The European Research Council

Martin Penny
ERC Executive Agency
Head of Unit
Physical Sciences & Engineering
December 2016
Outline

• What is the ERC?
• What does ERC offer?
• How ERC research proposals are evaluated?
• Some tips on preparing an ERC proposal
What is the ERC?

- An autonomous funding body set up by the EU in 2007 and led by scientists
- Funding excellent researchers of any nationality
- To carry out frontier research in all fields of science and humanities
- 1 researcher, 1 Host Institution, 1 project, 1 selection criterion
- Substantial grants and a recognised label of excellence
- International, top level peer-review
ERC in H2020
Budget Horizon 2020

- ERC budget: €13 billion
- H2020 budget: €77 billion

- Societal challenges (38.5%)
- Industrial leadership (22.1%)
- Other Excellent science (14.7%)
- EIT and other (5.2%)
- JRC (2.5%)
What does ERC offer?

Creative Freedom of the Individual Grantee

ERC offers selective and generous grants, independence, recognition & visibility

- Work on any research topic: **completely bottom-up**
- Gain **financial autonomy** for 5 years
- Negotiate the **best work conditions** with the host institution
- Attract **top team members and collaborators** (EU and non-EU)
- **Portability of grants**
- **Attract additional funding and gain recognition:** ERC is a quality label
Who can apply?

- **Excellent** Researchers
- **Any nationality, any age** or any current place of work
- **In conjunction with a Host Institution** based in Europe
  
  EU or associated countries
Researchers career development and complementary funding schemes

- Students
- Post Graduates
- Post-docs
- Junior Professor/Junior Researcher
- Associated Professor
- Full Professor
- Junior Professor
- ERC CoG – Consolidators
- ERC StG - Starters
- Marie Skłodowska Curie
- Erasmus
- ERC AdG - Advanced

European Research Council
Established by the European Commission
What does ERC offer?

ERC Grant Schemes

Starting Grants
- starters
- 2-7 years after PhD
- (≥ 50% commitment)
- up to €1.5 Million
- for 5 years

Consolidator Grants
- consolidators
- 7-12 years after PhD
- (≥ 40% commitment)
- up to €2 Million
- for 5 years

Advanced Grants
- track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years
- (≥ 30% commitment)
- up to €2.5 Million
- for 5 years

Proof-of-Concept
- bridging gap between research - earliest stage of marketable innovation
- up to €150,000 for ERC grant holders only
Additional funding:

- 'Start-Up costs for scientists moving to EU / Associated Countries
- Purchase of major equipment
- Access to large facilities

- Up to €500 000 for Starting
- Up to €750 000 for Consolidator
- Up to €1 Million for Advanced grantees
How to prepare and submit an ERC research proposal?

- Have a **bright, original and exciting idea**
- Design a **research project** to implement the idea
- Get a letter of support from a **Host Institution** where the project is to be carried out (the HI must be located in the EU or any of the H2020 associated countries)
- Write your **research proposal**
- **Fully electronic/web based submission system**
- **Submit** your research proposal **before the deadline**
How to prepare and submit an ERC research proposal?

**Proposal structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>PART A</strong> – online forms</th>
<th><strong>PART B1</strong> – submitted as .pdf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1 Proposal and PI info</td>
<td>• Extended Synopsis 5 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 Host Institution info</td>
<td>• CV 2 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3 Budget</td>
<td>• Early Achievements (StG and CoG) or 10-year Track Record (AdG) 2 p.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annexes – submitted as .pdf</th>
<th><strong>PART B2</strong> – submitted as .pdf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• HI support letter</td>
<td>• Scientific Proposal 15 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• copy of PhD (StG, CoG);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• document for extension of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eligibility window (StG,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoG)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to prepare and submit an ERC research proposal?

ERC panel structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Sciences and Humanities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH2 Institutions, Values, Environment and Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH3 The Social World, Diversity, Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH5 Cultures and Cultural Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH6 The Study of the Human Past</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life Sciences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LS1 Molecular and Structural Biology and Biochemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS2 Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics and Systems Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS3 Cellular and Developmental Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS4 Physiology, Pathophysiology and Endocrinology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS5 Neurosciences and Neural Disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS6 Immunity and Infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS7 Diagnostic Tools, Therapies &amp; Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS8 Evolutionary, Population and Environmental Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS9 Applied Life Sciences and Biotechnology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Sciences &amp; Engineering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PE1 Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE3 Condensed Matter Physics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE4 Physical &amp; Analytical Chemical Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE6 Computer Science &amp; Informatics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE7 Systems &amp; Communication Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE8 Products &amp; Process Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE9 Universe Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE10 Earth System Science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each panel: Panel Chair and 10-16 Panel Members
Submission, evaluation and selection
Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants

