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ERC – All you need to know before applying!

Thursday, 15th of June 2017



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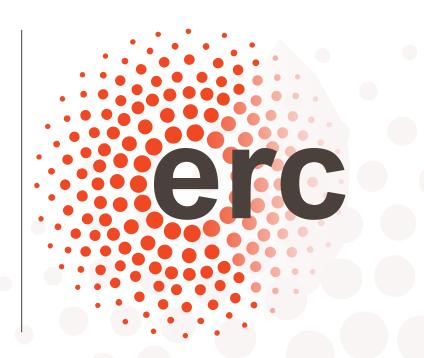
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What is the ERC

- How to apply
- Belgium Performance in ERC schemes





ERC is....

Pillar 1



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1. funding: it is part of H2020

Excellent Science	 Future and Emerging Technologies Marie Skłodoswka Curie Actions Research Infrastructures
Pillar 2: Industrial leadership	 LEIT Access to Risk Finance Innovation in SMEs
Pillar 3: Societal challenges	 Health, demographic change and wellbeing; Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research, and the Bioeconomy; Secure, clean and efficient energy; Smart, green and integrated transport; Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials; Europe in a changing world - inclusive, innovative and reflective societies; Secure societies - protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens.

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ERC is....

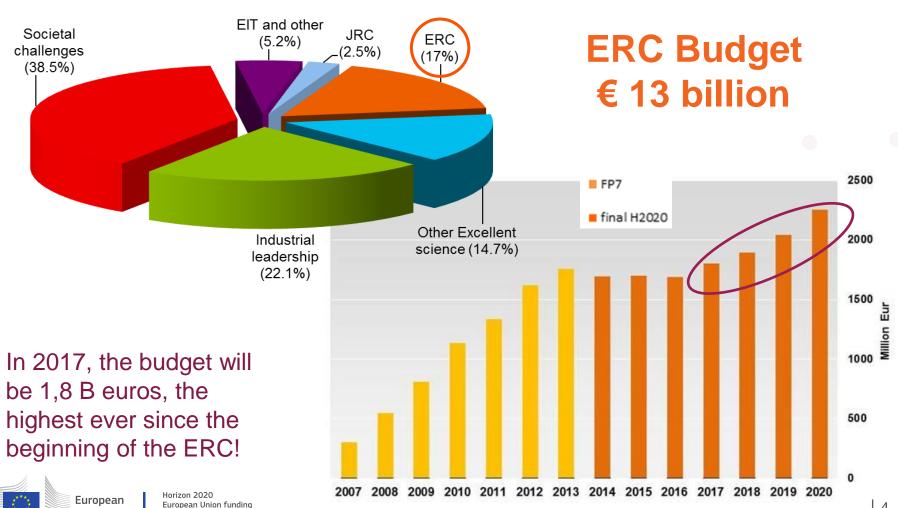
Commission

for Research & Innovation

1. funding: it is part of H2020



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ERC is.... 2. the Scientific Council

Commission

community







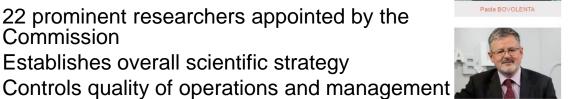


Martin STOKHOF

Scientists at the Driver's Seat

22 prominent researchers appointed by the

Ensures communication with the scientific





Margaret BUCKINGHAM



Kurt MEHLHORN





Establishes overall scientific strategy

Panel Members

- Appointed by the Scientific Council
- Full independence in the evaluation • and ranking of the proposals



Appoint remote referees Horizon 2020 European Union funding for Research & Innovation

Christopher CLARK













Nektarios TAVERNARAKIS

Janet THORNTON



mae ILINGWIRTH



Michael KRAMER





Michel WIEVIORKA





















ERC is...

3. the ERCEA



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The ERC Executive Agency

- Implements calls for proposals
- Organises peer review evaluation
- Establishes and manages grant agreements
- Administers scientific and financial aspects
- Carries out communications activities



ERC Scientific officers

- Work closely with the panel members
- Manage all practical aspects of the evaluations
- Carry out scientific follow-up



ERC basics:

1 researcher, 1 Host Institution, 1 project, 1 selection criterion



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Physical Sciences and Engineering



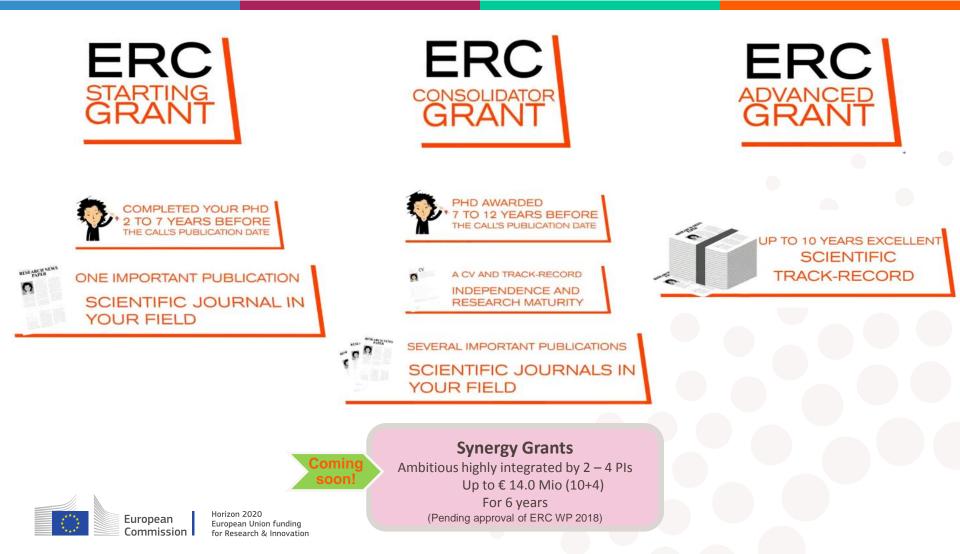
Social Sciences and Humanities



The main ERC funding schemes...



