

# The European Research Council

ERC funding schemes and  
novelties (and some tips for  
writing a good proposal)

***Dia Anagnostou, PhD***

*Research Programme Expert/SNE*

ERCEA, Unit B.2 Call Coordination

**7 October 2025**

**PRAXI Network Webinar, Greece**



**European Research Council**

Established by the European Commission

# Overview

---

1. General outline ERC grant schemes
2. Submission and evaluation process (including novelties in the 2026 Work Programme)
3. Tips and hints for preparing your proposal
4. How is Greece doing at the ERC?

# ERC mission

---

*".... to support investigator-driven frontier research across all fields, based on scientific excellence."*

bottom-up  
no pre-determined priorities



# ERC is....

## 1. Part of Horizon Europe (2021-2027)



EUR 16 billion

ERC budget in Horizon Europe



17%

of the entire  
Horizon Europe budget



# ERC is....

## 2. The Scientific Council

### Life Sciences



Geneviève  
Almouzni  
Molecular Cell  
Biology



Liselotte  
Højgaard  
Medicine



Leszek  
Kaczmarek  
Neurobiology



Dirk  
Inzé  
Plant Biology



Luke  
O'Neill  
Biochemistry and  
Immunology



Jesper  
Svejstrup  
Vice-President  
Biochemistry



Maria Leptin  
ERC President  
Cell Biology



Gerd  
Gigerenzer  
Vice-President  
Psychology



Eystein  
Jansen  
Vice-President  
Earth Science

### Social Sciences and Humanities



Harriet  
Bulkeley  
Geography



Mercedes  
García-Arenal  
History



Torsten  
Persson  
Economics



Giovanni  
Sartor  
Law



Milena  
Žic Fuchs  
Linguistics

### Physical Sciences and Engineering



Conny  
Aerts  
Astrophysics



Tom  
Henzinger  
Computer  
Science



Maarit  
Karppinen  
Chemistry



Sylvie  
Lorente  
Mechanical  
Engineering



Björn  
Ottersten  
Electrical  
Engineering



Tomaž Prosen  
Physics



Nicola  
Spaldin  
Materials Theory



András  
Stipsicz  
Mathematics



# ERC is....

## 3. The ERC Executive Agency

- Implements the ERC strategy as set by the Scientific Council
- Manages ERC operations (e.g. organises peer-review evaluations, follows up on projects funded)
- Carries out communication activities and ensures dissemination of information to stakeholders



European Research Council  
Established by the European Commission



# Why should one apply for an ERC grant ?

---

- Research topic of own choice, with a team of own choice
- True financial autonomy for 5 years
- Negotiate with the host institution the best conditions of work
- Attract top team members (EU and non-EU) and collaborators
- Move with your grant to any place in Europe if desired ('Portability of grants')
- Attract additional funding and gain recognition: ERC is a quality label

## Independence & flexibility & visibility

# ERC in Figures



Over **14,000**  
top researchers funded since  
the ERC creation in 2007



Over **100,000**  
researchers and other professionals  
employed in ERC research teams



Over **2,400**  
patents and other IPR applications  
generated by ERC funding



Over **400**  
start-ups identified as founded  
or co-founded by ERC grantees



Over **220,000**  
articles from ERC projects published  
in scientific journals



Over **950** research institutions hosting  
ERC grantees – universities, public or  
private research centres in the EU or  
Associated Countries



**93**  
nationalities of  
grant holders



**14** Nobel Prizes, **6** Fields Medals, **11** Wolf Prizes  
and other prizes awarded to ERC grantees

# ERC Grant schemes



## Starting Grants

**2-7 years after PhD (2026)**

up to € 1.5 Mio for 5 years  
possibility for additional funding



## Advanced Grants

**track-record of significant research achievements**

up to € 2.5 Mio for 5 years  
possibility for additional funding



## Proof-of-Concept

bridging gap between research - earliest stage of marketable innovation

€150,000 **for ERC grant holders**



## Consolidator Grants

**7-12 years after PhD (2026)**

up to € 2 Mio for 5 years  
possibility for additional funding



## Synergy Grants

**2 – 4 Principal Investigators**

up to € 10.0 Mio for 6 years  
1 PI can be based outside EU/Associated Countries;  
possibility for up to € 4 Mio 'additional funding'



# Additional funding – Work Programme 2026

## StG, CoG, AdG\*

- Additional funding can be requested to cover further eligible costs if needed for implementing the project
- No more pre-defined cost categories for additional funding
- May include personnel costs



**Up to €1 million**

Applicants already based in an EU Member State or country associated to HE

**Up to €2 million**

Applicants re-locating to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere to take up their ERC grant



**\* SyG: up to €4 million additional funding**

# ERC plus – to be added to the 2026 ERC Work Programme

## New funding instrument

The ERC Scientific Council is currently working on a new instrument to offer ambitious researchers substantial funding for up to seven years, as part of the **Choose Europe for Science** initiative announced by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. More details about the modalities will follow in due course. The new funding instrument will be included in an amended version of the ERC Work Programme 2026 that is expected to be adopted by the end of 2025.

