EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL

ERC Work Programme 2011

- Revised -

Established by the ERC Scientific Council
and transmitted for adoption to the Commission on 29 of November 2010

Unless stated otherwise, the activities of this Work programme will be implemented by the Dedicated Implementation Structure of the ERC which the Commission has established in the legal form of an Executive Agency (2008/37/EC, 14.12.07). The implementation will be delegated to the latter according to the *Commission Decision delegating powers to the European Research Council Executive Agency with a view to performance of tasks linked to implementation of the specific programme Ideas in the field of research comprising in particular implementation of appropriations entered in the Union budget* (C(2008) 5694, 08.10.2008).

(European Commission C(2010) 1848 of 24 March 2011)

How to use the Work Programme (WP)

The WP is to be read in association with the relevant guidance for applicants. The most current guidance is available at the ERC website: http://erc.europa.eu/index.cfm

***Parts 1 and 2** describe the background to the WP, the broad policy objectives and the underlying principles of ERC funding. **Parts 3 and 4** give details of the ERC grant schemes, submission and evaluation while **Part 5** lists other activities to allow the Scientific Council of the ERC to carry out its duties. The **Annexes** give information on the relevant calls in overview form, and other useful information.*

European Commission
FP7 Specific Programme IDEAS

SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

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Prior Information of Candidates, Tenderers and Grant Applicants (Article 8 of Decision on the Early Warning System and Article 13 of Regulation on the Central Exclusion Database):

Candidates, tenderers, grant applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- the Commission Decision of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (EWS) for the use of authorising officers of the Commission and the executive agencies (OJ, L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 125); or
- the Commission Regulation of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database (CED) (OJ L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 12);

their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the EWS only or both in the EWS and CED, and communicated to the persons and entities listed in the above-mentioned Decision and Regulation, in relation to the award or the execution of a procurement contract or a grant agreement or decision.

1. Background and objectives

1.1 Background

The European Research Council (ERC) has a unique position in European research funding. It is a science-led funding body, supporting research at the highest level of excellence, operating to world class standards.

The ERC consists of an independent **Scientific Council**, responsible for scientific strategy and an administrative arm, the **European Research Council -Executive Agency (ERCEA)**. The Commission is responsible for assuring the "ERC's full autonomy and integrity".[1]

The **Scientific Council** is composed of 22 members who collectively represent Europe's scientific community. As well as establishing the ERC's strategy, it has full authority over decisions on the type of research to be funded and acts as guarantor of the quality of the activity from the scientific perspective. It establishes the annual work programme that shall be adopted by the Commission with the assistance of the Programme Committee, establishes the peer review structure and process, monitors the quality of the programme's implementation from the scientific perspective, and develops the ERC's international strategy..

The Scientific Council is supported by the autonomous **ERCEA**[2], which is responsible for all aspects of administrative implementation and programme execution. The Executive Agency implements in particular, the evaluation procedures, peer review and selection process according to the principles established by the Scientific Council and will ensure the financial and scientific management of the grants.

The work programme provides information on the research activities for 2011 which will be implemented through calls for proposals in the latter half of 2010, as well as on other types of activities not implemented through calls for proposals to allow the Scientific Council to carry out its duties and mandate.

1.2 Objectives

In line with the EU's Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the objectives of the ERC are **to reinforce excellence, dynamism and creativity in European research** and improve the attractiveness of Europe for the best researchers from both European and third countries, as well as for industrial research investment.

In order to fulfil these objectives the ERC funds research of the very highest quality **at the frontiers of knowledge** thus facilitating the major breakthroughs that are necessary to address society's "Grand Challenges", to promote the creation and growth of businesses in emerging sectors and to fully develop a knowledge and innovation society in Europe.

[1] In accordance with the Specific Programme Ideas, Council Decision (2006/972/EC) of 19 December 2006.

[2] Its tasks are described in the Delegation Act, Commission Decision C(2008)5694 of 8 October 2008.

The ERC complements existing funding schemes at the national and European levels. By establishing world class benchmarks of excellence in its evaluation and in the research it funds the ERC will raise the status, visibility and attractiveness of European frontier research and **provide a powerful dynamic for driving up the quality of the overall European research system**. In this way the ERC supports research excellence across the whole of the European Union and associated countries. ERC grants awarded on the basis of excellence can complement the efforts of national funding bodies and host institutions to build or reinforce excellence across Europe.

2. Underlying principles of ERC funding

2.1 Open to all fields of research

The ERC's funding schemes operate on a 'bottom-up' basis without predetermined priorities.

Applications can be made in any field of research - including the social sciences and humanities - with particular emphasis on the frontiers of science, scholarship and engineering. In particular, proposals of an interdisciplinary nature which cross the boundaries between different fields of research, pioneering proposals addressing new and emerging fields of research or proposals introducing unconventional, innovative approaches and scientific inventions are encouraged, and will be assessed on the significance of their expected impact.

2.2 Open to all researchers

The ERC grants are open to **researchers from any country in the world**. However, the ERC-funded research should be carried out in one of the 27 EU Member States or in one of the associated countries. The ERC grants are open to researchers from both **public and private institutions**.

Moreover, independent researchers of any age can apply. The only requirements are that for ERC Starting Grants they should normally be between two and twelve years after PhD award (see section 3.9.2) and for Advanced Grants active researchers with a track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years (see section 4.9.2).

2.3 Scientific excellence is the sole evaluation criterion

Scientific excellence is the sole criterion on the basis of which ERC grants are awarded. The ERC's peer review evaluation process has been carefully designed to identify scientific excellence and guarantee transparency, fairness and impartiality in the treatment of proposals.

The evaluation of ERC grant applications is conducted by peer review panels composed of renowned scientists and scholars selected by the ERC Scientific Council. The Panels may be assisted by referees. Each Panel is headed by a highly distinguished Panel Chair and composed of 10-14 Panel Members.

2.4 Two types of grants

Two types of ERC grant are available at present. These will be the core of the ERC's operations for the duration of the 7th Framework Programme.

- The ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grants (ERC Starting Grants) boost the independent careers of excellent researchers by providing adequate support at the critical stage where they are starting or consolidating their own independent research team or programme.

- The ERC Advanced Investigator Grants (ERC Advanced Grants) encourage substantial advances at the frontier of knowledge by supporting excellent, leading advanced investigators to pursue ground breaking, high-risk/high gain research.

In addition, ERC grantees can now apply for additional Proof of Concept funding to establish the innovation potential of ideas arising from their ERC-funded frontier research projects. This activity will be implemented through a Coordination and Support Action (see Chapter 5).

2.5 Attractive long-term funding

Depending on the specific project and field, the level of ERC Starting Grants may be up to **EUR 2 000 000**, and the level of ERC Advanced Grants may be up to **EUR 3 500 000** for a period of up to 5 years.

An ERC grant can cover up to 100% of the total eligible direct costs of the research plus a contribution towards indirect costs.

ERC grants are portable as described in the ERC model grant agreement.

ERC awards are made and grants operated according to simple procedures that maintain the focus on excellence, encourage initiative and combine flexibility with accountability. The ERC is continuously looking for further ways to simplify and improve its procedures in order to ensure that these principles are met.

2.6 Principal Investigators and their research team are supported

The ERC's funding schemes aim to empower individual researchers and provide the best settings to foster their creativity.

The Grants will support projects carried out by individual teams which are headed by a single **Principal Investigator** and, as necessary, include additional **team-members**. The constitution of the research team is flexible. Commonly, it involves researchers from the Principal Investigator's research group or from the same organisation as team members. However, depending on the nature of a project the research team may also involve team members from other research organisations situated in the same or a different country (see Starting Grant section 3.9.3 and Advanced Grant section 4.9.3). In certain fields (e.g. in the humanities and mathematics), where research is often performed individually the "team" may consist solely of the Principal Investigator.

With the focus on the Principal Investigator, the concept of individual team is fundamentally different from that of a traditional 'network' or 'research consortium'. **Proposals of the latter type should not be submitted to the ERC.**

2.7 The role of the Host Institution

An ERC grant is awarded to the institution (Applicant Legal Entity) that engages and hosts the Principal Investigator. This does not exclude cases where the Principal Investigator's employer is not the host institution (in these cases, the specific conditions of engagement will be subject to clarification and approval during the granting procedure)[3].

Grants are awarded to the host institution with the explicit **commitment that this institution offers appropriate conditions for the Principal Investigator independently to direct the research and manage its funding for the duration of the project.** These conditions, including the *'portability'* of the project, are the subject of a supplementary agreement between the principal investigator and the host institution[4] and must ensure that the Principal Investigator may:

- apply for funding independently
- manage the research and the funding for the project and make appropriate resource allocation decisions
- publish independently as senior author and include as co-authors only those who have contributed substantially to the reported work
- supervise team members, including research students, doctoral students or others
- have access to appropriate space and facilities for conducting the research

These conditions are consistent with the 'The European Charter for Researchers and The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers'.

Any type of legal entity, including universities, research organisations and undertakings can host the Principal Investigator and his/her team as long as the principles indicated above are respected and the Principal Investigator and his/her activity are not constrained by the research strategy of the entity. The ERC welcomes applications from Principal Investigators hosted by private commercial research centres, including industrial laboratories.

Host institutions are expected to make all appropriate efforts to provide the conditions to attract and retain scientists and scholars of the calibre to be awarded an ERC grant, within the framework provided by the ERC Model Grant Agreement and any other available administrative and legal possibilities.

2.8 Reinforcing European research

The ERC's funding schemes aim to foster a healthy competitive dynamic across Europe, helping to drive up the quality of the overall research system.

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[3] Exceptionally, the Principal Investigator may himself/herself act as the applicant legal entity, if he/she is acting in the capacity of the legal entity in his/her own right.

[4] This is supplementary to the ERC Grant Agreement and is described in the ERC Model Grant Agreement *C(2007)1625*.

The **host institution must be established in a Member State or an associated country**. It may also be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). It is therefore expected that the research project will be carried out within the territory of a Member State or an associated country but in certain conditions contributions from elsewhere may be funded (see Starting Grant section 3.9.3 and Advanced Grant section 4.9.3).

The ERC is particularly keen to encourage excellent proposals which involve the establishment of a new research activity in the EU or the associated countries by a Principal Investigator who is moving from a third country to the EU or an associated country. Such projects may request additional funding (see Starting Grant section 3.3.1 and Advanced Grant section 4.3.1) to provide additional assistance to cover eligible "start-up" costs, which may include the purchase of major equipment.