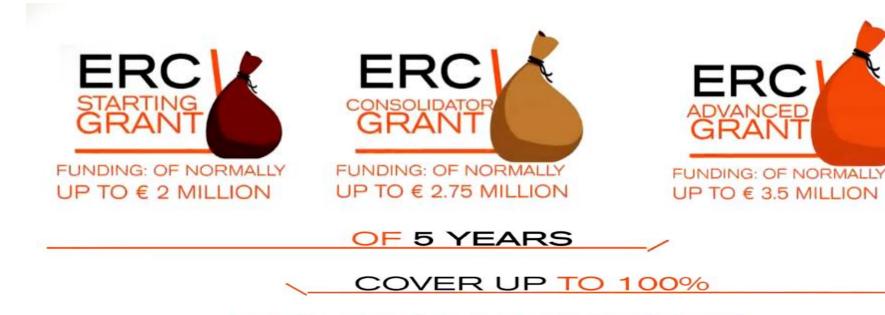
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... are substantial long-term grants...

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TOTAL ELIGIBLE DIRECT COSTS

Reasons for additional funds: •start-up costs for moving to Europe •access to large facilities •major equipment



...that go to the very best scientists...



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Horizon 2020 European Union funding for Research & Innovation NO THEMATIC PRIORITIES NO CONSORTIA NO CO-FINANCING

PAN-EUROPEAN

COMPETITIONS

REGARDLESS

... with excellence as the sole evaluation criterion!



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SCIENTIFIC OF THE RESEARCHER THE PROJECT



Why should one apply for an ERC grant?



ERC offers independence, recognition & visibility

- 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
- portability of grants within Europe
- attract additional funding



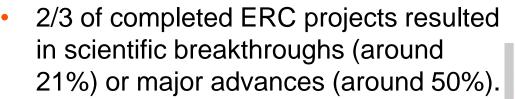
After 10 Years, the ERC has been a Success Story



VEORS

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ERC is carrying out post-project evaluations to measure its impact!



- 2/3 of the projects have an important degree of interdisciplinarity.
- The projects that have made more significant contributions have a higher degree of interdisciplinarity and a higher potential for economic or societal impact.
- Conclusion: the high-risk/high-gain approach intrinsic to the ERC frontier research funding is very successful!





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Celebrating ERC-10 in Europe and beyond

- ERC Week: 13-19 March
- >140 events in 35 countries
- Twitter: #ERC10yrs

More information: erc.europa.eu/ERC10yrs/erc-week



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European Commission Horizon 2020 European Union funding for Research & Innovation

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- What is the ERC
- How to apply
- Belgium Performance in ERC schemes





Preparing your proposal Step 1: Get information!



- Register early, get familiar with the European Commission's Participant Portal system, download the templates and start filling in the forms http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/home.html
- Use the help tools and call documents (Information for Applicants, Work Programme, Frequently Asked Questions) to prepare your proposal
 - Read the guidelines carefully!
 - Find out about the formatting rules and page limits to respect!
- Talk to your Institution's grant office and other ERC grantees



*** Host Institution**



- * Your choice (in an EU Member State/Associated Country)
- * You can change it during the project's life
- Negotiate with the HI (your position, equipment, administrative support, access to infrastructure, etc.)

Rumour: The quality/fame of the HI is increasing my chances/scores.

NOT true: the HI is not an evaluation criterion!



Preparing your proposal Step 2: for StG/CoG, make sure you are eligible!



- Established by the European Commission
- Dates calculated as according to the 1st of January of the year of the Call
- Extensions of eligibility window possible for StG and CoG for documented cases of:
 - Maternity 18 months per child (before or after PhD)
 - Paternity actual time taken off
 - Military service
 - Medical specialty training
 - Caring for seriously ill family members
- No limit to the total extension



Preparing your proposal Step 3: Decide whether to apply.



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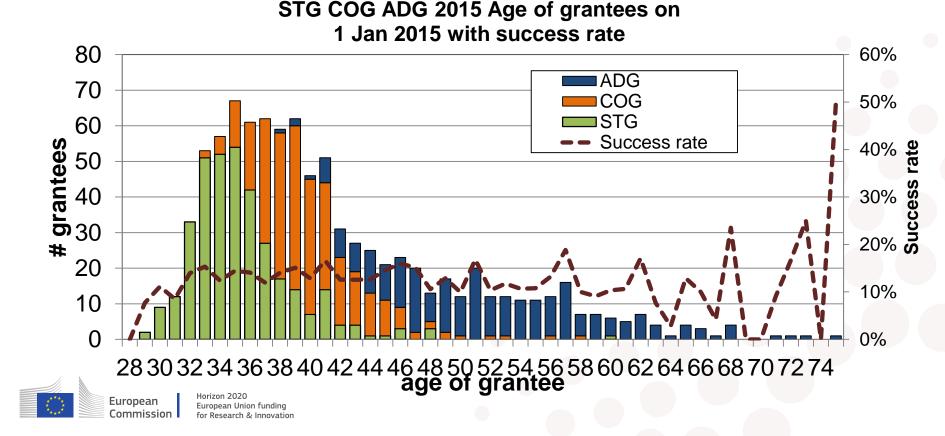
Shall I apply now or wait another year?