**Up to 7 years  
Up to €7 million**

**Details to be  
published  
later in 2025  
as an amendment to  
ERC Work  
Programme 2026**

<https://erc.europa.eu/news-events/news/choose-europe-science-erc-welcomes-new-budget-super-grants>

# Overview

---

1. General outline ERC grant schemes
2. Submission and evaluation process (including novelties in the 2026 and 2027 Work Programme)
3. Tips and hints for preparing your proposal
4. How is Greece doing at the ERC?

# Evaluation criteria and process

---



**Excellence**  
is the sole evaluation criterion

## Excellence of the Research Project

- Ground-breaking nature
- Ambition
- Feasibility of the research project

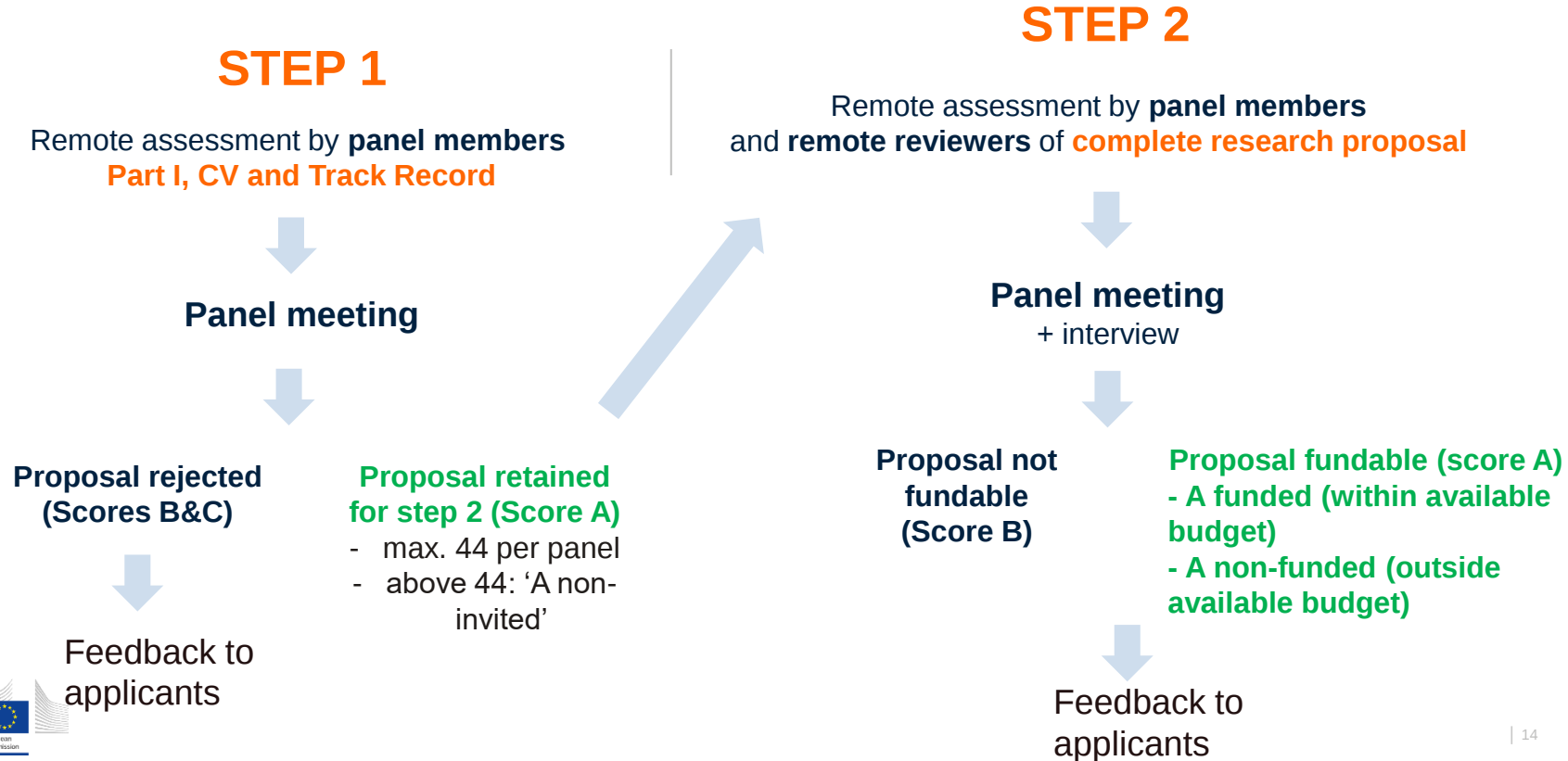
## Excellence of the Principal Investigator

- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity
- Commitment

The panels will **primarily evaluate the ground-breaking nature and ambition of the project**. At the same time, the panels will evaluate the intellectual capacity and creativity of the PI, with a focus on the extent to which the PI has the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project (no numerical scoring of PI)

# Evaluation: Process

For main grant schemes (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced grants): a single submission but a **two-step** evaluation



# Changes in ERC Work Programme 2026

---

## Grant application

- New structure of the scientific proposal:
  - Scientific Proposal Part I (up to 5 pages)
  - Scientific Proposal Part II (up to 7 pages or 10 pages for Synergy Grant)



The panels will use Part I for evaluation at Step 1 and both parts together for their evaluation at Step 2.

