

# ERC Work Programme 2017



**European Research Council**

Established by the European Commission

*(European Commission C(2016) 4616 of 25 July 2016)*

## Who should read this document?

*This document is the annual work programme for the European Research Council funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. It is the legal document which sets out how the ERC will allocate its funding for the corresponding year. It is established by the Scientific Council of the ERC and subsequently adopted by the European Commission.*

***Principal Investigators who wish to apply to one of the ERC's calls will need to apply through the Participants Portal. This contains all the information necessary for applying to each ERC call as well as details of your National Contact Point who can provide information and personalised support in your native language at:***

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/page/home>

*Potential applicants, and those interested in more information on the ERC in general can find out more, including the background to the ERC's mission and organisation, a description of the main funding schemes, a step by step guide to applying to the ERC and details of funded projects here:*

<http://erc.europa.eu/>

## Summary of main features in 2017

***Three ERC frontier research grants will be available under Work Programme 2017: Starting; Consolidator; and Advanced Grants.***

***Restrictions on applications will apply to the 2017 calls based on the outcome of the evaluation of previous calls – see restrictions on submission of proposals under “Eligibility criteria” below.***

***ERC Principal Investigators will also continue to be able to apply for Proof of Concept Grants.***

***For the first time under Horizon 2020, beneficiaries of ERC frontier research grants funded under this Work Programme will automatically be covered by the provisions on research data sharing unless they specifically decide to opt-out – see section on open access under “Objectives and Principles of ERC Funding” below.***

## Indicative summary of main calls from the 2017 budget<sup>1</sup>

|                        | <i>Starting Grant</i> | <i>Consolidator Grant</i> | <i>Advanced Grant</i> | <i>Proof of Concept Grant</i>                        |
|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| <i>Call identifier</i> | <b>ERC-2017-StG</b>   | <b>ERC-2017-CoG</b>       | <b>ERC-2017-AdG</b>   | <b>ERC-2017-PoC</b>                                  |
| <i>Call Opens</i>      | 26 July 2016          | 20 October 2016           | 16 May 2017           | 2 August 2016  |
| <i>Deadline</i>        | 18 October 2016       | 9 February 2017           | 31 August 2017        | 19 January 2017<br>25 April 2017<br>5 September 2017 |

<sup>1</sup>These opening dates and call deadlines are indicative. The Director of the European Research Council Executive Agency may open it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged opening date. The Director may delay the envisaged deadline by up to two months. The budget amounts for 2017 are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the draft budget for 2017 after the adoption of the budget for 2017 by the budgetary authority or if the budget is not adopted as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths.

|   |                                 |                                 |                                 |   |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Budget million EUR</b><br><i>(estimated number of grants)</i>  | 605 (415)                       | 575 (320)                       | 567 (245)                       | 20 (130)  |
| <b>Planned dates to inform applicants</b><br><i>(after step 1 and step 2 for frontier research grants, by deadline for PoC)</i> | 31 May 2017<br>6 September 2017 | 13 July 2017<br>6 December 2017 | 31 January 2018<br>9 April 2018 | 1 March 2017<br>28 June 2017<br>8 November 2017 |
| <b>Indicative date for signature of grant agreements</b><br><i>(by deadline for PoC)</i>  | 6 January 2018                  | 6 April 2018                    | 9 August 2018                   | 1 July 2017<br>28 October 2017<br>8 March 2018  |

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# Objectives and Principles of ERC Funding

The fundamental activity of the ERC is to provide attractive, long-term funding to support excellent investigators and their research teams to pursue ground-breaking, high-gain/ high-risk research.

Research funded by the ERC is expected to lead to advances at the frontiers of knowledge and to set a clear and inspirational target for frontier research across Europe.

***Scientific excellence is the sole criterion on the basis of which ERC frontier research grants are awarded***

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 independent experts working remotely.

The ERC's peer review evaluation process has been carefully designed to identify scientific excellence irrespective of the gender, age, nationality or institution of the Principal Investigator and other potential biases, and to take career breaks, as well as unconventional research career paths, into account. The evaluations are monitored to guarantee transparency, fairness and impartiality in the treatment of proposals.

***Applications can be made in any field of research***

The ERC's frontier research grants operate on a 'bottom-up' basis without predetermined priorities.

The ERC puts particular emphasis on the frontiers of science, scholarship and engineering. In particular, it encourages proposals of a multi- or 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.

***Independent researchers of any age and career stage can apply for attractive long-term funding***

The ERC awards funding to excellent investigators looking to set up or consolidate their own independent research team or programme, as well as to already established research leaders.

The ERC awards flexible, long-term funding for a period of up to five years for the Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants. The Scientific Council will review funding conditions regularly to make sure that grants remain competitive both at European and international level.

The maximum grant varies by grant type. 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<sup>2</sup> as described in the ERC Model Grant Agreement.

The ERC aims to use procedures that maintain the focus on excellence, encourage initiative and combine simplicity and flexibility with accountability. The ERC is continuously looking for further ways to improve its procedures in order to ensure that these principles are met.

***Principal Investigators from anywhere in the world can apply for an ERC grant***

ERC grants are open to researchers of any nationality who may reside in any country in the world at the time of the application.

*The ERC is particularly keen to encourage excellent proposals from Principal Investigators based outside Europe who wish to carry out a project with a host institution in the EU or in one of the Associated Countries.*

However the host institution must be established in an EU Member State or Associated Country. In certain conditions team members may be based outside of

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<sup>2</sup> *Portability* means that the Principal Investigator may request to transfer the entire grant or part of it to a new beneficiary, under specific conditions included in the ERC Model Grant Agreement. These conditions may include provisions for the transfer of equipment purchased and used exclusively for the implementation of the project.

the EU or an Associated Country (see “Eligible host institution” below).

***The ERC frontier research grants aim to empower individual researchers and provide the best settings to foster their creativity***

The Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants will support projects carried out by individual teams which are headed by a single Principal Investigator. The constitution of the research teams is flexible. Depending on the nature of a project the research team may involve team members from other research organisations situated in the same or a different country (see “Eligible host institution” below).

*The ERC supports individual Principal Investigators. Support for consortia is provided by other calls under Horizon 2020.*

***Host institutions must provide appropriate conditions for the Principal Investigator to independently direct the research and manage its funding***

An ERC grant is awarded to the institution that engages and hosts the Principal Investigator<sup>3</sup>. Grants are awarded to the

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<sup>3</sup> Normally the Principal Investigator will be employed by the Host Institution, but cases where, for duly justified reasons, the Principal Investigator's employer cannot become the host institution, or where the Principal Investigator is self-employed, can be accommodated. The specific conditions of engagement will be subject to

host institution with the explicit commitment that this institution offers appropriate conditions for the Principal Investigator to independently manage the ERC funded research. These conditions<sup>4</sup>, including the '*portability*' of the grant, are the subject of a supplementary agreement between the Principal Investigator and the host institution<sup>5</sup> and must ensure that the Principal Investigator is able to:

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

Public or private institutions, including universities, research organisations and

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clarification and approval during the granting procedure or during the amendment procedure for a change of host institution.