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Rumour: I should wait until the end of the eligibility window since then I will be more competitive.

XNOT true: The success rate is virtually flat across the eligibility window (StG, CoG)



Preparing your proposal Step 4: Choose your Panel! Evaluation Panel Structure (WP2017)



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Life Sciences

- LS1 Molecular and Structural Biology and Bioc
 - Big changes in the LS panels coming in WP2018!
 - Technology and Public Health
- LS8 Evolutionary, Population and Environmental Biology
- LS9 Applied Life Sciences and Non-Medical Biotechnology

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 Process Engineering
- **PE9** Universe Sciences

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PE10 Earth System Science

Social Sciences and Humanities

- SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations
- SH2 Institutions, Values, Environment and Space
- SH3 The Social World, Diversity, Population
- SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity
- SH5 Cultures and Cultural Production
- SH6 The Study of the Human Past



Choosing the right Panel is very important!

- Proposals are assigned to the Panel of the PI's choice.
- The PI can flag one "Secondary Review Panel" → the PI must explain the interdisciplinary nature of the proposal in Part B1.
- The Panel Chair can request
 - cross-panel review(s) if the main panel does not have all necessary expertise.

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- reviews from other active panel members across all calls (StG– CoG AdG).
- Transfer of proposals between panels may occur if:
 - there is a clear mistake on part of the applicant.
 - the necessary expertise is available in a different panel.

Both Panel Chairs must agree on the transfer.

Rumour: Choose the panel "strategically" in order 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! If you choose the "wrong" one because it has an X, Y, Z reputation, you will most probably hurt your proposal's chances of success!



Preparing your proposal Step 5: Start filling the different sections!



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PART A – administrative online forms

- A1 Proposal and PI info
- A2 Host Institution info
- A3 Budget

PART B1– submitted as .pdfAbstract and Cross-domain1 p.explanation5 p.Extended Synopsis5 p.(Recommended Model) CV2 p.Funding ID1 p.Track Record2 p.

Annexes – submitted as .pdf

- Statement of support of HI
- copy of PhD or equiv. (StG & CoG) *If applicable*:
- document for extension of eligibility window (StG & CoG)
- explanatory information on ethical issues

PART B2 – submitted as .pdf

Scientific Proposal 15 p. (incl. budget table)



Choose your descriptors and free keywords carefully in Part A!



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- Descriptors and free keywords
 - influence which Panel will evaluate your proposal
 - * are the **basis of allocation to the panel members**
 - * will determine whether a cross-panel evaluation is necessary

Rumour: The panel descriptors represent ERC scientific priorities

X NOT true: The panel descriptors are indicative so that applicants can see what expertise is in the Panel. It is the applicants that choose the subject of their proposal and the Panels use the excellence criterion to judge whether it should be funded.

Rumour: The more cross-panel descriptors I indicate, the higher the funding chances, since I emphasize like this the interdisciplinarity of my proposal.

X NOT true: even though these are used to allocate proposals to Panel Members, once the proposals are allocated, the Panel Members do not see the keywords and descriptors used.



What are the differences between Part B1 and Part B2?



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Since Panel Members see only Part B1 in Step 1:

- Make sure that all parts of the B1 are carefully drafted, since B1 will give the first impression of your project/yourself and will determine if you pass to Step 2
 - * No excessive highlighting

This is a ground-breaking idea. It is the *first* time that this <u>type of experiment</u> has been tried. This represents **high risk/high gain** research.

- 🔅 🔹 Avoid jargon
- 🔅 🔹 Do not oversell it
- It is recommended to add an outline of the methodological approach since in Step 1 the Panel Members are asked to assess the feasibility of the project



Questions to ask yourself when writing part B1 a) Research Project



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- Is my project new, innovative, bringing in new solutions/theories?
- Does it promise to go substantially beyond the state of the art? Focus on the ground-breaking nature – no incremental research!
- Why is my project **important**? **Think Big**!
- How can I prove/support my case? Do I have a hypothesis? Do I have preliminary results? Have I proven the project's feasibility? Are my goals realistic?
- Is it timely? (Why wasn't it done in the past?)
- What's the risk? Is it justified by a substantial potential gain? Do I have a plan for managing the risk? Have I proposed alternatives? (proof of maturity?)

Have I given a realistic picture of my collaborations? Show that you can drive the collaborations but that it is you who will be leading the project.



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Questions to ask yourself when writing part B1 b) Principal Investigator

Why am I the best/only person to carry it out? Know your competitors – what is the state of play and why is your idea and scientific approach outstanding compared to them?

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- Am I able to work independently, and to manage a 5-year project with a substantial budget?
- Am I internationally competitive?
- Have I shown my scientific leadership in my CV?



* When writing your CV



- * Remember that the CV/Track Record are as important as your project!
- Explain what has been your own contribution to your key publications (incl. papers published without your PhD and postdoc supervisor).
- * Explain publishing habits in your field and country if needed.
- If you know that you have gaps or other issues in your CV (e.g. co-authored publications), explain them.
- * Describe accurately any other activity which can indicate scientific maturity.
- Do not forget to put your h-index, total number of publications and citations (with and without self-citations)!
- Fully fill in your Funding ID.

