Building ERC Capacity in Widening Countries

ERC-Portugal

Building Your Path Towards an ERC Application: National Case Study

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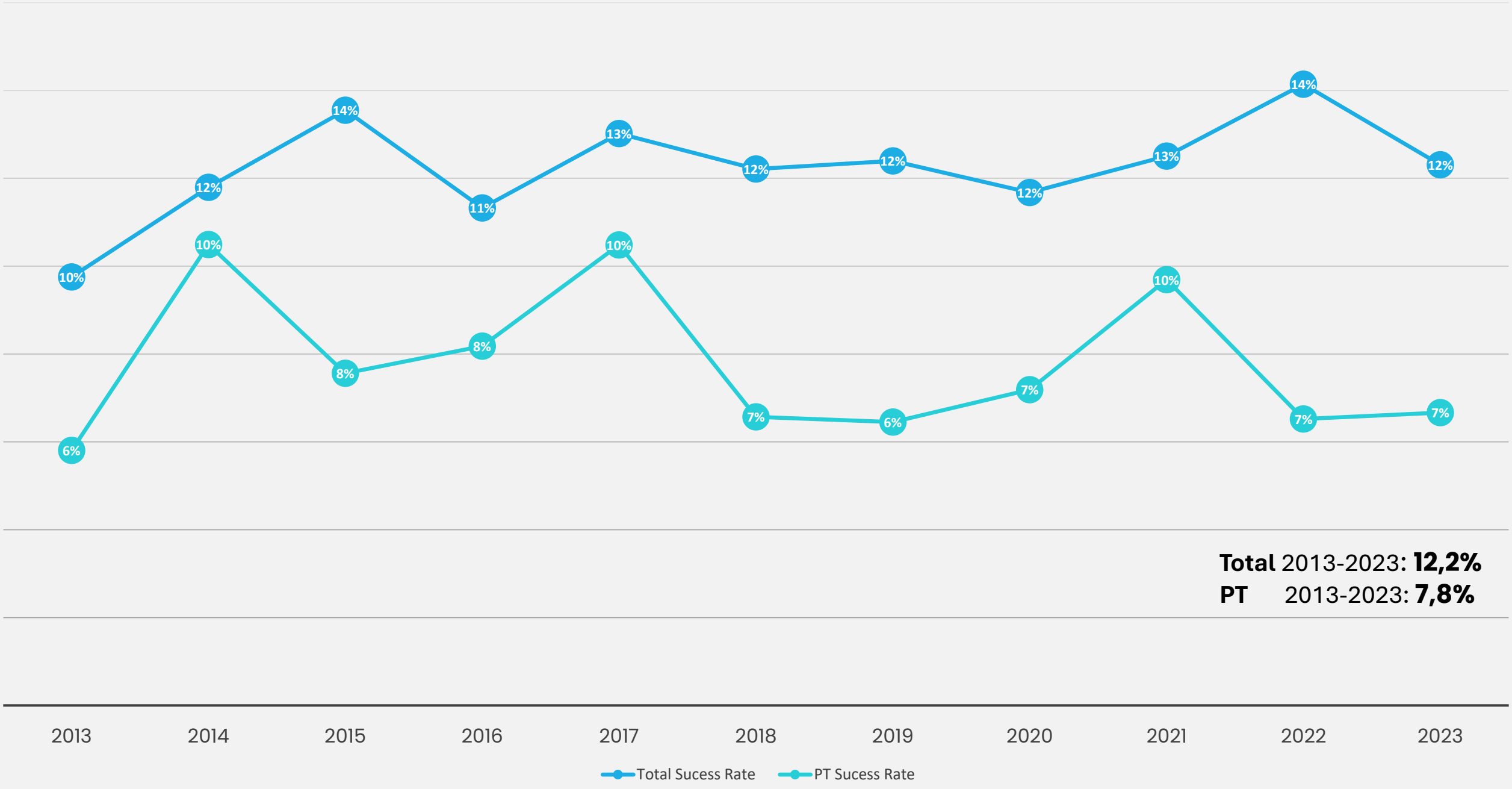
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Portugal’s participation in the ERC

