

The European Research Council

Excellence in Research ERC & MSCA in Romania

Marilena Plesu

Consolidator Grant Call Co-Coordinator

21 November 2024

Grand Hotel Bucharest, Romania



European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

Overview

- ERC and ERC Grant Schemes
- Eligibility
- Novelties in Evaluation since ERC Work Programme 2024
- Tips
- Your Questions



ERC is part of Horizon Europe



EUR 16 billion
ERC budget in Horizon Europe



17%
of the entire
Horizon Europe budget



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission



About the ERC

ERC Scientific Council

Life Sciences



Geneviève
ALMOUZH
(Molecular Cell Biology)



Liselotte
HØJGAARD
(Medicine)



Leszek
KACZMAREK
(Neurobiology)



Dirk
INZÉ
(Plant Biology)



Luke
O'NEILL
(Biochemistry & Immunology)



Jesper
SVEJSTRUP
Vice-President
(Biochemistry)



Maria
LEPTIN
ERC President
(Cell Biology)



Gerd
GIGERENZER
(Psychology)

Eystein
JANSEN
Vice-President
(Earth Science)



Social Sciences and Humanities



Harriet
BULKELEY
(Geography)



Mercedes
GARCÍA-ARENAL
(History)



Torsten
PERSSON
(Economics)



Giovanni
SARTOR
(Law)



Milena
ŽIČ FUCHS
(Linguistics)

Physical Sciences and Engineering



Ben
FERINGA
(Organic Chemistry)



Tom
HENZINGER
(Computer Science)



Chryssa
KOUVELIOTOU
(High-Energy Astrophysics)



Sylvie
LORENTE
(Mechanical Engineering)



László
LOVÁSZ
(Mathematics)



Bjorn
OTTERSTEN
(Electrical Engineering)



Nicola
SPALDIN
(Materials Theory)



Alice
VALKÁROVÁ
(Physics)



Evaluation



Excellence

is the sole evaluation criterion

Excellence of the Research Project

- Ground breaking nature
- Ambition, scientific impact
- Scientific Approach

Excellence of the Principal Investigator

- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity
- Commitment

Why to apply for ERC grant?

ERC offers independence, recognition & visibility to:

- work on a **research topic of own choice**;
- gain **financial autonomy** for five years;
- negotiate the **best conditions of work** with the host institution;
- attract **excellent team members** and **collaborators** from anywhere in the world;
- **move with the grant** to any place in Europe if desired (“portability of grants”);
- win **additional funding**.

ERC funding schemes



Starting Grant

Size of the grant: up to €1.5 million + up to €1 million
Duration: up to 5 years
2-7 years of experience since completion of their PhD



Consolidator Grant

Size of the grant: up to €2 million + up to €1 million
Duration: up to 5 years
7-12 years of experience since completion of their PhD



Advanced Grant

Size of the grant: up to €2.5 million + up to €1 million
Duration: up to 5 years
Already established research leaders with a recognised track record of research achievements



ERC funding schemes



Synergy grant

Size of the grant: €10 million + up to €4 million

Duration: up to 6 years

Be composed of 2 to 4 PIs and their research groups (**one PI can be based outside EU/AC**)