Rumour : One needs publications in Nature/Science/High Impact Factor journals to succeed.

X NOT true: however, publishing with senior scientists (former supervisors) may raise doubts about maturity/scientific independence.



What are the differences between Part B1 and Part B2?



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In Step 2, both part B1 and B2 are read by Panel Members and specialists around the world (specialised external referees) so in Part B2:

- Do not repeat the synopsis, go into details on your methodology and work plan!
- * Explain hypothesis or provide preliminary data (if it exists)
- Make sure that the quantitative and qualitative differences to the state of the art are clear and referenced - show you did your homework!
- Provide alternative strategies to mitigate risks
- Make sure that there is an obvious link between B1 and B2 Panel Members do not want surprises!
- Make use of the evaluation criteria (Ground breaking nature, Potential impact, Scientific Approach) - use them as title/subtitle

Rumour: I need preliminary results.

× NOT true: however explain how the literature supports your "hypothesis".



What are the differences between Part B1 and Part B2?



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In Step 2, both part B1 and B2 are read by Panel Members and specialists around the world (specialised external referees) so in Part B2:

- Make the project "easy to read and attractive" use paragraphs and correct typos!
- Check **coherency** of figures
- Use full space available (15 p.)
- Make sure you give full references (these are excluded from page count so there is no excuse)
- You must add some sort of timeline
- Explain involvement of team members and collaborators (ERC proposals are NOT collaborative)
- For the second seco





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Explain your budget properly!

- Budget analysis carried out in Step 2 evaluation.
- Panels have responsibility to ensure that resources requested are reasonable and well justified.
- Budget cuts need to be justified on a proposal-by-proposal basis (no across-the-board cuts).

Not explained costs are often cut!

- Panels recommend a final maximum budget based on the resources allocated/removed.
- Panels do not "micro-manage" project finances.
- Awards made on a "take-it-or-leave-it" basis: no negotiations.
- * Ask for funding for Open Access this is obligatory in Horizon2020!

Rumour : Ask for more money, the reviewers will anyhow cut it down.

NOT true: unexplained or non-motivated requests can be cut down, so if you artificially inflate your budget, the extra funding will be indeed cut.



Beware of Open Access!



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- The ERC supports the principle of open access to
 - the published output of research, including in particular peer-reviewed articles and monographs
 - research data and data related products such as computer code.
- Under Horizon 2020, beneficiaries of ERC grants must ensure open access to all peer-reviewed scientific publications relating to their results as set out in Article 29.2 of the ERC Model Grant Agreement.
- In 2017, for the first time under Horizon 2020, beneficiaries of ERC grants will automatically be covered by the provisions on research data sharing as set out in Article 29.3 of the ERC Model Grant Agreement unless they specifically decide to opt-out.



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Beneficiaries that do not opt-out should also ensure appropriate management (including preservation and curation) of the research data they generate in order to ensure its sustainability.

Preparing your proposal Step 6: Proof-Read the proposal and Submit!

- A submitted proposal can be revised until the call deadline by submitting a new version and overwriting the previous one.
- Once you submit, all you need to do is wait!



It's our turn to do the work!

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The ERC Evaluation procedure

STEP 1 **STEP 2** Remote assessment by Panel members Remote assessment by Panel members and Remote Reviewers of full of section 1 – Synopsis and CV (B1) proposals (B1+B2) Panel meeting Panel meeting (with interview for StG + CoG) **Proposals retained** Ranked list of for step 2 proposals B Α Feedback to Redress В applicants Horizon 2020 European European Union funding Commission for Research & Innovation

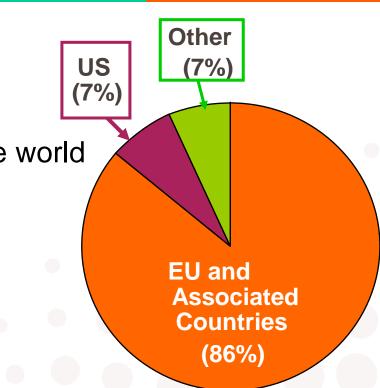
Who evaluates the proposals ?



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- Panel members: typically 600 PMs
 involved per call
 - High-level scientists
 - Recruited by ScC from all over the world
 - About 11-16 members
 - Steps 1 and 2
- Remote Referees: typically 2000 / call

→ Step 2



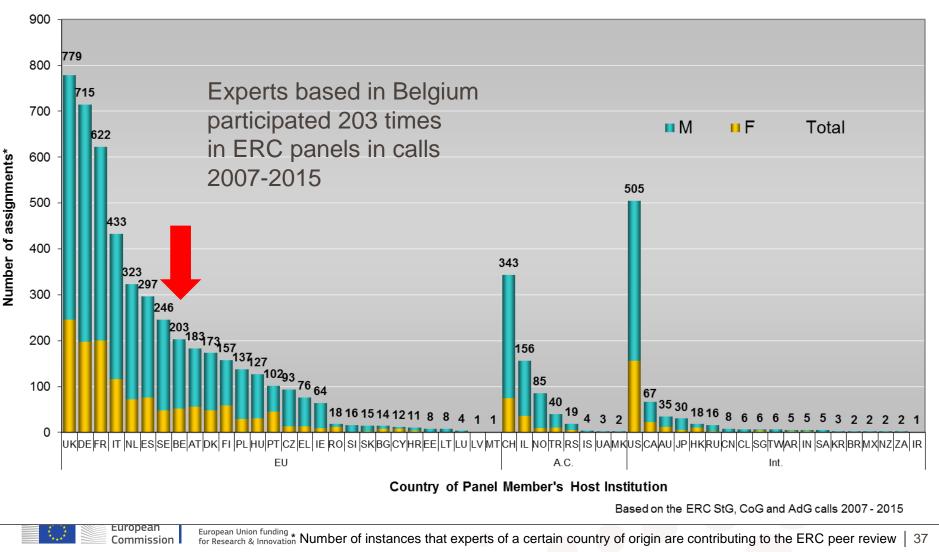


ERC Panel Members by Country of HI and Gender

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I have been invited for an interview – now what? (1)

Have clear and representative slides and focus on SCIENCE! Don't try to make a business presentation – you are talking to scientists.