<sup>4</sup> These conditions are consistent with “The European Charter for Researchers” and “The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers”.

<sup>5</sup> This is supplementary to the ERC Grant Agreement and is described in the ERC Model Grant Agreement.

undertakings can host the Principal Investigator and his or her team as long as the principles indicated above are respected and the Principal Investigator is not constrained by the research strategy of the entity.

*The ERC welcomes applications from Principal Investigators **hosted by private for-profit 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.

### **Open access**

The ERC supports the principle of open access to the published output of research, including in particular peer-reviewed articles and monographs, as a fundamental part of its mission. It also supports the basic principle of open access to research data and data related products such as computer code. The ERC considers that providing free online access to all these materials can be the most effective way of ensuring that the fruits of the research it funds can be accessed, read and used as the basis for further research.

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 addition, for the first time under Horizon 2020, beneficiaries of ERC frontier research grants funded under this Work Programme 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. 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. These provisions are designed to facilitate access, re-use and preservation of research data generated during the ERC funded research work.

Beneficiaries should carefully check the additional obligations related to open research data contained in Article 29.3. They may opt-out of the provisions of the previous paragraph at any stage, thereby freeing themselves retroactively from the associated obligations.

### ***Gender Balance***

Under Horizon 2020, beneficiaries of ERC grants must take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the implementation of the action and aim for a gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, as set out in the Horizon 2020 ERC Model Grant Agreement. ERC Principal Investigators should also determine the relevance of integrating sex and gender analysis into their research. Specific activities promoting equal opportunities

or gender balance or covering the gender dimension of research funded by the ERC can be considered as eligible costs where these costs are necessary for the implementation of the action.

### ***Ethical principles***

The proposed research and innovation activities shall comply with ethical principles and relevant national, Union and international legislation, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols. Particular attention shall be paid to the principle of proportionality, the right to privacy, the right to the protection of personal data, the right to the physical and mental integrity of a person, the right to non-discrimination and the need to ensure high levels of human health protection. The proposed research and innovation activities shall have an exclusive focus on civil applications.

Funding of human embryonic stem cell research is possible within the ethical framework defined in the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2014 – 2020<sup>6</sup>.

### ***Research Integrity***

It is essential to maintain and promote a culture of research integrity at all stages of the evaluation and granting process to make ERC competitions fair and efficient and to maintain the trust of both the

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<sup>6</sup> As set out in Commission Declaration 2013/C 373/02 of 20 December 2013.

scientific community and society as a whole.

Cases of scientific misconduct such as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or misrepresentation of data that may arise during the evaluation or throughout the life cycle of an ERC funded project will be addressed vigorously by the ERC within the applicable legal and procedural framework. Any breach of research integrity by Principal Investigators or beneficiaries may be sanctioned by measures such as the rejection of proposals from evaluation, requests for measures to be taken by the host institution, reduction of the grant and suspension or termination of grants.

However, the host institutions that engage and host ERC Principal Investigators have

the primary responsibility for the detection of scientific misconduct and for the investigation, and adjudication of any breaches of research integrity that may arise. Therefore host institutions are expected to have structures in place to uphold research integrity and to make all appropriate efforts to verify that no allegations of scientific misconduct are pending against any Principal Investigator applying for or participating in an ERC grant and to bring to the attention of the ERC any such allegations or cases of scientific misconduct.

The ERC applies the same rigour to ensuring that its evaluation process is governed by principles of research integrity, in particular through rules on confidentiality and conflict of interest.

# ERC Frontier Research Grants

## Funding rates

### **Maximum size of grant and grant assessment**

The maximum grant varies by grant type.

During the peer review evaluation, evaluation panels will assess the funding requested by the applicant, including any request for additional funding for major costs (see “Size of ERC Grants” under each profile below), against the needs of the project before making any recommendation for funding.

The funding requested must be fully justified by an estimation of the real project cost. The panels may suggest modifications to the indicative budgetary breakdown in the application, particularly where they consider funding requests to be not properly justified. In such cases they shall explain in writing any such suggested modification.

The Principal Investigator will have the freedom to modify the budgetary breakdown during the course of the project. Requests to modify the budgetary breakdown in respect of additional funding to cover major costs may be accepted only provided that such modifications remain within the objectives for which the additional funding was awarded.

### **Union Contribution**

The Union financial contribution will take the form of the reimbursement of up to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and of flat-rate financing of indirect costs on the basis of 25% of the total eligible direct costs<sup>7</sup>. The level of the awarded grant represents a maximum overall figure – the final amount to be paid must be justified on the basis of the costs actually incurred for the project.

### **Call budgets**

For the Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant calls an indicative budget will be allocated to each panel in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals.

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<sup>7</sup> 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

### **Eligible proposals**

All proposals must be complete and submitted before the relevant call deadline. A complete proposal needs to include all parts or sections (see “*Proposal submission and description*” below). Incomplete proposals may be declared ineligible.

The content of the proposal must relate to the objectives and to the grant type set out in the call, as defined in this work programme. A proposal will only be deemed ineligible on grounds of ‘scope’ in clear-cut cases.

Where there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision following an eligibility review committee<sup>8</sup>. 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 will be declared ineligible and not considered any further.

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<sup>8</sup> For further information see applicable ERC rules for submission and evaluation - Commission Decision C(2015) 4975.

### **Eligible Scientific Fields**

Applications may be made in any field of research<sup>9</sup>.

### **Eligible Principal Investigator**

The ERC actions are open to researchers of any nationality who intend to conduct their research activity in any Member State or Associated Country. Principal Investigators may be of any age and nationality and may reside in any country in the world at the time of the application. However Principal Investigators funded through the ERC frontier research grants shall spend a minimum percentage of their total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country and a minimum percentage of their total working time on the ERC project (see Eligible Host Institution and profiles of Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant Principal Investigators below).

Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant proposals are submitted by the Principal Investigator who has scientific responsibility for the project, on behalf of the host institution. There are specific eligibility criteria for a Principal

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<sup>9</sup> Research proposals within the scope of Annex I to the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications, shall be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom Framework Programme.

Investigator applying to the Starting or Consolidator Grants based on the date of award of his or her first PhD (or equivalent doctoral degree<sup>10</sup>) as below. This “streaming” allows applicants to be compared with researchers at a similar career stage.