For Advanced Investigators the ERC also funds Co-Investigator projects to bring together the necessary knowledge and skills from more than one discipline for particular projects (see sections 4.2 and 4.3.1).

In order to strengthen the ERC's role in the innovation chain, from blue sky research to commercialisation, ERC grant holders will be given the opportunity to apply for additional funding to establish the innovation potential of ideas arising from their ERC-funded frontier research projects. This "proof of concept" aims to cover a funding gap in the earliest stage of an innovation, and can be used for activities such as technical validation, market research, clarifying IPR position and strategy or investigating commercial and business opportunities.

3. ERC Starting Grant

3.1 Background

It is widely recognised that Europe offers insufficient opportunities for young investigators to develop independent careers and make the transition from working under a supervisor to being independent research leaders in their own right. This structural problem leads to a dramatic waste of research talent in Europe. It limits or delays the emergence of the next-generation of researchers, who bring new ideas and energy, and it encourages highly talented researchers at an early stage of their career to seek advancement elsewhere, either in other professions or as researchers outside Europe.

The ERC is well placed to go beyond previous modest efforts to address this issue and is committed to making a sustained investment on the scale necessary to have a real impact on European science and scholarship

3.2 Objectives

ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grants are designed to support researchers (Principal Investigators) at the stage at which they are starting or consolidating their own independent research team or programme. The scheme will support the creation of independent and excellent new individual research teams and will strengthen others that have been recently created.

The evaluation panels will be empowered to conclude whether the grant and the conditions specified by the host institution will allow the Principal Investigator to make or consolidate the transition to independence. The Principal Investigators will be assessed by the evaluation panels as either "starters" or "consolidators" (see section 3.6.2).

The ERC is particularly keen to encourage excellent proposals which involve the establishment of a new research activity in the EU or the associated countries by a Principal Investigator who is moving from a third country into the EU or the associated countries. To provide additional assistance to cover "start-up" and relocation costs, which may include the purchase of major equipment, proposals with these features may request an additional element of funding (see 3.3.1), the justification for which will be assessed by the evaluation panels.

3.3 Size of ERC Starting Grants

3.3.1 Maximum size of grant

Normally, the maximum grant will be EUR 1 500 000 for a period of 5 years (pro rata for projects of shorter duration). However, an additional EUR 500 000 can be made available to cover (a) eligible "start-up" costs for Principal Investigators moving from a third country to the EU or an associated country or (b) the purchase of major equipment.

3.3.2 Grant assessment

The overall level of the grant offered will be assessed during the peer review evaluation. Evaluation panels will judge the funding requested by the applicant against the needs of the project before making an award. The funding requested by the Principal Investigator must be fully justified by an estimation of the real project cost. The panels may suggest a modification to the indicative budgetary breakdown in the application, particularly where they consider

funding requests to be not properly justified, but in such cases shall explain in writing any such modification. The Principal Investigator will have the freedom to re-budget during the course of the project upon notification of the ERCEA.

3.3.3 Union Contribution

The Union financial contribution shall be in the form of a grant to the budget corresponding to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs, and a reimbursement of a flat-rate of 20% of the total eligible direct costs[5] towards indirect costs. The level of the grant represents a maximum overall figure – payments must be justified on the basis of the amounts actually disbursed for the project[6].

3.4 Profile of the ERC Starting Grant Applicant

A competitive Starting Grant Principal Investigator must have already shown the potential for research independence and evidence of maturity. For example, it is normally expected that applicants will have produced **at least one important publication without the participation of their PhD supervisor**. Applicants should also be able to demonstrate a promising **track-record of early achievements** appropriate to their research field and career stage, including significant publications (as main author) in major international peer-reviewed multidisciplinary scientific journals, or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals of their respective field. They may also demonstrate a record of invited presentations in well-established international conferences, granted patents, awards, prizes etc.

Normally, the Principal Investigator must have been awarded their first PhD **at least 2 and up to 12 years prior to the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Starting Grant** (see sections 3.6.2 and 3.9.2).

3.5 ERC Starting Grant proposal description

Section 1

1(a) Scientific leadership potential: A description of the applicant's scientific leadership potential should include:

- a presentation of the content of the early scientific or scholarly achievements of the applicant to his or her own research field, demonstrating the applicant's qualifications and potential to go significantly beyond the state of the art;
- the recognition and diffusion that these early contributions have received from others (publications, citations or appropriate equivalents/additional funding/ students/international prizes and awards/ institution-building/other);

Applicants should also explain their career stage ("starter" or "consolidator") based on whether they are applying to start their transition to independence or to consolidate their own independent team/activity (see sections 3.6.2, 3.9.2 and the ERC Guide for Applicants).

[5] Excluding the direct costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the host institution.

[6] Commission Decision (C(2009)1942) of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

1(b) Curriculum Vitae: The CV should include the standard academic and research record as well as a succinct 'funding ID' which must specify any current research grants and their subject, and any ongoing application for work related to the proposal. Any research career gaps and/or unconventional paths should be clearly explained so that can be fairly assessed by the evaluation panels.

1(c) Early achievements track-record: The applicant should list:

1. **Publications, as main author** (indicating those without the presence as co-author of their PhD supervisor) in **major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals** and/or in the **leading international peer-reviewed journals, peer-reviewed conferences proceedings and/or monographs** of their respective research fields, also indicating the number of citations (excluding self-citations) they have attracted.

2. Granted **patent(s)** (if applicable).

3. **Invited presentations to peer-reviewed, internationally established conferences** and/or **international advanced schools** (if applicable)

4**. Prizes and Awards** (if applicable)

1(d) Extended Synopsis: concise presentation of the scientific proposal, with particular attention to the ground-breaking nature of the research project, which will allow evaluation panels to assess, in step 1 of the evaluation, the feasibility of the outlined scientific approach.

Section 2

Scientific Proposal: description of scientific and technical aspects of the project, demonstrating the ground-breaking nature of the research, its potential impact and research methodology. The fraction of the applicant's research effort that will be devoted to this project, a full estimation of the real project cost and any ethical considerations raised by the project also need to be indicated.

In fairness to all applicants, strict limits will be applied to the length of proposals, as follows:

Section 1

Scientific leadership potential: 1 page
Curriculum Vitae: 2 pages
Early achievements track-record: 2 pages

Extended Synopsis: 5 pages

Section 2

Scientific Proposal: 15 pages

Only the material that is presented within these limits will be evaluated (peer reviewers will only be asked, and will be under no obligation to read beyond, the material presented within the page limits).

The host institution must confirm its association with and its support to the project and the Principal Investigator. As part of the application the institution must provide a binding

statement that the conditions of independence are already fulfilled or will be provided to the Principal Investigator if the application is successful, according to the template provided[7]. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement will not be considered for evaluation.

Additional necessary elements of the proposal:

1. Host Institution Binding Statement of Support
2. Ethical Review table (incorporated in Section 2 of the proposal)
3. PhD record and supporting documentation for eligibility checking

3.6 ERC Starting Grant proposal submission procedure and peer review evaluation

3.6.1 Proposal Submission

Proposals are submitted by the Principal Investigator, who has scientific responsibility for the project, on behalf of the host institution which is the applicant legal entity.

Proposal submission is made electronically via the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS). **EARLY REGISTRATION AND SUBMISSION IN EPSS IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED AND SHOULD BE DONE AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE IN ADVANCE OF THE CALL DEADLINE.**

3.6.2 Peer review evaluation

A **single submission of the full proposal** will be followed by a **two-step evaluation**. At step 1, Section 1 of the proposal will be assessed and marked. At step 2 the complete version of the retained proposals will be assessed and marked. The evaluation will be conducted by means of a structure of high level peer review panels as listed in Annex 1. The Panels may be assisted by referees.

The allocation of the proposals to the various panels will be based on the expressed preference of the applicant. The applicant must submit the proposal to his/her chosen primary evaluation panel before the submission deadline of this panel. The applicant may also indicate a secondary evaluation panel.

In cases where panels determine that a proposal is of a cross-panel or cross-domain nature, panels may request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional referees.

The Principal Investigators will be assessed by the evaluation panels as "starters" or "consolidators". The allocation of the proposals to the two streams will be based on the number of years since the award of their PhD. "Starters" being normally those awarded their PhD from 2 up to 7 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication, and "consolidators" being normally those awarded their PhD over 7 and up to 12 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication. However, in making the final streaming decision, panels will also take into

[7] See ERC Guide for Applicants. The statement must be on an official letter (organisation letterhead), signed by the legal representative of the host institution who can commit the host institution according to the requirements of the ERC Model Grant Agreement (C(2007) 1625 of 16/04/2007). The letter should be scanned and uploaded to EPSS with the proposal.

account the specific stage of the Principal Investigator's research career at the time of the application based on the information and supporting documents provided. Applicants wishing to be evaluated in a stream different than that corresponding to the years past PhD must make their case in the leadership profile in Section 1 of the application (see sections 3.5, 3.9.2 and the ERC Guide for Applicants).

In order to assure comparable success rates for the "starters" and "consolidators" the indicative budget of each panel will be divided in proportion to the budgetary demand of the proposals submitted in these two categories.

Principal Investigators whose proposals will be retained for the second step of the evaluation may be invited for an interview to present their project to the evaluation panel meeting in Brussels.

A description of the evaluation process for Starting Grant proposals is set out in Annex 2.

3.6.3 Call budget

The ERC Scientific Council has established the following indicative percentage budgets for each of the 3 main research domains:

***Physical Sciences & Engineering:* 40%**
***Life Sciences:* 35%**
***Social Sciences & Humanities*: 15%**

In addition a "**fourth domain**" with an indicative budget of **10%** has been established to fund research projects of a cross-panel and/or cross-domain nature.

3.7 Restrictions on applications

The current rules, which may subsequently be modified by the Scientific Council in light of experience, are as follows:

- A Principal Investigator who served as a panel member on a panel for a previous Starting Grant call may not apply to the Starting Grant call 2011;
- Only one ERC grant managed by a Principal or Co-Investigator can be active at any time;
- A Principal or Co-Investigator may not be associated with more than one application to the ERC calls with deadlines during the same calendar year;
- A Principal Investigator who has submitted an eligible proposal to the Starting Grant call 2010 may not apply to the Starting Grant call 2011, unless his/her proposal was evaluated above the quality threshold at the end of step 1 (see section 3.11).