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- Anticipate questions.
- Know the details of your proposal and methods, as well as your research area who are your main competitors/collaborators?
- Bring additional slides on new supporting data, if you have, and for possible explanations.
- Be able to answer the questions: Which 2 sentences you hope will be added to a textbook about your research in 5 years? Where do you want to be in 5 years?
- Don't over-explain your CV!



I have been invited for an interview – now what? (2)

When the panel asks questions, don't answer with "excellent question" – it can come across as arrogant.

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* Keep the time.

* PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!!!!!

Rumour 1: Choose your Acronym in alphabetical order, interviews are planned alphabetically.

NOT true: the important thing is to choose an easy-to-remember acronym since this helps identifying the project during discussions!

Rumour 2: Late afternoon interviews have less chance, PMs are tired.

NOT true: you need to "shake" the PMs up no matter what time of day!



Typical reasons for rejection



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Research Project

- <u>Scope</u>: Too narrow ←→ too broad/unfocussed
- Incremental research
- Collaborative project, <u>several Pls</u>
- Work plan not detailed enough/unclear
- Insufficient <u>risk</u> management

Principle Investigator (PI)

- Insufficient <u>track-record</u>
- Insufficient (potential for) independence
- Insufficient experience in **leading** projects

Before Redressing: see what you could you have done/explained/ presented better before blaming the process!

- Diverting scientific opinion is <u>not</u>
 <u>a motivation for redress</u>
- An obvious mistake however might result in a re-evaluation

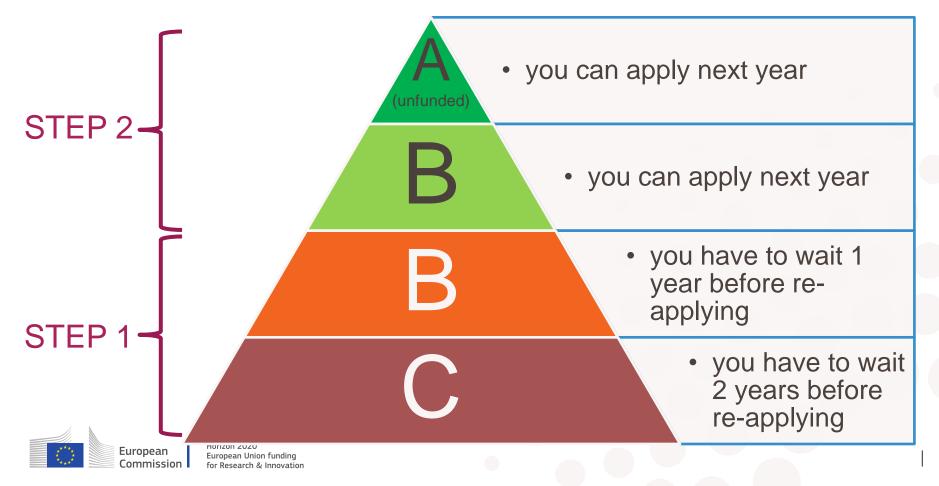


I did not get the grant, can I apply next year?



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 In order to make the evaluation process more effective, the Scientific Council has introduced re-submission restrictions.



Timetable of the 2017 Calls



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ERC calls	Budget million EUR (estimated number of grants)	Call Publication	Submissio n Deadline	Planned dates to inform applicants			
Starting Grants ERC-2017-StG	605 (415)	29 July 2016	18 Oct 2016	Step 1: 31 May 2017 Step 2: 6 Sept 2017			
Consolidator Grants ERC-2017-CoG	575 (320)	20 Oct 2016	9 Feb 2017	Step 1: 13 July 2017 Step 2: 6 Dec 2017			
Advanced Grants ERC-2017-AdG	567 (245)	16 May 2016	31 Aug 2017	Step 1: 31 Jan 2018 Step 2: 9 April 2018			



Horizon 2020 European Union funding for Research & Innovation





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- 2012-2013: two pilot Synergy grant calls
 - ➔ 1,5-3% success rate: 24 projects selected
- 2014: the *ad-hoc* Synergy Working Group of the Scientific Council decided to assess the pilot funding scheme
 - Assessment report delivered December 2015
- 2016: the Scientific Council decided to re-launch the scheme
 - Implementation: 2018 Work Programme







- ERC foresees to be a highly competitive call
 - only exceptional proposals are likely to be funded that will demonstrate that the truly ambitious research questions could lead to breakthroughs only through the joint effort of the complementary and synergistic group of PIs.
- 'Synergy' is not simply a successful collaboration
 - The interaction would yield something more than just the sum of the individual parts.
 - To yield possibly either unforeseen, completely new science, to cross fertilize disciplines or to solve important research problems that until now could not be dreamt of solving.





