critical shortcomings in the existing framework for funding acknowledgments within scientific publications. Addressing these gaps is important for preserving the transparency and accountability of scientific contributions linked to ERC funding.

The full article can be found here

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Choose Europe **for science**

2025 has been a turbulent year not only geopolitically but also for the scientific community. Scientific freedoms have increasingly been curtailed in parts of the world through funding cuts, suspension of programmes, and erasure of data.

To uphold the values of scientific freedom and to offer a safe heaven for researchers to pursue their ambitions in research without political interference, the ERC set in motion two initiatives.

First, it doubled the “additional funding” for researchers moving to Europe from outside the EU or an Associated Country. Starting with the Advanced Grant 2025 call, researchers from overseas had the option to apply for two million euro of additional funding instead of one million euro. The response to this has been very positive, and the share of applicants from countries outside the EU and Associated Countries has doubled for the Consolidator Grant and nearly tripled for the Advanced Grant. Around two thirds of these applicants for Starting Grant and Advanced Grant were resident in the US at the time of application.

Secondly, the ERC has introduced a new grant scheme, which offers larger grants for a longer period of time and targets researchers both in Europe and around the world. Plans for the ERC Plus Grant were announced by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at the Choose Europe for Science Conference at the Sorbonne on the 5 May 2025, and the application process will start in the spring of 2026.

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Changes to the 2026 and 2027 **Work Programmes**

Over the past few years, the ERC Scientific Council has been working on a number of changes to the evaluation process. The main principles of these have been enshrined in its annual Work Programmes.

For the 2027 Work Programme, the Scientific Council has introduced broader eligibility periods for Starting and Consolidator Grant applicants. The Starting Grant call will accept applications from researchers who have just defended their PhD to researchers who have done so up to ten years ago. For Consolidator Grant applicants this period will be between five and fifteen years after their PhD defence. With overlapping eligibility periods, the new model gives candidates more freedom and flexibility to apply to a scheme that suits them best.

Work Programme 2027 will also see the continuation of the ERC Plus Grant. Introduced under Work Programme 2026, the grant scheme offers generous long-term funding to researchers with a bold vision. It is this vision that candidates will have to convincingly present in their application, alongside the established sections outlining the scientific proposal and the CV and track record of the Principal Investigator.

The Scientific Council has also doubled the “additional funding” for researchers moving to the EU or an Associated Country to take up their grant. This will also continue in 2027.

As of Work Programme 2026 the ERC has streamlined its application forms to reduce the burden on the applicants, as well as on the reviewers, and has adapted its evaluation procedures (details in “Changes to the ERC evaluation procedures: background and rationale”).

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ERC President's speech **at the European Parliament**

At a hearing of the European Parliament's Committee on Budgets, Maria Leptin, President of the ERC, set out the case for strengthening Europe's investment in frontier research as a foundation for competitiveness, resilience and strategic autonomy. She argued that excellence-based, investigator-driven research is essential for long-term innovation and for Europe's ability to respond to technological change, geopolitical instability and the green transition.

Maria Leptin underlined the distinctive model of the ERC where funding is allocated solely on the basis of scientific excellence, free from political direction, and open across all fields. She stressed that demand for ERC grants far exceeds available resources, with many top-ranked proposals going unfunded. Doubling the ERC budget in the next EU long-term budget, she argued, is a necessary step if Europe is serious about closing the innovation gap with global competitors.

In the discussion with Members of Parliament, questions focused on the balance between basic and applied research, the role of the ERC in supporting the green transition, and concerns about widening regional disparities. Maria Leptin emphasised that the role of the ERC was to provide the best platform for scientists and to strengthen Europe's overall research base. She pointed out examples of successful institutions in Widening countries such as the Institute for Computer Science, Artificial Intelligence and Technology (INSAIT) founded in 2022 in Bulgaria. She noted that a significant share of ERC-funded projects contribute to areas such as climate and energy, while cautioning against earmarking funds by political priority.

Responding to questions on emerging technologies such as AI and quantum computing, she said that the ERC's bottom-up approach is precisely what enables Europe to keep up with the pace of change in these areas, with leading researchers best placed to anticipate future research directions. She also defended the importance of institutional independence, arguing that protecting scientific autonomy is vital for trust, credibility and Europe's long-term prosperity.

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Revision of the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

The ERC Scientific Council is entrusted by Horizon Europe legislation with the responsibility of monitoring the quality of the ERC's operations and implementation, and of reviewing and assessing the ERC's achievements, as well as the quality and impact of the research it funds (Council Decision (EU) 2021/764, Annex I, Pillar I, point 1.3.1).

The ERC Scientific Council established the ERC Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy to provide a framework for evaluating the impact of ERC funding activities and the performance of its operations. The first strategy was approved by the ERC Scientific Council in 2009 and subsequently revised in 2018. During 2025, the strategy was revised for a second time and published as the ERC Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy 2026.

Through this revision, the Standing Committee for Programme Impact Monitoring and Evaluation (PRIME) of the ERC Scientific Council has revamped the monitoring and evaluation strategy to better reflect modern research evaluation practices, integrate evolving activities and approaches, and identify the long-term impact of the ERC.

ERC monitoring and evaluation activities will be approved annually through implementation plans annexed to the strategy and will be organised around three branches:

> **Accountability and Reporting** – to fulfil the legal reporting obligations of the ERC and ensure transparency and accountability to stakeholders and the ERC Scientific Council;

> **Impact Analysis** – to analyse the impact of ERC-funded research within and beyond the research community;

> **Analysis for Evaluation and Learning** – to extract evidence to support improvements in the scientific strategy of the ERC and its funding operations.

In response to recent developments in research evaluation and impact assessment, the ERC will increasingly use AI-based tools for enhanced evaluation and analysis and promote stronger data accessibility for research. At the same time, the ERC will engage external expertise when necessary and seek collaborations with other funding organisations to exchange knowledge and align its practices with evolving standards for monitoring and evaluation.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy will be periodically adjusted based on accumulated experience and best practices and taking into account legislative changes where appropriate.

Highlights

At the **World Economic Forum (WEF)** Annual Meeting, held in Davos, Switzerland, from 21 to 24 January, President Maria Leptin and ERC grantees participated in sessions, several of which were live-streamed, discussing the outlook for AI and science, climate change, research security, and more. The theme of this year's edition of WEF was Collaboration for the Intelligent Age. The ERC also organised a side session titled Shaping Tomorrow: **Boosting European Competitiveness Through Pioneering Science and Innovation**, featuring (then) Prime Minister of Belgium Alexander De Croo, Nobel Prize laureates Michael Spencer and Arden Patapoutian, the ERC President, McKinsey Senior Partner Solveigh Hieronimus and ERC grantee Piotr Sankowski.