3.8 Ethical Principles

All proposals will be subject to ethical clearance.

The proposed research activities shall respect fundamental ethical principles including those reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The opinions of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies and the Protocol on the Protection and Welfare of Animals will also be taken into account. Other issues addressed include data protection and/or dual or military use of applications.

Funding of human embryonic stem cell research is possible within the ethical framework defined in the EU Seventh Framework Programme and the Ideas Specific Programme[8].

3.9 Eligibility Criteria

Proposals where parts or sections of the proposal and/or the PhD-related documents and/or supporting documentation justifying the extension of the eligibility period (see point 3.9.2) and/or the host institution's binding statement of support are missing will be considered incomplete and as a consequence may be ruled ineligible for evaluation[9] . The proposal must be submitted to the appropriate primary ERC panel (i.e. the panel which covers the main scientific areas of the research proposed) before the respective deadline. In addition, only proposals which satisfy the rules restricting applications (as specified in section 3.7 above) will be considered eligible to be evaluated.

Where there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision by an eligibility review committee. If it becomes clear before, during or after the peer review evaluation phase, that one or more of the eligibility criteria has not been met, the proposal is declared ineligible and is withdrawn from any further examination.

3.9.1 Eligible Scientific Fields

Applications may be made in any field of research[10].

3.9.2 Eligible Principal Investigator

The ERC actions are open to researchers of any nationality who intend to establish and conduct their research activity in any Member State or associated country.

The Principal Investigator may be of any age and nationality and may reside in any country in the world at the time of the application.

The Principal Investigator must have been awarded his/her first PhD (or equivalent doctoral degree[11]) **at least 2 and up to 12 years prior to the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Starting Grant**. The reference date towards the calculation of the eligibility period should be the date of the actual award according to the national rules in the country that the degree was awarded.

However, Principal Investigators who were awarded their first PhD more than 12 years prior to the publication date of the call may still be eligible in the following properly documented circumstances.

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[8] See also Commission statement, OJ L 412 of 30.12.2006, p. 42.

[9] See also 'eligibility check' in ERC rules for the submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the Seventh Framework Programme, (C(2007)2286 of 6 June 2007) and C(2007)4429 of 27 September 2007).

[10] Research proposals within the scope of Annex I to the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications, should be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom 7th Framework Programme.

[11] See ERC Scientific Council's strategic note 'PhD and Equivalent Doctoral Degrees' at Annex 4, including specific provisions for holders of medical degrees

For maternity, the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by 18 months for each child born **before or after** the PhD award. For paternity, the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by the actual amount of paternity leave taken for each child born **before or after** the PhD award. For long-term illness, clinical qualification or national service the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by the **documented** amount of leave taken for each incident which occurred **after** the PhD award.

The elapsed time since the award of the first PhD should not in any case surpass 16 years and six months. No allowance will be made for part-time working (two years of part-time working count as two full-time years).

3.9.3 Eligible Host Institution (Applicant Legal Entity)

The host institution, must engage the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the grant, and must be established in a Member State or an associated country. It may also be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). Any type of legal entity, including universities, research organisations and undertakings can host the Principal Investigator and his/her team.

It is expected that the research project will be implemented within the territory of a Member State or an associated country. This does not exclude field work or other research activities in cases where these must necessarily be conducted outside the EU or the associated countries in order to achieve the scientific objectives of the project/activity.

It is also expected that the host institution will be the only participating legal entity. However, additional team members, unlike Principal Investigators, may be hosted by additional legal entities which will be eligible for funding, and which may be established anywhere, including outside the European Union or associated countries[12].

3.10 Evaluation criteria

Excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation. It will be applied to the evaluation of both the Principal Investigator and the research project in conjunction.

Evaluation panel members should take into account the phase of the Principal Investigator's transition to independence, possible breaks in the research career of the applicant and/or unconventional research career paths. Evaluation panel members should also take into consideration the benchmarks set in section 3.4.

The detailed elements applying to the two Sections of the proposal are as follows:

1. Principal Investigator

Intellectual capacity and creativity:

To what extent are the achievements and publications of the Principal Investigator ground-breaking and demonstrative of independent creative thinking and capacity to go significantly beyond the state of the art?

[12] See Article 29.2(a) of the FP7 rules for participation Regulation (EC) No1906/2006 of 18 December 2006.

To what extent will an ERC Starting Grant make a significant contribution to the establishment or consolidation of independence?

Commitment:

Is the Principal Investigator strongly committed to the project and willing to devote a significant amount of time to it (they will be expected to devote at least 50% of their working time to the ERC-funded project)?

2. Research project

***Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research**:*

To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges at the frontiers of the field(s) addressed?

To what extent does it have suitably ambitious objectives, which go substantially beyond the current state of the art (e.g. including inter- and trans-disciplinary developments and novel or unconventional concepts and/or approaches)?

Methodology:

To what extent does the possibility of a major breakthrough with an impact beyond a specific research domain/discipline justify any highly novel and/or unconventional methodologies ("high-gain/high-risk balance")?

To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible?(assessed at step 1)

To what extent is the proposed research methodology (including the proposed timescales and resources) appropriate to achieve the goals of the project? To what extent are the resources requested necessary and properly justified?(assessed at step 2)

If it is proposed that team members engaged by another host institution participate in the project is their participation fully justified by the scientific added value they bring to the project? (assessed at step 2)

3.11 Application of Criteria

Panels and referees will evaluate and mark each proposal on a scale of 1 to 4 for each of the 2 evaluation criteria:

4: Outstanding
3: Excellent
2: Very Good

1: Non-competitive

At the end of each evaluation step, the proposals will be ranked by the panels on the basis of the marks they have received and an overall appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses.

If at the end of step 1 of the evaluation, a proposal is marked below the quality threshold of **2** on either of the two headings, it will not be further evaluated and will not be funded.

If at the end of step 2 of the evaluation, a proposal is marked below the quality threshold of **2** on either of the two headings, it will not be funded.

4. ERC Advanced Grant

4.1 Background

Pursuing non-conventional or high-risk research projects is a well recognised way to promote major scientific advances but many funding agencies find it difficult to set aside significant amounts of funding for this purpose. ERC Advanced Grants provide an opportunity to established, innovative and active scientists and scholars to pursue ground-breaking, high-risk research that opens new directions in any field of their choice regardless of nationality, age or current location.

By awarding grants on a competitive basis solely on the criterion of excellence the ERC will establish clear benchmarks for quality which will help to raise the level of all European research. In these ways the grants will complement and add value to existing funding schemes and investments at the national and European levels.

As well as leading researchers already established in Europe, recipients are expected to include leading researchers from third countries and returnees from the European 'diaspora' who wish to establish themselves in Europe.

4.2 Objectives

Advanced Grants are intended to promote substantial advances in the frontiers of knowledge, and to encourage new productive lines of enquiry and new methods and techniques, including unconventional approaches and investigations at the interface between established disciplines.

The peer review evaluation of proposals will therefore give emphasis to these aspects, in full understanding that such research has a high-gain/high-risk profile, i.e. if successful the payoffs will be very significant, but there is a higher-than-normal risk that the research project does not entirely fulfil its aims.

Applicants must have a track record of research achievements and recognised as such. Assessment of their scientific leadership profile and track record, therefore, will be a significant component of the evaluation.

The ERC is particularly keen to encourage excellent proposals which involve the establishment of a new research activity in the EU or the associated countries by a Principal Investigator who is moving from a third country into the EU or the associated countries. To provide additional assistance to cover “start-up” and relocation costs, which may include the purchase of major equipment, proposals with these features may request an additional element of funding (see 4.3.1), the justification for which will be assessed by the panels.

Research proposals of a multi- and inter-disciplinary nature are strongly encouraged throughout the ERC's schemes. In this context, the ERC also supports **"Co-Investigator projects"**. A Principal Investigator applying for an Advanced Grant may identify a member or members of his/her individual team as Co-Investigators in order to bring together the necessary knowledge and skills from more than one discipline for a particular project. Such projects may request additional funding (see section 4.3.1). The contribution of Principal Investigators and Co-Investigators in this type of project must be carried out in the EU or associated countries.

4.3 Size of ERC Advanced Grants

4.3.1 Maximum size of grant

Normally, the maximum grant will be EUR 2 500 000 for a period of 5 years (pro rata for projects of shorter duration). However, an additional EUR 1 000 000 can be made available to cover (a) eligible "start-up" costs for Principal Investigators moving from a third country to the EU or an associated country, (b) 'Co-Investigator projects' and/or (c) the purchase of major equipment.

4.3.2 Grant assessment

The overall level of the grant offered will be assessed during the peer review evaluation. Evaluation panels will judge the funding requested by the applicant against the needs of the project before making an award. The funding requested by the Principal Investigator must be fully justified by an estimation of the real project cost. The panels may suggest a modification to the indicative budgetary breakdown in the application, particularly where they consider funding requests to be not properly justified, but in such cases shall explain in writing any such modification. The Principal Investigator will have the freedom to re-budget during the course of the project upon notification of the ERCEA.

4.3.3 Union Contribution

The Union financial contribution shall be in the form of a grant to the budget corresponding to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs, and a reimbursement of a flat-rate of 20% of the total eligible direct costs[13] towards indirect costs. The level of the grant represents a maximum overall figure – payments must be justified on the basis of the amounts actually disbursed for the project[14].

4.4 Profile of the ERC Advanced Grant Applicant

Applicants for the prestigious ERC Advanced Grant are expected to be active researchers and to have a track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years which must be presented in the application. There is little prospect of an application succeeding in the absence of such a record, which identifies investigators as exceptional leaders in terms of originality and significance of their research contributions.

Thus, in most fields, Principal Investigators of Advanced Grant proposals will be expected to demonstrate a record of achievements appropriate to the field and at least matching one or more of the following benchmarks:

- Normally 10 publications as senior author (or in those fields where alphabetic order of authorship is the norm, joint author) in major international peer-reviewed multidisciplinary scientific journals, and/or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals and peer-reviewed conferences proceedings of their respective field.

[13] Excluding the direct costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the host institution.