Proof of Concept

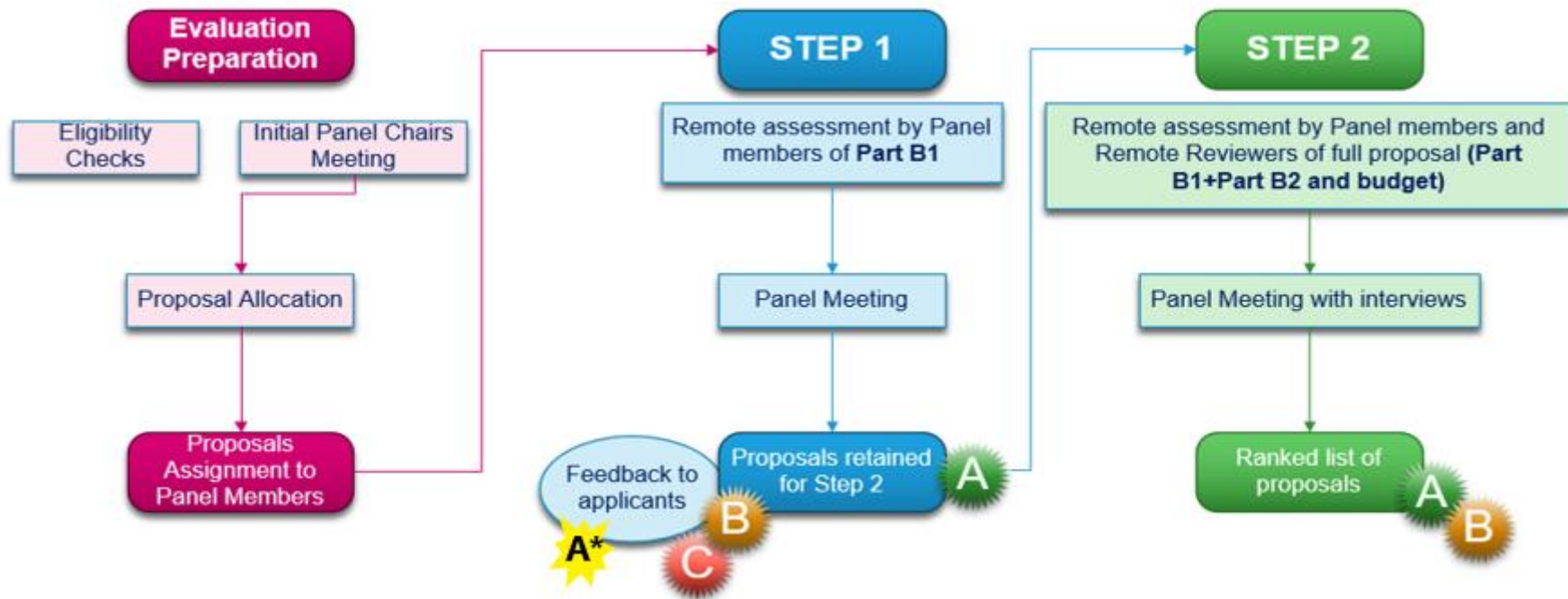
Size of the grant: lump sum €150 000

Duration: up to 18 months

Demonstrate that the idea funded by the original ERC grant has innovation potential and significant economic or societal benefits