Europe must prioritise research and innovation to be competitive – An article co-authored by Nobel laureate Jean Tirole and ERC President Maria Leptin was published in January in collaboration with the World Economic Forum. The article argues that Europe faces an urgent economic challenge: widening competitiveness gaps with the United States and China. Citing a warning from former European Central Bank President Mario Draghi, the authors stress that without decisive action, Europe risks long-term economic decline. A central point is that R&D and innovation are the engines of growth in advanced economies, yet the EU underinvests relative to peers—particularly in private-sector R&D, where it trails significantly behind the US and China. This is linked to Europe's focus on "mid-tech" industries rather than high-tech sectors such as ICT, biotech, and semiconductors, resulting in fewer breakthrough patents and slower productivity growth. To reverse this trend, the authors urge stronger support for disruptive research, high-growth start-ups, and cutting-edge industries, not just incremental improvements in established technologies. They highlight the ERC's role in funding frontier science that fuels innovation and feeds into patents and tech companies but note that broader systemic issues—such as fragmented markets, over-regulation, low R&D intensity, and hurdles to scaling up—must be addressed. Europe needs more investment, smarter regulation, and conditions that help innovators thrive if it is to regain global competitiveness through research and innovation.

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On 6 February, **the European Parliament Committee on Environment, Climate and Food Security invited Scientific Council member Harriet Bulkeley** to present the ERC report "Transformative Change for a Sustainable Future", published in 2024. She joined representatives of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), including Executive Secretary Anne Larigauderie and Chairman Obura, who presented IPBES landmark assessments on 'Transformative Change' and the 'Nexus': interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food, and health. Harriet Bulkeley emphasised how frontier research can enhance understanding of the multi-crises we face, from biodiversity loss to climate change and pollution. ERC grants provide researchers with the resources and opportunities to address these complex challenges and their interdependencies across disciplines, systems, and multiple actors. She also stressed the importance of social sciences and humanities in understanding the social, economic, cultural, and political dynamics involved.

At a **hearing of the European Parliament's ITRE Committee** on 19 February, **ERC President Maria Leptin** called for a doubling of the ERC budget in the next EU long-term budget. She argued that Europe risks falling behind global competitors unless it strengthens investment in frontier research and scientific excellence, warning that too many top-rated ERC proposals currently go unfunded. Maria Leptin highlighted Artificial Intelligence as an example of a fast-moving field where breakthroughs depend on deep fundamental research. She stressed that Europe must invest not only in applications but in the underlying science that drives advances in AI and other emerging technologies. The ERC's bottom-up model, she argued, is designed precisely to capture such unpredictable breakthroughs. She also emphasised that the ERC's autonomy in setting its scientific strategy and evaluating proposals is essential to its credibility and success. The ERC's simple, tailored procedures allow Europe's best researchers to thrive. Standardised, bureaucratic processes designed for other programmes should not be imposed on the ERC. Protecting this independence, alongside increasing funding, is crucial if Europe is serious about closing the innovation gap and maintaining global leadership in science.

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In March, two ERC grantees, **Moty Heiblum from Weizmann Institute of Science** and **Jonathan Jones from Sainsbury Laboratory**, were among the 2025 Wolf Prize laureates. Mordehai (Moty) Heiblum researched mesoscopic physics, focusing on fractional charge and statistics using electronic interferometers, and was supported with three ERC Advanced Grants (2008, 2014 and 2018). Jonathan Jones studies in plant-microbe interactions and plant immunity were funded with two ERC Advanced Grants (2008 and 2014).

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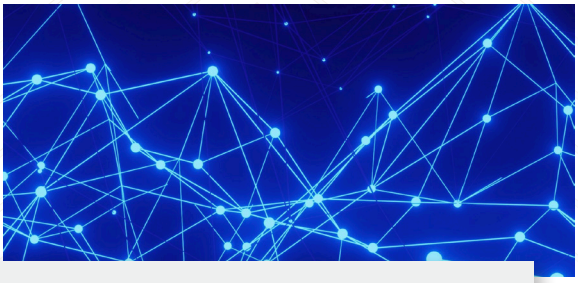
The **Science is Wonderful! fair**, organised annually in Brussels by the European Commission, brings the world of cutting-edge research to pupils and students from primary and secondary schools. The 2025 edition attracted over 4,500 participants and featured more than 150 researchers, including eight ERC grantees and their team members, who hosted interactive experiments and performed engaging science shows.



© https://aerg.eu/ambassadors

The ERC and the Association of ERC Grantees launched a new **Ambassadors for the ERC initiative** to promote investment in frontier research and raise awareness of its benefits for the economy and society. Thirty-two ERC grantees from across the EU Member States and Associated Countries were selected as Ambassadors. Representing a broad range of scientific domains and acting as advocates for ERC-funded research, the Ambassadors engage with policymakers, the media, and local research communities, working in close cooperation with ERC National Contact Points. The initiative is expected to expand further to strengthen advocacy for frontier research across Europe.

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In April, **ERC President Maria Leptin visited Dublin** for a series of engagements with research and political leaders. Maria Leptin delivered a keynote address at an ERC Impact Forum hosted by Research Ireland and held meetings with Taoiseach Micheál Martin, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science James Lawless, and leaders from Ireland's higher education institutions. At the ERC Impact Forum, the ERC President argued that the impact of frontier research cannot be reduced to short-term metrics or immediate commercial outputs. She stressed that the ERC's excellence-based, bottom-up model is designed to fund curiosity-driven research that often produces transformative applications only years later. Maria Leptin underlined the central role of the public sector in sustaining high-risk, long-term research that markets alone will not fund. She argued that transformative breakthroughs often originate in publicly financed, curiosity-driven science, where time horizons are long and outcomes uncertain. The role of the ERC, she suggested, is precisely to provide this stable, excellence-based public investment, enabling researchers to pursue ambitious ideas without immediate commercial pressure. By doing so, the public sector creates the conditions for future private innovation, new industries, and societal benefits. Maria Leptin emphasised that strategic public funding is not about picking winners but about building a strong knowledge base, supporting talent, and ensuring that Europe retains the capacity to generate its own discoveries rather than relying on advances made elsewhere.

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© The Shaw Prize Council

In May, ERC grantee **Wolfgang Baumeister** of the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry won the **Shaw Prize in Life Science and Medicine** for the advancement of cryogenic-electron tomography (cryo-ET). In his first ERC Synergy Grant, Baumeister worked on toxic protein aggregation in neurodegeneration, and subsequently continued studying the structural elucidation of plasmodesmata—microscopic channels that connect plant cells—at near-atomic resolution using cryo-ET with a second ERC Synergy Grant.

© Francois Gardy / Institut Pasteur

In June, the **EMBO Gold Medal 2025** was awarded to **David Bikard** (Institut Pasteur) and Tanmay Bharat (MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology) for their pioneering work on gene editing, including the recent editing of a target bacterial population directly in the gut of mice. David Bikard's current work on the gut microbiome is funded through an ERC Consolidator Grant.