# Changes in ERC Work Programme 2026

Part I of the Scientific Proposal (max. 5 pages)

*References should be included (they do not count towards the page limit)*



Why your proposal is an original, creative idea about an important question in your research field(s) and how the project will advance the frontier of knowledge.

What you expect may be changed, opened, challenged or how the current understanding will be different after your work has been undertaken.

- (1) lay out the current state of knowledge
- (2) explain the scientific question and the objectives of the project
- (3) present the overall approach or research strategy you propose to use to reach the project goals.

**Feasibility of the scientific approach will no longer be assessed at Step 1**

See pp. 21-23: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/information-for-applicants\\_he-erc-stg-cog\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/information-for-applicants_he-erc-stg-cog_en.pdf)

# Changes in ERC Work Programme 2026

Part II of the Scientific Proposal (max. 7 pages)

*References should be included (they do not count towards the page limit)*



Detailed explanation of the project implementation, including research methodology, work plan, risk assessment, and mitigating measures, justification for the requested budget and resources, and any further necessary background not included in Part I.

At step 1, only Part I and the CV & track record are assessed

At step 2, the panel assesses the complete Research Proposal:

- both Part I and Part II **(no need to repeat sections of Part I in Part II)**
- CV and Track Record
- Resources
- Time commitment

See pp. 21-23: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/information-for-applicants\\_he-erc-stg-cog\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/information-for-applicants_he-erc-stg-cog_en.pdf)

# Eligibility periods change in ERC Work Programme 2027

StG: 0-10 years after PhD  
CoG: 5-15 years after PhD

The eligibility period for both Starting and Consolidator Grant schemes will be widened:

- From 2027 on, researchers will be eligible to apply for a **Starting Grant immediately after successfully defending their PhD, and at any time within the following 10-year period**
- **Consolidator Grant** applicants will be eligible to apply **between 5 and 15 years after defending their PhD**
- Researchers will be awarded no more than one Starting Grant and one Consolidator Grant during their career
- The rules for the extension of the eligibility periods will remain in place

# 2026 Calendar

| ERC call*                           | Call Opening      | Submission Deadline |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Starting Grants<br>ERC-2026-StG     | 9 July 2025       | 14 October 2025 ←   |
| Consolidator Grants<br>ERC-2026-CoG | 25 September 2025 | 13 January 2026 ←   |
| Advanced Grants<br>ERC-2026-AdG     | 28 May 2026       | 27 August 2026      |
| Synergy Grants<br>ERC-2026-SyG      | 10 July 2025      | 5 November 2025 ←   |

\*New *ERC plus* scheme expected to be added to Work Programme 2026 later this year

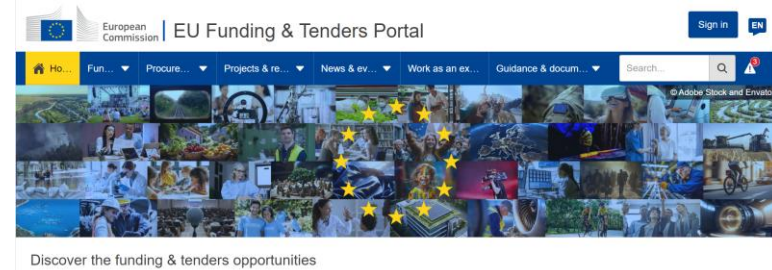
# Overview

---

1. General outline ERC grant schemes
2. Submission and evaluation process (including novelties in the 2026 Work Programme)
3. Tips and hints for preparing your proposal
4. How is Greece doing at the ERC?

## Before you start:

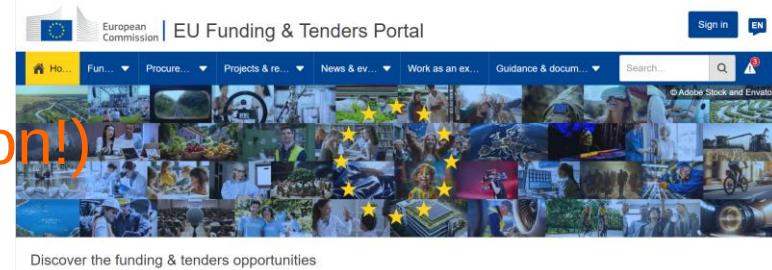
---



- Do you have that idea for an ERC project? Start developing it, do your literature research, run your idea by peers/mentors
- Are you convinced your idea is innovative and potentially ground-breaking?
- Are you passionate about your idea and eager to demonstrate that it works?

**If the answer is yes, then go for it !**

# As you start: Get information (early on!)



- Register early, get familiar with the European Commission's **Funding and Tender portal** and download the templates  
<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>
- Read the call documents (Information for Applicants, **Work Programme**, Frequently Asked Questions) that explain how to prepare your proposal
- Talk to your Institution's grant office – get a HI letter; check your NCP and events
- Talk to ERC grantees and former panel members
- Contact the ERCEA to ask all your questions well ahead of the submission deadline—e.g., [ERC-2026-STG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ERC-2026-STG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu), [ERC-2026-COG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ERC-2026-COG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu) , ...
- Get the written consent of your collaborators before the submission deadline (a simple email exchange is sufficient)



# Choose grant type & ensure eligibility

---

- Window is calculated as according to the 1st of January of the year of the call (i.e. 1 January 2026 for the 2026 calls).