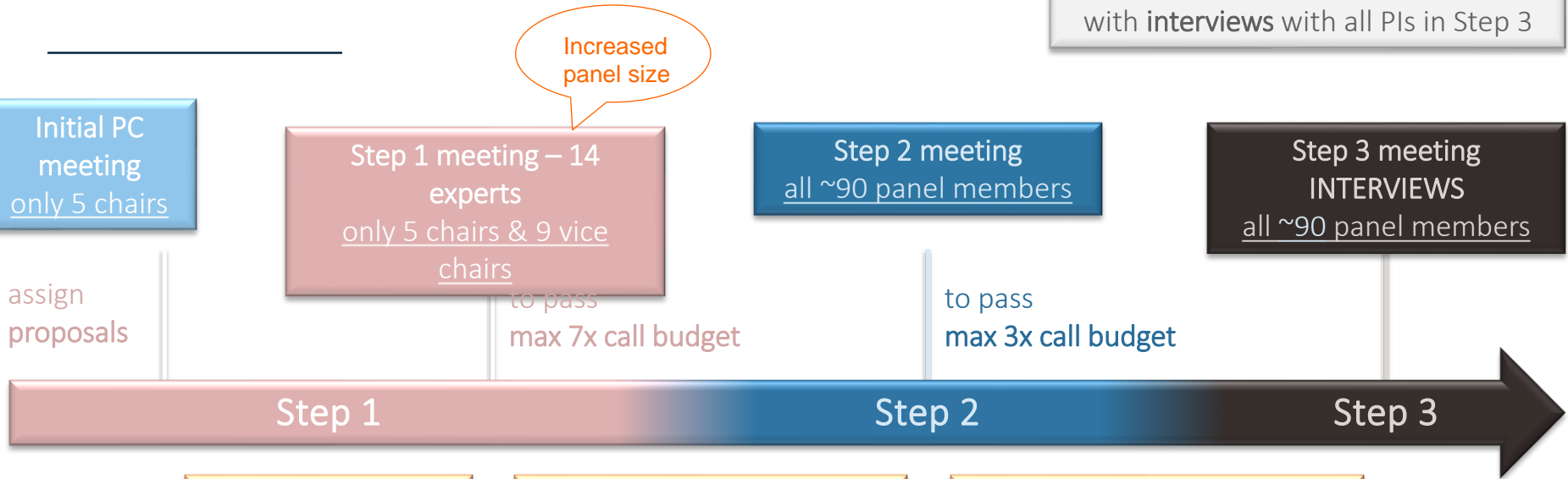
ERC evaluation process

One time submission, Two steps evaluation (StG, CoG, AdG)



Evaluation Process Overview – SyG 2025

3-STEP EVALUATION
with interviews with all PIs in Step 3



Remote Phase 1

Review Part B1
by ~90 PMs & ~150 PEVs*
as generalists: ~ 5
reviews/proposal

Remote Phase 2

Review Part B1 + B2
by ~90 PMs as generalists
& ~4-6 External Reviewers
per proposal as
specialists:

~8-12 reviews/proposal

Remote Phase 3

Preparation of **interview** questions
& strategy (**NO** new reviews)

PM = panel member

*PEV = panel evaluator

(panel member serving in another ERC call)

Overview

- ERC and ERC Grant Schemes
- Eligibility
- Novelties in Evaluation since ERC Work Programme 2024
- Tips
- Your Questions



Preparing your proposal

... make sure you are eligible!

1. Reference date for the calculation of the Eligibility window for StG and CoG: **1st of January of the year of the Call**
 - StG2025:** 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2022
 - CoG2025:** 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2017
 - *Extensions of eligibility window possible for documented cases*
2. If you previously applied to an ERC call, check **resubmission restrictions**
3. Time **commitment on the project:** Min. 50% (StG), 40% (CoG), 30% (AdG and SyG)
4. Minimum 50% of PI **working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country**

Since WP2023

Change in PhD eligibility reference date



➤ New “PhD eligibility reference date” rule:

*The reference date towards the calculation of the eligibility period shall be the **certified date of the successful defence**. Document provided by the awarding institution.*

- Allows for the eligibility window to reflect the *real **academic age*** instead of the “administrative age” of the PI;
- Puts an end to confusion about “award according to national rules” - brings clarity to applicants;
- Most PhD certificates include the defence date;
- If the PhD certificate does not show defence date, the candidate has to ask for written confirmation from the awarding institution.

StG and CoG: Extension of the Eligibility windows

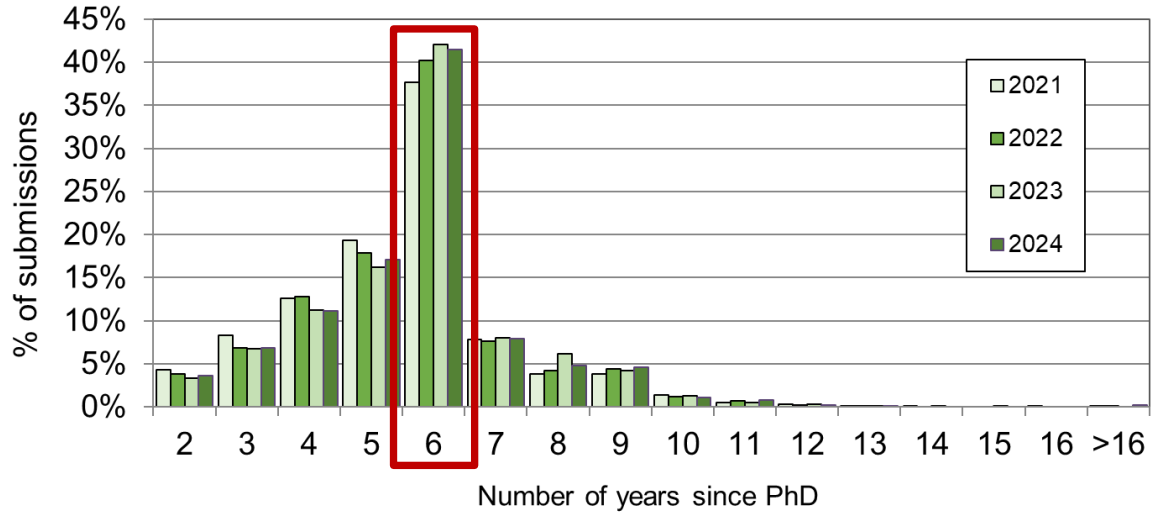
For documented situations occurring before the call deadline