In May, **ERC President Maria Leptin took part in the 13th Annual Meeting of the Global Research Council in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**. The meeting was hosted by the Research, Development and Innovation Authority (RDIA) of Saudi Arabia in partnership with King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) and the Scientific and Technological Research Council (TÜBİTAK) of Türkiye. The Annual Meeting brings together heads of research councils from the world's major funders to share best practices. The main topics discussed this year were Research Management in the Era of Artificial Intelligence and Working Together in Co-Creation to Address Global Challenges. The meeting was preceded by five regional meetings, including the European Regional Meeting held on 28–30 October 2024 in Tallinn, Estonia.

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In September, the **2025 Albert Lasker Award** was awarded to ERC grantee **Dirk Görlich** (Max Planck Institute for Multidisciplinary Sciences, Göttingen) and **Steven L. McKnight** (UT Southwestern Medical Centre) for "discoveries that exposed the structures and functions of low-complexity domains within protein sequences, revealing new principles of intracellular transport and cellular organisation." As a Principal Investigator in an ERC Synergy Grant, Dirk Görlich is studying the architecture and dynamics of molecular machines.

© Cristophe Salomon

Also in September, ERC grantee **Christophe Salomon** (CNRS) won the **2025 Balzan Prize** for "his pioneering contribution in paving the way for the application of ultra-cold atoms to the creation of atomic clocks, which have revolutionised the measurement of time." With two ERC Advanced Grants, Christophe Salomon investigated criticality, dual superfluidity, and atomic Fermi gases in lower dimensions.

https://koerber-stiftung.de/en/events/koerber-preis-2025-lives-tream/

In September, computer scientist and quantum physicist **Stephanie Wehner** received the **2025 Körber European Science Prize**. The prize recognised her groundbreaking work on the quantum internet—an ultra-fast and extremely secure computer network that enables entirely new applications and computing possibilities. Stephanie Wehner was awarded an ERC Starting Grant in 2015 for her research on quantum communication networks.

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On 16–17 September, **the ERC participated in the European Research & Innovation Days**, the European Commission's flagship event bringing together policymakers, researchers, business leaders, and the innovation community to discuss how research and innovation strengthen Europe's competitiveness, sustainability, and industrial leadership. The ERC organised a session on Securing Europe's Leadership in Scientific Discovery, highlighting the importance of investing in people, ideas, and innovation pathways. The session emphasised the pivotal role of the ERC in enabling scientific excellence, interdisciplinary breakthroughs, and societal impact, with contributions from members of the ERC Scientific Council, Conny Aerts, Dirk Inzé, and ERC grantee Jan Lagerwall Ambassador for the ERC for Luxembourg. At the exhibition, ERC grantee David Fernández Rivas presented the Bubble Gun project, developing needle-free injection technology designed to deliver fluids precisely while minimising skin damage. The ERC also engaged participants on key policy topics at institutional stands.

The European Research Council Executive Agency published **Mapping Frontier Research on the New European Bauhaus**, a "feedback to policy" report highlighting how curiosity-driven research contributes to more sustainable, inclusive, and inspiring living environments across Europe. The report presents a portfolio of 87 ERC projects, supported with EUR 158 million between 2014 and 2024. Together, they generate new knowledge, breakthrough technologies, and innovative solutions that contribute to the vision of the New European Bauhaus, a European Commission initiative launched in 2021 in support of the European Green Deal. The projects cover themes from nature-based building materials, solar-powered architecture, and affordable housing, to urban greening, sustainable mobility, and pollution reduction. They also explore human and cultural dimensions of the built environment, examining how art and culture foster a sense of belonging, how neuroscience links wellbeing to spatial design, and how circular economic models can enhance urban resilience.

© https://www.coimbra-group.eu

On 20 November, at an event marking the **40th anniversary of the Coimbra Group** held at Bozar, Brussels, ERC President Maria Leptin warned that academic freedom is increasingly under pressure globally and within Europe. She said that scientific progress depends on the freedom to question, criticise, and explore without political interference. Maria Leptin stated that academic freedom is not an abstract principle but a practical condition for excellence and innovation. She highlighted the ERC's role in safeguarding this freedom through its bottom-up, excellence-based funding model, which supports researchers solely on the basis of scientific merit. She called on European institutions and governments to actively defend academic freedom as a core democratic value and a strategic asset for Europe's competitiveness. Protecting independent research, she emphasised, is essential to maintaining trust in science and ensuring Europe's long-term prosperity and global standing.

In October, the **ERC and the African Academy of Sciences** established a new partnership to strengthen scientific collaboration between Europe and Africa. The agreement enables researchers supported under the African Research Initiative for Scientific Excellence to undertake research collaborations with ERC grantees in Europe, fostering cooperation in frontier research and supporting sustainable and inclusive development.

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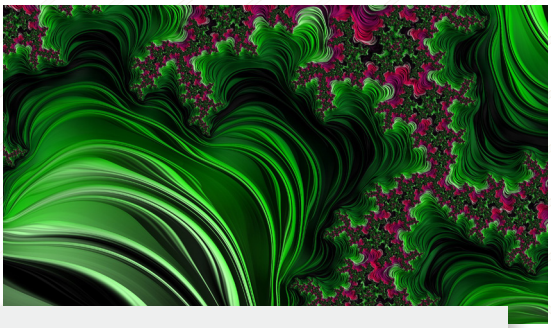

On 12 November, the ERC and the European Parliament's Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA) organised a joint event entitled **From Science to Policy: Shaping a Sustainable and Competitive Europe,** building on the ERC report How ERC Frontier Research Supports 'Transformative Change'. The report highlights pioneering research projects addressing urgent systemic transformations needed to tackle climate change and rising social inequalities. ERC-funded researchers shared scientific insights and real-world examples demonstrating how frontier research can inform policies and support governments, businesses, and communities in the transition towards a more sustainable and competitive Europe. The event brought together senior representatives from European institutions, including ERC President Maria Leptin; STOA Chair Christian Ehler; STOA First Vice-Chair Lina Gálvez; and STOA Panel Member Hélder Sousa Silva. Contributions were also made by Román Arjona, Chief Economist at the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs; Mihai Tomescu (European Environment Agency); and Joachim Maes (Directorate-General for Environment). A high-level panel discussion on Enhancing the Uptake of Scientific Evidence in Policymaking included Joanna Drake, Deputy Director-General of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation; Valérie Drezet-Humez, Director for General Affairs, Knowledge and Resources, Directorate-General for Environment and ERC Scientific Council Member Harriet Bulkeley.

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On 19 November, the ERC hosted the session Breakthrough Discovery and Innovation: Securing Europe's Competitive Edge? at the **2025 European Business Summit**. The session opened with an address by Philippe Aghion, 2025 Nobel Laureate in Economics and ERC grantee, and continued with a panel discussion featuring Pascal Lamy, Vice-President of the Paris Peace Forum; Jean-François van Boxmeer, Chair of the European Roundtable of Industry; and ERC President Maria Leptin. The panel explored the role of scientific research and innovation in strengthening Europe's global competitiveness. The session brought together 140 participants on site and over 200 online. It was followed by a high-level networking lunch sponsored by the ERC, in which ERC grantee Emilie Caspar delivered the opening speech.