Tough future restrictions on submissions planned!

2018 Work Programme text pending the adoption of the ERC Work Programme 2018 in July 2017

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A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as category *B* at step 1 or step 2 in the Synergy Grant call for proposals under Work Programme 2018 may <u>not</u> submit a proposal to the Synergy Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2019.

A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as category C at step 1 in the Synergy Grant call for proposals under Work Programme 2018 may <u>not</u> submit a proposal to <u>any ERC research grant calls for proposals made under</u> Work Programme 2019 or for the Synergy Grant call in 2020.

<u>All</u> Principal Investigators whose proposal was rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity in the Synergy Grant calls for proposals under Work Programme 2018 may <u>not</u> submit a proposal to the calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2019.





- Indicative budget foreseen for 2018: 250 M€
 - To select 25-30 projects
- 2, 3 or 4 Principal Investigators (1 of them being the Corresponding PI)
- No restrictions on location of PIs
 - PI can come from the same corridor in one HI, different HIs within one country, or from different countries (within EU or AC)
- Indicative call opening: 19 July 2017
- Indicative call closure: 14 November 2017
- Proposals to be evaluated between November 2017 and September 2018.



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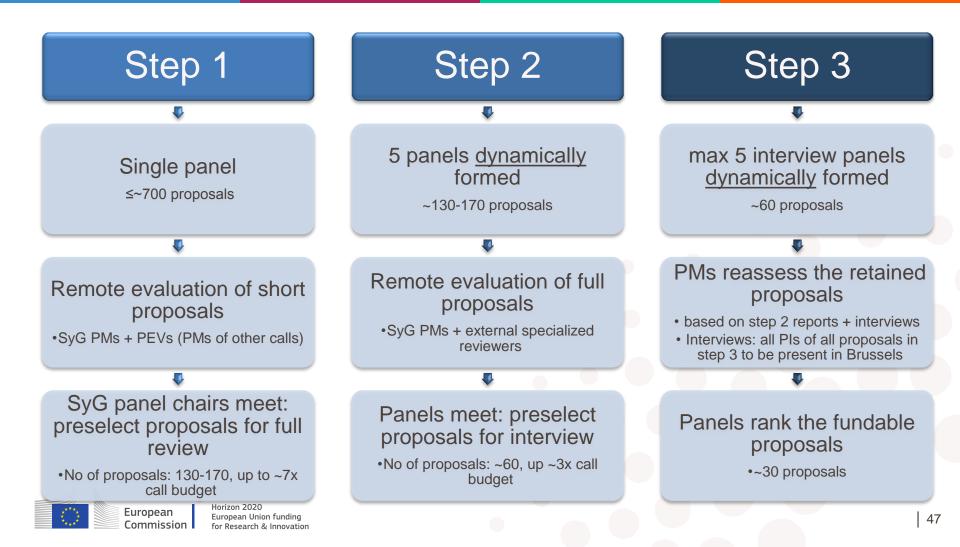
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The SyG 2018 evaluation process



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- Normal maximum budget of 10 M€ per grant
 - With additional 4 M€ more in case:
 - a) "start-up' costs for Principal Investigators moving to the EU or AC and/or
 - b) the purchase of major equipment and/or
 - c) access to large facilities
- Time commitment:
 - ≥50% of working time in EU or AC and
 - ≥30% of working time on the ERC project

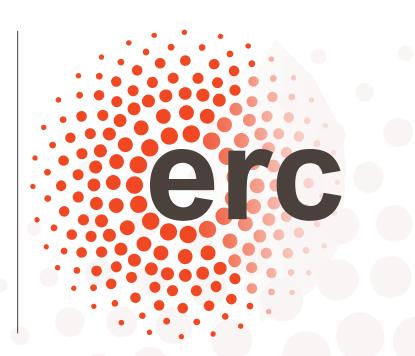


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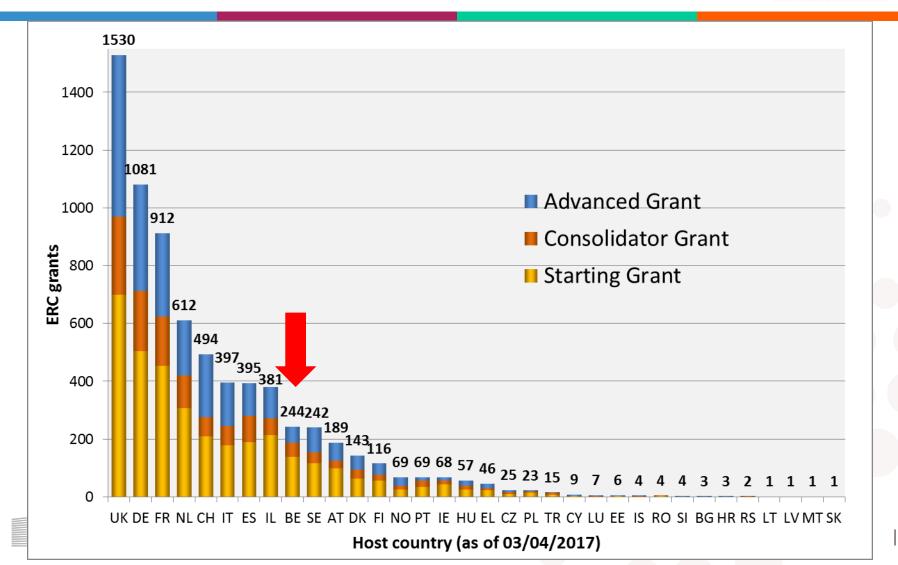