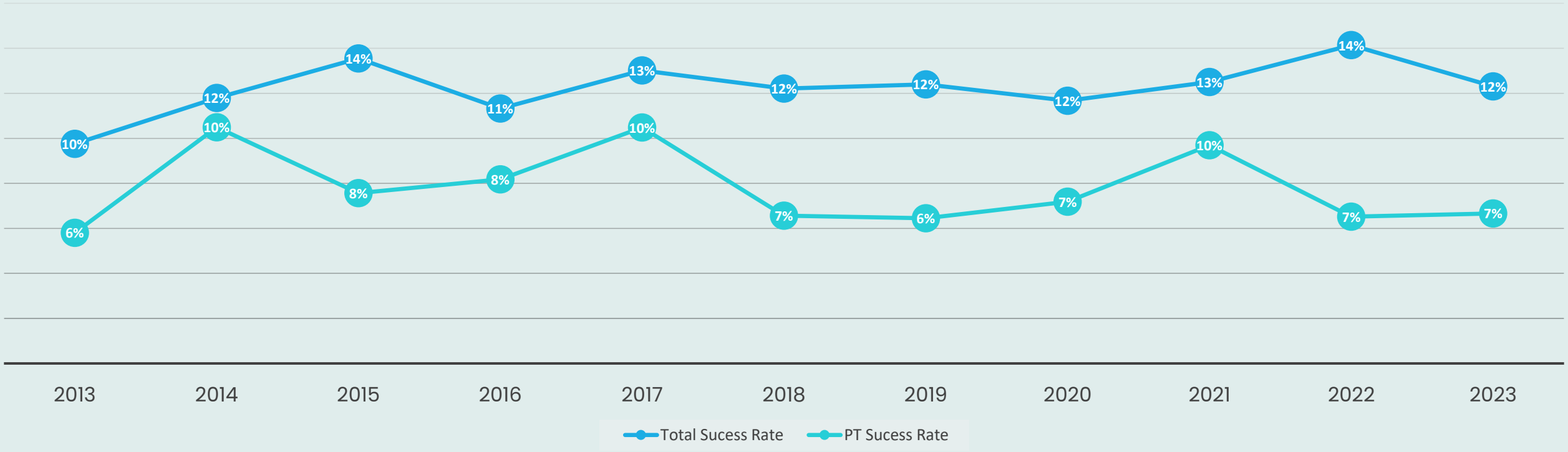
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Success Rate: PT vs. Total