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ERC grantee Philippe Aghion wins 2025 Nobel Prize in Economics

In October, the 2025 Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel was awarded to Joel Mokyr, Peter Howitt and Philippe Aghion for their contributions to understanding innovation and long-term economic growth.

Philippe Aghion is a French economist and professor at the Collège de France, INSEAD and the London School of Economics and Political Science. He has been awarded two ERC Advanced Grants since 2018.

His first ERC-funded research project explored the dynamics of innovation-driven growth and the theory of “creative destruction”. It examined how new firms and technologies replace old ones and how this process shapes inequality, social mobility and wellbeing. With his second ERC Advanced Grant awarded in 2024, Professor Aghion is studying how research and development policies stimulate breakthrough innovation, support radical green technologies and harness the economic and employment potential of Artificial Intelligence.

© Ill. Niklas Elmehed © Nobel Prize Outreach

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Plenary Meetings outside Brussels

Twice a year the ERC Scientific Council holds its plenary meeting outside of Brussels to engage with policymakers, representatives of the national scientific community and ERC grantees.

Between 23-25 June, the ERC Scientific Council convened in Durham for its 100th plenary meeting. One of the main topics at the plenary meeting was the new funding scheme, ERC Plus Grants, for which the European Commission provided extra funding to the ERC under the Choose Europe initiative. The ERC Scientific Council visited the labs of several ERC grantees at the University of Durham, while other ERC grantees presented their work during a research showcase.

The ERC Scientific Council held a roundtable with UK Minister of State for Science, Innovation, Research and Nuclear Lord Patrick Vallance, the Vice-Chancellors of the N8 Research Partnership (Durham University, Lancaster University, University of Leeds, University of Liverpool, University of Manchester, Newcastle University and University of Sheffield), representatives from the British Academy, the Royal Academy, UKRI and other UK funding bodies. The discussion topics of the roundtable revolved around the next EU budget (multi-annual financial framework for 2028-2034), global support for fundamental research, protecting academic freedom and freedom of research, the impact of Artificial Intelligence and finding a balance between research security and scientific collaboration.

The ERC Scientific Council gathered in Copenhagen from 7–10 October for its plenary meeting and two public events, in conjunction with Denmark's Presidency of the Council of the EU. An event on competitiveness featured leading voices such as Denmark's Minister for Higher Education & Science Christina Egelund, Nobel Laureate Anne L'Huillier, and Millennium Technology & Breakthrough Prize Laureate Sir David Klenerman. Danish Minister Christina Egelund emphasised the central role of science and innovation in shaping the future of the European Union and called for sustained investment in Europe's research talent as a driver of innovation and strategic autonomy. The Minister also underlined the importance of frontier research for strengthening Europe's resilience and democracies and stressed the need to protect Europe's scientific excellence at the frontiers of knowledge. ERC President Maria Leptin took part in a panel discussion on Competitiveness through Frontier Research, exploring the role of frontier research in shaping Europe's global competitiveness. She was joined by Manuel Heitor, former Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education of Portugal; Maria Cristina Messa, Scientific Director of the IRCCS Don Carlo Gnocchi Foundation and former Italian Minister of University and Research; Ernst Kuipers, Vice President (Research) at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, and former Minister of Health, Welfare, and Sport of the Netherlands; and Diarmuid O'Brien, Chief Executive Officer of Taighde Éireann – Research Ireland. Maria Leptin noted that Europe remains economically strong but has fallen behind the United States in key advanced technologies, contributing to a growing productivity gap. In a shifting global landscape marked by rising U.S. protectionism, she argued that Europe must boost long-term prosperity by investing in breakthrough, curiosity-driven research— supported by institutions like the ERC—and fostering innovation hubs connecting academia, industry, and investors.

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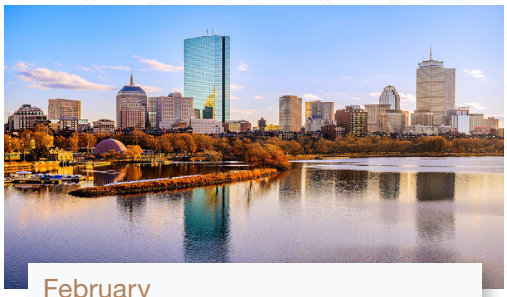
Meetings

The ERC Scientific Council held regular plenary meetings in person in 2025, in Brussels (February, April and November), Durham (June) and Copenhagen (October). In addition, in 2025 the members of the Scientific Council participated in other meetings and events representing the ERC, including scientific conferences.

© World Economic Forum

January

- 15: APE International Conference 2025 (Berlin, online)
- 21-24: World Economic Forum (Davos)
- 22-23: International Science & Policy Symposium 2025 (Hannover)



February

- 5: Public event “Role and Importance of Frontier Research” (Singapore)
- 6: 8th anniversary meeting of HFRI (ELIDEK) Greece (online)
- 15: 2025 AAAS Annual Meeting (Boston)
- 18-19: ScC Plenary (Brussels)
- 19: Exchange with EP ITRE Committee (Brussels)
- 20: BIST Forum 2025 (Barcelona, online)

March

- 3: Bilateral meeting with EP President Roberta Metsola (Brussels)
- 3-4: CEPS Ideas Lab 2025 (Brussels)
- 21: Annual conference of the Marie Curie Alumni Association (Krakow, online)

© Finbarr O'Rourke

April

- 1: ERC Impact Forum (Dublin)
- 9-10: ERC event “Research & Innovation for a Competitive Europe” (Brussels)
- 15: EU Day at Erasmus University (Rotterdam, online)
- 29-30: ScC Plenary (Brussels)

© European Commission

May

- 2: Bilateral meeting with EC President Ursula von der Leyen (Brussels)
- 5: Launch of “Choose Europe for Science” at the Sorbonne (Paris)
- 7: United Nations Science and Technology Forum (New York)
- 19-21: 13th Annual Meeting of the Global Research Council (Riyadh)
- 22: Workshop “Cancer Research, Healthcare and Prevention” (Vatican)
- 23: Ministerial lunch at the Competitiveness Council – Research and space (Brussels)
- 23: GITEX Europe 2025 (Berlin)

June

- 3: EU Cluster workshop on Transformative Change for Biodiversity (Brussels)
- 5: 10th Anniversary Conference of YERUN (Brussels)
- 5: International Higher Education Forum 2025 (Birmingham, online)
- 10: High-level visit to Lithuania (Vilnius)
- 11: High-level visit to Estonia (Tallinn)
- 24-25: ScC Plenary (Durham)

© https://metascience.info/

July

- 2: Metascience 2025 Conference (London)
- 18-20: SciFoo Camp 2025 (Mountain View, California)

© 2025 Lindau Nobel Laureate

August

- 20: Symposium “ERC Funding in Quantum Science” (Vienna)
- 26: 8th Lindau Nobel Meeting in Economic Sciences (Lindau)