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<sup>10</sup> See ERC Scientific Council's note on 'PhD and Equivalent Doctoral Degrees' at Annex 2, including specific provisions for holders of medical degrees.



|                               | Starting Grant   | Consolidator Grant   | Advanced Grant |
|-------------------------------|--|--|----------------|
| Specific Eligibility Criteria | <p>Principal Investigator shall have been awarded his or her first PhD</p> <p>≥ 2 and ≤ 7 years</p> <p>prior to 1 January 2017</p> <p>Cut-off dates:<br/>PhD from 1 January 2010 to 1 January 2015 (inclusive)</p> | <p>Principal Investigator shall have been awarded his or her first PhD</p> <p>&gt; 7 and ≤ 12 years</p> <p>prior to 1 January 2017</p> <p>Cut-off dates:<br/>PhD awarded from 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2009 (inclusive)</p> | <p>none</p>    |

*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 where the degree was awarded.*

*However, the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD taken into consideration for eligibility can be reduced **in the following properly documented circumstances** provided they started before the call deadline.*

*For maternity, the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by 18 months or if longer by the documented amount of leave actually taken 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 documented amount of paternity leave actually taken for each child born **before or after** the PhD award.*

*For long-term illness<sup>11</sup>, clinical training or national service the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD<sup>12</sup> will be considered reduced by the documented amount of leave actually taken by the Principal Investigator for each incident which occurred **after** the PhD award.*

<sup>11</sup> Over ninety days for the Principal Investigator or a close family member (child, spouse, parent or sibling).

<sup>12</sup> For applicants whose first eligible degree is their MD such incidents can be considered from the date of the completion of their MD degree.

## **Eligible Host Institution**

The host institution (Applicant Legal Entity<sup>13</sup>) must engage the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the project, as defined in the grant agreement. It must either be established in an EU Member State or Associated Country as a legal entity created under national law, or it may be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) or any other entity created under EU law. Any type of legal entity, public or private, including universities, research organisations and undertakings can host Principal Investigators and their teams.

It is expected that the research project will be implemented within the territory of the Member States or Associated Countries. This does not exclude field work or other research activities in cases where these must necessarily be conducted outside the European Union or the Associated Countries in order to achieve the scientific objectives of the project/activity<sup>14</sup>.

It is also expected that the host institution will be the only participating legal entity. However, where they bring scientific added value to the project, additional team members may be hosted by

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<sup>13</sup> Please see important information on possible registration of economic operators in the Commission's Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) on final page.

<sup>14</sup> Time spent on such field work or other research activities may count as time spent in the EU or the Associated Countries for the purpose of the Principal Investigator's time commitments.

additional legal entities<sup>15</sup> which will be eligible for funding, and which may be legal entities established anywhere, including outside the European Union or Associated Countries, or international organisations. Legal entities established outside the European Union or Associated Countries shall be eligible for funding provided that their participation is deemed essential for carrying out the action.

Please also refer to Annex 3 - Countries Associated to Horizon 2020 and Restrictions Applying to Some Legal Entities Established in Certain Third Countries.

## **Restrictions on submission of proposals**

The ERC calls are highly competitive. Thousands of high quality proposals are received each year and only outstanding proposals are likely to be funded. In order to maintain the quality and integrity of ERC's evaluation process the Scientific Council decided to introduce restrictions on applications from 2009. These restrictions were extended from 2015.

The restrictions for submission under the ERC Work Programme 2017 are set out in the box below. The Scientific Council may decide in the light of experience that different restrictions will apply in subsequent years. The restrictions related to the outcome of the evaluation in previous calls are designed to allow unsuccessful Principal Investigators the

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<sup>15</sup> Consortia agreements are not required for ERC multi-beneficiary grants.

time necessary to develop a stronger proposal.

The year of an ERC call for proposals refers to the Work Programme under which the call was made and can be established by its call identifier. A 2015 ERC call for proposals is therefore one that was made under the Work Programme 2015 and will have 2015 in the call identifier (for example ERC-2015-StG).

Ineligible or withdrawn proposals do not count against any of the restrictions in the box below.

*A Principal Investigator may submit proposals to different ERC frontier research grant calls made under the same Work Programme, but only the first eligible proposal will be evaluated.*

**No restrictions apply**

*A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as **category A** in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programme 2016 may submit a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2017.*

*A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as **category B at step 2** in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programme 2016 may submit a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2017.*

**Restrictions apply**

*A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as **category B at step 1** in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programme 2016 may not submit a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2017.*

*A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as **category C** in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programmes 2015 or 2016 may not submit a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2017.*

*A Principal Investigator whose proposal was rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity in the calls for proposals under Work Programmes 2015 or 2016 may not submit a proposal to the calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2017.*

*A researcher may participate as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator<sup>16</sup> in only one ERC frontier research project at any one time<sup>17</sup>.*

*A researcher participating as Principal Investigator in an ERC frontier research project may not submit a proposal for another ERC frontier research grant, unless the existing project ends<sup>18</sup> no more than two years after the call deadline.*

*A Principal Investigator who is a serving Panel Member for a 2017 ERC call or who served as a Panel Member for a 2015 ERC call may not apply to a 2017 ERC call for the same type of grant<sup>19</sup>.*

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<sup>16</sup> Projects with Co-Investigators were supported under the Advanced Grant in ERC Work Programmes from 2008 – 2011. A Co-Investigator was a team-member of the Principal Investigator with particular research responsibilities.

<sup>17</sup> A new frontier research project can only start after the duration of the project fixed in a previous frontier research grant agreement has ended.

<sup>18</sup> According to the duration of the project fixed in the previous frontier research grant agreement.

<sup>19</sup> The members of the ERC panels alternate to allow panel members to apply to the ERC calls in alternate years.

## Starting Grant profile

### Objectives

ERC Starting Grants are designed to support excellent Principal Investigators at the career stage at which they are starting their own independent research team or programme. Applicant Principal Investigators must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of their scientific proposal.

### Size of ERC Starting Grants

Starting Grants may be awarded up to a maximum of **EUR 1 500 000** for a period of **5 years**<sup>20</sup>.

However, up to an **additional EUR 500 000** can be requested in the proposal to cover (a) eligible "start-up" costs for Principal Investigators moving to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant and/or (b) the purchase of major equipment and/or (c) access to large facilities<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> The maximum award is reduced pro rata temporis for projects of a shorter duration. This does not apply to ongoing projects.

<sup>21</sup> As any additional funding is to cover major one-off costs it is not subject to pro-rata temporis reduction for projects of shorter duration. All funding requested is assessed during evaluation.

### Profile of the ERC Starting Grant Principal Investigator

The Principal Investigator shall have been awarded their first PhD **at least 2 and up to 7 years prior to 1 January 2017**. The effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD can be reduced in certain properly documented circumstances (see "*Eligible Principal Investigator*" above).

A competitive Starting Grant Principal Investigator must have already shown the potential for research independence and evidence of maturity, for example by having produced **at least one important publication as main author or without the participation of their PhD supervisor**.

Applicant Principal Investigators 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.

