

ANNEX TO THE DECISION

The IDEAS Work Programme

EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME 2013

Established by the ERC Scientific Council
and transmitted to the Commission for adoption on 12 of March 2012

Unless stated otherwise, the activities of this Work programme will be implemented by the Dedicated Implementation Structure of the ERC which the Commission has established in the legal form of an Executive Agency (2008/37/EC, 14.12.07). The implementation will be delegated to the latter according to the *Commission Decision delegating powers to the European Research Council Executive Agency with a view to performance of tasks linked to implementation of the specific programme Ideas in the field of research comprising in particular implementation of appropriations entered in the Union budget* (C(2008) 5694, 08.10.2008).

(European Commission C(2011)..... of 2012)

How to use the Work Programme (WP)

The WP is to be read in association with the relevant guidance for applicants. The most current guidance is available at the ERC website: <http://erc.europa.eu/>

Parts 1 and 2 describe the background to the WP, the broad policy objectives and the underlying principles of ERC funding. **Part 3** explains the common features and requirements for ERC frontier research grants. **Parts 4 - 7** give details of the individual ERC frontier research grant schemes. **Part 8** sets out the proposal submission and evaluation procedure for ERC frontier research grants. **Part 9** covers Proof of Concept Grants for holders of ERC frontier research grants, while **Part 10** lists other activities to allow the Scientific Council of the ERC to carry out its duties. **Part 11** gives a breakdown of the budget by activity. The **Annexes** give information on the relevant calls in overview form, and other useful information.

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1. Background and objectives

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1.1 Background

The European Research Council (ERC) has a unique position in European research funding. It is a science-led funding body, supporting research at the highest level of excellence, operating to world class standards.

The ERC consists of an independent **Scientific Council**, responsible for scientific strategy and an administrative arm, the **European Research Council Executive Agency (ERCEA)**. The Commission is responsible for assuring the "ERC's full autonomy and integrity"¹.

The **Scientific Council** is composed of 22 members who collectively represent Europe's scientific community. As well as establishing the ERC's strategy, it has full authority over decisions on the type of research to be funded and acts as guarantor of the quality of the activity from the scientific perspective. It establishes the annual work programme that shall be adopted by the Commission with the assistance of the Programme Committee, establishes the peer review structure and process, monitors the quality of the programme's implementation from the scientific perspective, and develops the ERC's international strategy.

The Scientific Council is supported by the autonomous **ERCEA**², which is responsible for all aspects of administrative implementation and programme execution. The Executive Agency implements in particular, the evaluation procedures, peer review and selection process according to the principles established by the Scientific Council and will ensure the financial and scientific management of the grants.

The work programme provides information on the research activities for 2013 which will be implemented through calls for proposals in the latter half of 2012, as well as on other types of activities not implemented through calls for proposals to allow the Scientific Council to carry out its duties and mandate.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the ERC are **to reinforce excellence, dynamism and creativity in European research** and improve the attractiveness of Europe for the best researchers from across the world, as well as for industrial research investment.

In order to fulfil these objectives the ERC funds research of the very highest quality **at the frontiers of knowledge** thus feeding into the innovation chain and supporting the EU's Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and the EU's flagship Innovation Union initiative.

The ERC complements existing funding schemes at the national and European levels. By establishing world class benchmarks of excellence in its evaluation and in the research it funds, and increasing competition to provide attractive conditions for excellent researchers the ERC will raise the status, visibility and attractiveness of European frontier research and **provide a powerful dynamic for driving up the quality of the overall European research**

¹ In accordance with the Specific Programme Ideas, Council Decision 2006/972/EC of 19 December 2006.

² Its tasks are described in the Delegation Act, Commission Decision C(2008)5694 of 8 October 2008.

system. In this way the ERC supports research excellence across the whole of the European Union and Associated Countries.

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2. Underlying principles of ERC funding

2.1 Open to all fields of research

The ERC's funding schemes operate on a 'bottom-up' basis without predetermined priorities.

Applications can be made in any field of research with particular emphasis on the frontiers of science, scholarship and engineering. In particular, proposals of an 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 are encouraged.

2.2 Scientific excellence is the sole evaluation criterion

Scientific excellence is the sole criterion on the basis of which ERC frontier research grants are awarded. The ERC's peer review evaluation process has been carefully designed to identify scientific excellence irrespective of gender, and to take career breaks as well as unconventional research career paths into account. The evaluations are monitored to identify potential biases (e.g. in terms of gender, age, nationality), to guarantee transparency, fairness and impartiality in the treatment of proposals.

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 remote referees.

2.3 Open to all researchers from any country in the world

Principal Investigators from anywhere in the world can apply for an ERC grant provided their host institution is established in a Member State or an Associated Country. It may also be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). It is therefore expected that the research project will be carried out within the territory of a Member State or an Associated Country but in certain conditions contributions from elsewhere may be funded (see section 3.3.3).

The ERC is particularly keen to encourage excellent proposals from Principal Investigators based outside Europe that wish to carry out a project with a host institution in the EU or the Associated Countries. Principal Investigators do not have to be based full-time in Europe but will be expected to spend at least 50% of their total working time over the lifetime of the grant in an EU Member State or Associated Country (see Starting Grant section 4.4, Consolidator Grant section 5.4, Advanced Grant section 6.4 and Synergy Grant section 7.4). Principal Investigators that move to a Member State or an Associated Country to take up an ERC grant may request additional funding (see Starting Grant section 4.3, Consolidator Grant section 5.3 and Advanced Grant section 6.3) to provide assistance to cover eligible "start-up" costs, which may include the purchase of major equipment.

In addition, the constitution of the Principal Investigators' 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, including countries outside the EU Member States or Associated Countries** (see section 3.3.3).

2.4 Attractive long-term funding at all independent career stages

Independent researchers of any age and career stage can apply (see section 3.3.2).

The two streams of what was previously known as the ERC Starting Grant will now be separated into two separate calls. Therefore four ERC frontier research grants will be available in 2013: Starting; Consolidator; Advanced; and Synergy Grants as described in parts 4 - 7.

The Synergy Grant will remain available in 2013 on a pilot basis for exceptional proposals³.

Existing ERC Principal Investigators can also apply for an additional Proof of Concept Grant as described in part 9.

The ERC awards generous, long-term funding for a period of up to five years for the Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants, and up to six years for Synergy Grants. The maximum grant varies by grant type. See sections 4.3, 5.3, 6.3 and 7.3. 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 as described in the ERC Model Grant Agreement.