StG-2026: 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2023 (inclusive)

CoG-2026: 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2018 (inclusive)

The reference date shall be the certified date of the successful defence of the first PhD degree

- If you previously applied to an ERC call, check resubmission restrictions
- Minimum 50% of PI working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country
- Time commitment on the project: Min. 50% (StG), 40% (CoG), 30% (AdG/SyG)



# Starting/Consolidator Grant: Extension of the Eligibility Window

For documented situations occurring before the call deadline

- **Maternity leave:** 18 months for each child born before/after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Paternity/parental leave:** documented time taken for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Long-term illness** (>90 days for the PI or a close family member) or national service: documented amount of leave taken for each incident that occurred after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Clinical training:** documented amount of clinical training received after the reference date of the 1st eligible degree, up to a maximum of 4 years;
- Major disaster (natural or human-caused such as armed conflicts)
- Seeking asylum
- Gender-based violence or any other form of violence



# Choose a review panel when you submit your proposal

Panel structure: Annex 1 of [Work Programme 2026](#) available on the ERC website

- Check the keywords of the panel
- Check the panel members of previous calls of a particular panel ([Panel Members | ERC \(europa.eu\)](#))
- ERC panel structure provides **guidance**, not meant to be a complete scientific classification (***not exhaustive***);
- Panel titles, subtitles, descriptors **do not reflect priorities**;
- **Any topic/field** is equally welcome, whether mentioned in panel structure or not;
- You can flag one '**secondary review panel**'. Explain why proposal is 'cross-panel' in Part B1! (Transfer of proposals may still occur)

**Common misconception:** Choose the panel '**strategically**', to increase chances of success

**X NOT true:** The budget is distributed among the scientific panels as a function of demand, success rate is equal amongst panels → **choose the panel that is right for your proposal!**

# Evaluation panel structure (2025, 2026)

---

## Life Sciences

- LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions
- LS2 Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems
- LS3 Cell Biology, Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration
- LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing
- LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System
- LS6 Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy
- LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases
- LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution
- LS9 Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering

## Physical Sciences & Engineering

- PE1 Mathematics
- PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter
- PE3 Condensed Matter Physics
- PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences
- PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials
- PE6 Computer Science and Informatics
- PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering
- PE8 Products and Processes Engineering
- PE9 Universe Sciences
- PE10 Earth System Science
- PE11 Materials Engineering

## Social Sciences and Humanities

- SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations
- SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems
- SH3 The Social World and Its Interactions
- SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity
- SH5 Texts and Concepts
- SH6 The Study of the Human Past
- SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space
- SH8 Studies of Cultures and Arts

# Overview of proposal parts

## PART A – admin forms online

Section 1 General information

Section 2 Participants

**Section 3 Budget**

Section 4 Ethics and security

Section 5 Other Questions

## Annexes – submitted as .pdf

- Statement of support of HI
- copy of PhD or equivalent (StG & CoG)

*If applicable:*

- document for extension of eligibility window (StG & CoG)
- explanatory info on ethical issues

## PART B1 – submitted as single .pdf



Abstract (2000 characters)

Secondary panel explanation (1000 characters)

**Part I Scientific Proposal** 5 p.

**References** (does not count towards page limit)

**CV & Track Record** up to 4 p.

## PART B2 – submitted as single .pdf



**Part II Scientific Proposal** 7 p.

**References** (does not count towards page limit)

**Funding ID** (does not count towards page limit)

seen by the panel



European Research Council  
Established by the European Commission



# New Curriculum Vitae and Track Record template - as of work programme 2024

## 1. Personal details

## 2. Research achievements and peer recognition

*The applicant can provide a **short, factual narrative** on the significance of the listed achievements and recognitions in relation to the research field and the proposed project.*

- Research achievements ( $\leq 10$  outputs):
  - Demonstrating advancement in the field
  - Emphasis on recent achievements
- Peer recognition, such as prizes or awards

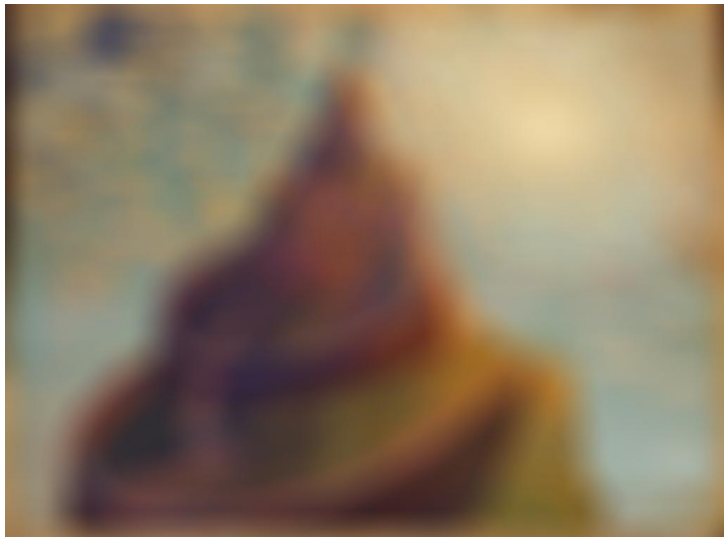
## 3. Additional information

*Relevant additional information on their research career to provide context when assessing their research achievements and peer recognition.*