## Early achievements track record

*In the Track record (see “Proposal description” below) the applicant Principal Investigator should list (if applicable):*

- 1. Up to five publications 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, highlighting those as main author or without the presence as co-author of their PhD supervisor (properly referenced, field relevant bibliometric indicators may also be included);**
- 2. Research monographs and any translations thereof;**
- 3. Granted patent(s);**
- 4. Invited presentations to internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools;**
- 5. Prizes/ Awards/ Academy memberships.**

### **Expected time commitment of the Starting Grant Principal Investigator**

The question of whether the Principal Investigator is strongly committed to the project and demonstrates the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project forms a key part of the evaluation.

Principal Investigators funded through the ERC Starting Grants shall spend a minimum of 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country and a minimum of 50% of their total working time on the ERC project<sup>22</sup>.

Principal Investigators shall ensure a sufficient time commitment and presence throughout the course of the project to

guarantee its proper execution. The time commitment will be monitored, and in cases where the actual commitment is below the minimum levels set out above, or the levels indicated in the proposal (see proposal description below), appropriate measures may be taken, up to and including reduction of the grant and suspension or termination of grants in accordance with the grant agreement.

It is also expected that Principal Investigators will be able to start their project within six months of receiving an invitation letter from the ERC.

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<sup>22</sup> See Eligible Host Institution above regarding field work.

## Consolidator Grant profile

### Objectives

ERC Consolidator Grants are designed to support excellent Principal Investigators at the career stage at which they may still be consolidating their own independent research team or programme. Applicant Principal Investigators must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of their scientific proposal.

### Size of ERC Consolidator Grants

Consolidator Grants may be awarded up to a maximum of **EUR 2 000 000** for a period of **5 years**<sup>23</sup>.

However, up to an **additional EUR 750 000** can be requested in the proposal to cover (a) eligible "start-up" costs for Principal Investigators moving to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant and/or (b) the purchase of major equipment and/or (c) access to large facilities<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> The maximum award is reduced pro rata temporis for projects of a shorter duration. This does not apply to ongoing projects.

<sup>24</sup> As any additional funding is to cover major one-off costs it is not subject to pro-rata temporis reduction for projects of shorter duration. All funding requested is assessed during evaluation.

### Profile of the ERC Consolidator Grant Principal Investigator

The Principal Investigator shall have been awarded their first PhD **over 7 and up to 12 years prior to 1 January 2017**. The effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD can be reduced in certain properly documented circumstances (see "*Eligible Principal Investigator*" above).

A competitive Consolidator Grant Principal Investigator must have already shown research independence and evidence of maturity, for example by having produced **several important publications as main author or without the participation of their PhD supervisor**. Applicant Principal Investigators 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.

## Early achievements track record

*In the Track Record (see “Proposal description” below) the applicant Principal Investigator should list (if applicable):*

- 1. Up to ten publications 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, highlighting those as main author or without the presence as co-author of their PhD supervisor (properly referenced, field relevant bibliometric indicators may also be included);***
- 2. Research monographs and any translations thereof;***
- 3. Granted patent(s);***
- 4. Invited presentations to internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools;***
- 5. Prizes/ Awards/ Academy memberships.***

### ***Expected time commitment of the Consolidator Grant Principal Investigator***

The question of whether the Principal Investigator is strongly committed to the project and demonstrates the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project forms a key part of the evaluation.

Principal Investigators funded through the ERC Consolidator Grants shall spend a minimum of 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country and a minimum of 40% of their total working time on the ERC project<sup>25</sup>.

Principal Investigators shall ensure a sufficient time commitment and presence throughout the course of the project to

guarantee its proper execution. The time commitment will be monitored, and in cases where the actual commitment is below the minimum levels set out above, or the levels indicated in the proposal (see proposal description below), appropriate measures may be taken, up to and including reduction of the grant and suspension or termination of grants in accordance with the grant agreement.

It is also expected that Principal Investigators will be able to start their project within six months of receiving an invitation letter from the ERC.

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<sup>25</sup> See Eligible Host Institution above regarding field work.



## Advanced Grant profile

### Objectives

Advanced Grants are designed to support excellent Principal Investigators at the career stage at which they are already established research leaders with a recognised track record of research achievements. Applicant Principal Investigators must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of their scientific proposal.

### Size of ERC Advanced Grants

Advanced Grants may be awarded up to a maximum of **EUR 2 500 000** for a period of **5 years**<sup>26</sup>.

However, up to an **additional EUR 1 000 000** can be requested in the proposal to cover (a) eligible "start-up" costs for Principal Investigators moving to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant, and/or (b) the purchase of major equipment and/or (c) access to large facilities<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> The maximum award is reduced pro rata temporis for projects of a shorter duration. This does not apply to ongoing projects.

<sup>27</sup> As any additional funding is to cover major one-off costs it is not subject to pro-rata temporis reduction for projects of shorter duration. All funding requested is assessed during evaluation.

### Profile of the ERC Advanced Grant Principal Investigator

ERC Advanced Grant Principal Investigators 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:

- 10 publications as main 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;
- 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:

- 5 granted patents;
- 10 invited presentations in well-established internationally organised conferences and advanced schools;
- 3 research expeditions led by the applicant Principal Investigator;
- 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 or artistic prizes/awards or membership in well-regarded Academies or artefact with documented use (for example, architectural or engineering design, methods or tools);
- Major contributions to launching the careers of outstanding researchers;
- Recognised leadership in industrial innovation.

## Ten-year track record

*In the Track Record (see “Proposal description” below) the applicant Principal Investigator should list (if applicable):*

- 1. Up to ten representative publications, from the last ten years, as main author (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 conference proceedings of their respective research fields (properly referenced, field relevant bibliometric indicators may also be included);**
- 2. Research monographs and any translations thereof;**
- 3. Granted patents;**
- 4. Invited presentations to internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools;**
- 5. Research expeditions that the applicant Principal Investigator has led;**

6. Organisation of **international conferences** in the field of the applicant (membership in the steering and/or organising committee);

7. **Prizes/ Awards/ Academy memberships;**

8. **Major contributions to the early careers of excellent researchers;**

9. **Examples of leadership in industrial innovation or design.**

If a Principal Investigator so chooses, his or her 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, or if longer by the amount of leave actually taken, for each child born **before or during** the last ten years. For paternity, the track record considered can be extended by the amount of paternity leave actually taken for each child born **before or during** the last ten years. For long-term illness<sup>28</sup>, clinical qualification or national service the track record considered can be extended by the amount of leave actually taken by the Principal Investigator and clearly explained in the career break section of their CV for each incident which occurred **during** the last ten years.

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<sup>28</sup> Over ninety days for the Principal Investigator or a close family member (child, spouse, parent or sibling).

### **Expected time commitment of the Advanced Grant Principal Investigator**

The question of whether the Principal Investigator demonstrates the level of commitment to the project necessary for its execution and demonstrates the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project forms a key part of the evaluation.

Principal Investigators funded through the ERC Advanced Grants shall spend a minimum of 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country and a minimum of 30% of their total working time on the ERC project<sup>29</sup>.