[14] Commission Decision (C(2009)1942) of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

- Normally 3 major research monographs, of which at least one is translated into another language. This benchmark is relevant to research fields where publication of monographs is the norm (e.g. humanities and social sciences).

Other alternative benchmarks that may be considered (individually or in combination) as indicative of an exceptional record and recognition in the last 10 years:

- Normally 5 granted patents
- Normally 10 invited presentations in well-established internationally organised conferences and advanced schools
- Normally 3 research expeditions led by the applicant
- Normally 3 well-established international conferences or congresses where the applicant was involved in their organisation as a member of the steering and/or organising committee
- International recognition through scientific prizes/awards or membership in well-regarded Academies

If a Principal Investigator so chooses, their achievements over a longer period than the past ten years can be considered in the following circumstances which should be highlighted in the CV.

For maternity, the track record considered can be extended by 18 months for each child born **before or during** the last ten years. For paternity, the track record considered can be extended by the actual amount of paternity leave taken for each child born **before or during** the last ten years. For long-term illness, clinical qualification or national service the track record considered can be extended by the amount of leave taken for each incident which occurred **during** the last ten years.

The track record considered should not in any case surpass 14 years and six months. No allowance will be made for part-time working (two years of part-time working count as two full-time years).

4.5 ERC Advanced Grant proposal description

Section 1

1(a) Scientific leadership profile: A description of the applicant's scientific leadership profile should include:

- a presentation of the content and impact of the major scientific or scholarly contributions of the applicant to his or her own research field and/or neighbouring research fields, demonstrating the applicant's capacity to go significantly beyond the state of the art, and, if applicable, their wider societal impact;
- the international recognition and diffusion that these major contributions have received from others (publications, citations or appropriate equivalents/additional funding/ students/international prizes and awards/ institution-building/other);
- evidence of efforts and ability to inspire younger researchers towards high quality research (highlights of research mentoring record, information on the careers of supervised graduate and post-doctoral students, etc.);

- where applicable: proven ability to productively change research fields and/or to establish new interdisciplinary approaches;

1(b) Curriculum Vitae: The CV should include the standard academic and research record as well as a succinct 'funding ID' which must specify any current research grants and their subject, and any ongoing application for work related to the proposal Any research career gaps and/or unconventional paths should be clearly explained so that can be fairly assessed by the evaluation panels.

1(c) 10-year track-record: The applicant should list his/her activity over the past 10 years as regards:

1. The **top 10 publications, <u>as senior author</u>** (or in those fields where alphabetic order of authorship is the norm, joint author) in **major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals** and/or in the **leading international peer-reviewed journals and peer-reviewed conferences proceedings** of their respective research fields, also indicating the number of citations (excluding self-citations) they have attracted.

2. **Research monographs and any translations thereof** (if applicable).

3. Granted **patents** (if applicable).

4. **Invited presentations to peer-reviewed, internationally established conferences** and/or **international advanced schools** (if applicable)

5. **Research expeditions** that the applicant has led (if applicable).

6. Organisation of **International conferences** in the field of the applicant (membership in the steering and/or organising committee) (if applicable)

7**. International Prizes/Awards/Academy memberships** (if applicable)

In the case of 'Co-Investigator projects', the leadership profile, CV and the 10-year track-record should also be provided for each designated Co-Investigator.

1(d) Extended Synopsis: concise presentation of the scientific proposal, with particular attention to the ground-breaking nature of the research project, which will allow evaluation panels to assess, in step 1 of the evaluation, the feasibility of the outlined scientific approach.

<u>Section 2</u>

Scientific Proposal: description of scientific and technical aspects of the project, demonstrating the ground-breaking nature of the research, its potential impact and research methodology. The fraction of the applicant's research effort that will be devoted to this project, a full estimation of the real project cost and any ethical considerations raised by the project also need to be indicated.

In fairness to all applicants, <u>strict limits will be applied to the length of proposals, as follows:</u>

Section 1

Scientific leadership profile: 1 page
Curriculum Vitae: 2 pages
10-year track-record: 2 pages

Extended Synopsis: 5 pages

Section 2

Scientific Proposal: 15 pages

Only the material that is presented within these limits will be evaluated (evaluators will only be asked, and will be under no obligation to read beyond, the material presented within the page limits).

The host institution must confirm its association with and its support to the project and the Principal Investigator. As part of the application, the institution must provide a binding statement of support that the conditions of independence are already fulfilled or will be provided to the Principal Investigator if the application is successful, according to the template provided[15]. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement will not be considered for evaluation.

Additional necessary elements:

1. Host Institution binding statement of support
2. Ethical Review table (incorporated in Section 2 of the proposal)

4.6 ERC Advanced Grant proposal submission procedure and peer review evaluation

4.6.1 Proposal Submission

Proposals are submitted by the Principal Investigator, who has scientific responsibility for the project, on behalf of the host institution which is the applicant legal entity.

Proposal submissions will be done electronically via the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS). **EARLY REGISTRATION AND SUBMISSION IN EPSS IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED AND SHOULD BE DONE AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE IN ADVANCE OF THE CALL DEADLINE.**

4.6.2 Peer review evaluation

A **single submission of the full proposal** will be followed by a **two-step evaluation**. At step 1, Section 1 of the proposal will be assessed and marked. At step 2 the complete version of the retained proposals will be assessed and marked. The evaluation will be conducted by means of a structure of high level peer review panels as listed in Annex 1. The Panels may be assisted by referees.

[15] See ERC Guide for Applicants. The statement must be on an official letter (organisation letterhead), signed by the legal representative of the host institution who can commit the host institution according to the requirements of the ERC Model Grant Agreement (C(2007)1625 of 16/04/2007). The letter should be scanned and uploaded to EPSS with the proposal.

The allocation of the proposals to the various panels will be based on the expressed preference of the applicant. The applicant must submit the proposal to his/her chosen primary evaluation panel before the submission deadline of this panel. The applicant may also indicate a secondary evaluation panel.

In cases where panels determine that a proposal is of a cross-panel or cross-domain nature, panels may request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional referees.

A description of the evaluation process for Advanced Grant proposals is set out in Annex 3.

4.6.3 Call budget

The ERC Scientific Council has established the following indicative percentage budgets for each of the 3 main research domains:

***Physical Sciences & Engineering:* 40%**
***Life Sciences:* 35%**
***Social Sciences & Humanities*: 15%**

In addition a "**fourth domain**" with an indicative budget of **10%** has been established to fund research projects of a cross-panel and/or cross-domain nature.

4.7 Restrictions on applications

The current rules, which may subsequently be modified by the Scientific Council in light of experience, are as follows:

- A Principal Investigator who served as a panel member on a panel for the Advanced Grant call 2009 may not apply to the Advanced Grant call 2011;
- Only one ERC grant managed by a Principal or Co-Investigator can be active at any time;
- A Principal or Co-Investigator may not be associated with more than one application to the ERC calls with deadlines during the same calendar year;
- A Principal Investigator who has submitted an eligible proposal to the Advanced Grant call 2010 may not apply to the Advanced Grant call 2011, unless his/her proposal was evaluated above the quality threshold at the end of step 1 (see section 4.11).

4.8 Ethical Principles

All proposals will be subject to ethical clearance.

The proposed research activities shall respect fundamental ethical principles including those reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The opinions of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies and the Protocol on the Protection and Welfare of Animals will also be taken into account. Other issues addressed include data protection and/or dual or military use of applications.

Funding of human embryonic stem cell research is possible within the ethical framework defined in the EU Seventh Framework Programme and the Ideas Specific Programme[16].

4.9 Eligibility Criteria

Proposals where parts or sections of the proposal and/or the host institution's binding statement of support are missing will be considered incomplete and as a consequence may be ruled ineligible for evaluation[17]. The proposal must be submitted to the appropriate primary ERC panel (i.e. the panel which covers the main scientific areas of the research proposed) before the respective deadline. In addition, only proposals which satisfy the rules restricting applications (as specified in section 4.7 of this WP) will be considered eligible to be evaluated.

Where there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision by an eligibility review committee. If it becomes clear before, during or after the peer review evaluation phase, that one or more of the eligibility criteria has not been met, the proposal is declared ineligible and is withdrawn from any further examination.

4.9.1 Eligible Scientific Fields

Applications may be made in any field of research[18].

4.9.2 Eligible Principal Investigator

The ERC actions are open to researchers of any nationality who intend to establish and conduct their research activity in any Member State or associated country.

The ERC Advanced Grant Principal Investigator (and Co-Investigator) can be of any age and nationality and he/she can reside in any country in the world at the time of the application

Principal Investigators applying for the ERC Advanced Grant should be established research leaders who have made exceptional contributions to research in terms of originality and significance. No specific eligibility criteria with respect to their academic requirements are consequently foreseen.

4.9.3 Eligible Host Institution (Applicant Legal Entity)

The host institution must engage the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the grant and must be established in a Member State or an associated country. It may also be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). Any type of legal entity, including universities, research organisations as well as undertakings can host the Principal Investigator and his/her team.

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[16] See also Commission statement, OJ L 412 of 30.12.2006, p. 42.

[17] See also 'eligibility check' in ERC rules for the submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the Seventh Framework Programme, (C(2007)2286 of 6 June 2007) and C(2007)4429 of 27 September 2007).

[18] Research proposals within the scope of Annex I to the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications, should be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom 7th Framework Programme.

It is expected that the research project will be implemented within the territory of a Member State or an associated country. This does not exclude field work or other research activities in cases where these must necessarily be conducted outside the EU or the associated countries in order to achieve the scientific objectives of the project/activity.

It is also expected that the host institution will be the only participating legal entity. However, additional team members (including Co-Investigators) may be hosted by additional legal entities. In the case of team members (but not Co-Investigators) the these additional legal entities which will be eligible for funding may be established anywhere, including outside the European Union or associated countries[19].

4.10 Evaluation criteria

Excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation. It will be applied to the evaluation of both the Principal Investigator (and any Co-Investigators if applicable) and the research project in conjunction.

Evaluation panel members should take into account possible breaks in the research career of the applicant and/or unconventional research career paths. Evaluation panel members should also take into consideration the benchmarks set in section 4.4.

The detailed elements applying to the 2 Sections of the proposal are as follows:

1. Principal Investigator

Intellectual capacity and creativity:

To what extent is the Principal Investigator's (and any Co-Investigator if applicable) record of research, collaborations, project conception, supervision of students and publications ground-breaking and demonstrative of independent creative thinking and the capacity to go significantly beyond the state of the art?