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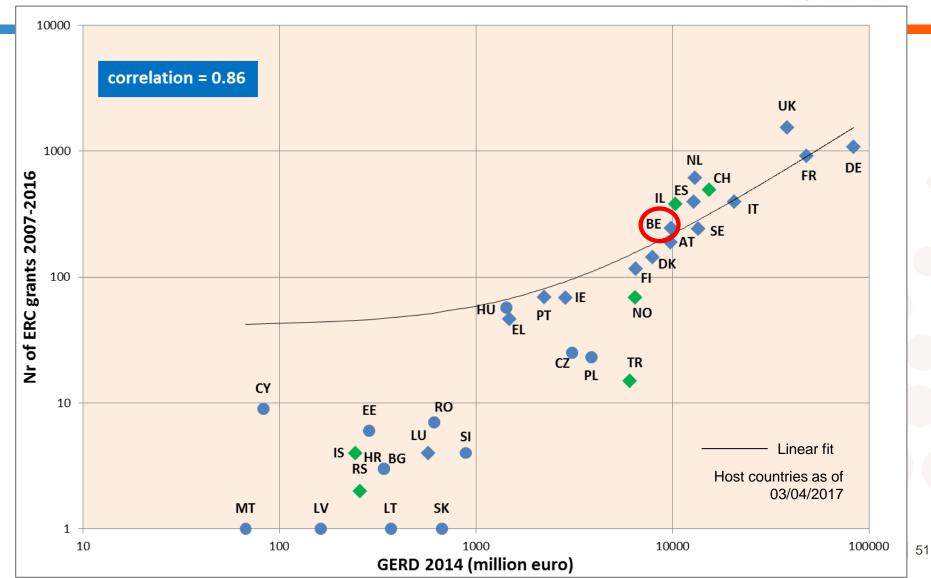
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ERC Grants versus GERD



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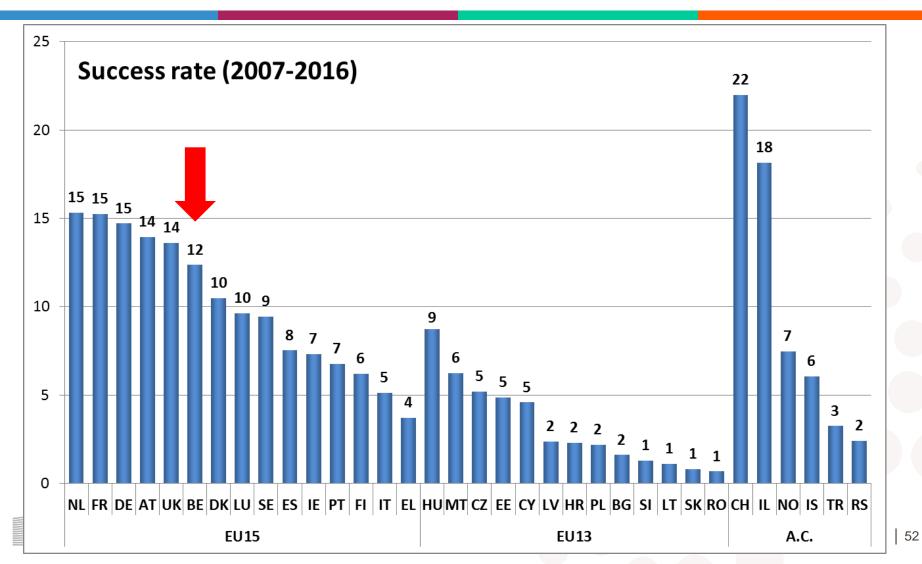


Success Rate by Country of HI



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Country	Higher-Education Institution	No	StG	CoG	AdG	Total	LS	PE	SH	Тор
UK	UK University of Cambridge		81	33	78	192	68	92	32	
UK	UK University of Oxford		75	36	79	190	55	- 77	58	European
UK	UK University College London		68	27	47	142	56	41	45	Institutions
CH	CH Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL)		53	15	50	118	33	83	2	Hosting
CH	Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich)	5	45	7	65	117	35	78	4	ERC
	IL Weizmann Institute		55	23	36	114	66	46	2	Grantees
IL	IL Hebrew University of Jerusalem		55	15	37	107	45	44	18	
UK	IK University of Edinburgh		33	14	38	85	28	33	24	by Funding
UK	UK Imperial College		48	13	23	84	29	53	2	Schemes
NL	University of Amsterdam	10	38	14	22	74	7	25	42	
DK	University of Copenhagen		31	21	18	70	30	25	15	ERC calls 2007-2016
	University of Munich (LMU)	12	30	4	33	67	27	23	17	
	Tel Aviv University	13	39	10	16	65	29	30	6	
	University of Leuven	13	34	10	21	65	17	35	13	<i>Current signatories</i> of the grant
UK	UK University of Bristol		22	7	30	59	10	38	11	agreement
NL	Delft University of Technology		28	14	16	58	7	45	6	
CH	University of Zurich	16	23	9	25	57	32	11	14	Data as of
NL	Utrecht University	16	26	16	15	57	10	26	21	03/04/2017
NL	Radboud University Nijmegen	17	32	9	15	56	21	13	22	
NL	Leiden University	18	25	10	18	53		21	32	
FI	University of Helsinki	19	25	9	18	52	33	14	5	
IL	Technion - Israel Institute of Technology	20	32	6	12	50	16	33	1	
UK	University of Manchester	21	20	8	20	48	10	30	8	
Country	Research Organisation	No	StG	CoG	AdG	Total	LS	PE	SH	
FR	National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS)	1	188	82	94	364	105	218	41	
	Max Planck Society	2	85	23	82	190	98	81	11	
DE	Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres	3	50	29	25	104	64	39	1	
FR	National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM)	4	41	24	24	89	83	3	3	
ES	Spanish National Research Council (CSIC)	5	28	17	18	63	20	36	7	
FR	French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission	6	40	5	17	62	10	50	2	