The ERC grants are open to researchers from both **public and private institutions**.

ERC awards are made and grants operated according to simple procedures that maintain the focus on excellence, encourage initiative and combine flexibility with accountability. The ERC is continuously looking for further ways to simplify and improve its procedures in order to ensure that these principles are met.

2.5 Principal Investigators and their research teams are supported

The ERC's funding schemes 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** and, as necessary, include additional **team-members**. 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 section 3.3.3).

ERC Synergy Grants will support small groups of 2 – 4 Principal Investigators (with a designated Corresponding Principal Investigator⁴) and their teams. Depending on the nature of a project the group may involve Principal Investigators and team members from other research organisations situated in the same or a different country (see section 3.3.3).

³ Because of the introduction of the ERC Synergy Grants, Co-Investigator projects will no longer be supported under the Advanced Grant scheme.

⁴ When the term "Lead Principal Investigator" is used in relation to the Synergy Grant following the terminology of the Ideas Work Programme 2012 (for example in the ERC Grant Agreement) it should be understood to mean Corresponding Principal Investigator under the Ideas Work Programme 2013.

With the focus on the Principal Investigators, the concepts of the individual team or ERC Synergy Group are fundamentally different from that of a network or consortium of undertakings, universities, research centres or other legal entities. **Proposals of the latter type should not be submitted to the ERC.**

2.6 The role of the Host Institution

An ERC grant is awarded to the institution (Applicant Legal Entity⁵) that engages and hosts the Principal Investigator. The Principal Investigator will be employed by the host institution⁶.

Grants are awarded to the host institution with the explicit **commitment that this institution offers appropriate conditions for the Principal Investigator independently to direct the research and manage its funding for the duration of the project.** These conditions, including the '*portability*' of the project⁷, are the subject of a supplementary agreement between the Principal Investigator and the host institution⁸ and must ensure that the Principal Investigator may:

⁵ **Prior Information of Principal Investigators, Candidates, Tenderers and Grant Applicants - registration of legal entities in the Commission's Early Warning System (EWS) and Central Exclusion Database (CED)**

The Commission uses an internal information tool (EWS), as well as a database available to public authorities implementing EU funds (CED) to flag identified risks related to beneficiaries of centrally managed contracts and grants with a view to protecting the EU's financial interests.

Principal Investigators, candidates, tenderers, grant applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- Commission Decision of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (EWS) for the use of authorising officers of the Commission and the executive agencies (OJ L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 125); or
- Commission Regulation of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database – CED (OJ L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 12);

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 EWS only or both in the EWS and CED, and communicated to the persons and entities listed in the above-mentioned Decision and Regulation, in relation to the award or the execution of a procurement contract or a grant agreement or decision.

⁶ 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 clarification and approval during the granting procedure or during the amendment procedure for a change of host institution.

⁷ A special clause may be included in new ERC grant agreements with regard to equipment which is critical for the implementation of the project, which are used exclusively for the project, and which are fully charged to the project's budget. In case of portability of the ERC grant, and upon request of the Principal Investigator to the host institution and approval of the ERCEA, such equipment shall be transferred at their residual value to the new host institution (residual value is the difference between purchase price and depreciation costs already accepted by ERCEA).

⁸ This is supplementary to the ERC Grant Agreement and is described in the ERC Model Grant Agreement C(2007)1625.

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

These conditions are consistent with the 'The European Charter for Researchers and The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers'.

In the case of Synergy Grants, where the different Principal Investigators may be hosted by more than one host institution, each of the host institutions shall offer the commitments above subject to a supplementary agreement between the Principal Investigator or Principal Investigators and the host institution.

Any type of legal entity, public or private, including universities, research organisations and undertakings can host the Principal Investigator or Corresponding Principal Investigator and his/her team as long as the principles indicated above are respected and the Principal Investigator or Corresponding Principal Investigator and his/her activity are not constrained by the research strategy of the entity. The ERC welcomes applications from Principal Investigators or Corresponding Principal Investigators hosted by private commercial 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.

3. Common features and requirements for ERC frontier research grants

This section sets out the common features and requirements for the four ERC frontier research grants. The specific features and requirements of these grants are set out in the subsequent individual parts.

3.1 Available funding and grant assessment

3.1.1 Maximum size of grant

The maximum grant varies by grant type. See sections 4.3, 5.3, 6.3 and 7.3.

3.1.2 Grant assessment

The overall level of the grant offered will be assessed during the peer review evaluation. Evaluation panels will judge the funding requested by the applicant against the needs of the project before making an award. 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, but in such cases shall explain in writing any such modification. The Principal Investigator or Corresponding Principal Investigator will have the freedom to re-budget during the course of the project upon notification of the ERCEA.

3.1.3 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 20% of the total eligible direct costs⁹. 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 project¹⁰.

3.1.4 Call budgets

For the Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant calls the ERC Scientific Council has established the following indicative percentage budgets for each of the three main research domains:

Physical Sciences & Engineering: 44%

Life Sciences: 39%

Social Sciences & Humanities: 17%

An indicative budget is then allocated to each panel within each domain, in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals. There is no indicative breakdown by domain for the ERC Synergy Grants call.

Research proposals of a multi and inter disciplinary nature are strongly encouraged throughout the ERC's schemes. Proposals of this type are evaluated by the ERC's regular panels with the appropriate external expertise (see section 8.2). Given this, it is no longer considered necessary to establish an indicative percentage budget to fund proposals of a

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Commission Decision C(2009)1942 of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

cross-panel and/or cross-domain nature as was the case in previous work programmes. Funding for such proposals will come from the regular panels which perform the evaluation.

3.2 Ethical Principles

All proposals will be subject to ethical clearance.

The proposed research activities shall respect fundamental ethical principles including those reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The opinions of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies and the Protocol on the Protection and Welfare of Animals will also be taken into account. Other issues addressed include data protection and/or dual or military use of applications.

Funding of human embryonic stem cell research is possible within the ethical framework defined in the EU Seventh Framework Programme and the Ideas Specific Programme¹¹.

Cases of scientific misconduct such as plagiarism and fabrication or misrepresentation of data will be considered as breaches of fundamental ethical principles and the proposals concerned may be excluded in accordance with Article 15.2 of the FP7 Rules for participation¹².

3.3 Eligibility Criteria

All proposals must be complete and be submitted before the relevant call deadline. A complete proposal entails all parts or sections. Incomplete proposals may be declared ineligible¹³. For applications for Starting Grants, Consolidator Grants, Advanced Grants and Synergy Grants the required elements are set out in part 8.