Commitment:

Is the Principal Investigator strongly committed to the project and willing to devote a significant amount of time to it (they will be expected to devote at least 30% of their working time to the ERC-funded project and spend at least 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or associated country)?

2. Research project

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research*:*

To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges at the frontiers of the field(s) addressed?

[19] See Article 29.2(a) of the FP7 rules for participation Regulation (EC) No1906/2006 of 18 December 2006.

To what extent does it have suitably ambitious objectives, which go substantially beyond the current state of the art (e.g. including inter- and trans-disciplinary developments and novel or unconventional concepts and/or approaches)?

Methodology:

To what extent does the possibility of a major breakthrough with an impact beyond a specific research domain/discipline justify any highly novel and/or unconventional methodologies ("high-gain/high-risk balance")?

To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible? (assessed at step 1)

To what extent is the proposed research methodology (including the proposed timescales and resources) appropriate to achieve the goals of the project? To what extent are the resources requested necessary and properly justified? (assessed at step 2)

If it is proposed that team members engaged by another host institution participate in the project is their participation fully justified by the scientific added value they bring to the project? (assessed at step 2)

4.11 Application of Criteria

Panels and referees will evaluate and mark each proposal on a scale of 1 to 4 for each of the 2 evaluation criteria:

4: Outstanding
3: Excellent
2: Very Good
1: Non-competitive

At the end of each evaluation step, the proposals will be ranked by the panels on the basis of the marks they have received and an overall appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses.

If at the end of step 1 of the evaluation, a proposal is marked below the quality threshold of **2** on either of the two headings, it will not be further evaluated and will not be funded.

If at the end of step 2 of the evaluation, a proposal is marked below the quality threshold of **2** on either of the two headings, it will not be funded.

5. ERC Proof of Concept

The activity described in this chapter will be implemented through Coordination and Support Actions[20]. The implementation method to be used is given in the description below.

5.1 - Background

It is widely recognised that Europe offers insufficient opportunities for funding in the earliest stage of an innovation, where a potentially commercial concept needs verification through testing or prototypes, through the identification of a potentially appropriate market, and also through the creation of protectable intellectual property rights, in terms of patents or other forms of protection.

Because of the difficulty of attracting investors who would be ready to risk their capital in an innovation which is still in its pre-development stage, many excellent useful ideas with near term market potential get lost in the period of transition when they are already deemed promising, but too new to validate their commercial potential and thereby attract the capital necessary for their continued development.

The ERC funds excellent research at the frontier of knowledge. This frontier research in emerging areas can often cover elements of both basic and applied research. ERC-funded ideas are therefore expected to lead to social and technological innovations which, when successfully applied, could generate enormous economic and societal benefits for Europe. By covering the funding gap which can occur at the earliest stages of an innovation the ERC aims to capture the maximum value from the frontier research that it funds.

5.2 Objectives

The ERC Proof of concept provides additional funding to ERC grant holders to establish proof of concept, identify a development path and an Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) strategy for ideas arising from an ERC-funded project. The objective is to provide funds to enable ERC-funded ideas to be brought to a pre-demonstration stage where potential commercialisation opportunities have been identified.

The commercialisation process of an innovation may vary widely between different fields of research/invention (e.g. life science technologies taking normally longer to reach market than software technologies) and depending on which model of commercialisation is pursued.

Innovations can be commercialised through licenses to a new or existing company or through a venture funded start-up, depending on the nature of the invention/idea, its potential markets, the inventor's plans for future involvement in the commercialisation, etc.

The ERC Proof of concept aims at supporting an ERC grant-holder during the pre-demonstration phase to prepare a "package" to be presented to venture capitalists or companies that might invest in its technology and take it through the early commercialisation phase.

The aim is that of conducting a proof of concept of an idea that was generated in the course of the ERC-funded project, i.e. to undertake further work to verify whether, in principle, this idea has near term market potential. This would help:

[20] Commission Decision C(2009) 1942 of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

- establishing viability, technical issues and overall direction
- clarifying IPR position and strategy
- providing feedback for budgeting and other forms of commercial discussion
- providing connections to later stage funding
- covering initial expenses for establishing a company

The ERC Proof of concept funding may be used for conducting further work (i.e. activities which were not scheduled to be funded by the ERC Starting and Advanced Grants) to verify the innovation potential of an idea arising from an ERC-funded project.

5.3 Size of ERC Proof of concept

5.3.1 Maximum financial contribution per grant

The maximum financial contribution per grant will be up to EUR 150 000 for a period of 12 months.

Only one proof of concept grant may be awarded per each ERC funded project.

5.3.2 Assessment

The overall level of the funding offered will be assessed during the evaluation. The funding requested by the applicant will be judged against the needs of the proposed activity before awarding the grant. The funding requested by the Principal Investigator must be fully justified by an estimation of the actual costs for the proposed activities.

Subcontracts may only cover the execution of limited parts of the proposed activity when duly justified[21].

5.3.3 Union Contribution

The Union financial contribution shall be in the form of a grant corresponding to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs, and a reimbursement of a flat-rate of 7% of the total eligible direct costs[22] towards indirect costs The level of the grant represents a maximum overall figure – payments must be justified on the basis of the actual costs of the project.

5.4 ERC Proof of concept proposal description

The proposal will provide detailed descriptions of the project, its objectives, planning, execution, and required resources. It will comprise the following main elements:

a) A short **description of the idea** to be taken to proof of concept. This should include an indication of the ERC-funded project from which the idea is substantially drawn

[21] See section on Subcontracting in the Guide to Financial Issues relating to FP7 Indirect Actions of June 2010: "Subcontracting may concern only certain parts of the project, as the implementation of the project lies with the participants. Therefore, the subcontracted parts should in principle not be "core" parts of the project work. (…) In projects where research is not the main purpose (like in coordination and support actions - CSA) the core part should be understood as referring to the main activity of the project"

[22] Excluding the direct costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the host institution.

and briefly demonstrate the relation between the idea and the ERC-funded project in question.

b) Outline an **early-stage innovation strategy** for the idea. This should include a clear description of the innovation potential of the idea; identification of customer and societal benefits; definition of the commercialisation process to be followed; and, where applicable, brief explanation of the activities to be undertaken in terms of initial steps of market analysis, clarification of IPR position and strategy, technical testing, plans for industry/sector contacts.

c) Outline a reasonable and plausible **plan of the activities** proposed for establishing the feasibility of the project.

d) **Budget**: list of requested resources necessary for the implementation of the proposed proof of concept and proper justification.

In fairness to all applicants a strict limit of seven pages will be applied to the length of proposals. Only the material that is presented within this limit will be evaluated (independent peer reviewers will be asked to evaluate, and will be under no obligation to read beyond, the material presented within the page limit).

The host institution must confirm its association with and its support to the project and the Principal Investigator. As part of the application the institution must provide a binding statement that the conditions of independence are already fulfilled or will be provided to the Principal Investigator if the application is successful, according to the template provided[23]. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement will not be considered for evaluation.

5.5 ERC Proof of concept proposal submission procedure and evaluation

5.5.1 Proposal Submission

Grants for the proof of concept will be awarded through a call for proposals.

Proposals are submitted by the Principal Investigator, who has responsibility for the proposed activities, on behalf of the host institution which is the applicant legal entity.

Applications can be submitted continuously from the date of publication of the call until the final deadline and will be evaluated and selected in two rounds, based on two specific deadlines set out in Annex 4.

Proposal submission is made electronically via the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS).

[23] See ERC Guide for Applicants. The statement must be on an official letter (organisation letterhead), signed by the legal representative of the host institution who can commit the host institution according to the requirements of the ERC Model Grant Agreement (C(2007) 1625 of 16/04/2007). The letter should be scanned and uploaded to EPSS with the proposal.

5.5.2 Evaluation

A one-step submission and evaluation procedure will be used. The evaluation will be conducted by peer reviewers[24]. These experts may work remotely and may if necessary meet as an evaluation panel as set out in section 5.7.2 on the application of the evaluation criteria.

5.5.3 Call budget

The indicative budget for this call for 2011 is **EUR 10 000 000** (approximately half of which will be for each of the two evaluation rounds following two specific deadlines)[25].

5.6 Eligibility Criteria

5.6.1 Eligible Principal Investigator

All Principal Investigators benefitting from an ERC Advanced or Starting Grant that is either ongoing or ,where the project has ended[26], less than 12 months before the publication date of this call are eligible to participate and apply for an ERC proof of concept funding.

Fundamental research often generates unexpected or new opportunities for commercial application and the ERC is particularly keen in helping to ensure that the useful excellent ideas that it has already funded do not miss these opportunities. The proof of concept funding looks to build upon ideas which draw substantially from research that has been funded by the ERC and it is therefore an offered only to Principal Investigators whose proposals draw substantially on the outputs of previous ERC-funded research.

Applicants will need to demonstrate the relation between the idea to be taken to proof of concept and the ERC Advanced or Starting Grant in question.

Only one proof of concept grant may be awarded per each ERC funded project.

5.6.2 Eligible Host Institution (Applicant Legal Entity)

The host institution must engage the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the proof of concept activity and must be established in a Member State or an associated country. It may also be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). Any type of legal entity, including universities, research organisations as well as undertakings can host the Principal Investigator and his/her team.

5.7 Evaluation criteria

5.7.1 Evaluation criteria

The proof of concept is a grant awarded in relation to an existing ERC-funded project which has already been evaluated on the basis of **excellence as the sole criterion**.

The proof of concept opportunity to be funded will have arisen from scientifically excellent ERC-funded research that has already been subject to rigorous peer review. The activities to be funded draw substantially on the outputs of ERC-supported research, but they are not

[24] According to section 3.1.6.3 of the ERC Rules for the submission of proposals
[25] Estimated amount from assigned revenue
[26] The end date of the project which is indicated in the ERC Grant Agreement:

aimed at extending the original research or predominantly concerned with overcoming technical obstacles.

The grant will cover activities at the very early stage of turning research outputs into a commercial proposition, i.e. the initial steps of pre-competitive development of commercial potential.