Total 2013-2023: **12,2%**
PT 2013-2023: **7,8%**

Success Rate: PT vs. Total



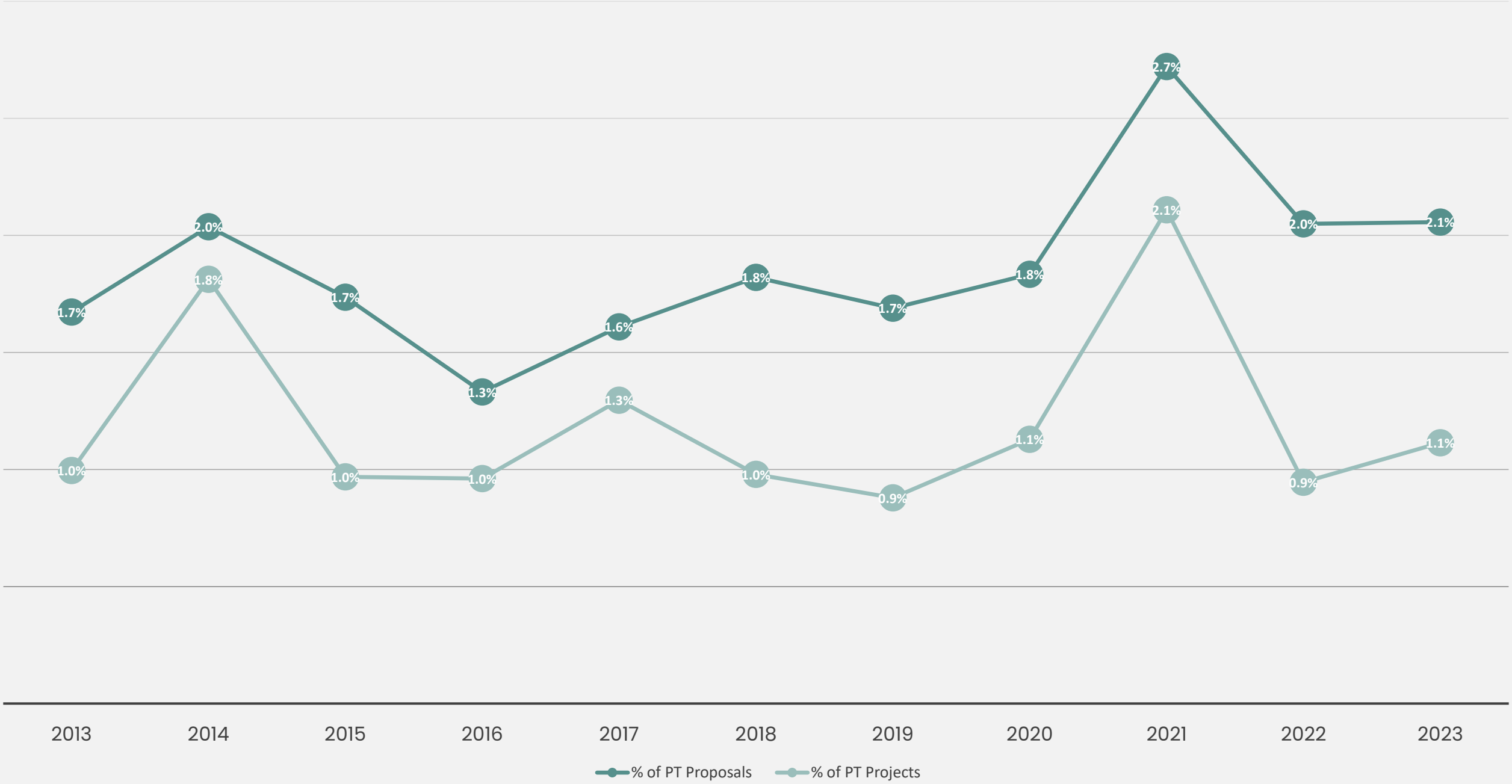
Success Rate **2007-2023**

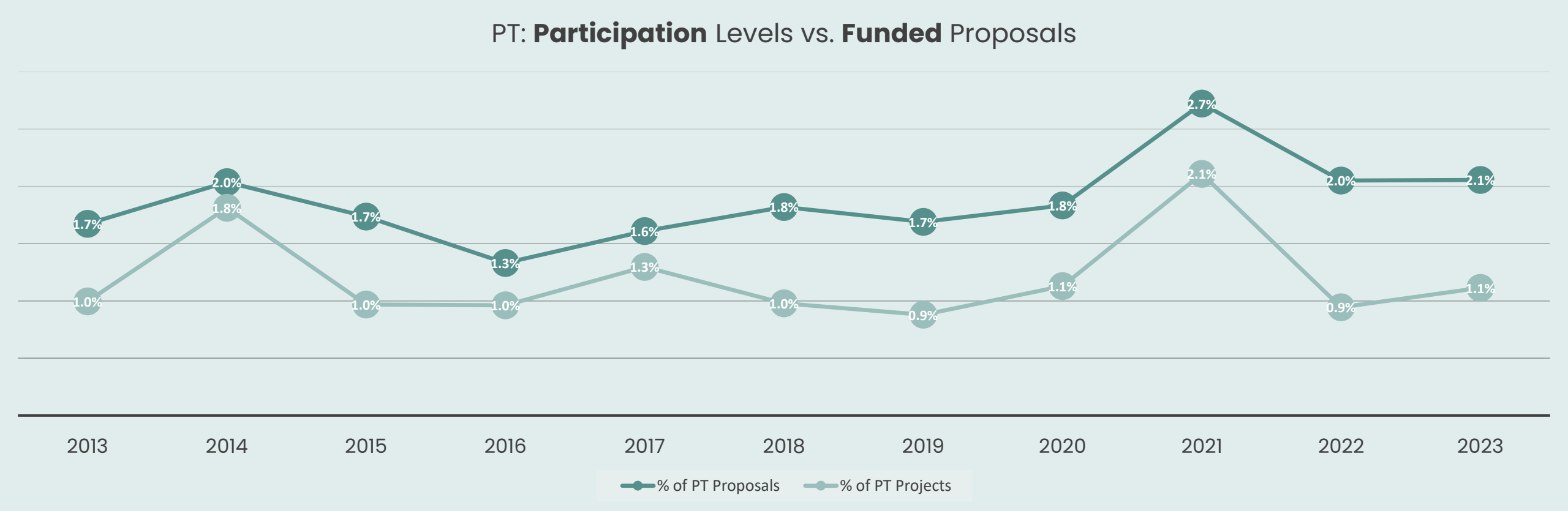
- **LS:** 9,1% vs. 12%
- **PE:** 5,3% vs. 11,5%
- **SH:** 6,3% vs. 10,5%

Success Rate **2013-2023**

- **LS:** 10,3% vs. 12,9% **2,6** p.p.
- **PE:** 6,1% vs. 12,3% **6,2** p.p.
- **SH:** 7,1% vs. 11,3% **4,2** p.p.