Where there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision by 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.

3.3.1 Eligible Scientific Fields

Applications may be made in any field of research¹⁴.

3.3.2 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.

¹¹ See also Commission statement, OJ L 412 of 30.12.2006, p. 42.

¹² Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 of 18 December 2006.

¹³ See also 'eligibility check' in ERC rules for the submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the Seventh Framework Programme C(2010)8695 of 9 December 2010.

¹⁴ 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 7th Framework Programme.

Advanced and ERC Synergy Grants

No specific eligibility criteria are foreseen for Principal Investigators applying for the ERC Advanced and ERC Synergy Grants but only exceptional proposals are likely to be funded in what are expected to be extremely competitive calls (see profiles of the ERC Advanced Grant applicant in 6.4 and ERC Synergy Grant applicants in 7.4).

Groups applying for the ERC Synergy Grant must be made up of a minimum of two and a maximum of four Principal Investigators and, as necessary, their teams. One of the Principal Investigators must be designated as the Corresponding Principal Investigator.

Starting and Consolidator Grants

Special requirements apply to Principal Investigators applying to the Starting and Consolidator Grants based on the date of award of his/her first PhD (or equivalent doctoral degree¹⁵).

For the Starting Grant the Principal Investigator shall have been awarded his/her first PhD **at least 2 and up to 7 years prior to the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Starting Grant.**

For the Consolidator Grant the Principal Investigator shall have been awarded his/her first PhD **over 7 and up to 12 years prior to the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Consolidator Grant.**

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 that the degree was awarded.

However, the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD can be reduced in the following properly documented circumstances.

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

For long-term illness¹⁶, clinical training or national service the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by the actual amount of leave taken for each incident which **occurred after** the PhD award.

The elapsed time since the award of the first PhD should not in any case surpass 11 years and six months for applicants to the Starting Grant and 16 years and six months for applicants to the Consolidator Grant.

¹⁵ See ERC Scientific Council's note on 'PhD and Equivalent Doctoral Degrees' at Annex 9, including specific provisions for holders of medical degrees.

¹⁶ Over ninety days.

3.3.3 Eligible Host Institution (Applicant Legal Entity)

The host institution must engage the Principal Investigator or the Corresponding Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the grant. It must either be established in a Member State or an Associated Country as a legal entity created under national law, or it may be an International European Interest Organisation¹⁷ (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). 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 a Member State or an Associated Country. This does not exclude field work or other research activities in cases where these must necessarily be conducted outside the EU or the Associated Countries in order to achieve the scientific objectives of the project/activity.

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 additional legal entities which will be eligible for funding, and which may be legal entities established anywhere including outside the European Union or Associated Countries, or international organisations¹⁸.

Additional Principal Investigators participating in an ERC Synergy group may also be hosted by additional legal entities which will be eligible for funding, but these must be established in a Member State or an Associated Country or be an International European Interest Organisation or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre.

3.3.4 Further restrictions on submission of proposals

The current restrictions are set out below. These apply to the Starting, Consolidator, Advanced and ERC Synergy Grants¹⁹. They may be modified in subsequent years by the Scientific Council in light of experience.

- A Principal Investigator may submit only one proposal to the ERC for ERC frontier research grant calls made under the same Work Programme²⁰;
- A Principal Investigator who has submitted an eligible proposal to a 2012 ERC call may not apply to a 2013 ERC call for any ERC frontier research grant if the proposal was evaluated as of insufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation (category C – see section 8.5). As an exception to this rule, a Principal Investigator who has submitted an eligible proposal to the 2012 Synergy Grant call may apply to the 2013 Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls (but not Synergy Grant) even if the

¹⁷ As defined by Article 2.12 of the FP7 Rules for participation Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 of 18 December 2006.

¹⁸ In accordance with Article 29.2(a) of the FP7 rules for participation Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 of 18 December 2006.

¹⁹ Principal Investigators can apply for an additional Proof of Concept Grant while holding an ERC frontier research grant – see part 9.

²⁰ Ineligible or withdrawn proposals do not count against this limit. In the event of multiple submissions, only the first eligible submission will be evaluated.

proposal was evaluated as of insufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation (category C – see section 8.5);

- A Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator²¹ may hold only one frontier research grant from the ERC at any one time;
- A Principal Investigator who holds an ERC frontier research grant cannot submit a proposal for another ERC Grant unless the existing grant expires no more than two years after the call deadline;
- A Principal Investigator who is a serving Panel Member for a 2013 ERC call or who served as a Panel Member for a 2011 ERC call may not apply to a 2013 ERC call for the same type of grant.

The year of an ERC call refers to the Ideas Work Programme under which the call was made and can be established by its call identifier. A 2012 ERC call is therefore one that was made under the Ideas Work Programme 2012 and will have 2012 in the call identifier (for example ERC-2012-StG).

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²¹ Co-Investigator projects were supported under the Ideas Work Programmes from 2008 – 2011.

4. ERC Starting Grant

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4.1 Background

It is widely recognised that Europe offers insufficient opportunities for young investigators to develop independent careers and make the transition from working under a supervisor to being independent research leaders in their own right. This structural problem leads to a dramatic waste of research talent in Europe. It limits or delays the emergence of the next-generation of researchers, who bring new ideas and energy, and it encourages highly talented researchers at an early stage of their career to seek advancement elsewhere, either in other professions or as researchers outside Europe.

The ERC is committed to making a sustained investment on the scale necessary to have a real impact on European science and scholarship.

4.2 Objectives

ERC Starting Grants are designed to support researchers (Principal Investigators) at the stage at which they are starting their own independent research team or programme. The scheme will support independent and excellent new individual research teams.

The evaluation panels will evaluate whether the grant and the conditions specified by the host institution will allow the Principal Investigator to make the transition to independence.

4.3 Size of ERC Starting Grants

Starting Grants can be up to a maximum of EUR 1 500 000 for a period of 5 years (pro rata for projects of shorter duration). However, up to an additional EUR 500 000 can be made available to cover (a) eligible "start-up" costs for Principal Investigators moving from a another country to the EU or an Associated Country as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant and/or (b) the purchase of major equipment and/or (c) access to large facilities²².

4.4 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 the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Starting Grant**. The effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD can be reduced in certain properly documented circumstances (see sections 3.3.2).

