Preparing an ERC application and the Evaluation Process

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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?
Horizon 2020 Budget € 77 billion
ERC Budget € 13 billion
What does ERC offer?

ERC Grant Schemes

**Starting Grants**
- starters
- 2-7 years after PhD
- (≥ 50% commitment)
- up to €2.0 Mio
- for 5 years

**Consolidator Grants**
- consolidators
- 7-12 years after PhD
- (≥ 40% commitment)
- up to €2.75 Mio
- for 5 years

**Advanced Grants**
- track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years
- (≥ 30% commitment)
- up to €3.5 Mio
- for 5 years

**Proof-of-Concept**
- bridging gap between research - earliest stage of marketable innovation
- up to €150,000 for ERC grant holders
Researchers career development and complementary funding schemes

- Students
  - Post Graduates
  - Post-docs
  - Junior Professor/Junior Researcher
  - Associated Professor
  - Full Professor
  - Senior Professor

- Erasmus
- Marie Curie
- ERC StG - Starters
- ERC CoG – Consolidators
- ERC AdG - Advanced
What do ERC grants offer?

Creative Freedom of the Individual Grantee

ERC offers independence, recognition & visibility

- fund research on **any topic: completely "bottom-up"**
- **financial autonomy** for 5 years
- ability to negotiate with the host institution the **best conditions** of work
- to attract **top team members and collaborators**
- **portability**
- ability to attract additional funding
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 HI where the project is to be carried out (the HI must be located in EU or any of the H2020 associated countries)
• Write your research proposal and submit it within the deadline!
• All electronic / web based
How ERC research proposals are evaluated?

Evaluation of proposals: review procedure

**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

- Right balance between generalist + specialized review
- Appropriate treatment of interdisciplinary proposals
ERC Evaluation process (StG, CoG & AdG)
Panel structure: 3 domains and 25 panels

Each panel:
Panel Chair and
10-16 Panel Members

Life Sciences (LS) 9
LS1 Molecular & Structural Biology & Biochemistry
LS2 Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics & Systems Biology
LS3 Cellular & Developmental Biology
LS4 Physiology, Pathophysiology & Endocrinology
LS5 Neurosciences & Neural disorders
LS6 Immunity & Infection
LS7 Diagnostic Tools, Therapies & Public health
LS8 Evolutionary, Population & Environmental Biology
LS9 Applied Life Sciences & Non-Medical Biotechnology

Social Sciences and Humanities (SH) 6
SH1 Markets, Individuals & Institutions
SH2 The Social World, Diversity & Common Ground
SH3 Environment, Space & Population
SH4 The Human Mind and its Complexity
SH5 Cultures & Cultural Production
SH6 The Study of the Human Past

Physical Sciences & Engineering (PE) 10
PE1 Mathematics
PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter
PE3 Condensed Matter Physics
PE4 Physical & Analytical Chemical sciences
PE5 Synthetic Chemistry & Materials
PE6 Computer Science & Informatics
PE7 Systems & Communication Engineering
PE8 Products & Process Engineering
PE9 Universe Sciences
PE10 Earth System Science
How to prepare and submit an ERC research proposal?
Proposal structure

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

- HI support letter
- copy of PhD (StG, CoG);
- document for extension of eligibility window (StG, CoG)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART B2 – submitted as .pdf</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Scientific Proposal</td>
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<td>15 p.</td>
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</table>
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 panel members by country of HI and gender
ERC Starting, Consolidator and Advanced grant calls 2007 - 2014

ERC STG COG ADG panel members 2007-2014 by host institution country

# panel members/panel chairs

EU

Associate countries

International

M (71 %)

F (29 %)
ERC StG, CoG, AdG 2014
Age of applicants at call publication date

Age of applicants at call publication date

AdG 2014
CoG 2014
StG 2014

# Applicants
Age of 2014 grantees

- ADG
- COG
- STG

Age of grantee

# grantees

age of grantee
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
CoG 2014 # funded proposals and success rates by years past PhD and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years past PhD</th>
<th># funded proposals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>220</td>
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</table>

F success rate (15.2 %)  
M success rate (14.9 %)
A few tips and advice (1/2)

- 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)
- 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 (1/2)

• 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...
Call Planning 2016 (provisional dates)

- **StG 2016 (2-7 yrs past PhD)**
  - Deadline: 17 November 2015

- **CoG 2016: (7-12 yrs past PhD)**
  - Deadline 2 Feb 2016

- **AdG 2016 (more senior researchers)**
  - Deadline: 1 September 2016
For further information…

- **ERC Web site**: http://erc.europa.eu/
- **Documents**:
  - ERC Work Programme (published annually)
  - Information for Applicants (published with each call)
- **National Contact Points**
- **European Commission Research Participant Portal**
Thank you