The evaluation criteria for selection of proposals for proof of concept funding are the following:

1. Innovation potential:

Proposals demonstrate that the proposed proof of concept activity could greatly help move the output of research towards the initial steps of pre-commercialisation**.**

1.1 The **economic and societal benefits** of the project to be taken to proof of concept are identified and an indication on whether the project will lead to a new product, a new process or enabling technologies (instrumentation, software, *etc.*) for further discoveries is included.

1.2 The proposal indicates the definition of the **commercialisation process** to be followed (licenses to a new or existing company, a venture funded start-up, a spin-off company, other forms).

1.3 (Where applicable) Plans for seeking external confirmation of the technology/product/process (**testing, technical reports**) and a brief explanation of what external party testing is foreseen are included.

1.4 (Where applicable) Plans for undertaking initial steps of **market research** in order to find out features which make the proposed technology/product/process innovative or distinctive compared to other technology/product/process are included. The proposal includes plans for analysing the competitive advantage of the technology/product/process vs. alternate technology/product/process that can meet the same market needs

1.5 (Where applicable) Plans to clarify the **IPR position and strategy** are proposed, including an evaluation on whether there is an opportunity for creating intellectual property protection (in terms of patents or other forms of protection)[27]. This includes plans for sufficient protection to get the technology/product/process to market and attain at least a temporal competitive advantage

1.6 (Where applicable) Plans for **industry/sector contacts**, appropriateness of receptor company/organization, ability to further the development of the technology/product/process is demonstrated. Activities aimed at attracting further funding from non-ERC sources once the ERC-funded activities end will also be considered, including activities aimed at identifying specific companies for further financial commitments. If there are no "hard" commitments for funding (*i.e.* letters of support or intent), demonstration of a solid roadmap for pursuing the funding needed for future commercialisation is included

2. Quality of the proof of concept plan:

[27] Any application for funding of IPR activities under the ERC Proof of concept will not discharge beneficiaries from their prior obligations under their pre-existing ERC Advanced/Starting Grant in respect of protecting IPR capable of industrial or commercial application. If any foreground was potentially protectable in the pre-existing ERC Advanced/Starting Grant, beneficiaries had the legal obligation to seek for adequate and effective protection according to Article 44 of the Rules for Participation and Article II.28 of the ERC MGA.

The proposed proof of concept is based on a sound approach for establishing technical and commercial feasibility of the project.

2.1 A reasonable and acceptable plan of the proposed activities is provided, including the planned funding against clearly identified technical and commercial objectives.

2.2. A sound project-management plan is presented, including appropriate risk and contingency planning.

2.3 The proposed activities are conducted by a team that is well qualified for the purpose.

3. Budget:

The requested budget shall be necessary for the implementation of the proposed proof of concept and properly justified.

5.7.2 Application of criteria

Peer reviewers will evaluate independently each eligible proposal on each of the three evaluation criteria above on a “pass/fail” basis.

In order to be considered for funding, proposals will have to be awarded a pass mark by a majority of peer reviewers on each of the three evaluation criteria. A proposal which fails one or more of the criteria will not be ranked and will not be funded.

If there is not enough budget to fund all the proposals which pass all three evaluation criteria, those proposals which pass all three evaluation criteria will be ranked according to the number of pass marks which they received from peer reviewers. Proposals will be funded in order of this ranking.

If necessary, the peer reviewers will meet as an evaluation panel in order to determine a priority order for proposals which have the same number of pass marks.

6. Other activities

The different initiatives described in this chapter aim to allow the Scientific Council of the ERC to carry out its duties and mandate.

These activities will be implemented through Coordination and Support Actions[28]. The implementation method to be used in each case is given in the description under each of the topics below.

6.1 Support to monitoring and evaluation strategy

The Scientific Council has developed a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy in order to help it fulfil its obligations under the Ideas Specific Programme to establish the ERC's overall strategy and to monitor and quality control the programme's implementation from the scientific perspective. Its M&E strategy will:

- provide a sound evidence base to assess objectively the performance and impact of the ERC and make necessary adjustments;
- enhance the understanding of the dynamics in the research landscape in Europe (and beyond) in order to recalibrate ERC strategies in view of changes in the wider context in which the ERC operates;
- be both robust (in terms of the reliability of data basis and the rigour of its analysis) and flexible (in terms of manageable burden on budget and data providers such as ERC grantees);

While aiming at the specific needs of the ERC, the strategy has been developed – and continues to be refined - in liaison with the other programmes of the 7th Framework Programme, to draw experience from the latter and to meet, in a co-ordinated way, the Commission's obligations for programme monitoring and evaluation, as well as the specific evaluation requirements established in the legislation for the ERC.

The Scientific Council has initiated a range of projects and studies to support this strategy. These have been implemented through Coordination and Support Actions (CSA), to solicit proposals for relevant studies and analysis, to issue calls tenders for services on specific topics and to draw on external expertise through expert group[29] contracts.

In the ERC Work Programmes 2008 and 2009, Coordination and Support Actions were used to solicit, through open calls, proposals for studies and analysis addressing specific elements of the ERC M&E strategy[30].

Through those open calls, external studies which – among others – will develop and test adequate evaluation methodologies for selected components of the M&E strategy have been initiated[31]. In 2010, the Scientific Council shifted the focus to activities contributing to enhancing and complementing the ERC's internal capacities in Monitoring and Evaluation, and specifically:

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[28] Commission Decision (C(2009) 1942) of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

[30] Ideas Work programmes 2008 and 2009 provide more details on various components of the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy on which proposals were sought.

[31] There are currently four studies underway following the 2008 and 2009 CSA open call. For details see http://erc.europa.eu/.

1. developing the required data infrastructure to implement the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy (through call for tenders)
2. further development of the ERC M&E strategy, (through expert groups)

In 2011 the Scientific Council will consolidate its M&E activities and consider the initial results of the current projects before taking any decisions to launch further calls in 2012. To do this the Scientific Council will call on the services of expert groups as below.

To develop and refine the key elements and quality standards of the Monitoring & Evaluation strategy of the Ideas Specific Programme

A small number of expert panels will be called to refine the various components of the M&E strategy. Expert group members will also work on time-limited specific monitoring and evaluation topics together with ERC staff members. The focus for topics will be based on the ERC's M&E strategy, but will also aim to draw on good practice and experience from monitoring and evaluation activities of national research systems, especially as regards the ERC's complementarity and added value.

Indicative overall budget for CSA (supporting action – expert groups): EUR 100 000 for 2011.

6.2 Support to the ERC Scientific Council

According to the Specific Programme "Ideas", an independent review was carried out of the ERC's structures and mechanisms, against the criteria of scientific excellence, autonomy, efficiency and transparency and with the full involvement of the Scientific Council. The Review Panel suggested a number of adjustments in order to ensure a more effective European Research Council and a coherent presentation of the ERC's activities to stakeholders.

On the basis of the review and the ambition to make the ERC fully sustainable, the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: "The European Research Council – meeting the challenge of world class excellence"[32], sets out the aims for the second phase of the ERC's development. It includes a number of specific actions to improve the ERC's operations to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the "Ideas" Specific Programme, which are taken up in the revision of the ERC Decision[33]. The ERC Decision further specifies that certain of these actions should be charged to the operational budget allocated to the Specific Programme "Ideas".

6.2.1 ERC Scientific Council Standing Identification Committee

N.B. This activity will be directly implemented by the Commission services (DG RTD).

[32] COM(2009)552 final , 22.10.2009.

[33] Commission Decision 2011/12/EU of 12 January 2011 amending Decision 2007/134/EC establishing the European Research Council

Future members of the Scientific Council shall be appointed by the Commission based on the factors and criteria set out in the ERC Decision following an independent and transparent procedure for their identification, agreed with the Scientific Council, including a consultation of the scientific community and a report to the European Parliament and the Council. For this purpose, a high level standing Identification Committee of independent experts has been set up as an expert group with honoraria paid under the operational budget of the Specific Programme "Ideas".

Indicative overall budget for CSA (expert group): EUR 75 000 for 2011.

6.2.2 Support to the Chair and vice-Chairs

It is foreseen that a grant will be awarded to Wiener Wissenschafts-, Forschungs- und Technologiefonds (Vienna Science and Technology Fund), Vienna, Austria. The named institution will provide local support and assistance to the Chair and vice-Chairs of the Scientific Council for their tasks of preparing the plenary and other meetings of the Scientific Council, as well as tasks related to the process of developing and projecting its policies and activities in interaction with the scientific community and other stakeholders.

The principal activities and expected impact will be:

- to support and assist the Chair in his/her diverse responsibilities including the preparation of meetings, the efficient and effective functioning of the Scientific Council, its integrated operation together with the ERC's dedicated implementation structure and effective interfacing with the scientific community, other funding agencies and the political institutions of the EU.
- To support and assist the vice-Chairs to ensure their contributing to the efficient operation of the Scientific Council, and the efficient and timely achievement of its objectives in preparing and managing ERC operations under FP7

The named institution would therefore be the direct beneficiary of up to EUR 300 000.

Indicative overall budget for CSA (grant to named beneficiary): EUR 300 000 for 2011.

6.2.3 Honoraria and meeting expenses for Scientific Council members

In recognition of their personal commitment, the Scientific Council members, constituted as an expert group, shall be compensated for the tasks they perform by means of an honorarium for their attendance at Scientific Council plenary meetings, reflecting their responsibilities and benchmarked against similar provisions in similar entities and Member States. The honoraria and travel and subsistence expenses shall be charged to the operational budget allocated to the Specific Programme "Ideas".

Indicative overall budget for CSA (expert group): EUR 375 000 for 2011.

6.3 CSA Evaluation

Proposals for Coordination and Support Actions (CSA) under this chapter will be evaluated as follows.

6.3.1 Eligibility Criteria

Proposals for co-ordination and support actions must be focused on requirements specified in the work programme and/or call for proposals.

Co-ordination and support actions are open to legal entities situated in Member States, or associated countries. Applications from International European Interest Organisations (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, and legal entities established in third countries are also eligible.

The minimum participation is one independent legal entity.

6.3.2 CSA Evaluation Criteria

Proposals for Coordination and Support Actions (CSA) will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Objectives and impact (award):

Are the objectives of the proposed project consistent with the requirements specified in the work programme and/or call for proposals? Will the project have a substantial impact in the context of the ERC strategic objectives?

2. Quality and effectiveness (award):

Is the proposed methodology and work plan effective in reaching the goals of the project? Does it ensure the highest quality and/or utility of results? Does it, where appropriate, correspond to, or go beyond, best current practice?