A competitive Starting Grant Principal Investigator must have already shown the potential for research independence and evidence of maturity. For example, it is expected that applicants will have produced **at least one important publication without the participation of their PhD supervisor**. Applicants 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 proposal (see section 8.1.2) the applicant should list:

²² As any additional funding is to cover major one-off costs it is not subject to pro-rata reduction for projects of shorter duration. All funding requested is assessed during evaluation.

1. **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 five representative publications, those without the presence as co-author of their PhD supervisor, and the number of citations (excluding self-citations) they have attracted (if applicable).
2. Granted **patent(s)** (if applicable).
3. **Invited presentations to peer-reviewed, internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools** (if applicable).
4. **Prizes and Awards** (if applicable).

Principal Investigators funded through the ERC Starting Grants will be expected to spend a minimum 50% of their total working time on the ERC project and a minimum of 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country.

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5. ERC Consolidator Grant

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5.1 Background

It is widely recognised that Europe offers insufficient opportunities for young investigators to develop independent careers and make the transition from working under a supervisor to being independent research leaders in their own right. This structural problem leads to a dramatic waste of research talent in Europe. It limits or delays the emergence of the next-generation of researchers, who bring new ideas and energy, and it encourages highly talented researchers at an early stage of their career to seek advancement elsewhere, either in other professions or as researchers outside Europe.

The ERC is committed to making a sustained investment on the scale necessary to have a real impact on European science and scholarship.

5.2 Objectives

ERC Consolidator Grants are designed to support researchers (Principal Investigators) at the stage at which they are consolidating their own independent research team or programme. The scheme will strengthen independent and excellent new individual research teams that have been recently created.

The evaluation panels will evaluate whether the grant and the conditions specified by the host institution will allow the Principal Investigator to consolidate the transition to independence.

5.3 Size of ERC Consolidator Grants

Consolidator Grants can be up to a maximum of EUR 2 000 000 for a period of 5 years (pro rata for projects of shorter duration). However, up to an additional EUR 750 000 can be made available to cover (a) eligible "start-up" costs for Principal Investigators moving from a another country to the EU or an Associated Country as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant and/or (b) the purchase of major equipment and/or (c) access to large facilities²³.

5.4 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 the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Starting Grant**. The effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD can be reduced in certain properly documented circumstances (see sections 3.3.2).

A competitive Consolidator Grant Principal Investigator must have already shown research independence and evidence of maturity. For example, it is expected that applicants will have produced several important publications without the participation of their PhD supervisor. Applicants 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 proposal (see section 8.1.2) the applicant should list:

²³ As any additional funding is to cover major one-off costs it is not subject to pro-rata reduction for projects of shorter duration. All funding requested is assessed during evaluation.

1. **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 ten representative publications, those without the presence as co-author of their PhD supervisor, and the number of citations (excluding self-citations) they have attracted (if applicable).
2. Granted **patent(s)** (if applicable).
3. **Invited presentations to peer-reviewed, internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools** (if applicable).
4. **Prizes and Awards** (if applicable).

Principal Investigators funded through the ERC Consolidator Grants will be expected to spend a minimum 50% of their total working time on the ERC project and a minimum of 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country.

6. ERC Advanced Grant

DRAFT

6.1 Background

ERC Advanced Grants provide an opportunity to established, innovative and active scientists and scholars to pursue ground-breaking, high-risk research that opens new directions in any field of their choice regardless of nationality, age or current location.

By awarding grants on a competitive basis solely on the criterion of excellence the ERC will establish clear benchmarks for quality which will help to raise the level of all European research. In these ways the grants will complement and add value to existing funding schemes and investments at the national and European levels.

6.2 Objectives

Advanced Grants are intended to promote substantial advances in the frontiers of knowledge, and to encourage new productive lines of enquiry and new methods and techniques, including unconventional approaches and investigations at the interface between established disciplines.

The peer review evaluation of proposals will therefore give emphasis to these aspects, in full understanding that such research has a high-gain/high-risk profile, i.e. if successful the payoffs will be very significant, but there is a higher-than-normal risk that the research project does not entirely fulfil its aims.

Applicants must have a recognised track record of research achievements, assessment of which will be a significant component of the evaluation.

6.3 Size of ERC Advanced Grants

Advanced Grants can be up to a maximum of EUR 2 500 000 for a period of 5 years (pro rata for projects of shorter duration). However, up to an additional EUR 1 000 000 can be made available to cover (a) eligible "start-up" costs for Principal Investigators moving from a another country to the EU or an Associated Country as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant, and/or (b) the purchase of major equipment and/or (c) access to large facilities²⁴.

6.4 Profile of the ERC Advanced Grant Principal Investigator

Principal Investigators for the prestigious ERC Advanced Grant 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 senior 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;

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

- 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;
- 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 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 proposal (see section 8.1.2) the applicant should list his/her activity over the past 10 years as regards:

1. **Highlight ten representative publications, as senior 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 conferences proceedings** of their respective research fields, also indicating the number of citations (excluding self-citations) they have attracted (if applicable).
2. **Research monographs and any translations thereof** (if applicable).
3. **Granted patents** (if applicable).
4. **Invited presentations to peer-reviewed, internationally established conferences** and/or **international advanced schools** (if applicable).
5. **Research expeditions** that the applicant has led (if applicable).
6. Organisation of **international conferences** in the field of the applicant (membership in the steering and/or organising committee) (if applicable).
7. **International Prizes/ Awards/ Academy memberships** (if applicable).

- | |
|---|
| <p>8. Major contributions to the early careers of excellent researchers (if applicable).</p> <p>9. Examples of leadership in industrial innovation or design (if applicable).</p> |
|---|

If a Principal Investigator so chooses, their 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 for each child born **before or during** the last ten years. For paternity, the track record considered can be extended by the actual amount of paternity leave taken for each child born **before or during** the last ten years. For long-term illness, clinical qualification or national service the track record considered can be extended by the amount of leave taken for each incident which occurred **during** the last ten years.

The track record considered should not in any case surpass 14 years and six months.

Principal Investigators funded through the ERC Advanced Grants will be expected to spend a minimum 30% of their total working time on the ERC project and a minimum of 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country.

7. ERC Synergy Grant

DRAFT

7.1 Background

It is increasingly recognised that for complex scientific problems, collaboration between different researchers and their teams, often on an interdisciplinary basis and using shared facilities, can lead to outstanding new ideas and discoveries. Building on of its support to individual researchers, the ERC extends its portfolio of instruments to cover such collaborative research projects to push forward the frontiers of knowledge.