- **Maternity leave:** +18 months for each child born before/after the date of successful defence of their first PhD degree;
- **Paternity leave:** documented time taken for each child born before/after the date of successful defence of their first PhD degree;
- **Long-term illness** (>90 days for the PI or a close family member) or **national service:** documented amount of leave taken for each incident that occurred after the date of successful defence of their first PhD degree;
- **Clinical training:** documented amount of clinical training received **after** the reference date of the 1st eligible degree, **up to a maximum of 4 years;**
- **Seeking asylum:** documented time of the PI's inability to work before the call deadline due to seeking asylum, which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their first PhD degree;
- **Disability:** Extension corresponding to the reduced amount of working time (including leave taken) and/or the degree of disability as documented by the PI, before the call deadline, and which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their first PhD degree;
- **Major disasters:** Extension by the documented time of a PI's inability to work before the call deadline due to a major disaster, which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their first PhD degree.

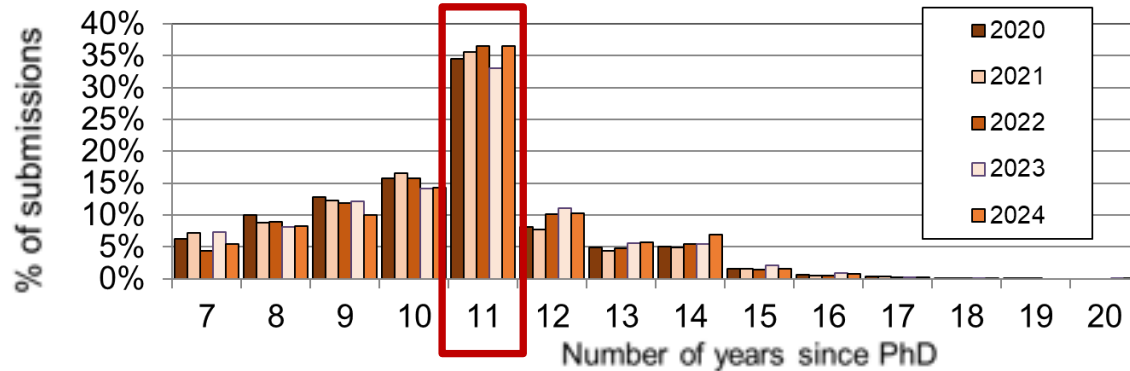


Submissions by years since PhD

STG 2021-2024



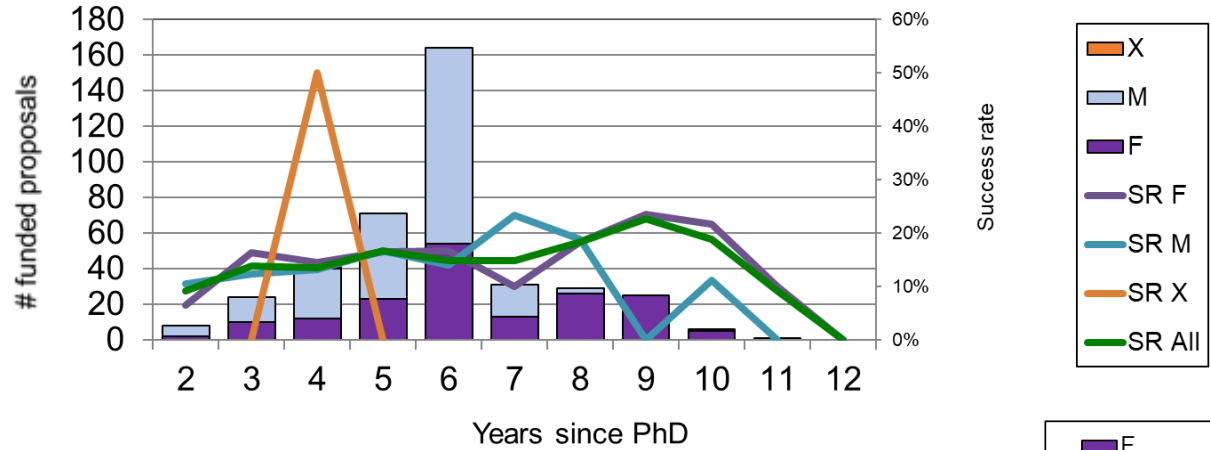
COG 2020-2024



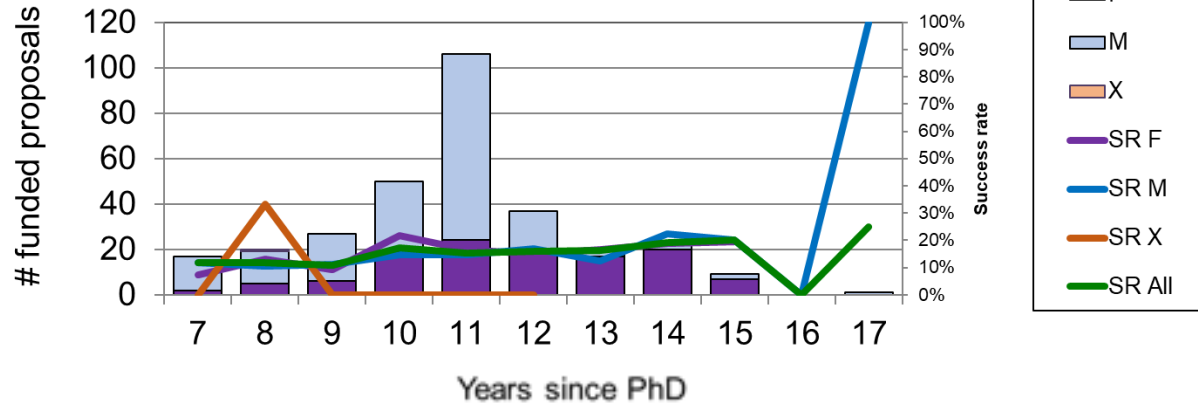
Shall I apply now or wait another year?

STG and COG 2023 - Results of step 2

STG 2023



COG 2023



Overview

- ERC and ERC Grant Schemes
- Eligibility
- **Novelties in Evaluation since ERC Work Programme 2024**
- Tips
- Your Questions



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission



Summary of Novelties – As from ERC Work Programme 2024

<p>FOCUS ON RESEARCH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ground-breaking• Ambitious• Feasible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 10 research outputs• Short narrative• Career breaks, diverse paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 44 proposals in step 2 (exc. SyG)• 'A not invited' can reapply next year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AdG only: One amount payment based on the work done (not success)• Additional funding and portability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Panel – SH8• Changes in description of some panels
Assessment	No prescriptive PI profiles	Evaluation Procedure	Lump Sum Pilot	Panels

ERC President, Prof. Maria Leptin, explains the background and rationale to the recent changes in the evaluation process of ERC grant proposals: [Evaluation of research proposals: The why and what of the ERC's recent changes | ERC \(europa.eu\)](#)



Novelties as from the ERC Work Programme 2024 (I)

Research assessment

Focus on the research project



- ERC panels will primarily evaluate the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of the project
- They will also evaluate the intellectual capacity, creativity, and commitment of the applicant, with a focus on the extent to which she/he has the excellence and required scientific expertise to successfully execute the proposed project