Principal Investigators shall ensure a sufficient time commitment and presence throughout the course of the project to guarantee its proper execution. The time commitment will be monitored, and in cases where the actual commitment is below the minimum levels set out above, or the levels indicated in the proposal (see proposal description below), appropriate measures may be taken, up to and including reduction of the grant and

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<sup>29</sup> See Eligible Host Institution above regarding field work.

suspension or termination of grants in accordance with the grant agreement.

It is also expected that Principal Investigators will be able to start their

project within six months of receiving an invitation letter from the ERC.

## Proposal submission and description

### Proposal Submission

Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant proposals are submitted by the Principal Investigator who has scientific responsibility for the project, on behalf of the host institution.

*Proposal submission is made electronically. **Early registration and submission is strongly recommended and should be done as early as possible in advance of the call deadline.***

For each call, Information for Applicants<sup>30</sup> is published on the ERC website and Participants Portal, which describes in detail how the electronic forms should be completed.

### Proposal description

A complete proposal shall consist of the following elements<sup>31</sup>.

***Extended Synopsis: 5 pages***

***Curriculum Vitae: 2 pages***

***Track Record: 2 pages***

<sup>30</sup> As well as other relevant documents, including the ERC rules for submission and evaluation.

<sup>31</sup> Incomplete proposals may be declared ineligible, see "Eligibility criteria" above.

***Scientific Proposal: 15 pages***

***Host Institution Binding Statement of Support***

***Ethics Review Table***

***PhD record and supporting documentation for eligibility checking*** (for Starting and Consolidator Grants only).

*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 in the Information for Applicants. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement may be declared ineligible.*

*In fairness to all applicants, **these page limits will be applied strictly.** 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).*

**Extended Synopsis:** This should be a concise presentation of the full scientific proposal, with particular attention to the ground-breaking nature of the research project and the feasibility of the outlined scientific approach. At step 1 the full scientific proposal is not assessed so all essential information must be covered in the synopsis. The applicant will choose a primary evaluation panel and may also indicate a secondary evaluation panel. The applicant should indicate when he or she believes that the proposal is of a cross-panel or cross-domain nature.

**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 on-going application for work related to the proposal. Any research career gaps and/or unconventional paths should be clearly

explained so that they can be fairly assessed by the evaluation panels.

**Track Record:** The Principal Investigator must provide a list of achievements reflecting his or her track record. The type of achievements expected for Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant applicant Principal Investigators are set out in the relevant profiles above.

**Scientific Proposal:** Description of the scientific and technical aspects of the project, demonstrating the ground-breaking nature of the research, its potential impact and research methodology. The proposal should also clearly specify the percentage of the applicant's total working time that will be spent in the EU or an Associated Country and the percentage of the applicant's total working time that will be devoted to the project, as well as a full estimation of the real project cost.

*Applications where the Principal Investigator proposes to commit less time in the EU or an Associated Country or to the project than the minimum percentages set out under the profiles of Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant Principal Investigators above **will be declared ineligible.***

## Evaluation procedure and criteria

### Evaluation procedure

A **single submission of the full proposal** will be followed by a **two-step evaluation**.

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 independent experts working remotely.

Applicant Principal Investigators can request during the electronic proposal submission that up to three specific persons should not act as an evaluator in the evaluation of their proposal<sup>32</sup>.

**At step 1**, the extended synopsis and the Principal Investigator's track record and CV will be assessed (and **not** the full scientific proposal). **At step 2** the complete version of the retained proposals will be assessed (including the full scientific proposal).

The allocation of the proposals to the various panels will be based on the expressed preference of the applicant Principal Investigator (see "*Proposal description*" above). Proposals may be allocated to a different panel with the agreement of both Panel Chairs concerned.

The panel to which a proposal is allocated may request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional remote experts.

*The ERC strongly encourages **multi and interdisciplinary research proposals**. Proposals of this type are evaluated by ERC's regular panels with the appropriate external expertise.*

Proposals will be retained for step 2 based on the outcome of the evaluation at step 1 (see below) and a budgetary cut-off level of three times the panel's indicative budget.

Principal Investigators whose proposals are retained for step 2 of the evaluation for the Starting and Consolidator Grants will be invited for an interview to present their project to the evaluation panel, meeting in Brussels.

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<sup>32</sup> The persons identified may be excluded from the evaluation of the proposal concerned, as long as it remains possible to have the proposal evaluated.

### *Evaluation criteria*

For all ERC frontier research grants, **scientific excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation**. It will be applied in conjunction to the evaluation of both: the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of the research project; and the intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment of the Principal Investigator.

During the evaluation, 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 should be taken into account. Benchmarks set in the relevant profiles above including the expected minimum working times to be spent on the ERC project, will also be taken into consideration.

In general, projects wholly or largely consisting in the collation and compilation of existing material in new databases, editions or collections are unlikely to constitute ground-breaking or "frontier" research in themselves, however useful such resources might be to subsequent original research. Such projects are therefore unlikely to be recommended for funding by the ERC's panels.

Plagiarism detection software may be used to analyse proposals submitted to the ERC.

The detailed evaluation elements applying to the excellence of the research project and the Principal Investigator are set out below.



## **1. Research Project**

### **Ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility**

#### **Starting, Consolidator and Advanced**

##### ***Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project***

*To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?*

*To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines)?*

*To what extent is the proposed research high risk/high gain?*

##### ***Scientific Approach***

*To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the extent that the proposed research is high risk/high gain (based on the Extended Synopsis)?*

*To what extent is the proposed research methodology appropriate to achieve the goals of the project (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?*

*To what extent does the proposal involve the development of novel methodology (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?*

*To what extent are the proposed timescales and resources necessary and properly justified (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?*

## **2. Principal Investigator**

### **Intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment**

#### ***Starting and Consolidator***

##### ***Intellectual capacity and creativity***

*To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to propose and conduct ground-breaking research?*

*To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking?*

*To what extent have the achievements of the PI typically gone beyond the state of the art?*

##### ***Commitment***

*To what extent does the PI demonstrate the level of commitment to the project necessary for its execution and the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project (minimum 50% for Starting and 40% for Consolidator of the total working time on it) (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?*

#### ***Advanced***

##### ***Intellectual capacity and creativity***

*To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to propose and conduct ground-breaking research?*

*To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking?*

*To what extent have the achievements of the PI typically gone beyond the state of the art?*

*To what extent has the PI demonstrated sound leadership in the training and advancement of young scientists?*

##### ***Commitment***

*To what extent does the PI demonstrate the level of commitment to the project necessary for its execution and the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project (minimum 30% of the total working time on it) (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?*

## **Outcome of evaluation**

At each evaluation step, each proposal will be evaluated and marked for each of the two main elements of the proposal: the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of the research project; and the intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment of the Principal Investigator.

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

At the end of **step 1** of the evaluation applicants will be informed that their proposal:

- A.** is of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;
- B.** is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;
- C.** is not of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation.

