The European Research Council

ERC Funding Opportunities: Supporting excellent researchers all over Europe

The ERC’s quest to support excellent researchers all over Europe

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What is ERC?

The ERC supports excellence in frontier research through a bottom-up, individual-based, pan-European competition.

**Budget:** € 13 billion (2014-2020) - 1.9 billion €/year
€ 7.5 billion (2007-2013) - 1.1 billion €/year

- **Scientific governance:** independent Scientific Council with 22 members including the ERC President; full authority over funding strategy
- **Support by the ERC Executive Agency (autonomous)**
- **Excellence as the only criterion**

- **Strategy**
  - Support for the individual scientist – no networks!
  - Global peer-review
  - No predetermined subjects (bottom-up)
  - Support of frontier research in all fields of science and humanities
ERC offers: Creative Freedom to Individual Grantee

independence, recognition & visibility

• to work on a research **topic of own choice**, with a **team of own choice**
• to gain true **financial autonomy** for 5 years
• to negotiate with the host institution the **best conditions** of work
• to attract **top team members** (EU and non-EU) and collaborators
• to move with the grant to any place in Europe if necessary (**portability of grants**)  
• to attract additional funding and gain recognition;
**ERC Main Grant Schemes**

- **Starting Grants**
  - Starters (2-7 years after PhD)
  - up to €2.0 Mio
  - for 5 years

- **Consolidator Grants**
  - Consolidators (7-12 years after PhD)
  - up to €2.75 Mio
  - for 5 years

- **Advanced Grants**
  - Track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years
  - up to €3.5 Mio
  - for 5 years

- ERC awarding close to 1000 grants annually (2014)
- Average ERC grant size of about 2€ million
- 25% overhead for institutions hosting ERC grants
Geographical location of ERC grants (FP7)

ERC grants at **600** different host institutions in **32** countries
"Excellence attracts excellence"
Concentration of ERC grants in research intensive countries and top research institutions

90% of ERC grants in top 10 countries
50% of ERC grants in top 50 institutions
Talent is everywhere

Disparity among the countries in the number of ERC grants per 1 million inhabitants
Number of applications per country of HI ERC Calls 2007 – 2014 (FP7&H2020)

- Relatively low participation rate from some European countries
ERC grantees at home and abroad: ERC Calls 2007 – 2014 (FP7&H2020)

- Outflow of leading researchers from some European countries
- Attraction of ERC grantees to some countries
Mission: To capitalize on the full European potential for frontier research without departing from the ERC's principle of excellence.

- Contribute to a truly inclusive European culture of competitiveness in science
- Strengthen participation in ERC calls by researchers from the EU’s less research-performing regions
- Facilitate systematic debate and interactions with relevant stakeholders to promote national and local support for promising scientists from EU’s less research-performing regions

Identify possible actions that could be taken by the ERC to support the best scientists from weak participating European countries (particularly from the EU13) and encourage them to apply to the ERC.
Established by the European Commission

Results from the ERC Widening participation survey
Identified problems common to all EU13 countries

- **Low international profile of research:** lack of international dynamics and mobility, lower levels of international exposure
- **Unattractiveness of research environment:** scientific isolation, missing culture of scientific excellence, lack of open and merit based reward system
- **Poor career prospective:** lack of science career building programmes and long-term research career prospective, non-merit based recruitment practices
- **Low levels of research investment:** low salaries for top scientists, lack of additional and sustainable funding: ERC top-up, ERC runners-up, ERC exit programmes
- **Inadequate research funding systems:** lack of competitive attitude, research funding system not appropriate for pursuing ambitious projects
- **Lack of institutional support to ERC applicants and grantees provided locally:** administration of HI, NCPs, colleagues and peers, personal coaching

National, institutional conditions matter!
First actions of the WG

- Promotion of the ERC visiting research fellowship
- Launching of NCP Network project in support of widening European Participation (2016):
  - trans-national workshops, trainings, coaching, twinning/tripling among ERC NCPs to raise the level of national, local support to applicants
  - trans-national workshops/training days for coaching of potential ERC candidates according to the best European standards
  - Assistance with organisation of regional widening European participation events

**ERC Visiting Research Fellowship**

**Overcoming scientific isolation by stimulating mobility**

**Key principles**

**Scheme:** Short term research visit (minimum of three months) in an ERC team: international exposure, grant application coaching

**Funding:** by a national research-funding organization of a country in the European Research Area, no additional funding is provided by ERC.

**Eligibility:** Open to all researchers working in ERA, through public, open competitions through evaluation panels composed by researchers of high repute and based on excellence and potential for an ERC grant application.

**Condition:** A letter of support signed by an ERC grantee and his/her Host Institution stating that in case the applicant is selected he/she will be hosted as member of the research team of the PI

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Successful applicants must sign a letter of commitment to apply for an ERC grant no later than one/two year(s) after the end of the visit.
ERC Visiting Research Fellowship: Hungarian proposal

- Open call for a three-months mobility proposals to visit ERC team by The National Research, Development and Innovation Office, as pre-ERC application stage.
- The Office expects to support the mobility of 20 Hungarian researchers, amounting to a total support of €320.000 (ca. €15.000 per fellowship).
- The applicants have to submit the proposal including: (1) CV, (2) short research plan; (3) budget plan, (4) supporting declaration of the host institution/ERC grantee, (5) declaration of the applicant to apply to the ERC within one year after the end of the visit.
- Proposals will be evaluated by external reviewers invited by the Office followed up with recommendations of the review panels of the Office.
- Evaluation criteria include: 1) Hungarian applicant’s potential to be awarded an ERC grant, 2) the contribution of the foreign visit, 3) the novelty of the research plan and 3) its relation to the profile of the foreign research group to be visited.
- Final decision on awarding the fellowship will remain with the president of the Office.
Other possibilities towards widening European participation in ERC calls at national level

- **Research capacity building and strengthening of local research infrastructure:** use of EU structural funds
- **Increase of the research investment**
- **Reforms of national/local research systems along best practices for nurturing scientific excellence:** competition based research funding, open merit based recruitment, performance based salaries,...
- **Internationalisation of research:** fostering international mobility and cross-border scientific exchange, raising attractiveness of research environment
- **Strengthening local support to ERC applicants and grantees:** training days, workshops, seminars, and coaching for ERC candidates, but also their supporting services

The ERC ScC WG on Widening European Participation is starting its consultation with different stakeholders to see where and how the ERC could best contribute
Questions of this afternoon:

- How can we together increase the number of excellent applications to ERC from the region?
- What can be done on national and institutional levels to better support promising scientists in applying to ERC?
- How can ERC help in strengthening national and local support for promising scientists from the region?
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