**STEP 1**
Remote assessment by Panel members of section 1 – PI and synopsis

Panel meeting

Proposals retained for step 2

**STEP 2**
Remote assessment by Panel members and reviewers of full proposals

Panel meeting + interview (StG and CoG)

Ranked list of proposals

Feedback to applicants

- Balance between generalist + specialised reviews
- Appropriate treatment of interdisciplinary proposals
How ERC research proposals are evaluated?

*Excellence is the sole evaluation criterion*

Evaluation of *excellence* at two levels:

- **Excellence of the Research Project**
  - ✓ Ground breaking nature
  - ✓ Potential impact
  - ✓ Scientific Approach

- **Excellence of the Principal Investigator**
  - ✓ Intellectual capacity
  - ✓ Creativity
  - ✓ Commitment
# ERC Evaluation outcome

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 possible outcomes:</th>
<th>Evaluation Mark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The proposal fully meets the ERC's excellence criterion and is recommended for</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funding if sufficient funds are available;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposal is of high quality, sufficient to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;</td>
<td>B Step 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it meets some but not all elements of the ERC's excellence criterion and will not be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funded.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposal is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to step 2 of the</td>
<td>B Step 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluation and will not be funded.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposal is not of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation and</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will not be funded.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Extensions of eligibility window possible for StG and CoG for documented cases of:

- Maternity – 18 months per child *(before or after PhD)*
- Paternity – actual time taken off
- Military service
- Medical speciality training
- Caring for seriously ill family members

- No limit to the total extension
Some tips and advice

- Be ambitious and 'daring'; panels instructed to seek out high-risk research
- Grab interest and attention of readers/reviewers
- Remember that Part B1 will be seen by 'generalists' (panel members) and is a 'stand-alone' document
- If you make it to Step 2, reviewers see both B1 and B2, so do not repeat/duplicate part B1 in part B2
- Do not include unnecessary partners and collaborators; it is not supposed to be a 'consortium'
Some tips and advice

- For interviews (StG and CoG):
  - Get Panel Members interested in you and what you are doing
  - Practice thoroughly, several (many?) times; typically a 10 minute presentation followed by 10-15 minutes of questions
  - Panels want to see that these are your ideas, not those of your supervisor
  - It is normal to be nervous...
## Overview of 2017 ERC Calls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calls</th>
<th>Call date</th>
<th>Deadline(s)</th>
<th>Budget € million (estimated grants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Starting Grant ERC-2017-StG | 26 Jul 2016 | 18 Oct 2016  
Now closed                      | 605 (415)                        |
| Consolidator Grant ERC-2017-CoG | 20 Oct 2016 | 9 Feb 2017                  | 575 (320)                           |
| Advanced Grant ERC-2017-AdG  | 16 May 2017 | 31 Aug 2017                  | 567 (244)                           |
25 Apr 2017  
5 Sep 2017                   | 20 (130)                            |
After 9 Years, a Success Story

- Over 6,000 top researchers funded since the ERC’s creation in 2007
- Over 40,000 researchers and other professionals employed in ERC research teams
- €13 billion ERC budget for 2014-2020 under Horizon 2020
- Over 90,000 articles from ERC projects published in prestigious scientific journals
- 677 research institutions hosting ERC grantees – universities, public or private research centres in the EU or associated countries
- 67 nationalities of grant holders
Some useful tools and links

- Read **Information for Applicants** and Work Programme
- Contact your **National Contact Point** if you have questions
- View the **step-by-step video** Introduction to application process, including tips & tricks for the interview
  https://vimeo.com/94179654
- Consult **ERC website** for latest funding opportunities, view ERC funded projects
The European Research Council

  or watch: [https://player.vimeo.com/video/154715819](https://player.vimeo.com/video/154715819)

- Sign up for news alerts: [erc.europa.eu/keep-updated-erc](http://erc.europa.eu/keep-updated-erc)

- Follow us on:
  - [www.facebook.com/EuropeanResearchCouncil](http://www.facebook.com/EuropeanResearchCouncil)
  - [twitter.com/ERC_Research](http://twitter.com/ERC_Research)
  - [www.linkedin.com/company/european-research-council](http://www.linkedin.com/company/european-research-council)