At the end of **step 2** of the evaluation applicants will be informed that their proposal:

- A.** fully meets the ERC's excellence criterion and is recommended for funding **if sufficient funds are available**;
- B.** meets some but not all elements of the ERC's excellence criterion and will not be funded.

In addition, once the evaluation of their proposal has been completed, applicants will receive an evaluation report which will include the ranking range of their proposal among the proposals evaluated by the panel.

Projects recommended for funding will be funded by the ERC if sufficient funds are available. Proposals will be funded in priority order based on their rank.

**Applicants may also be subject to restrictions on submitting proposals to future ERC calls based on the outcome of the evaluation. Applicants will need to check the restrictions in place for each call (for 2017 calls see restrictions on submission of proposals under “Eligibility criteria” above).**

# Proof of Concept Grant

**for Principal Investigators of  
ERC frontier research grants**

## **Objectives**

Frontier research often generates unexpected or new opportunities for commercial or societal application. The ERC Proof of Concept Grants aim to maximise the value of the excellent research that the ERC funds, by funding further work (i.e. activities which were not scheduled to be funded by the original ERC frontier research grant) to verify the innovation potential of ideas arising from ERC funded projects. Proof of Concept Grants are therefore on offer only to Principal Investigators whose proposals draw substantially on their ERC funded research.

## **Ethical Principles**

All proposals will be subject to ethics review as with proposals for the ERC's frontier research grants.

## **Eligibility Criteria**

### **Eligible Principal Investigator**

All Principal Investigators in an ERC frontier research project, that is either on going or has ended<sup>33</sup> less than 12 months before 1 January 2017, are eligible to participate and apply for an ERC Proof of Concept Grant.

A Principal Investigator whose proposal was rejected on the grounds of a breach of

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<sup>33</sup> Where the duration of the project fixed in the ERC Grant Agreement has ended.

research integrity in the calls for proposals under Work Programmes 2015 or 2016 may not submit a proposal to the calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2017.

### **Eligible projects**

All proposals must be complete and be submitted before the relevant call deadline. Incomplete proposals may be declared ineligible (See ERC Proof of Concept Grant proposal submission and description below).

The content of the proposal must relate to the objectives and to the grant type set out in the call, as defined in this work programme. A proposal will only be deemed ineligible on grounds of 'scope' in clear-cut cases.

Where there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision following 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 will be declared ineligible and not considered any further.

Applicants will need to demonstrate the relation between the idea to be taken to proof of concept and the ERC frontier research project (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced or Synergy) in question.

More than one Proof of Concept Grant may be awarded per ERC funded frontier research project but only one Proof of

Concept project may be running at any one time for the same ERC frontier research project<sup>34</sup>.

### **Eligible Host Institution**

The host institution (Applicant Legal Entity<sup>35</sup>) must engage the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the proof of concept project as defined in the grant agreement and must be established in a Member State or an Associated Country as a legal entity created under national law<sup>36</sup>.

Please also refer to Annex 3 - Countries Associated to Horizon 2020 and Restrictions Applying to Some Legal Entities Established in Certain Third Countries.

### **Maximum size of grant and grant assessment**

The financial contribution will be up to a maximum of **EUR 150 000** for a period of **18 months**. The ERC expects that normally, proof of concept projects should be completed within 12 months. However, to allow for those projects that require

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<sup>34</sup> This limit also applies to Synergy projects.

<sup>35</sup> Please see important information on possible registration of economic operators in the Commission's Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) on final page.

<sup>36</sup> It may also be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), or an entity created under EU law. Any type of legal entity, public or private, including universities, research organisations as well as undertakings can host the Principal Investigator and their team.

more preparation time, projects will be signed for 18 months. Given this initial flexibility, extensions of the duration of proof of concept projects may be granted only exceptionally.

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 award. The funding requested by the Principal Investigator must be fully justified by an estimation of the actual costs for the proposed activities.

The Union financial contribution will take the form of the reimbursement of up to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and of flat-rate financing of indirect costs on the basis of 25% of the total eligible direct costs<sup>37</sup>. The level of the awarded grant represents a maximum overall figure – the final amount to be paid must be justified on the basis of the costs actually incurred for the project.

The indicative budget for this call for 2017 is **EUR 20 000 000** (approximately one-third of which will be for each of the three evaluation rounds following three specific deadlines - proposals submitted before each cut-off date will be evaluated with the proposals submitted before the same cut-off date).

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<sup>37</sup> 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.

## **ERC Proof of Concept Grant proposal submission and description**

### **Proposal Submission**

Funding for the Proof of Concept Grant will be awarded through a call for proposals. Proposals are submitted by a single 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 at any time from the opening date of the call until the final deadline and will be evaluated and selected in three rounds, based on three specific deadlines. A Principal Investigator may submit only one application per call. Ineligible or withdrawn proposals do not count against this limit.

*Proposal submission is made electronically. **Early registration and submission is strongly recommended and should be done as early as possible in advance of the call deadline.***

### **Proposal description**

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

- 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 and

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

- Outline the **innovation potential** of the idea to be taken to proof of concept. This should include a clear description of how the proof of concept activities will lead to a commercial or social innovation.
- Outline the **economic and/or societal impact** expected from the project, including the identification of customer and societal benefits; definition of the process to be followed leading to concrete application; initial steps of analysis of the advantages of the project's outcomes over existing products, policies, or processes; and, where applicable, brief explanation of the activities to be undertaken in terms of clarification of IPR position and strategy, testing in real world contexts, plans for contacts with commercial and/or societal partners.
- Outline a reasonable and plausible **plan of the activities** proposed for establishing the feasibility of the project, including a list of requested resources necessary for the implementation of the proposed project and a full estimation of the real project cost.
- **Host Institution Binding Statement of Support.**
- **Ethics Review** table.

*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 in the Information for Applicants. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement may be declared ineligible.*

*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 (peer reviewers will only be asked to evaluate, and will be under no obligation to read beyond, the material presented within the page limit).*

## **ERC Proof of Concept Grant evaluation**

A single-stage submission and single-step evaluation procedure will be used. The evaluation will be conducted by independent experts. These experts may work remotely and may if necessary meet as an evaluation panel as set out below on the application of the evaluation criteria.

### **Evaluation criteria**

Proof of Concept Grants are awarded in relation to an existing ERC-funded project.

The activities to be funded shall draw substantially on this scientifically excellent ERC-funded research. However the additional funding is not aimed at extending the original research.