7.2 Objectives

ERC Synergy Grants are intended to enable a small group of Principal Investigators and their teams to bring together complementary skills, knowledge, and resources in new ways, in order to jointly address research problems.

The aim is to promote substantial advances at the frontiers of knowledge, and to encourage new productive lines of enquiry and new methods and techniques, including unconventional approaches and investigations at the interface between established disciplines.

The peer review evaluation will therefore look for proposals that demonstrate the synergies, complementarities and added value that could lead to **breakthroughs that would not be possible by the individual Principal Investigators working alone**.

7.3 Size of ERC Synergy Grants

The maximum grant can be up to a maximum of EUR 15 000 000 for a period up to six years (pro rata for projects of shorter duration).

7.4 Profile of the ERC Synergy Grant Principal Investigators

Groups applying for the ERC Synergy Grant must be made up of a minimum of two and a maximum of four Principal Investigators and, as necessary, their teams. One of the Principal Investigators must be designated as the Corresponding Principal Investigator.

Applications are expected from a group of innovative and active Principal Investigators. ERC Synergy Grants are designed to foster research at the intellectual frontiers. New types of joint effort may be needed that allow for new combinations of skills and disciplines, or the bringing together of researchers from different institutions, sectors or countries. It is therefore expected that the organization of such activities will vary widely, depending on the particular needs of the research.

It is expected that in most cases ERC Synergy groups will be interdisciplinary, often using multidisciplinary approaches.

Principal Investigators funded through the ERC Synergy Grants will be expected to spend a minimum 30% of their total working time on the ERC project and a minimum of 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country. They will also be expected to be physically located in the same place (min 30% of the total working time) to ensure face to face contact for significant periods of “core time” over the course of the project.

With the focus on the Principal Investigators, the concept of an ERC Synergy group is fundamentally different from that of a network or consortium of undertakings, universities,

research centres or other legal entities. **Proposals of the latter type should not be submitted to the ERC.**

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8. Proposal submission and evaluation for ERC frontier research grants

8.1 ERC frontier research grant proposal submission procedure and proposal description

8.1.1 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 which is the applicant legal entity.

Synergy Grant proposals are submitted by a Corresponding Principal Investigator as ‘primus inter pares’ on behalf of the group. Together all the Principal Investigators have scientific responsibility for the group's project on behalf of the host institution(s) which is the applicant legal entity.

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, a Guide for Applicants is published on the ERC website. These guides describe in detail how the electronic forms should be completed.

8.1.2 Proposal description

The following elements are required²⁵.

- Extended Synopsis: 5 pages*
- Curriculum Vitae: 2 pages for each Principal Investigator*
- Track-record: 2 pages for each Principal Investigator*

- Scientific Proposal: 15 pages*

In fairness to all applicants, the page limits above 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). Exceptionally for Synergy Grant applications the budget and resource tables that are included in the Scientific Proposal will not count towards the 15 page limit.

Additional necessary elements of the proposal:

- Host Institution Binding Statement of Support;
- Ethical Review table (incorporated in the 15 page Scientific Proposal).

Additional necessary elements of the proposal for Starting and Consolidator Grants:

- PhD record and supporting documentation for eligibility checking.

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

²⁵ Incomplete proposals may be declared ineligible by the ERCEA, see section 3.4 on eligibility criteria.

Principal Investigator if the application is successful, according to the template provided²⁶. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement may not be considered for evaluation.

For Synergy Grant applications, only the host institution of the Corresponding Principal Investigator must confirm its association with and its support to the project and the Corresponding Principal Investigator. However, if the application is successful and there is more than one host institution, each of the host institutions shall offer the commitments set out in section 2.6 subject to a supplementary agreement between the Principal Investigator or Principal Investigators and the host institution.

Extended Synopsis: Concise presentation of the scientific proposal, with particular attention to the ground-breaking nature of the research project and the feasibility of the outlined scientific approach.

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 ongoing application for work related to the proposal. Any research career gaps and/or unconventional paths should be clearly explained so that can be fairly assessed by the evaluation panels.

Track-record: Each of the Principal Investigators must provide a list of achievements reflecting their track record. The type of achievements expected for Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant applicants are set out in sections 4.4, 5.4 and 6.4. Principal Investigators applying to the Synergy Grant could have any of these profiles based on which is most appropriate for their career stage.

Scientific Proposal: Description of scientific and technical aspects of the project, demonstrating the ground-breaking nature of the research, its potential impact and research methodology. The proposal will also need to indicate the fraction of the applicant's research effort that will be devoted to this project, a full estimation of the real project cost and any ethical considerations raised by the project.

For Synergy grants the proposal should also cover how the project will create significant synergies and added value beyond the current work of the Principal Investigators allowing them to undertake more original, valuable, and path-breaking research. Special emphasis should be accorded to the innovative ways of working together and specify how the core time spent together will be utilized.

8.2 ERC Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant peer review evaluation

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 remote referees²⁷.

²⁶ The statement must be on an official letter (organisation letterhead), signed by the legal representative of the host institution who can commit the host institution according to the requirements of the ERC Model Grant Agreement (C(2007) 1625 of 16/04/2007). The letter should be scanned and uploaded to the Commission electronic submission system with the proposal. A template for this statement will be provided by the relevant ERC Guide for Applicants for the call.

At step 1, the extended synopsis and the Principal Investigator's track-record and CV will be assessed. **At step 2** the complete version of the retained proposals will be assessed.

The allocation of the proposals to the various panels will be based on the expressed preference of the applicant. The applicant shall submit the proposal to his/her chosen primary evaluation panel before the submission deadline of the call. The applicant may also indicate a secondary evaluation panel.

In cases where panels determine that a proposal is of a cross-panel or cross-domain nature, panels may request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional referees.

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

A more detailed description of the evaluation process for Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant proposals is set out in Annex 10.

8.3 ERC Synergy Grant peer review evaluation

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 dedicated panels. The panels may be assisted by independent experts.

At step 1 the full proposal will be assessed. **At step 2** the most competitive of the retained proposals will be identified and their Principal Investigators may be invited for an interview to present their project to a panel meeting in Brussels. As part of the preparation for interviews site visits may be conducted in cases where features of the site form a significant part of the proposal.

If necessary, and in order to assure the quality of the evaluation in the case of heavy oversubscription to the call²⁸, at step 1 panel members may identify the less competitive applications by assessing the proposals on the basis of the extended synopsis and the Principal Investigators' track-records and CVs. These proposals will not be further evaluated and will be rejected, allowing the panel to focus on thorough evaluation of the retained proposals.