PT: **Participation** Levels vs. **Funded** Proposals





2021-2023 (+StG 2024) Horizon Europe

- **AdG** 2013-2020: **8** funded proposals / AdG 2021-2023: **11** funded proposals
- **SH** 2007-2020: **25** funded proposals / SH 2021-2023 (+StG 2024): **17** funded proposals

Portugal's participation in the ERC compared with other countries

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European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

Widening excellence Bridging the ERC gap for a truly pan-European Research Area

ERC Scientific Council White Paper

The ERC Scientific Council has reflected on ways to further support researchers in Widening countries. The Scientific Council recognises that the research policies and investments of each EU Member State will remain the main factors influencing national research quality and competitiveness in ERC calls, and that the most effective solutions must largely be developed within Widening countries themselves. The Scientific Council is also resolute in its commitment to maintaining excellence as the sole criterion in ERC evaluations. At the same time, the ERC stands ready to contribute further and continue to cooperate closely with Member States in supporting outstanding researchers.

This position paper presents an analysis of the factors underlying the comparatively low performance of researchers in Widening countries in ERC competitions, highlights progress, success stories, and good practices, and offers recommendations for actions to be taken by all relevant stakeholders, including governments, EU and national funding bodies, and the scientific community. Finally, it outlines new support measures the ERC is considering for the next Framework Programme.

Introduction

Increasing participation of researchers from EU “Widening countries"—Greece, Portugal, and the 13 Member States that have joined the EU since 2004—in Europe’s leading frontier science competition is a desirable goal for those countries and the ERC. A performance gap also affects most associated countries and Outermost Regions and should not be overlooked.[1]

ERC Publications

Widening excellence Bridging the ERC gap for a truly pan-European Research Area

ERC Scientific Council White Paper

Published March 2026

DATA SOURCES

Main grants per 1,000 higher education sector researchers:
ERC Dashboard / Eurostat 2023

Evaluated proposals 2007–2023, by country and panel:
ERC evaluation data / Eurostat 2023

Success rate by country of host institution, 2007–2024:
ERC Dashboard

erc.europa.eu/news-events/news/widening-excellence-bridging-erc-gap-truly-pan-european-research-area

Power rankings by number

Applications Submitted

12th

# of Applications (12/29)
2007-2023

1st

Widening (1/15)
Number of **Applications**

Grants Awarded

13th

# of Grants (13/29)
2007-2023

1st

Widening (1/15)
Number of **Grants**

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Power rankings by number **per 1,000 researchers**

Applications Submitted

22th ↓10

# of Applications (12/29)
2007-2023

8th ↓8

Widening (8/15)
Number of **Applications**

Grants Awarded

20th ↓7

# of Grants (13/29)
2007-2023

6th ↓6

Widening (6/15)
Number of **Grants**

Room for growth: Portugal in context

Normalised comparison | higher education sector researchers (Eurostat 2023 / ERC data 2007–2023)

GRANTS per 1,000 researchers

5.2

Portugal

161 grants / 31,073 researchers

GRANTS per 1,000 researchers

47.9

Netherlands

Top European performer

APPLICATIONS per 1,000 researchers

66.6

Portugal

2,070 proposals / 31,073 researchers

APPLICATIONS per 1,000 researchers

208

Slovenia

Top Widening country

On both metrics, Portugal remains significantly below leading performers, and **below the potential** suggested by its scientific community size. **This is the space ERC-Portugal is designed to address.**

Source: ERC Scientific Council White Paper 2025 / Eurostat 2023

ERC-Portugal | **Portugal's participation in the ERC**

Room for growth	**Participation levels** and number of submitted applications
	Competitiveness of submitted applications
	Broader and more diversified participantion, at institutional level and scientific areas