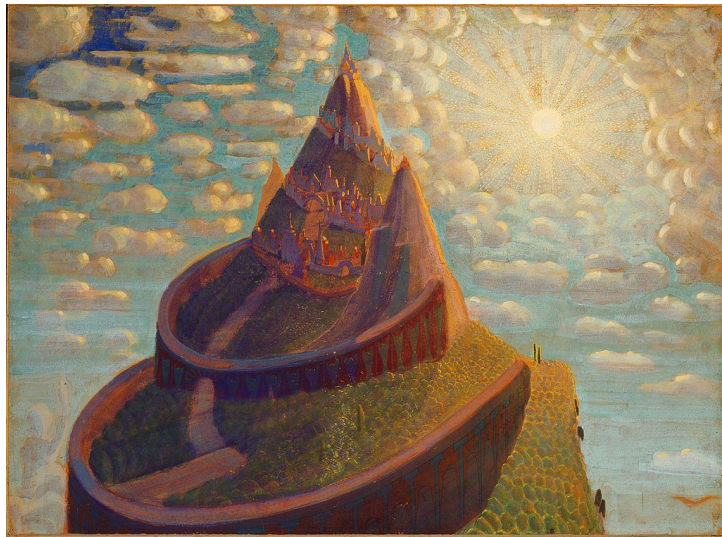
- Career breaks, diverse career paths, life events
- Other noteworthy contributions to the research community
  - *Mobility, grant income, supervision/mentoring not evaluated*
  - *Journal impact factor metric not relevant*

# Objectives of the proposed project

---



shallow  
blurred  
unsound  
unworkable



deep  
focused  
credible  
feasible

# Typical reasons for not making it

---

- Hypothesis and objectives not sufficiently clear
- Incremental in nature, missing the ground-breaking potential
- No realisation of risks & challenges, contingency
- Overly ambitious (promising too much)
- For interdisciplinary proposals: expertise missing in one area

# Some concluding remarks

---

- **Don't exclude yourself from participating in ERC calls** - if you have an idea that you think will make a significant change in your field of research: go for it!
- **Take risks**, explain your project's high scientific impact if you reach your aims, and **provide evidence that you can do it**
- **Writing a proposal is hard – devote plenty of time!** do not work right up to the deadline; a submitted proposal can be revised until the call deadline by submitting a new version and overwriting the previous one
- “Test” your proposal with peers/mentors/friends – need to re-write it many times!
- **If you fail, try again!** Gain experience from evaluation. Panel feedback is useful and resubmissions have a higher success rate



# Concluding message

---

**BABE**

Why is the world green

Researcher: Katerina Sam  
ERC Starting Grant 2018  
HI: Biologické Centrum AV ČR,  
v. v. i., Czech Republic



*“My advice would be that if you have a great idea for a project, just believe in it and go for the ERC. When I got my ERC grant some people came to me asking what to write about to get an ERC. This is not how it works – you need to have that really good idea first and then apply with it, not the other way around”.*

# Where can you find more information?

[Apply for a grant | ERC](#)



## 7 Videos - ERC Classes

- How can you get started with your ERC proposals?
- How can you write your ERC proposal?
- How do we evaluate your ERC proposal?
- What do you need to know about the ERC Synergy Grants?
- How can you best prepare for your ERC interview?
- Why care about ethics in your ERC proposal?
- How to communicate on your ERC science project?

[ERC CLASSES - YouTube](#)

# Overview

---

1. General outline ERC grant schemes
2. Submission and evaluation process (including novelties in the 2026 Work Programme)
3. Tips and hints for preparing your proposal
4. How is Greece doing at the ERC?