Broad assessment of the applicant



- Curriculum Vitae and Track Record: one document, structured
- Up to 10 research outputs that demonstrate how the applicant has advanced knowledge
- Selected examples of significant peer recognition
- Noteworthy contributions to the research community, career breaks or unusual career paths. These will not in themselves be evaluated but are important to provide context

Novelties as from the ERC Work Programme 2024 (II)

Evaluation procedure



- At most 44 proposals to step 2
- Proposals scored A at step 1 but not taken to interview may be re-submitted the following year

Lump-sum funding for Advanced grants



- Advanced grants: awarded as a **single lump sum**
- Final payment will be based on the work carried out and reported, irrespective of the “successful” outcome of the project activities
- Additional funding (equipment, access to research facilities) remains available and will be made part of the lump sum
- Portability of grant maintained

Overview

- ERC and ERC Grant Schemes
- Eligibility
- Novelties in Evaluation since ERC Work Programme 2024
- Tips
- Your Questions



Contrary to what you may think

- The **budget** is distributed among the scientific panels as a function of demand → success rate is equal amongst panels → **choose the Panel that is right for your proposal!**
- **Publication record** is not decisive in selection decisions;
- The **Host Institution** is not an evaluation criterion;
- The **success rate** is not linked to academic age.
- The **panel descriptors** do not represent ERC scientific priorities; **any topic/field** is equally welcome.



Evaluation panel structure

(2025) Novelties for ERC WP2025

Life Sciences

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

Physical Sciences & Engineering

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

Social Sciences and Humanities

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



Preparing your proposal

In Step 1: Panel members see only Part B1 of the proposal (prepare it accordingly!)

Part B1: Find the right balance

- ✓ Innovative? Beyond state-of-art?
Realistic/feasible?
- ✓ Outline state of play (incl. competition)
- ✓ Goals realistic? Think about risk mitigation
- ✓ Be concise & clear
(also for generalists)
- ✓ Feasibility (scientific approach)

In Step 2: Part B1 and B2 and **Budget section** are evaluated by Panel Members & Remote Referees

Part B2: Fill in the details

- ✓ No verbatim repetition of synopsis
- ✓ Detailed state-of-art
- ✓ Extensive methodology and work plan
- ✓ Provide risk mitigation strategies
- ✓ Explain involvement of team members
- ✓ Justify requested resources - Panels have to ensure that the requested resources are reasonable and well justified.



I have been invited for an interview .. now what?

- Have **clear and representative** slides and focus on **SCIENCE** – you are talking to scientists.
 - Get panel interested in **YOUR ideas** & proposal;
 - Don't over-explain your CV!
- **Anticipate questions**
- Know the **details of your proposal** and methods, as well as your **research area**
 - who are your main competitors/collaborators?
- **Get feedback** from your peers; have mock interviews, **keep the time**; typically a 5-10 minute presentation followed by 15-20 minutes of questions.