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

The evaluation criteria for selection of proposals for Proof of Concept Grants are excellence in innovation potential, impact and quality and efficiency of the implementation as below:



## **1. Excellence in Innovation potential**

*Does the proposed proof of concept activity greatly help move the output of research towards the initial steps of a process leading to a commercial or social innovation?*

## **2. Impact**

*2.1 Is the project to be taken to proof of concept expected to generate economic and/or societal benefits which are appropriately identified in the proposal?*

*2.2 Does the proposal indicate a suitable process that is designed to result in a concrete application, including outlining a process of commercialisation or a process of generating social benefits?*

*The proposal should include:*

- plans for the analysis of whether the project's outcomes are innovative or distinctive compared to existing solutions;*
- plans for seeking confirmation of the actual effectiveness of the project's results;*
- plans to clarify the IPR position and strategy<sup>38</sup>;*
- plans for setting up contacts with industry partners, societal organisations or potential 'end users' of the projects' results.*

## **3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Quality of the proof of concept plan)**

*Does the proposal provide a reasonable and acceptable plan of activities against clearly identified objectives and towards establishing the feasibility of the project?*

*This should include:*

- a sound project-management plan, including appropriate risk and contingency planning;*
- demonstration that the activities will be conducted by persons well qualified for the purpose;*
- demonstration that the budget requested is necessary for the implementation of the project and properly justified.*

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<sup>38</sup> 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 Grant Agreement in respect of protecting IPR capable of industrial or commercial application. If any foreground was potentially protectable in the pre-existing ERC project, beneficiaries had the legal obligation to seek for adequate and effective protection according to the Rules for Participation and the ERC Model Grant Agreement.

### **Outcome of evaluation**

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 marks which they received from peer reviewers sorted by the order in which the evaluation criteria appear above. 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 ranking.

# Other Actions

The different actions described in this chapter aim to allow the Scientific Council of the ERC to carry out its duties and mandate, including its obligations to establish the ERC's overall strategy and to monitor and quality control the programme's implementation from the scientific perspective.

### **Support to call and programme monitoring, and evaluation**

#### **1. Qualitative evaluation of frontier nature of ERC funded research**

The ERC will continue the work started under Work Programmes 2015 and 2016 to analyse the scientific output of its funded projects with a particular focus on the frontier nature of the research, and any potential research breakthroughs and discoveries. During this analysis the ERC will be assisted by experts.

*Type of action: Experts.*

*Indicative budget: EUR 500 000 from the 2017 budget.*

#### **2. Evaluation of proposals and project monitoring**

The ERC uses appointed independent experts during the evaluation of proposals and the preparation of the ERC calls, for ethics review and for the monitoring of ongoing projects. The ERC also reimburses the costs of Principal Investigators invited to attend interviews during the evaluation of their proposals.

*Type of action: Experts.*

*Indicative budget: EUR 10 517 000 from the 2017 budget.*

### **Support to the ERC Scientific Council**

#### **3. ERC Scientific Council Standing Identification Committee**

Future members of the Scientific Council shall be appointed by the Commission 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 of EUR 450 per day charged to the operational budget allocated to the ERC.

*Type of action: Experts. This activity will be directly implemented by the Commission services (DG RTD).*

*Indicative budget: EUR 40 000 from the 2017 budget.*

#### **4. Support to the Vice-Chairs**

Support will be provided to the three Vice-Chairs of the Scientific Council to ensure adequate local administrative assistance at their home institutes for their tasks of assisting the President of the ERC in representing the ERC and organising its work. For this purpose, the ERC Executive Agency will provide a grant to an identified beneficiary.

Type of action: Grant to an identified beneficiary.

Legal entity: University of Copenhagen, Universitetsparken 1, DK – 2100 Copenhagen, Denmark.

Indicative budget: EUR 300 000 from the 2017 budget.

## **5. Honoraria and meeting expenses for Scientific Council members**

In recognition of their personal commitment, the Scientific Council members 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 those travel and subsistence expenses related to the performance of tasks of the Scientific Council shall be charged to the operational budget allocated to the ERC.

Type of action: Experts.

Indicative budget: EUR 555 000 from the 2017 budget.

## **Union Contribution**

The Union financial contribution will take the form of the reimbursement of up to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and of flat-rate financing of indirect costs on the basis of 25% of the total eligible direct costs<sup>39</sup>. The level of the

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<sup>39</sup> Excluding the direct costs for subcontracting, the costs for financial support to third parties and the

awarded grant represents a maximum overall figure – the final amount to be paid must be justified on the basis of the costs actually incurred for the project.

## **Proposal Evaluation**

Proposals for grants under this part will be evaluated as follows.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

Proposals under this part must be focused on requirements specified in the work programme and/or call for proposals.

Actions under this part are open to legal entities<sup>40</sup> established in a Member State or an Associated Country as a legal entity created under national law, International European Interest Organisations (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) or an entity created under EU law. Legal entities established in countries outside the EU or Associated Countries and international organisations are also eligible.

Please also refer to Annex 3 - Countries Associated to Horizon 2020 and Restrictions Applying to Some Legal Entities Established in Certain Third Countries.

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costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the host institution.

<sup>40</sup> Please see important information on possible registration of economic operators in the Commission's Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) on final page.

All proposals must be complete and be submitted before the relevant deadline. A complete proposal entails all requested elements. Incomplete proposals may be declared ineligible.

The content of the proposal must relate to the objectives of the grant and/or call for proposals, as defined in this work programme and/or call. A proposal will only be deemed ineligible on grounds of 'scope' in clear-cut cases.

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

## Evaluation Criteria

### **1. Excellence related to the objectives of the grant and/or call for proposals**

*Are the objectives of the proposed project consistent with the requirements specified in the work programme and/or call for proposals? Do they, where appropriate, correspond to, or go beyond, best current practice?*

### **2. Impact**

*Will the project have a substantial impact in the context of the ERC objectives?*

### **3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation**

*Is the proposed methodology and work plan effective in reaching the goals of the project? Do they ensure the highest quality and/or utility of results?*

## Application of Evaluation Criteria

Each evaluation criterion will be marked on a scale of 0 to 5 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.

## Budget

|                                    | <i>2017 budget in EUR million<br/>(rounded)</i> |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Main Calls</b>                  |   |
| ERC-2017-StG                       | 605   |
| ERC-2017-CoG                       | 575   |
| ERC-2017-AdG                       | 567   |
| ERC-2017-PoC                       | 20  |
| <b>Other Actions</b>               |   |
| Experts                            | 11.61   |
| Grants to identified beneficiaries | 0.3   |
| Other calls for proposals          |   |
| Public procurements                |   |
| <b>Estimated total budget</b>      | <b>1778.84</b>                                  |

The budget amounts for 2017 are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the draft budget for 2017 after the adoption of the budget for 2017 by the budgetary authority or if the budget is not adopted as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths.

Budgetary figures given in this work programme are indicative. Unless otherwise stated, final budgets may vary following the evaluation of proposals. The

final figures may vary by up to 20% with respect to those indicated in this work programme for the following budgeted activities:

- Total expenditure for each call for proposals;
- Any repartition of the call budget within a call, up to 20% of the total expenditure of the call;

- Evaluation and monitoring, up to 20% of the total expenditure for all these activities;
- Each other individual action not implemented through calls for proposals.