# Success rate by country of Host Institution

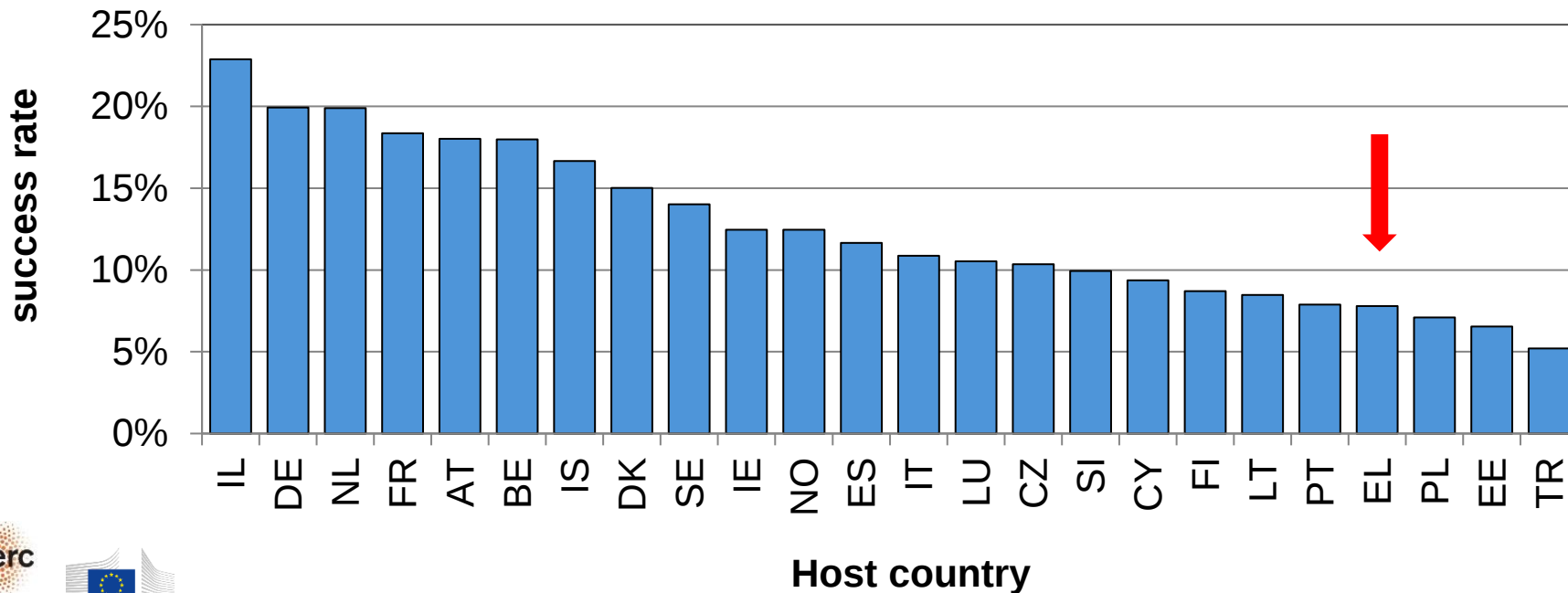


# Success rate in ERC ADG COG STG 2021-2024

By country of host institution

Total success rate 13.5% (all countries over 5% success rate)