3. Resources (selection):

Are the resources (personnel, experience, equipment, other) appropriate for the goals of the project? Will they be used effectively? Are they properly justified?

6.3.3 Application of CSA Evaluation Criteria

Each evaluation criterion will be marked on a scale of 0 to 5 (with half-point resolution) and an overall quality threshold of 80% will be used to establish the retained list of proposals which will be ranked in order of priority for funding.

7. Indicative budget for the *Ideas* Work Programme

Action	in EUR million[34]
ERC-2011-StG	**661.37**
ERC-2011-AdG	**661.37**
ERC-2011-PoC	**10**
Other Activities: 1.**Support to Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy** 2. **Support to Scientific Council**	**0.10** **0.75**
Evaluation, Monitoring And Review Costs	**6.50**[35]
Budget Source: Budget 2011	**1 329.64**
Budget Source: assigned revenues	**10.45**
Estimated total budget allocation	**1340.09**

[34] The Budget figures given in this table are rounded to two decimal points.

[35] For evaluation, monitoring and review costs the funding may vary by up to 20% of the stated budget.

Annex 1 Primary panels structure and description and corresponding deadlines

Physical Sciences & Engineering:

Starting Grant 2011: 14 October 2010, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)
Advanced Grant 2011: 9 February 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

PE1 **Mathematics:** all areas of mathematics, pure and applied, plus mathematical foundations of computer science, mathematical physics and statistics
PE2 **Fundamental constituents of matter:** particle, nuclear, plasma, atomic, molecular, gas, and optical physics
PE3 **Condensed matter physics:** structure, electronic properties, fluids, nanosciences
PE4 **Physical and analytical chemical sciences:** analytical chemistry, chemical theory, physical chemistry/chemical physics
PE5 **Materials and synthesis:** materials synthesis, structure-properties relations, functional and advanced materials, molecular architecture, organic chemistry
PE6 **Computer science and informatics:** informatics and information systems, computer science, scientific computing, intelligent systems
PE7 **Systems and communication engineering:** electronic, communication, optical and systems engineering
PE8 **Products and processes engineering:** product design, process design and control, construction methods, civil engineering, energy systems, material engineering
PE9 **Universe sciences:** astro-physics/chemistry/biology; solar system; stellar, galactic and extragalactic astronomy, planetary systems, cosmology, space science, instrumentation
PE10 **Earth system science:** physical geography, geology, geophysics, atmospheric sciences, oceanography, climatology, ecology, global environmental change, biogeochemical cycles, natural resources management

Life Sciences:

Starting Grant 2011: 9 November 2010, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)
Advanced Grant 2011: 10 March 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

LS1 **Molecular and Structural Biology and Biochemistry:** molecular biology, biochemistry, biophysics, structural biology, biochemistry of signal transduction

LS2 **Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics and Systems Biology:** genetics, population genetics, molecular genetics, genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics, metabolomics, bioinformatics, computational biology, biostatistics, biological modelling and simulation, systems biology, genetic epidemiology

LS3 **Cellular and Developmental Biology:** cell biology, cell physiology, signal transduction, organogenesis, developmental genetics, pattern formation in plants and animals

LS4 **Physiology, Pathophysiology and Endocrinology:** organ physiology, pathophysiology, endocrinology, metabolism, ageing, regeneration, tumorigenesis, cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome

LS5 **Neurosciences and neural disorders:** neurobiology, neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, neurochemistry, neuropharmacology, neuroimaging, systems neuroscience, neurological disorders, psychiatry

LS6 **Immunity and infection:** immunobiology, aetiology of immune disorders, microbiology, virology, parasitology, global and other infectious diseases, population dynamics of infectious diseases, veterinary medicine

LS7 **Diagnostic tools, therapies and public health:** aetiology, diagnosis and treatment of disease, public health, epidemiology, pharmacology, clinical medicine, regenerative medicine, medical ethics

LS8 **Evolutionary, population and environmental biology:** evolution, ecology, animal behaviour, population biology, biodiversity, biogeography, marine biology, ecotoxicology, prokaryotic biology

LS9 **Applied life sciences and biotechnology:** agricultural, animal, fishery, forestry and food sciences; biotechnology, chemical biology, genetic engineering, synthetic biology, industrial biosciences; environmental biotechnology and remediation;

Social Sciences & Humanities:

Starting Grant 2011: 24 November 2010, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)
Advanced Grant 2011: 6 April 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

SH1 **Individuals, institutions and markets:** economics, finance and management

SH2 **Institutions, values, beliefs and behaviour:** sociology, social anthropology, political science, law, communication, social studies of science and technology

SH3 **Environment, space and population:** environmental studies, demography, social geography, urban and regional studies

SH4 **The Human Mind and its complexity:** cognition, psychology, linguistics, philosophy and education

SH5 **Cultures and cultural production:** literature, visual and performing arts, music, cultural and comparative studies
SH6 **The study of the human past:** archaeology, history and memory

Annex 2 Starting Independent Researcher Grants Call for Proposals

Call Title: Call for proposals for *ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grant*

Call identifier: ERC-2011-StG

Date of publication[36]: 20 July 2010.

Electronic proposal submission deadlines[37] (single submission of full proposal): [38]

Panels PE1 - PE10 (Physical Sciences & Engineering): 14 October 2010, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)
Panels LS1 – LS9 (Life Sciences): 9 November 2010 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)
Panels SH1 – SH6 (Social Sciences & Humanities): 24 November 2010 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 661.4m from 2011 budget

The ERC Scientific Council has established the following indicative percentage budgets for each of the 3 main research domains:

Physical Sciences & Engineering: 40%
Life Sciences: 35%
Social Sciences & Humanities: 15%

In addition a "**fourth domain**" with an indicative budget of 10% has been established to fund research projects of a cross-panel and/or cross-domain nature.

The Union financial contribution shall be in the form of a grant to the budget corresponding to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and a reimbursement of a flat-rate of 20% of the total eligible direct costs[39]towards indirect costs. Indicative budgets may permit a variation of the budget for each domain by a maximum of 10% of the total budget for the call; however the budget proportions allocated to projects in the three main research domains will be no lower than the percentages indicated. In addition, the final budget awarded per ERC call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call.

Activity: European Research Council Starting Grant

Minimum number of participants: At least 1 independent legal entity established in one of the Member States, or one of the associated countries (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement)

[36] The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication

[37] The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months

[38] Please consult Annex 1 to the Ideas Work Programme for the panel description

[39] Excluding the direct costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the host institution.

Eligibility criteria: see eligibility criteria in the work programme. Normally, the Principal Investigator must have been awarded their first PhD **at least 2 and up to 12 years prior to the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Starting Grant**. However, Principal Investigators who were awarded their first PhD more than 12 years prior to the publication date of the call may still be eligible in certain properly documented circumstances such as maternity.

Grant Portability: applicants should be aware of the portability features of ERC grants as described in the ERC model grant agreement.

Grant starting date: due to the ground-breaking nature of frontier research projects, it is expected that all projects start within 6 months from the award of the grant. ERC reserves the right to cancel a grant if the proposed start date goes beyond this limit.

Evaluation procedure (see also section 3 of the work programme):

The evaluation will take place **in two steps** following the **single submission of a full proposal.**

The evaluation is carried out through evaluation panels[40] that may be assisted by referees.

Proposals may be evaluated remotely.

The allocation of the proposals to the various panels will be based on the expressed preference of the applicant. Proposals may be allocated to a different panel with the agreement of both panel chairs concerned.

An indicative budget will be allocated to each panel, in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals. This indicative budget is calculated as the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the panel[41] divided by the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the domain of the call, multiplied by the total indicative budget of the domain.

Following the same rationale and in order to assure comparable success rate for the "starters" and the "consolidators", the indicative budget of each panel will be further divided in proportion to the budgetary demand of the proposals submitted in these two categories ("starters" and "consolidators").

Step 1: Following the submission of the proposal, Section 1 of the proposal (see section 3.5) will be assessed and marked.

Cross-panel or cross domain proposals will be identified as such, and the panel may request additional reviews by experts.

Each panel will determine its budgetary cut-off level as a multiple of its indicative budget. The budgetary cut-off level may be set by each panel anywhere up to 3 times the panel's indicative budget.

[40] Panel members will be compensated on the evaluation tasks they perform. Additional reimbursement of travel and subsistence will be made for assignments involving travel. Referees who may assist the evaluation panels will not be compensated.

[41] Proposals containing grant requests above the maximum limit will be treated as at the limit for the purpose of calculating these indicative budgets.

The Principal Investigators will be assessed by the evaluation panels as either "starters" or "consolidators". The allocation of the proposals to the two streams will be based on the number of years since the award of their PhD. "Starters" being normally those awarded their PhD from 2 up to 7 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication, and "consolidators" being normally those awarded their PhD over 7 and up to 12 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication. However, the final streaming decision will also take into account the specific stage of their research career at the time of the application based on the information and supporting documents provided.

At the end of step 1, the panel will rank the proposals according to their marks. Proposals will be retained for Step 2 based on the ranked list and the determined budgetary cut-off level.

Step 2: The complete version of the retained proposals will be assessed and marked. The panel will agree on a ranked list.

Principal Investigators whose proposals will be retained for the second step of the evaluation may be invited for an interview to present their project to the evaluation panel meeting in Brussels. They will be accordingly reimbursed for their travel and subsistence expenses[42].

Following the conclusion of the panel evaluations the following additional steps will be taken with the appropriate participation of the panel chairs:

Step 2a: Acting in concert across the three main domains, all the panel chairs or their deputies will specifically discuss, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the scientific added value of proposals which have been identified as being of a cross-panel or cross-domain nature. In order to establish the ranked list of the ***"Fourth"*** domain, all panel chairs will further assess these proposals on the basis of the second evaluation criterion (Research project).

Step 2b: In accordance with the panel evaluations a consolidated ranked list for proposals which are above the quality threshold will be prepared for each research domain. These proposals can be funded in order of priority from the respective domain budgets.

Any funds still available in any of the four domains, after exhausting the list of proposals over the quality threshold, will be distributed to the other domains according to the initial call budget breakdown.

Finally, a number of proposals (over the quality threshold) in the three main domain lists may also be kept in reserve to allow for eventualities such as the failure of the granting procedure to projects, the withdrawal of proposals, budget savings agreed during the granting procedure, or the availability of additional budget from other sources. Additional funds will also be distributed according to the initial call budget breakdown.