ERC-Portugal Programme

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Preparation of applications

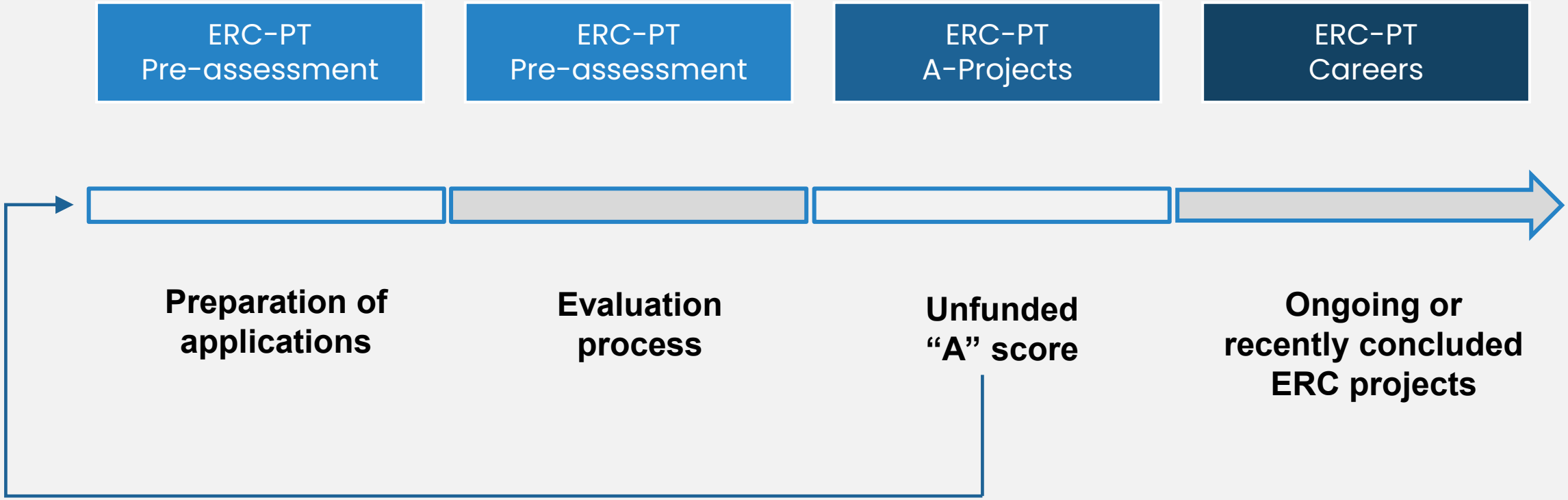
Evaluation process

Evaluation results

Funded research projects

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ERC-PT **Pre-Assessment**

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ERC-PT Pre-assessment

What is it?

- An **innovative peer-review service by FCT**, designed to support the national scientific community in preparing proposals for the StG, CoG, and AdG calls;
- Provides guidance to improve proposals to be submitted, **reflecting both the evaluation criteria and the profile of ERC reviewers**;
- **College of Reviewers** across all scientific areas;
- Two tracks: **STEP 1** (Part I) and **STEP 2** (Part I and Part II) tailored to accommodate different timelines and stages of preparation of researchers' proposals.

Note: Participation in the programme requires the commitment to submit the proposal.

ERC-PT Pre-assessment

STEP 1

- Submission of **Part I** (only) of the application;
- **One report** from a member of the College of Reviewers sent 1 month before the ERC deadline for the submission of applications
- Reports by members of the College **belonging to the same panel** where the application will be submitted

ERC-PT Pre-assessment

STEP 2

- Submission of **Part I and Part II**;
- **Three reports** from three members of the College of Reviewers per application, **non-consensual**, sent 1 month before the ERC deadline for submission of applications
- Reports from members of the College **belonging to the same panel** where the application will be submitted
- **Up to 3 online meetings** with members of the College who produced reports to take place in the last month prior to application submission

ERC-Portugal | **Pre-assessment**

State of Play
(since StG 2024)

238

Researchers supported by the Annual College of Reviewers

477

Reports in both STEP 1 and STEP 2 modalities

115

Online Meetings held between members of the College and researchers

ERC-Portugal | **Pre-assessment**

ERC-PT Pre-assessment

Recent and upcoming!

- Dedicated **ERC Plus track**;
- New **support model during the 2nd step** of the evaluation process – interview – with members of the Annual College of Reviewers;
- New initiatives to foster frontier research ideas before proposals reach the final drafting stage, integrated with bringing forward the programme's **Step 1 track to one year before submission**.