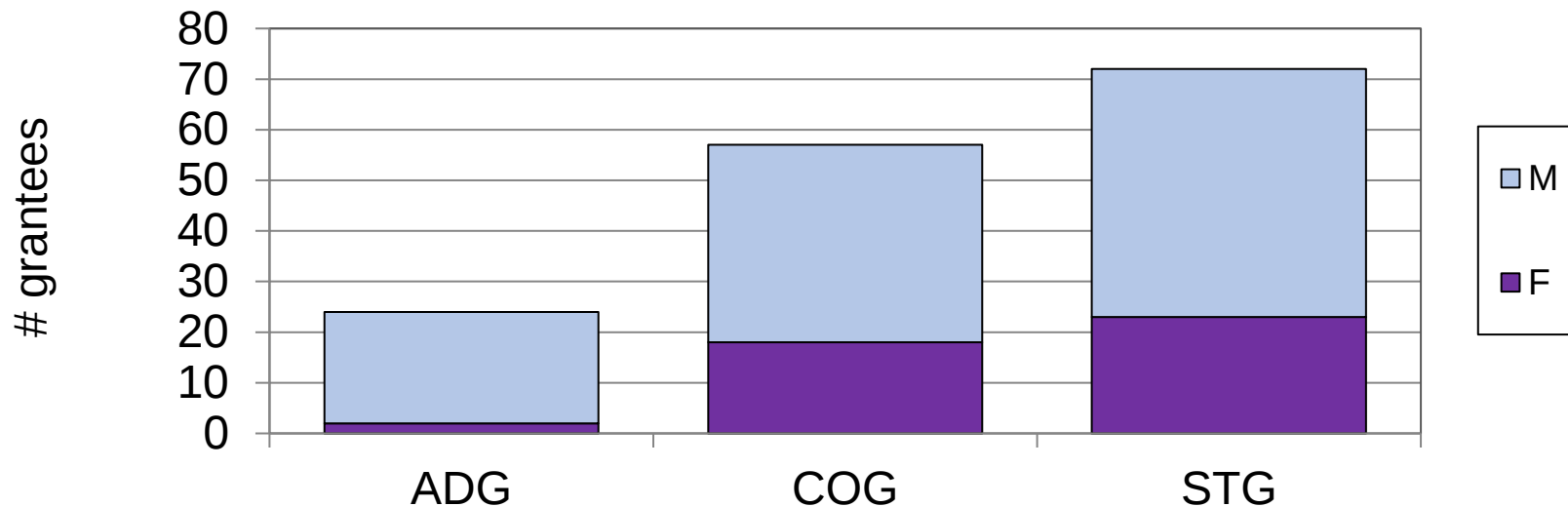
## ADG COG & STG 2021-2024 success rate



# H2020 and HE Greek nationals in single investigator grants

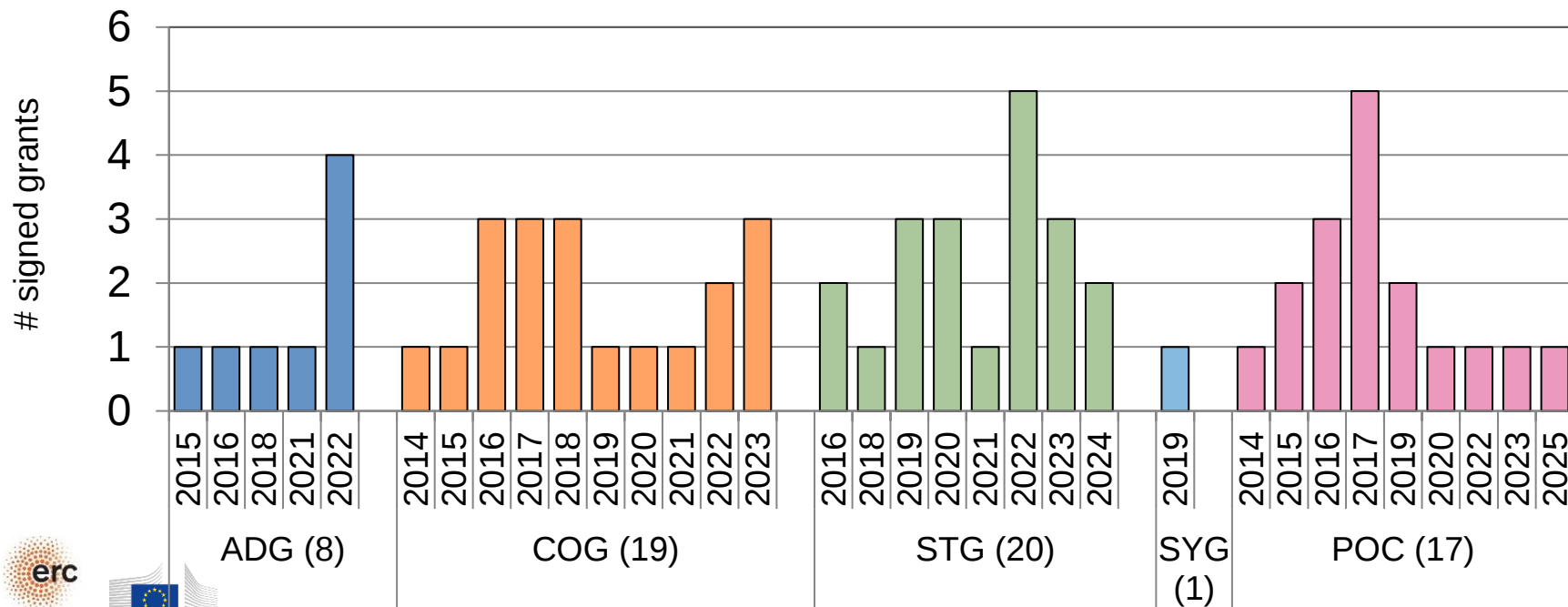
## 28% of PIs are women

### Greek nationals in single PI grants



# H2020 and Horizon Europe Signed projects in Greece

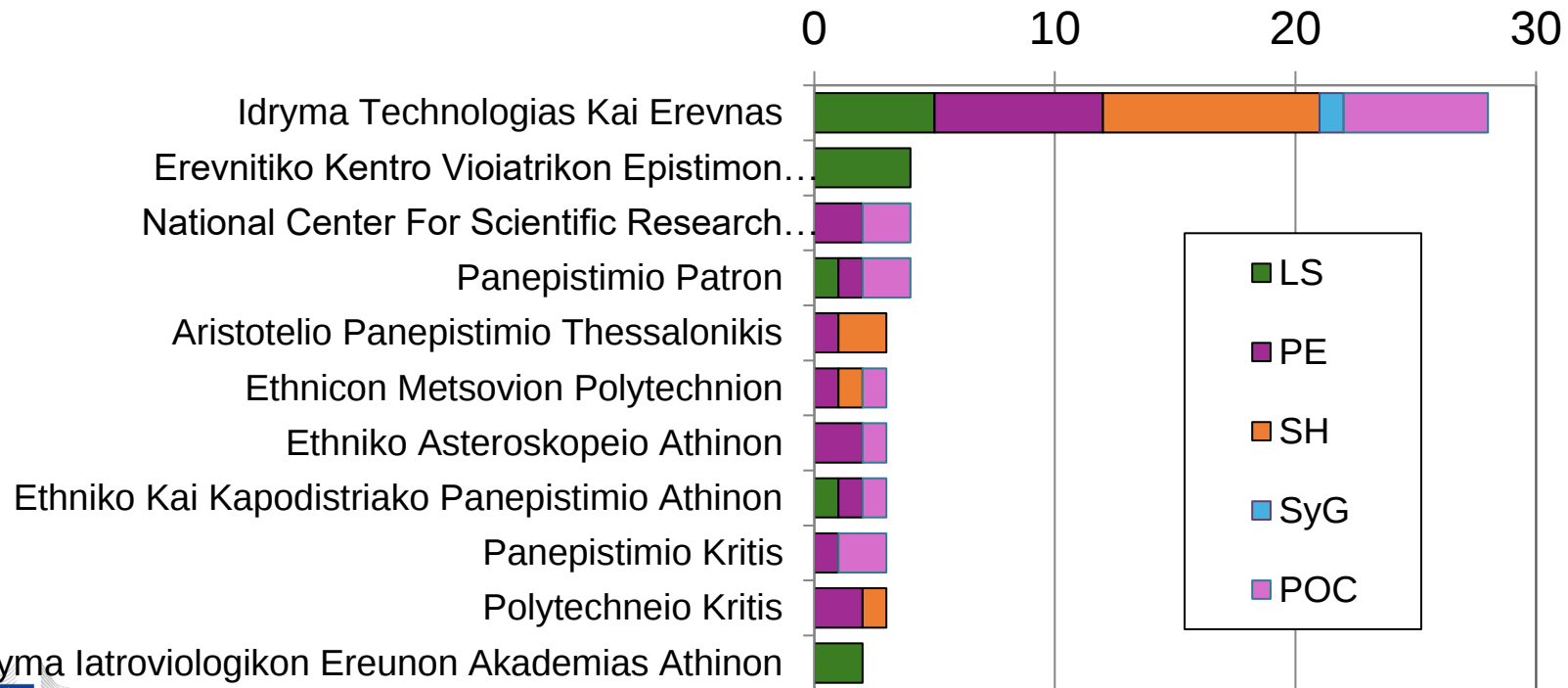
# of signed grants 1 Oct 2025



# H2020 and Horizon Europe

## Signed projects in Greece (1 Oct 25)

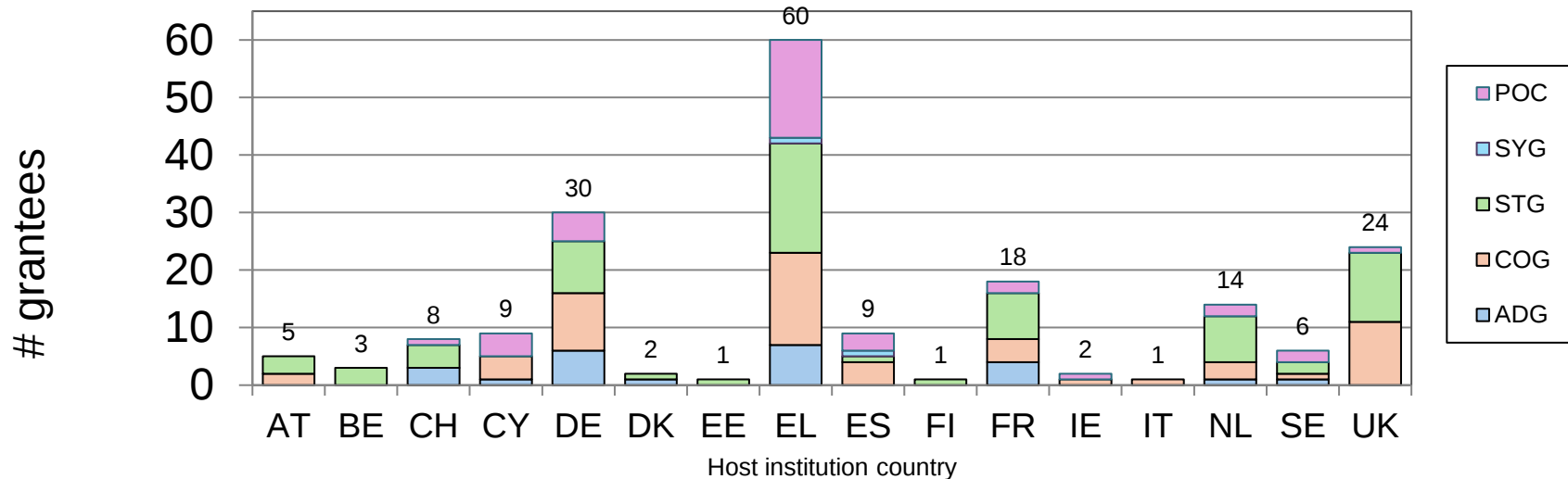
5 other institutions have 1 project



# H2020 and HE Greek Nationals with ERC grants

(data does not include PI in SyG who are not corresponding PIs)

## Country of grant of PI with Greek nationality



# Widening European Participation: Greece is part of the group of countries underrepresented in the Research & Innovation Framework Programme

- WEP country applicants apply or reapply less frequently and less successfully to the ERC. However, **proposals that pass to Step 2 do as well as any other**
- Often fail in step 1 due to grantsmanship skills, **no difference in CVs**
- Low national investment into R&I
- Poor support by granting offices -if any- or by National Contact Points
- Lower exposure to international research and innovation networks, larger distance between the research and innovation
- Poorer research facilities and conditions, salaries, equipment etc.

As soon as national support structures developed, number of submissions and number of successful applications go up! (e.g. Austria)



[Webinar: Applying for an ERC grant: where to seek support](#)

# Thank You!

## Questions?

More information: [erc.europa.eu](https://erc.europa.eu)



## Follow us on social media



@ERC\_Research



@ERC\_Research



European-Research-Council



European Research Council



European Research Council

# Evaluation: Process

For Synergy grant: a single submission but a **three-step** evaluation with interviews with all PIs in step 3