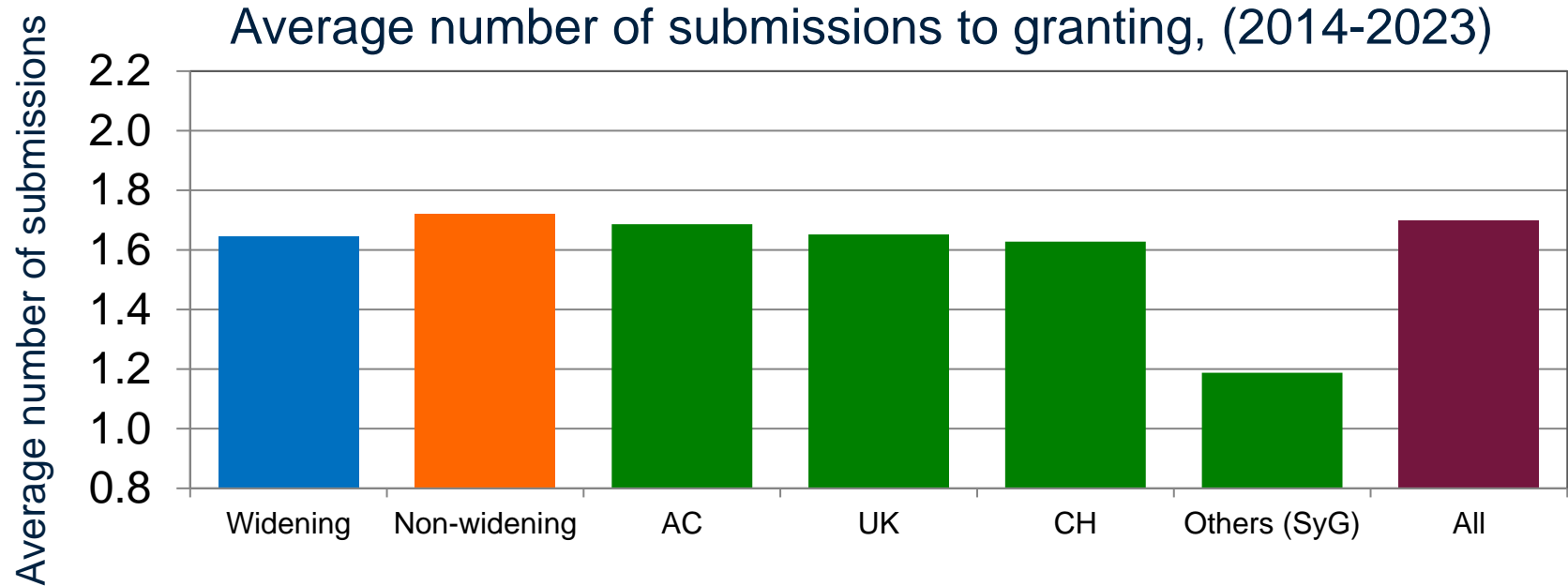
Key messages

- Don't exclude yourself from participating in ERC calls;
- If you have an idea that you think will make a significant change in your field of research or some other area, consider writing it down and apply to ERC;
- Be ambitious and "daring", **think big**;
- Look at **funded projects in your field** (search tool on ERC website), testimonials, tutorials ([ERC homepage](#));
- **Take risks**, explain your project's expected high scientific impact, and **provide evidence that you can do it**;
- **If you fail, try again!** Gain experience from evaluation. Panel feedback is useful and resubmissions have higher success rate (typically 1.5 times higher).



Average number of submissions to granting

~1.7 times has someone to reapply to get a grant, on average, for all calls



Widening countries have slightly less unsuccessful submissions before obtaining their grant than the non-widening countries



Five main tips, but no tricks!

1. Consult **call documents** (Work Programme, Information for Applicants);
2. **Register** early on the F&T Portal;
3. Have your **documentation ready**; Get the **written consent of your collaborators** before the submission deadline (a simple email exchange is OK);
4. Contact the ERCEA to **ask all your questions** well ahead of submission deadline:
ERC-2025-STG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu
ERC-2025-COG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu
ERC-2025-ADG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu
erc-syg-applicants@ec.europa.eu
5. **Submit** your research proposal **before the deadline** –avoid submitting on the last day.

Indicative summary of calls from the 2025 budget

	<i>Starting Grant</i>	<i>Consolidator Grant</i>	<i>Advanced Grant</i>	<i>Synergy Grant</i>
<i>Call identifier</i>	ERC-2025-StG	ERC-2025-CoG	ERC-2025-AdG	ERC-2025-SyG
<i>Call opens</i>	10 July 2024	26 September 2024	22 May 2025	11 July 2024
<i>Call deadline</i>	15 October 2024	14 January 2025	28 August 2025	6 November 2024

Where can you find more information?



Videos - ERC Classes

- What to consider before applying
- How to fill in the application
- The interview
- How the evaluation works

[Click here to watch!](#)

Thank You!

More information: erc.europa.eu

National Contact Point: erc.europa.eu/national-contact-points

Sign up for news alerts: erc.europa.eu/keep-updated-erc

Funding & Tender Opportunities: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

Follow us on social media



@ERC_Research



European-Research-Council



European Research Council



ERC_Research



European Research Council



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