If additional credits become available the Scientific Council shall set the rules by which they will be allocated to the calls based on a judgement of the scientific

need, number of applications and predicted success rates of the calls.

The budget figures given in this table are rounded to two decimal points.



# Annexes

## Annex 1

### Primary panel structure and description

#### *Physical Sciences & Engineering*

**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, biophysics.

**PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences**

Analytical chemistry, chemical theory, physical chemistry/chemical physics.

**PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials**

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**

Electrical, electronic, communication, optical and systems engineering.

**PE8 Products and Processes Engineering**

Product design, process design and control, construction methods, civil engineering, energy processes, 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, cryology, ecology, global environmental change, biogeochemical cycles, natural resources management.

## *Life Sciences*

### **LS1 Molecular and Structural Biology and Biochemistry**

Molecular synthesis, modification and interaction, biochemistry, biophysics, structural biology, metabolism, signal transduction.

### **LS2 Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics and Systems Biology**

Molecular and population 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, stem cell biology.

### **LS4 Physiology, Pathophysiology and Endocrinology**

Organ physiology, pathophysiology, endocrinology, metabolism, ageing, tumorigenesis, cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome.

### **LS5 Neurosciences and Neural Disorders**

Neurobiology, neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, neurochemistry, neuropharmacology, neuroimaging, systems neuroscience, neurological and psychiatric disorders.

### **LS6 Immunity and Infection**

The immune system and related disorders, infectious agents and diseases, prevention and treatment of infection.

### **LS7 Diagnostics, Therapies, Applied Medical Technology 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, microbial ecology.

### **LS9 Applied Life Sciences and Non-Medical Biotechnology**

Applied plant and animal sciences; food sciences; forestry; industrial, environmental and non-medical biotechnologies, nanobiotechnology, bioengineering; synthetic and chemical biology; biomimetics; bioremediation.

## ***Social Sciences & Humanities***

### **SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations**

Economics, finance and management.

### **SH2 Institutions, Values, Environment and Space**

Political science, law, sustainability science, geography, regional studies and planning.

### **SH3 The Social World, Diversity, Population**

Sociology, social psychology, demography, education, communication.

### **SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity**

Cognitive science, psychology, linguistics, philosophy of mind.

### **SH5 Cultures and Cultural Production**

Literature, philology, cultural studies, anthropology, study of the arts, philosophy.

### **SH6 The Study of the Human Past**

Archaeology and history.

## Annex 2

### ERC policy on PhD and equivalent doctoral degrees

#### **1. The necessity of ascertaining PhD equivalence**

In order to be eligible to apply to the ERC Starting or Consolidator 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 candidate selects an academic adviser and a subject for the dissertation, is assigned a dissertation committee, and designs his or 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 candidate'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 or 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 for useful references on degrees that will be considered equivalent to the PhD:

- EURYDICE: "Examinations, qualifications and titles - Second edition, Volume 1, European glossary on education" published in 2004<sup>41</sup>. Please note that some titles that belong to the same

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<sup>41</sup> <http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/european-glossary-on-education-pbEC3212292/>

category with doctoral degrees (ISCED 6 – 1997 classification or ISCED 8 – 2011 classification<sup>42</sup>) may correspond to the intermediate steps towards the completion of doctoral education and they should not be therefore considered as PhD-equivalent.

- List of research doctorate titles awarded in the United States that enjoy the same status and represent variants of the PhD within certain fields. These doctorate titles are also recognised as PhD-equivalent by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF)<sup>43</sup>.

### ***5. First Professional Degrees (for medical doctors please see below):***

It is important to recognise 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. Medical Doctors (or applicants holding a degree in medicine):***

For medical doctors (or applicants holding a degree in medicine), **a medical doctor degree will not be accepted by itself as**

**equivalent to a PhD award**. To be considered an eligible Principal Investigator, medical doctors (or applicants holding a degree in medicine) need to provide the certificates of **both a medical doctor degree and a PhD or proof of an appointment that requires doctoral equivalency** (e.g. 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 medical doctor degree completion plus two years is the time reference for calculation of the eligibility time-window (i.e. 4 - 9 years past the medical doctor degree for Starters, and over 9 - 14 years past the medical doctor degree for Consolidators).

For medical doctors who have been awarded both an MD and a PhD, **the date of the earliest degree that makes the applicant eligible** takes precedence in the calculation of the eligibility time-window (2 - 7 years after PhD or 4 - 9 years past the medical doctor degree for Starters, and over 7 - 12 years after PhD or 9 - 14 years past the medical doctor degree for Consolidators)

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<sup>42</sup>

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf>

<sup>43</sup>

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-structure-us.html>

## Annex 3

### Countries associated to Horizon 2020 and restrictions applying to some legal entities established in certain third countries

Please check the online manual for up-to-date information on the current position for Associated Countries<sup>44</sup>.

The eligibility criteria formulated in Commission Notice Nr. 2013/C- 205/05 (OJEU C-205 of 19.07.2013) shall apply for all actions under this Work Programme, including with respect to third parties receiving financial support in the cases where the respective action involves financial support to third parties by grant beneficiaries in accordance with article 137 of the EU's Financial Regulation.

Some entities from third countries are covered by the Council sanctions in place and are not eligible to participate in Union programmes. Please see: the consolidated list of persons, groups and entities subject to EU financial sanctions<sup>45</sup>.

Given that the EU does not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, legal persons established in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea or the city of Sevastopol are not eligible to

participate in any capacity. This criterion also applies in cases where the respective action involves financial support given by grant beneficiaries to third parties established in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea or the city of Sevastopol in accordance with Article 137 of the EU's Financial Regulation. Should the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol end, this Work Programme shall be revised.

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[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/international-cooperation\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/international-cooperation_en.htm)

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[http://eeas.europa.eu/cfsp/sanctions/consolidated-list\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/cfsp/sanctions/consolidated-list_en.htm).

## **Prior Information of Candidates, Tenderers, Grant Applicants and remunerated experts - registration of information in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES).**

The Commission operates the EDES, a system which has been established under Articles 105(a) and 108 of the Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2015/1929 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 October 2015 amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union<sup>46</sup> ('the Financial Regulation'). The EDES is used for the early detection of risks related to candidates, tenderers, grant applicants, beneficiaries of contracts and grants and linked third parties, as well as remunerated external experts, with a view to protecting the EU's financial interests.

Candidates, tenderers, grant applicants, remunerated external experts and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations mentioned in Article 106(1) of the Financial Regulation, 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 EDES, and communicated to the persons and entities referred to in Article 108 (1), (2), (4) and (12) of the Financial Regulation, in relation to the award or the execution of a procurement contract, a grant agreement or an expert contract.

NB: The EDES has replaced the Early Warning System (EWS) and the Central Exclusion Database (CED) as of 1 January 2016.

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<sup>46</sup> OJ L 286, 30.10.2015, p. 1–29