September

- 3: SwissCore Annual Event (Brussels)
- 11: Technology Days (Vienna)
- 16: High-Level Conference “One year after the Draghi Report” (Brussels)
- 16-17: European R&I Days (Brussels)
- 18: Hamburg Science Summit 2025

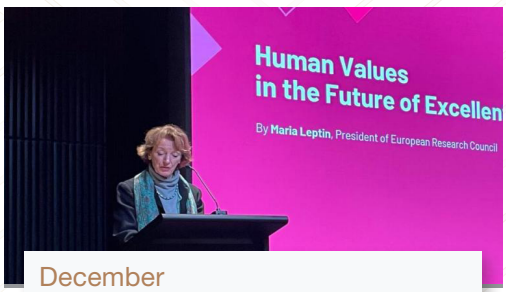
© University of Copenhagen

October

- 4: EU-Japan Symposium at the STS Forum (Kyoto)
- 7: ERC High-Level Event “Competitiveness through Frontier Research” (Copenhagen)
- 9-10: ScC Plenary (Copenhagen)
- 13: Exchange with EP Budgets Committee (Brussels)
- 15: 2025 GESDA Summit (CERN, Geneva)
- 22-23: ERC Workshop on data access under the Digital Services Act (Brussels)
- 29: CNRS International Event “Connecting talents” (Paris)

November

- 5: 75th Anniversary of NWO (The Hague)
- 6: Freedom of Research Summit (Aachen)
- 7-8: Research Summit and Falling Walls Science Summit (Berlin)
- 12: STOA-ERC event “From Science to Policy” (Brussels)
- 13: Public event “The next generation of women leaders” and visit to INSAIT (Sofia)
- 18: Academie des Sciences (Paris)
- 19: 2025 European Business Summit (Brussels)
- 20: 40th Anniversary of the Coimbra Group (Brussels)
- 24: Quinquennial Prizes of the FNRS (Brussels)
- 27-28: ScC Plenary (Brussels)



December

- 2: EU Conference “Human Values and Grand Challenges” (Aalborg)
- 3: EU High-level Conference on Reforming Research Assessment (Aarlborg)
- 4: “5th Freedom” Roundtable (Brussels)

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chapter four

Research Highlights

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Examples of **ERC-funded research**

(More examples can be found here)

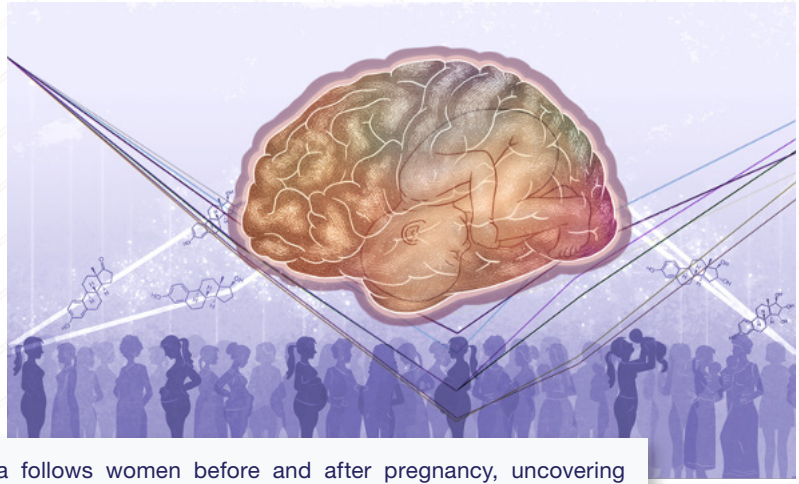
© ÖAW/Daniel Hinterramskogler, 2024

Decoding Europe's genetic puzzle

Historian Walter Pohl, working with archaeologists and geneticists, combines ancient DNA and historical sources to reveal how migration, kinship, and culture shaped early medieval Europe—showing that genetic ancestry and ethnic identity often did not coincide.

Read more here.

How pregnancy reshapes a mother's brain

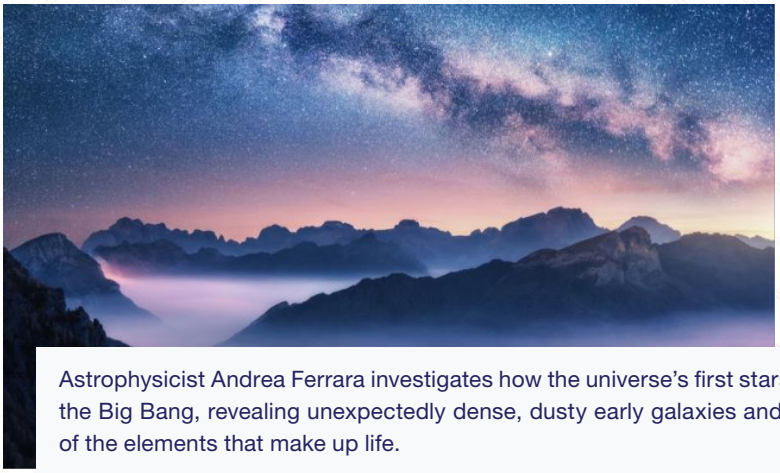


© Oscar Vilarroya

Neuroscientist Óscar Vilarroya follows women before and after pregnancy, uncovering lasting brain reorganisation driven by hormonal changes that support bonding, caregiving and maternal mental health.

Read more here.

The first stars of the universe



© Getty Images

Astrophysicist Andrea Ferrara investigates how the universe's first stars and galaxies formed after the Big Bang, revealing unexpectedly dense, dusty early galaxies and tracing the cosmic origins of the elements that make up life.

Read more here.

Paving digital highlights

How can billions of computers coordinate efficiently? Theoretical computer scientist Bernhard Haeupler develops distributed algorithms that adapt to real-world networks, keeping data moving faster, more reliably and with lower energy use.

Read more here.

© Getty Images

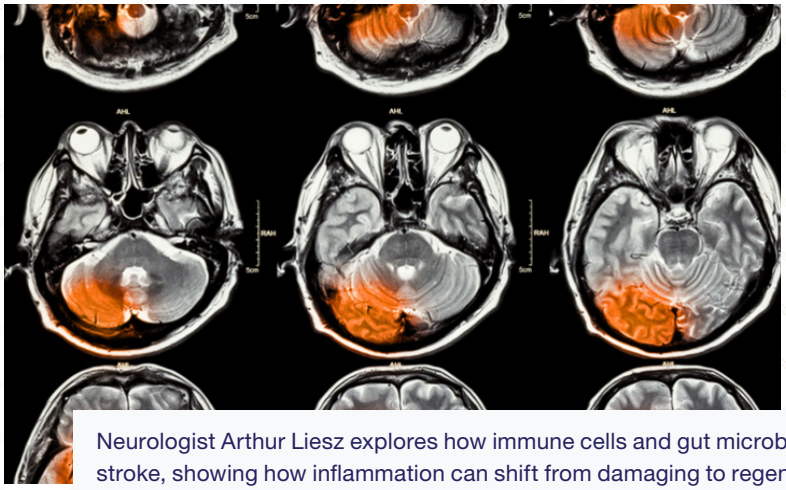
Living together in diversity

© Getty Images

What does inclusion mean in practice? Political scientist Elisabeth Ivarsflaten studies how Europeans balance democracy, religious freedom and gender equality, revealing where supporters of inclusive societies draw boundaries - and how everyday compromises enable coexistence.