ERC-Portugal | **Calendar**

ERC-PT Pre-Assessment Stages	**AdG 2026**	**ERC Plus**	**StG 2027**	**CoG 2027**
Deadline to submit applications to the Programme	**June 1**, 2026	**June 8**, 2026	**August 18**, 2026	**November 5**, 2026
Annual College of Reviewers' reports sent to Researchers	**Jul. 2, 2026**	**Jul. 13, 2026**	**Sep. 15, 2026**	**Dec. 9, 2026**
Online meetings with the *Annual College of Reviewers* (STEP 2)	**Jul. 6–24**, 2026	**Jul. 14–21**, 2026	**Sep. 16 – Oct. 2**, 2026	**Dec. 10–18**, 2026, and **Jan. 4–6**, 2027
ERC deadline for proposal submission	**Aug. 27**, 2026	**Sep. 2**, 2026	**Oct. 14**, 2026	**Jan. 13**, 2027

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ERC-PT **A-Projects**

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ERC-PT A-Projects

What is it?

- Funding of **250.000€**;
- Eligible **applications with an "A" score without funding** in StG, CoG, and AdG;
- Researchers members of a PT institution at the time of submission to FCT (i.e. it allows attraction);
- **Commitment to submit a new application** with a PT host institution;
- Open permanently and with minimal bureaucracy in submission and administrative management (lump sums);

ERC-PT A-Projects

What is it?

- Encourages synergies between National and European funding with similar goals, and provides additional incentives for the submission of high-quality applications.

Highlights

- **18 projects** already funded (4,5 M€) | LS: 13; PE: 5.

ERC-Portugal | **A-Projects**

ERC-PT A-Projects

New in 2025

+ SyG

- *Proposals with **1 Principal Investigator***: **150.000€ + *f*.100.000€**, where *f* is the percentage to be received by the PI from the total budget submitted to the ERC;
- *Proposals with **> 1 Principal investigator***: **150.000€/*x* + *f*.100.000€**, where *x* is the number of participating PIs in the project.

Upcoming

- **ERC Plus** dedicated track.

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ERC-PT **Careers**

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ERC-PT Careers

What is it?

- Incentive to national Research or HEI institutions to **Attract & Retain** ERC Grantees;
- **Hiring of ERC grantees**, either abroad or in Portugal, **including** those that had their grants finished in the **last 24 months** (ERC-PT Follow-Up);
- ATTRACT: Funding of **550.000€** or **450.000€** (ERC-PT Follow-Up) to institutions that recruit ERC grantees from abroad;
- RETAIN: Funding of **2/3 of salary costs for 3 years** to institutions that recruit ERC grantees from Portugal.

ERC-PT Careers

ERC-PT **Follow Up**

Follow-up track compares nicely with ERC Proof of Concept: (i) **triple** the funding, (ii) **no restrictions** on knowledge transfer levels.

Highlights

- **12 Contracts** funded (Jun. 2024 – Dec. 2025)

Upcoming

- **ERC Plus** dedicated track.

ERC-Portugal **Overview**

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ERC-Portugal | **Overview**

Annual
College of Reviewers

ERC-PT
Pre-assessment

- STEP 1
- STEP 2
- Interview
- Frontier Ideas initiatives

ERC-PT
A-Projects

- A-Projects StG, CoG, AdG
- A-Projects Synergy
- ERC Plus track

ERC-PT
Careers

- Attract
- Retain
- ERC-PT Follow-Up
- ERC Plus Track

ERC-Portugal Team

- Mapping and analysis of national participation
- National Delegates and Contact Points
- Coordinating and supporting the College of Reviewers
- Workshops and Webinars ERC-PT
- Communication and website
- Programme management

ERC-Portugal | **Team**

ERC-PT Team

- **Mapping**, characterisation, and analysis of the national participation;
- **Specialised scientific support** in peer-review processes;
- **National representation** in the ERC Programme Committee;
- **Dissemination and promotion** of the ERC funding instruments (NCPs);
- Coordinating and supporting the **Annual College of Reviewers**;
- Design and implementation of a **communication strategy**;
- **Management** of the Programme.

ERC-Portugal | **Team**

ERC-PT Team

Director: Bruno Béu

Coordinator: Rui Munhá

Scientific Officers:
Raquel Grazina;
Iolanda Morais

Delegates & NCPs @ ERC:
Rui Munhá
Bruno Béu
David Marçal

Communication:
Joana Ferreira
Nelson Dias

Management:
Paulo Gameiro
Maria Freitas



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Obrigado

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