Host Institutions in Belgium



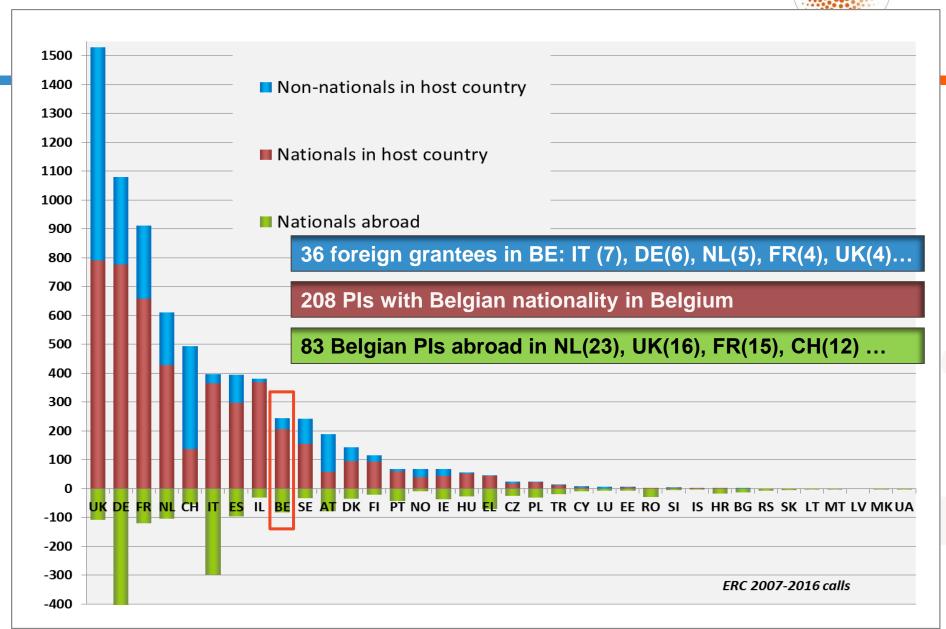
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	StG	CoG	AdG	Total	LS	PE	SH	PoC
University of Leuven	34	10	21	65	17	35	13	3
Ghent University	27	9	5	41	6	21	14	9
Flanders Institute for Biotechnology	14	13	7	34	34			6
University of Louvain	18	3	5	26	5	12	9	1
ULB - Free University of Brussels	12	4	7	23	4	12	7	
University of Antwerp	9	2	4	15	4	5	6	
VUB - Free University of Brussels	9	1	2	12	3	8	1	
University of Liege	7	3	1	11	3	5	3	1
Interuniversity Microelectronics Centre	2	1	2	5		5		1
University of Namur		1	2	3	2		1	
University of Mons	2			2		2		1
Hasselt University	1	1		2	2			
Prince Leopold Institute of Tropical Medicine	2			2	2			
Von Karman Institute for Fluid Dynamics	1			1		1		1
Royal Observatory of Belgium			1	1		1		
Orpheus Institute	1			1			1	
Total	139	48	57	244	82	107	55	23

Note: University of Antwerp also hosts one Synergy grantee



Grantees at Home and Abroad



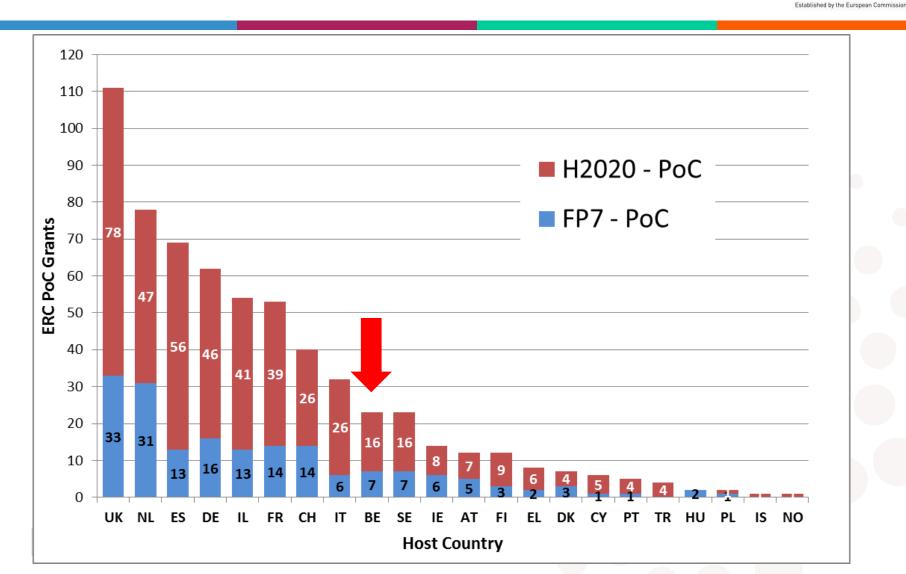
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