A more detailed description of the evaluation process for Synergy Grant proposals is set out in Annex 10.

8.4 Evaluation criteria

For all ERC Grants, **excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation**. It will be applied to the evaluation of both the research project and the Principal Investigator(s) in conjunction.

²⁷ Applicants can request that a specific person would not act as a peer reviewer as described in the Guide for Applicants for the call. This is foreseen by the ERC Rules for Submission, section 3.1.2.1. "Exclusion of independent experts at the request of an applicant", OJ L 327 of 11.12.2010.

²⁸ Defined as the requested budget of the submitted proposals being more than seven times the indicative call budget.

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 section 4.4, 5.4, 6.4 and 7.4 including the expected minimum working time to be spent on the ERC project should 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.

If an applicant submits a proposal which coincides, fully or in essence, with a proposal made by another applicant in the same or any previous call, both the ground-breaking nature of the project and the Principal Investigator's capacity to carry it out may be seriously called into question. Plagiarism detection software may be used to analyse proposals submitted to the ERC.

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

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1. Research Project
Ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility

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 across disciplines)?

How much is the proposed research high risk/high gain?

Scientific Approach

To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible (based on Extended Synopsis)?

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

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

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

Added value of the Group (for Synergy Grants)

To what extent does the proposal require and demonstrate novel working arrangements, significant synergies and scientific added-value to enable it to achieve its objectives?

Do they go beyond what the individual Principal Investigators could achieve alone?

2. Principal Investigator(s)
Intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment

Starting and Consolidator				
	Fully agree	Agree partially	Disagree partially	Strongly disagree
<i>The PI has demonstrated the ability to propose and conduct ground-breaking research and his/her achievements have typically gone beyond the state-of-the-art.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>The PI provides abundant evidence of creative independent thinking</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>The ERC Grant would contribute significantly to the establishment and/or further consolidation of the PI's independence.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>The PI is strongly committed to the project and demonstrates the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project (min 50% of the total working time on it and min 50% in an EU Member State or Associated Country) (based on Scientific Proposal).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Advanced				
	Fully agree	Agree partially	Disagree partially	Strongly disagree
<i>The track record of the PI is characterized by ground-breaking research and his/her achievements have typically gone beyond the state-of-the-art.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>The track record of the PI contains abundant evidence of creative independent thinking</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>The PI has demonstrated sound leadership in the training and advancement of young scientists.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>The PI 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 (min 30% of the total working time on it and min 50% in an EU Member State or Associated Country) (based on Scientific Proposal).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Synergy				
	Fully agree	Agree partially	Disagree partially	Strongly disagree
<i>The track records of each of the PIs are characterized by ground-breaking research and their achievements have typically gone beyond the state-of-the-art.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>The track records of each of the PIs contain abundant evidence of creative independent thinking.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Each of the PIs demonstrate the level of commitment to the project necessary for its execution and have demonstrated the willingness to devote a significant amount of the time to the project (min 30% of the total working time on it and min 50% in a EU Member State or Associated Country) as well as to spend significant periods of "core time" being physically located in the same place (based on Scientific Proposal).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8.5 Outcome of evaluation

At each evaluation step, each proposal will be evaluated and marked for each of the two main elements of the proposal: research project and Principal Investigator(s).

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

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. The applicant may also be subject to restrictions on submitting proposals to future ERC calls²⁹.

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 out of 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.

²⁹ Applicants will need to check the restrictions in place for each call.

**9. Proof of Concept Grant for
holders of ERC frontier research
grants**

The activity described in this chapter will be implemented through Coordination and Support Actions³⁰. The implementation method to be used is given in the description below.

9.1 Background

It is widely recognised that Europe offers insufficient opportunities for funding in the earliest stage of an innovation, where a potentially commercial or socially valuable concept needs verification through testing or prototypes, through the identification of a potentially appropriate market, and also through the creation of protectable intellectual property rights, in terms of patents or other forms of protection.

Because of the difficulty of attracting investors who would be ready to risk their capital in an innovation which is still in its pre-development stage, many excellent useful ideas presenting interesting opportunities for exploitation get lost in the period of transition when they are already deemed promising, but too new to validate their commercial or societal potential and thereby attract the capital necessary for their continued development.

The ERC funds excellent research at the frontier of knowledge. This frontier research in emerging areas can often cover elements of both basic and applied research. ERC funded ideas are therefore expected to lead to social and commercial innovations which, when successfully applied, could generate enormous economic and societal benefits for Europe. By covering the funding gap which can occur at the earliest stages of an innovation the ERC aims to capture the maximum value from the frontier research that it funds.

9.2 Objectives

The ERC Proof of Concept Grant provides additional funding to ERC frontier research grant holders to establish proof of concept, identify a development path and an Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) strategy for ideas arising from an ERC funded project. The objective is to provide funds to enable ERC funded ideas to be brought to a pre-demonstration stage where potential opportunities for exploitation have been identified.

Innovations can aim at financial profit and be commercialised through licenses to a new or existing company or through a venture funded start-up, depending on the nature of the invention/idea, its potential markets and the inventor's plans for future involvement in the commercialisation. The commercialisation process of an innovation may vary widely between different fields of research/invention and depending on which model of commercialisation is pursued.

Innovations can also aim at value in the form of large-scale, transformational benefit that accrues either to a significant segment of society or to society at large and feed into ventures aimed at addressing social and environmental goals which may also be in the voluntary and not-for-profit sectors.

ERC Proof of Concept Grants aim at supporting an ERC grant holder during the pre-demonstration phase to prepare a "package" to be presented to venture capitalists, companies or social entrepreneurs that might invest in the technology and take it through the early commercialisation or roll-out phase.

³⁰ Commission Decision (C(2009)1942) of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

The aim is that of conducting a proof of concept of an idea that was generated in the course of the ERC funded project, i.e. to undertake further work to verify, in principle, the opportunities for exploitation of this idea. This would help:

- establishing viability, technical issues and overall direction;
- clarifying IPR position and strategy;
- providing feedback for budgeting and other forms of exploitation opportunity discussion;
- providing connections to later stage funding;
- covering initial expenses for establishing a company.

ERC Proof of Concept Grants may be used for conducting 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 an idea arising from an ERC-funded project.