In addition the results of evaluations may be shared with relevant national agencies who may under certain conditions wish to fund specific ERC applicants themselves.

Evaluation criteria: See section 3 of the work programme for the applicable criteria.

Information on the modalities of the call and guidance to applicants on how to submit projects is available on:

[42] In duly justified and exceptional cases, the ERCEA may agree, subject to technical feasibility, on other ways of interviewing successful Principal Investigators such as video link, teleconference or similar means, and on the reimbursement of their possible related travel and subsistence expenses. Relevant provisions for the reimbursement of expenses incurred in relation to Principal Investigators' interviews are included in the ERC Rules for submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the 7th Framework Programme.

http://erc.europa.eu
http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/appmanager/participants/portal

Annex 3 Advanced Investigator Grant Call for Proposal

Call Title: Call for proposals for *ERC Advanced Investigators Grant*

Call identifier: ERC-2011-AdG

Date of publication[43]: 2 November 2010.

Electronic proposal submission deadlines[44] (single submission of full proposal): [45]

Panels PE1 - PE10 (Physical Sciences & Engineering): 9 February 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)
Panels LS1 – LS9 (Life Sciences): 10 March 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)
Panels SH1 – SH6 (Social Sciences & Humanities): 6 April 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 661.4m from 2011 budget

N.B.: The ERC Scientific Council has established the following indicative percentage budgets for each of the 3 main research domains:

Physical Sciences & Engineering: 40%
Life Sciences: 35%
Social Sciences & Humanities: 15%

In addition a "**fourth domain**" with an indicative budget of 10% has been established to fund research projects of a cross-panel and/or cross-domain nature.

The Union financial contribution shall be in the form of a grant to the budget corresponding to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and a reimbursement of a flat-rate a contribution of 20% of the total eligible direct costs[46] towards indirect costs. Indicative budgets may permit a variation of the budget for each domain by a maximum of 10% of the total budget for the call; however the budget proportions allocated to projects in the three main research domains will be no lower than the percentages indicated. In addition, the final budget awarded per ERC call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call.

Activity: European Research Council Advanced Grant

Minimum number of participants: At least 1 independent legal entity established in one of the Member States, or one of the associated countries (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement)

Eligibility criteria: see eligibility criteria in the work programme

[43] The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication

[44] The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months

[45] Please consult Annex 1 of the Ideas Work Programme for the panel description

[46] Excluding the direct costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the host institution.

Grant Portability: applicants should be aware of the portability features of ERC grants as described in the ERC model grant agreement.

Grant starting date: due to the ground-breaking nature of frontier research projects, it is expected that all projects start within 6 months from the award of the grant. ERC reserves the right to cancel a grant if the proposed start date goes beyond this limit.

Evaluation procedure (see also section 4 of the work programme):

The evaluation will take place **in two steps** following the **single submission of a full proposal.**

The evaluation is carried out through evaluation panels[47] that may be assisted by referees.

Proposals may be evaluated remotely.

The allocation of the proposals to the various panels will be based on the expressed preference of the applicant. Proposals may be allocated to a different panel with the agreement of both panel chairs concerned.

An indicative budget will be allocated to each panel, in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals. This indicative budget is calculated as the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the panel[48] divided by the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the domain of the call, multiplied by the total indicative budget of the domain.

Step 1: Following the submission of the proposal, Section 1 of the proposal (see section 4.5) will be assessed and marked.

Cross-panel or cross domain proposals will be identified as such, and the panel may request additional reviews by experts.

Each panel will determine its budgetary cut-off level as a multiple of its indicative budget. The budgetary cut-off level may be set by each panel anywhere up to 3 times the panel's indicative budget.

At the end of step 1, the panel will rank the proposals according to their marks. Proposals will be retained for Step 2 based on the ranked list and the determined budgetary cut-off level.

Step 2: The complete version of the retained proposals will be assessed and marked. The panel will agree on a ranked list.

Following the conclusion of the panel evaluations the following additional steps will be taken with the appropriate participation of the panel chairs.

Step 2a: Acting in concert across the three main domains, all the panel chairs or their deputies will bring forth and specifically discuss, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the scientific added value of proposals which have been identified as being of a cross-panel or cross-domain nature. In order

[47] Panel members will be compensated on the evaluation tasks they perform. Additional reimbursement of travel and subsistence will be made for assignments involving travel. Referees who may assist the evaluation panels will not be compensated.

[48] Proposals containing grant requests above the maximum limit will be treated as at the limit for the purpose of calculating these indicative budgets.

to establish the ranked list of the ***"Fourth"*** domain, all panel chairs will further assess these proposals on the basis of the second evaluation criterion (Research project).

Step 2b: In accordance with the panel evaluations, a consolidated ranked list for proposals which are above the quality threshold will be prepared for each research domain. These proposals can be funded in order of priority from the respective domain budgets.

Any funds still available in any of the four domains, after exhausting the list of proposals over the quality threshold, will be distributed to the other domains according to the initial call budget breakdown.

Finally, a number of proposals (over the quality threshold) in the three main domain lists may also be kept in reserve to allow for eventualities such as the failure of the granting procedure to projects, the withdrawal of proposals, budget savings agreed during the granting procedure, or the availability of additional budget from other sources. Additional funds will also be distributed according to the initial call budget breakdown.

In addition the results of evaluations may be shared with relevant national agencies that may under certain conditions wish to fund specific ERC applicants themselves.

Evaluation criteria: See section 4 of the work programme for the applicable criteria

Information on the modalities of the call and guidance to applicants on how to submit projects is available on:
http://erc.europa.eu
http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/appmanager/participants/portal

Annex 4 Proof of Concept Call for Proposals

Call Title: Call for proposals for *ERC Proof of Concept*

Call identifier: ERC-2011-PoC

Date of publication[49]: 29 March 2011.

Electronic proposal submission deadlines[50]:

First deadline: 15 June 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)
Final deadline: 8 November 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 10m from assigned revenues (approximately half of which will be for each of the two evaluation rounds following the deadlines above). The final budget awarded to this call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call.

The Union financial contribution shall be in the form of a grant corresponding to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs, and a reimbursement of a flat-rate of 7% of the total eligible direct costs[51] towards indirect costs.

Activity (Funding Scheme): European Research Council ERC Proof of Concept (Coordination and Support Action)

Minimum number of participants: At least one independent legal entity established in one of the Member States, or one of the associated countries (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement).

Eligibility criteria: See section 5 of the work programme for the applicable eligibility criteria.

Evaluation procedure: A one-step submission and evaluation procedure will be used. The evaluation will be conducted by peer reviewers[52]. These experts may work remotely and may if necessary meet as an evaluation panel as set out in section 5.7.2 on the application of the evaluation criteria.

Evaluation criteria: See section 5 of the work programme for the applicable evaluation criteria.

Information on the modalities of the call and guidance to applicants on how to submit projects is available on:

[49] The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication

[50] The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months

[51] Excluding the direct costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the host institution.

[52] According to section 3.1.6.3 of the ERC Rules for the submission of proposals.

http://erc.europa.eu
http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/appmanager/participants/portal

Annex 5 PhD and Equivalent Doctoral Degrees: The ERC Policy

1. The necessity of ascertaining PhD equivalence

In order to be eligible to apply to the ERC Starting Grant a Principal Investigator must have been awarded a PhD or equivalent doctoral degree. First-professional degrees will not be considered in themselves as PhD-equivalent, even if recipients carry the title "Doctor". See below for further guidelines on PhD degree equivalency.

2. PhD Degrees

The research doctorate is the highest earned academic degree. It is always awarded for **independent research** at a professional level in either academic disciplines or professional fields. Regardless of the entry point, doctoral studies involve several stages of academic work. These may include the completion of preliminary course, seminar, and laboratory studies and/or the passing of a battery of written examinations. The PhD student selects an academic adviser and a subject for the dissertation, is assigned a dissertation committee, and designs his/her research (some educators call the doctoral thesis a dissertation to distinguish it from lesser theses). The dissertation committee consists usually of 3-5 faculty members in the student's research field, including the adviser.

3. Independent research

Conducting the research and writing the dissertation usually requires one to several years depending upon the topic selected and the research work necessary to prepare the dissertation. In defending his/her thesis, **the PhD candidate must establish mastery of the subject matter, explain and justify his or her research findings, and answer all questions put by the committee**. A successful defence results in the award of the PhD degree.

4. Degrees equivalent to the PhD:

It is recognised that there are some other doctoral titles that enjoy the same status and represent variants of the PhD in certain fields. All of them **have similar content requirements**. Potential applicants are invited to consult the following web-pages for useful references on degrees that will be considered equivalent to the PhD:

a. EURYDICE: "Examinations, qualifications and titles - Second edition, Volume 1, European glossary on education": **http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/european_glossary/046EN.pdf** (table in Part II of .pdf document).

   Please note that some titles that belong to the same category with doctoral degrees (ISCED 6) may correspond to the intermediate steps towards the completion of doctoral education and they should not be therefore considered as PhD-equivalent.

b. List of research doctorate titles awarded in the United States that enjoy the same status and represent variants of the Ph.D. within certain fields. These doctorate titles are also recognised as PhD-equivalent by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF): **http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-structure-us.html**

5. First Professional Degrees:

It is important to recognize that the initial professional degrees in various fields are **first degrees, not graduate research degrees**. Several degree titles in such fields include the term "Doctor", **but they are neither research doctorates nor equivalent to the PhD**.

6. Doctor of Medicine (MD):

For medical doctors, an MD will not be accepted by itself as equivalent to a PhD award. To be considered an eligible Principal Investigator medical doctors (MDs) need to provide the certificates of both basic studies (MD) and a PhD or completion of clinical specialty training or proof of an appointment that requires doctoral equivalency (i.e. post-doctoral fellowship, professorship appointment). Additionally, candidates must also provide information on their research experience (including peer reviewed publications) in order to further substantiate the equivalence of their overall training to a PhD. In these cases, the certified date of the MD completion plus two years is the time reference for calculation of the eligibility time-window (i.e. 4-14 years past MD).

For medical doctors who have been awarded both an MD and a PhD, the date of their PhD award takes precedence in the calculation of the eligibility time-window (2-12 years after PhD).