Read more here.

Repairing the brain after a stroke



© Getty Images

Neurologist Arthur Liesz explores how immune cells and gut microbiota influence brain recovery after stroke, showing how inflammation can shift from damaging to regenerative and opening paths to new therapies.
Read more here.

The future of food dyes

© Shutterstock

Biotechnologist Irina Borodina uses engineered yeast to produce natural food dyes through fermentation, replacing synthetic colourants with safer, sustainable alternatives for food, textiles and other industries.

Read more here.

What smartphones mean worldwide

© Shutterstock

Anthropologist Daniel Miller leads global fieldwork showing how cultures shape smartphone use, from ageing and family life to health and money - reframing the device as a “virtual home” embedded in everyday social life.

Read more here.

At the forefront of tissue engineering

© Shutterstock

Blending engineering with biology, Liesbet Geris develops digital twins and regenerative scaffolds to guide cells in repairing bone and cartilage, laying the groundwork for personalised, living implants.

Read more here.

© Shutterstock

Will we run out of groundwater?

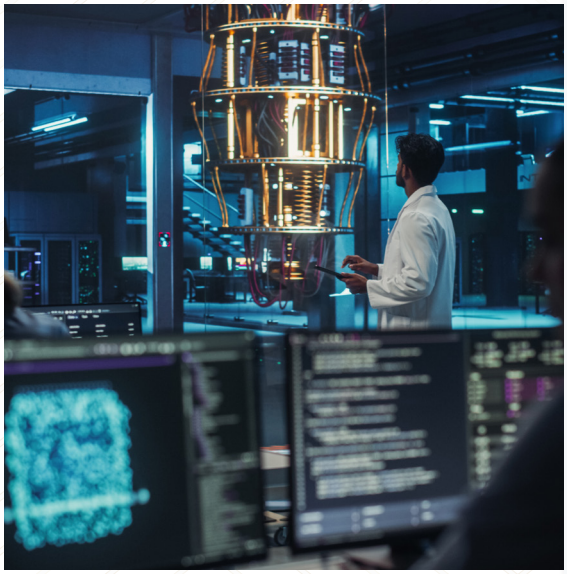
Hydrologist Marc Bierkens built the first global groundwater model to track depletion worldwide, revealing where over-pumping threatens ecosystems and food security - and how smarter management could keep groundwater sustainable.

Read more here.

Outstanding **publications**

This section highlights ERC-funded research that contributed to some of the most important scientific advances of 2025, as recognised by leading international science outlets.

In *Science* magazine's *Breakthroughs of 2025*, ERC-funded research featured among the runners-up for its role in advancing AI-driven science. A group of ERC grantees showed how large language models (LLMs) can contribute directly to scientific discovery. In mathematics and optimization, Starting grantee Christian Coester (Project ID: CCOO) used OpenAI's GPT-5 to test the robustness of a widely used decision-making framework in robotics, uncovering a previously unknown failure case and strengthening a classic optimization result. In biology, Synergy grantee José Penadés (Project ID: TalkingPhages) used Google's AI co-scientist to generate a hypothesis explaining how phage-inducible chromosomal islands spread between bacterial species, a hypothesis later confirmed experimentally. Together, these studies exemplify a broader shift in 2025: LLMs are no longer seen only as assistants, but as systems capable of generating and refining high-impact scientific ideas.



In *Physics World's* 2025 highlights in quantum science and technology, two ERC-funded projects were featured. A study led by former ERC grantee Stephanie Wehner (Project ID: QINTERNET) and Starting grantee Tim Taminiau (Project ID: QUNET) resulted in the first operating system for quantum networks, QNodeOS, making quantum networking accessible to non-experts. QNodeOS lays the groundwork for scalable quantum networks and a future quantum internet. Another study involving several teams at Quantinuum and Starting grantee Michael Knap (Project ID: ConsQuanDyn) showed that quantum computers can reliably model magnetic systems even in the presence of errors, a task that remains extremely challenging for classical computers. Alongside recent advances in quantum random number generation, this work signals a turning point in the practical achievements of quantum computing.

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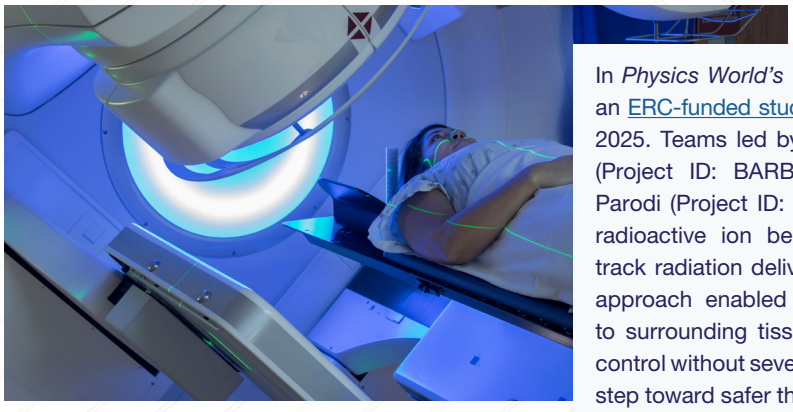

In *Physics World's* medical physics and biotechnology, an ERC-funded study in radiotherapy was a highlight of 2025. Teams led by Advanced grantee Marco Durante (Project ID: BARB) and Consolidator grantee Katia Parodi (Project ID: SIRMIO) demonstrated in mice that radioactive ion beams can both treat tumours and track radiation delivery in real time using imaging. This approach enabled precise dosage, reduced damage to surrounding tissue, and achieved complete tumour control without severe side effects, marking an important step toward safer therapy in clinical settings.

In *Science's* top science stories of 2025, ERC-funded research contributed to a major reassessment of early human evolution. A study led by Advanced and Proof of Concept grantee Enrico Cappellini (Project IDs: BACKWARD, SSPIN), Starting and Synergy grantee Fernando Racimo (Project IDs: STAMP, COREX), and Consolidator grantee Tomas Marques-Bonet (Project ID: ApeGenomeDiversity) revealed a more complex picture of hominin diversity around two million years ago. By analysing ancient proteins preserved in fossil teeth, researchers identified biological differences within populations previously thought to represent a single species, opening new avenues for studying deep human history beyond the limits of ancient DNA.