9.3 Eligibility Criteria

9.3.1 Eligible projects

Fundamental research often generates unexpected or new opportunities for commercial or societal application and the ERC is particularly keen in helping to ensure that the useful excellent ideas that it has already funded do not miss these opportunities. Proof of Concept Grants look to build upon ideas which draw substantially from research that has been or are currently funded by the ERC and it is therefore an offer only to Principal Investigators whose proposals draw substantially on the outputs of their ERC funded research.

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

A Proof of Concept Grant may be awarded more than once per ERC funded project but only one Proof of Concept Grant may be in effect at any one time for the same ERC project.

Any proposal that contravenes fundamental ethical principles shall not be selected. In particular, any cases of scientific misconduct such as plagiarism and fabrication or misrepresentation of data will be considered as breaches of fundamental ethical principles and will exclude such proposals in accordance with Article 15.2 of the FP7 Rules for participation³¹.

9.3.2 Eligible Principal Investigator

All Principal Investigators benefitting from an ERC frontier research grant, that is either ongoing or where the project has ended³² less than 12 months before the publication date of this call, are eligible to participate and apply for an ERC Proof of Concept Grant.

9.3.3 Eligible Host Institution (Applicant Legal Entity)

The host institution must engage the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the proof of concept activity and must be established in a Member State or an Associated

³¹ Regulation (EC) No1906/2006 of 18 December 2006.

³² The end date of the project which is indicated in the ERC Grant Agreement.

Country. It may also be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). Any type of legal entity, public or private, including universities, research organisations as well as undertakings can host the Principal Investigator and his/her team.

9.4 Size of ERC Proof of Concept Grant

9.4.1 Maximum financial contribution

The financial contribution will be up to a maximum of EUR 150 000 for a period of 12 months.

9.4.2 Assessment

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.

Subcontracts may only cover the execution of limited parts of the proposed activity when duly justified³³.

9.4.3 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 7% of the total eligible direct costs³⁴. 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 project³⁵.

9.4.4 Call budget

The indicative budget for this call for 2013 is **EUR 10 000 000** (approximately half of which will be for each of the two evaluation rounds following two specific deadlines).

There is no indicative breakdown by domain for this call.

³³ See section on Subcontracting in the Guide to Financial Issues relating to FP7 Indirect Actions of June 2010: "Subcontracting may concern only certain parts of the project, as the implementation of the project lies with the participants. Therefore, the subcontracted parts should in principle not be "core" parts of the project work. (...) In projects where research is not the main purpose (like in coordination and support actions - CSA) the core part should be understood as referring to the main activity of the project".

³⁴ 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.

³⁵ Commission Decision C(2009)1942 of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

9.5 ERC Proof of Concept Grant proposal submission procedure and proposal description

9.5.1 Proposal Submission

Funding for the Proof of Concept Grant will be awarded through a call for proposals.

Proposals are submitted by the 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 continuously from the date of publication of the call until the final deadline and will be evaluated and selected in two rounds, based on two specific deadlines set out in Annex 5.

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.**

9.5.2 Proposal description

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

- a) 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.
- b) Outline an **early-stage innovation strategy** for the idea. This should include a clear description of the innovation potential of the idea; identification of customer and societal benefits; definition of the commercialisation process to be followed; and, where applicable, brief explanation of the activities to be undertaken in terms of initial steps of market analysis, clarification of IPR position and strategy, technical testing, plans for industry/sector contacts.
- c) Outline a reasonable and plausible **plan of the activities** proposed for establishing the feasibility of the project.
- d) **Budget:** list of requested resources necessary for the implementation of the proposed proof of concept and proper justification.
- e) **Ethical Review** table.

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

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 provided³⁶. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement will not be considered for evaluation.

9.6 ERC Proof of Concept Grant evaluation

A one-step submission and evaluation procedure will be used. The evaluation will be conducted by peer reviewers³⁷. These experts may work remotely and may if necessary meet as an evaluation panel as set out in section 9.8 on the application of the evaluation criteria.

9.7 Evaluation criteria

Proof of Concept Grants are awarded in relation to an existing ERC-funded project which has already been evaluated on the basis of **excellence as the sole criterion**.

The activities to be funded shall draw substantially on the outputs of scientifically excellent ERC-funded research that has already been subject to rigorous peer review. However the additional funding is not aimed at extending the original research or predominantly concerned with overcoming technical obstacles.

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 the following:

1. Innovation potential:

1.1 Proposals demonstrate that the proposed proof of concept activity could greatly help move the output of research towards the initial steps of an innovation process leading to a new or significantly improved product, process or method of production, or form of organization or methodology (**commercial innovation**); or a new principle, a new piece of legislation, a new social movement, an intervention, a new form of participation (**social innovation**).

The following sub-criteria will also be taken into account when evaluating the proposal and its innovation potential:

1.2 The **economic and/or societal benefits** of the project to be taken to proof of concept are identified.

1.3 The proposal indicates the process designed either to generate a **financial profit** i.e. the commercialisation process to be followed (licenses to a new or existing company, a venture funded start-up, a spin-off company, other forms) or any other process designed to generate a **social benefit**.

1.4 (Where applicable) Plans for seeking confirmation of the technology/product/process (**testing, technical reports**) and a brief explanation of what testing is foreseen are included.

³⁶ See ERC Guide for Applicants. The statement must be on an official letter (organisation letterhead), signed by the legal representative of the host institution who can commit the host institution according to the requirements of the ERC Model Grant Agreement (C(2007) 1625 of 16/04/2007). The letter should be scanned and uploaded to the Commission electronic submission system with the proposal.

³⁷ According to section 3.1.6.3 of the ERC Rules for the submission of proposals.

1.5 (Where applicable) Plans for undertaking initial steps of **market research** in order to find out features which make the proposed technology/product/process innovative or distinctive compared to other technology/product/process are included. The proposal includes plans for analysing the competitive advantage of the technology/product/process vs. alternate technology/product/process that can meet the same market needs.

1.6 (Where applicable) Plans to clarify the **IPR position and strategy** are proposed, including an evaluation on whether there is an opportunity for creating intellectual property protection (in terms of patents or other forms of protection) or a freedom-to-operate analysis³⁸. This includes plans for sufficient protection to get the technology/product/process to market and attain at least a temporal competitive advantage.

1.7 (Where applicable) Plans for **industry/sector contacts**, appropriateness of receptor company/organization, ability to further the development of the technology/product/process is demonstrated. Activities aimed at attracting further funding from non-ERC sources once the ERC-funded activities end will also be considered, including activities aimed at identifying specific companies for further financial commitments. If there are no "hard" commitments for funding (*i.e.* letters of support or intent), demonstration of a solid roadmap for pursuing the funding needed for future commercialisation is included.