In *Scientific American's* most fascinating health and medicine stories of 2025, a study by Starting and Consolidator grantee Nicola Segata (Project IDs: MetaPG, microTOUCH) showed a clear link between coffee consumption and the gut microbiome. Researchers found that coffee drinkers consistently harbored higher levels of a beneficial gut bacterium, providing a concrete example of how diet can shape the microbiome and influence human health.

chapter five

Advancing Frontier Research

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ERC calls 2025

10,378
proposals submitted in 2025 to the StG, CoG and AdG calls

920
proposals submitted to PoC 2025

35%
more proposals submitted to CoG 2025 than in 2024

300
projects selected for funding in the PoC 2025 call

31%
more proposals submitted to AdG 2025 than in 2024

EUR 45 million
awarded in the PoC 2025 call

40%
of StG 2025 proposals submitted by female applicants

1,412
panel members in 2025 calls

38%
of CoG 2025 proposals submitted by female applicants

42%
female panel members in 2025 calls

25%
of AdG 2025 proposals submitted by female applicants

55
European and non-European countries hosting ERC panel members of 2025 calls

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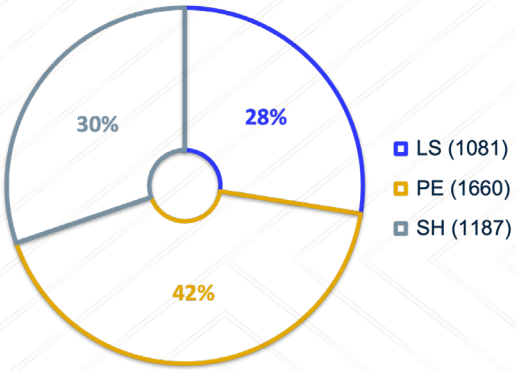
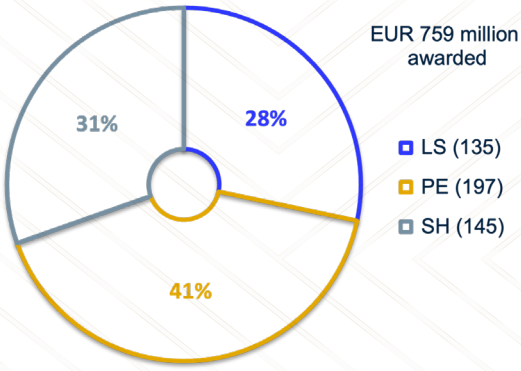
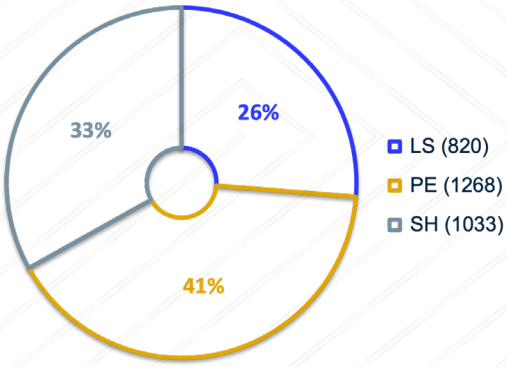
Starting Grant 2025 - Submitted proposals



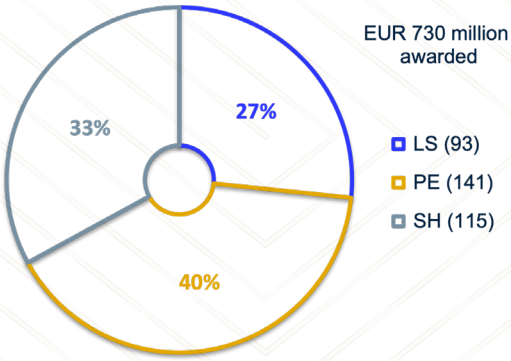
Starting Grant 2025 - Funded projects



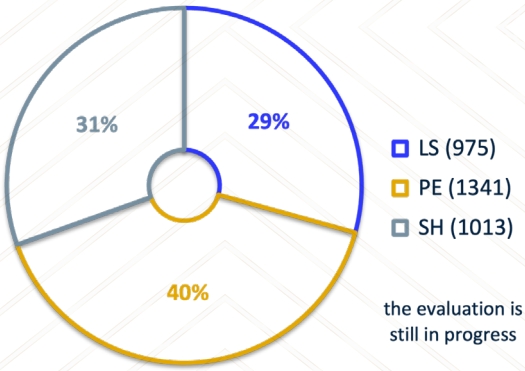
Consolidator Grant 2025 - Submitted proposals



Consolidator Grant 2025 - Funded projects



Advanced Grant 2025 - Submitted proposals



the evaluation is still in progress

Synergy Grant 2025

712 submitted proposals

66 funded projects; EUR 684 million awarded

LS = Life Sciences | PE = Physical Sciences and Engineering | SH = Social Sciences and Humanities

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ERC calls in **Horizon Europe**

	total number of applications	of which			
		evaluated*	evaluated CH and UK	funded	success rates**
Starting Grant 2021	4,066	3,454	562	470	13.6
Starting Grant 2022	2,932	2,485	353	411	16.5
Starting Grant 2023	2,696	2,430	198	400	16.5
Starting Grant 2024	3,474	3,434		492	14.3
Starting Grant 2025	3,928	3,884		477	12.3
Starting Grant 2026	4,807				
Consolidator Grant 2021	2,652	2,231	372	318	14.3
Consolidator Grant 2022	2,222	1,896	272	323	17.0
Consolidator Grant 2023	2,130	1,890	181	307	16.2
Consolidator Grant 2024	2,313	2,262		329	14.5
Consolidator Grant 2025	3,121	3,084		349	11.3
Consolidator Grant 2026	3,060				
Advanced Grant 2021	1,735	1,457	240	255	17.5
Advanced Grant 2022	1,647	1,339	249	218	16.3
Advanced Grant 2023	1,829	1,530	226	255	16.7
Advanced Grant 2024	2,534	2,309	158	282	12.2
Advanced Grant 2025	3,329				
Proof of Concept 2022 - 1st call	352	302	46	156	51.7
Proof of Concept 2022 - 2nd call	457	387	61	210	54.3
Proof of Concept 2023	608	495	69	240	48.5
Proof of Concept 2024	728	698		245	35.1
Proof of Concept 2025	920	879		300	34.1
Synergy Grant 2022	359	355		34	9.6
Synergy Grant 2023	395	387		37	9.6
Synergy Grant 2024	548	541		58	10.7
Synergy Grant 2025	712	701		66	9.4
Synergy Grant 2026	957				

Note: evaluated proposals based in CH (StG and CoG 2021, and AdG 2024) and UK (2021 - 2023 calls) are presented separately; following the termination of the exploratory talks, CH was considered a country non-associated to Horizon Europe so entities established in CH were not eligible for funding in the 2021 calls, could not apply afterwards until AdG 2024 and became eligible for funding in 2025 calls; entitites established in UK could continue to apply pending the adoption of the association Protocol, but were not eligible for funding in the ERC calls 2021-2023; CH proposals and UK proposals which were transfered to an eligible host institution and were funded by the ERC are counted in column “evaluated”; data as of February 2026

* withdrawn and ineligible proposals not taken into account

** percentage of funded proposals in relation to evaluated proposals

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Geographical distribution **of grantees for each call**

* Entities established in the CH were not eligible for funding in AdG 2024 (except international organisations)
Data as of February 2026

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Chairs of ERC evaluation panels 2025

Panel	Starting Grant 2025	Consolidator Grant 2025	Advanced Grant 2025
Life Sciences			
LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions	Titia Sixma	Ramesh Pillai	Benjamin Davis
LS2 Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems	Julius Fabian Brennecke	Abby Dernburg	Uwe Sauer
LS3 Cell Biology, Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration	Daniel Gerlich	Nick Brown	Anja Geitmann
LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing	Rong Tian	Jean-Ehrland Ricci	Jennifer Gamble
LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System	Eraldo Paulesu	Mara Dierssen Sotos	Eero Castren
LS6 Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy	David Tarlinton	Vincenzo Bronte	Clare Bryant
LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases	Liesbet Geris	Burkhard Becher	Stefaan De Smedt
LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution	Anna-Liisa Laine	Ashleigh Griffin	Richard Bardgett
LS9 Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering	Alan L. Kelly	Peter Bols	Lone Gram
Physical Sciences and Engineering			
PE1 Mathematics	Satoru Iwata	Daniel Král'	Marcelo Viana
PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter	Giulia Zanderighi	Gunnar Björk	Morgan Mitchell
PE3 Condensed Matter Physics	Daniele Brida	John Morton	Eva Monroy
PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences	Dónal Leech	Karen Wilson	Nigel Browning
PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials	Patrice Simon	Paula Colavita	Anita Maguire
PE6 Computer Science and Informatics	Mateja Jamnik	Alexandra Silva	Daniel Rückert
PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering	Heike Vallery	Christiaan Van Hoof	Michele Zorzi
PE8 Products and Processes Engineering	Yves Bamberger	Martyn Boutelle	Christian Sattler
PE9 Universe Sciences	Andy Shearer	Luca Amendola	Paola Caselli
PE10 Earth System Science	Vicki Hansen	Marc Benedetti	Jack Middelburg
PE11 Materials Engineering	Silvia Vignolini	João Rocha	Emmanuel Flahaut
Social Sciences and Humanities			
SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations	Florian von Wangenheim	Natalia Fabra	April M. Franco
SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems	Frédéric Mérand	Claes de Vreese	Christoffer Green-Pedersen
SH3 The Social World and its Interactions	Lionel Obadia	Klaus Lindgaard Høyer	Martina Merz
SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity	Gabriella Vigliocco	Johannes Angermuller	Roi Cohen Kadosh
SH5 Texts and Concepts	Maciej Eder	Karina van Dalen-Oskam	Galin Tihanov
SH6 The Study of the Human Past	László Kontler	Margaret Hunt	Kiran Klaus Patel
SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space	Tiit Tammaru	Pavel Raška	Tobias Kuemmerle
SH8 Studies of Cultures and Arts	Helena Wulff	Grażyna Jurkowlaniec	Karen Waltorp
Synergy Grant 2025			
Costantino Creton Jørgen Arendt Jensen	Carmen Gaina Deborah Lawlor	Simon Goldhill Sharon Tooze	Hilleke Hulshoff Pol

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chapter six

Communication

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Communication **actions**

The ERC Scientific Council has a mandate to communicate with the scientific community, key stakeholders, the media and the public at large.

All communication actions performed during the year were guided by the three overarching objectives set out in the Scientific Council's annual communication strategy – making the case for frontier research, providing timely and reliable information about ERC funding opportunities, and promoting public engagement with research.

The ERC Communication Unit carries out a wide range of activities - from handling press relations including press briefings and media interviews with its leaders and grantees to organising public sessions and events and more. Key communication tools include the ERC social media channels and website, the ERC magazine, newsletters, and increasingly videos.

The last year saw significant coverage of the ERC in traditional media and increased engagement on social media, with particularly high levels of interest in the results of ERC funding calls. There was substantial growth in followers in the ERC LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram platforms and the newly created BlueSky channel, alongside a significant increase in video views, which more than doubled.

Making the case for frontier research

The ERC President and the Scientific Council members participated in numerous high-profile events and bilateral meetings, demonstrating to policy-makers, the business community, and the media how supporting frontier research can help tackle both immediate and long-term economic, environmental, and societal challenges.

The ERC organised an event in Brussels where leading figures from industry, research and policy-making engaged in a dialogue on enhancing Europe's competitiveness through cutting-edge science and innovation. A joint event 'From Science to Policy: Shaping a Sustainable and Competitive Europe' was organised by the ERC with the European Parliament's (EP) Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA) in the EP's premises where ERC grantees and MEPs explored strategies for enhancing the integration of scientific evidence into policymaking. Sessions from both events were livestreamed gathering thousands of views.

The ERC also had sessions and visibility at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the EU Research & Innovation Week and the European Business Summit in Brussels, the Falling Walls conference in Berlin, as well as in the context of visits of the ERC President, including to Denmark, Lithuania, Estonia, Ireland and South Korea.

Keeping the research community updated

The ERC organised several webinars to inform potential applicants about the grant schemes, call calendar and funding opportunities. These included information on the newly introduced ERC Plus Grants with the participation of the ERC President that gathered more than 8 000 views and two webinars on the ERC 2026 Work Programme which both had over 40 000 views. Furthermore, two virtual information events for the less performing countries in ERC grants (widening countries) were viewed more than 8 000 times.

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The ERC organised five information events with the National Contact Points in the EU Member States and Associated Countries. Cooperation continued with the Euraxess network and the EU's Delegations across the world through jointly organised events to promote funding opportunities at international level.

Promoting public engagement with research

Many ERC grantees engage the public with their research, bridging the gap between science and society. The ERC Public Engagement with Research Award (PERA), which is organised every two years, recognises and rewards ERC grantees who have carried out innovative and impactful actions to engage audiences outside the domain of their ERC-funded research. In the current year, we highlighted the recommendations and insights from the 6 winners of the 2024 Awards with videos, social media and a dedicated issue of the ERC Magazine. The call for the 2026 Public Engagement with Research Awards was launched in the last quarter of the year.

A further two series of residencies of journalists in European research groups took place through the ERC Science Journalism Initiative. This initiative brings together science journalists with frontier research groups, to promote the coverage of research in the media with the aim of facilitating science communication and public engagement with science.

In line with our ambition to bring science to wider audiences, the ERC also developed and shared over 200 science stories and articles based on grantees and their research, through the ERC website, newsletter and social media channels.

Communication **figures**

45

press announcements
released by the ERC

19,000

mentions in the media

29

events (organised by the ERC
and partners both online and in person)

598,000

followers on social media

11,200

event participants
(including 6260 webinar participants)

24,000

press articles mentioning the ERC

1,566,000

video views across
various channels

1,145,000

website unique visitors

111,800

ERC
newsletter subscribers

105,500

pageviews
of science stories
and magazine articles

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