2. Quality of the proof of concept plan:

The proposed proof of concept is based on a sound approach for establishing technical and commercial feasibility of the project.

2.1 A reasonable and acceptable plan of the proposed activities is provided, including the planned funding against clearly identified technical and commercial objectives.

2.2. A sound project-management plan is presented, including appropriate risk and contingency planning.

2.3 The proposed activities are to be conducted by persons well qualified for the purpose.

3. Budget:

The requested budget shall be necessary for the implementation of the proposed proof of concept and properly justified.

9.8 Outcome of evaluation

Peer reviewers will evaluate independently each eligible proposal on each of the three evaluation criteria above on a "pass/fail" basis.

³⁸ 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 Advanced/Starting Grant in respect of protecting IPR capable of industrial or commercial application. If any foreground was potentially protectable in the pre-existing ERC Advanced/Starting Grant, beneficiaries had the legal obligation to seek for adequate and effective protection according to Article 44 of the Rules for Participation and Article II.28 of the ERC MGA.

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 proportion of pass marks which they received from peer reviewers. 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 proportion of pass marks.

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10. Other activities

The different initiatives described in this chapter aim to allow the Scientific Council of the ERC to carry out its duties and mandate.

These activities will be implemented through Coordination and Support Actions³⁹. The implementation method to be used in each case is given in the description under each of the topics below.

10.1 Support to monitoring and evaluation strategy

The Scientific Council has developed a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy in order to help it fulfil its obligations under the Ideas Specific Programme to establish the ERC's overall strategy and to monitor and quality control the programme's implementation from the scientific perspective. Its M&E strategy will:

- provide a sound evidence base to assess objectively the performance and impact of the ERC and make necessary adjustments;
- enhance the understanding of the dynamics in the research landscape in Europe (and beyond) in order to recalibrate ERC strategies in view of changes in the wider context in which the ERC operates;
- be both robust (in terms of the reliability of data basis and the rigour of its analysis) and flexible (in terms of manageable burden on budget and data providers such as ERC grantees).

While aiming at the specific needs of the ERC, the strategy has been developed – and continues to be refined - in liaison with the other programmes of the 7th Framework Programme, to draw experience from the latter and to meet, in a co-ordinated way, the Commission's obligations for programme monitoring and evaluation, as well as the specific evaluation requirements established in the legislation for the ERC.

The Scientific Council has initiated a range of projects and studies to support this strategy. These have been implemented through Coordination and Support Actions (CSA), to solicit proposals for relevant studies and analysis, to issue calls tenders for services on specific topics and to draw on external expertise through expert group contracts.

In 2013 the Scientific Council wishes to launch two calls.

ERC-2013-Support-1 call on "ERC proposal submission, peer review and gender mainstreaming"

The focus of the studies to be funded by this CSA should be on the ERC practices and processes in the context of gender mainstreaming and in particular during the proposals' submission and peer review. The studies may review and analyse various dimensions of the issue such as:

- The ERC documents (Work Programme, ERC guides for applicants, ERC rules for submission, model grant agreement etc);

³⁹ Commission Decision C(2009)1942 of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

- The ERC rules and procedures for the selection of reviewers (panel chairs, panel members, remote reviewers);
- The mechanisms, practices and selection procedures of the ERC peer review process.

The studies should take into account the experience from both the Starting and Advanced grant schemes. Project durations could be up to 18 months. It is foreseen that a range of different methods could be appropriate, recognising that different approaches may be appropriate for different scientific domains. In all cases, the output of the studies should be compatible with the basic principles of ERC, it should feed the strategic orientations of the Scientific Council and it is expected to be in a form that could be applicable to the ERC's operations.

Indicative overall budget for CSA (supporting action - call for proposals): EUR 200 000 for 2013.

ERC-2013-Support-2 call to acquire relevant external data sets to benchmark ERC performance

The ERC has started developing tools and systems to capture and manage data and information which are critical for Monitoring and Evaluation of its activities. While the initial focus was on data and information on ERC funding activities and on outputs of ERC-funded the projects, there is a need to put those data in context and analyse them in comparative perspective. In 2013 the ERC wishes to acquire data sets which can be used to build indicators against which ERC performance can be assessed and benchmarked both at European and global level.

A call for tenders – with further details and specifications - will be issued in 2013.

Indicative overall budget for CSA (supporting action – public procurement): EUR 350 000 for 2013.

10.2 Support to Open Access

The ERC supports the principle of open access to the published output of research as a fundamental part of its mission. The ERC considers that providing free online access is 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.

The "ERC Scientific Council Guidelines for Open Access" from 17 December 2007 requires that all peer-reviewed publications from ERC-funded research projects be deposited on publication into an appropriate research repository where available.

The ERC's open access guidelines list PubMed Central as a recommended repository for Life Sciences. In order to enable ERC Grantees to use PubMed Central as a repository for their manuscripts, the ERC will subscribe to join an initiative of other funding organisations in the biomedical field to operate a European version of PubMed Central. To this effect, the ERC will enter in an agreement with the Wellcome Trust, London, UK which manages this initiative.

Indicative overall budget (subscription in the form of an annual membership fee⁴⁰): EUR 90 000 for 2013.

10.3 Support to the ERC Scientific Council

10.3.1 ERC Scientific Council Standing Identification Committee

N.B. This activity will be directly implemented by the Commission services (DG RTD).

Future members of the Scientific Council shall be appointed by the Commission based on the factors and criteria set out in the ERC Decision 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 paid under the operational budget of the Specific Programme "Ideas".

Indicative overall budget for CSA (expert group): EUR 15 000 for 2013.

10.3.2 Support to the Chair and vice-Chairs

It is foreseen that a grant will be awarded to Wiener Wissenschafts-, Forschungs- und Technologiefonds (Vienna Science and Technology Fund), Vienna, Austria. The named institution will provide local support and assistance to the Chair and vice-Chairs of the Scientific Council for their tasks of preparing the plenary and other meetings of the Scientific Council, as well as tasks related to the process of developing and projecting its policies and activities in interaction with the scientific community and other stakeholders.

The principal activities and expected impact will be:

- To support and assist the Chair in his/her diverse responsibilities including the preparation of meetings, the efficient and effective functioning of the Scientific Council, its integrated operation together with the ERCEA and effective interfacing with the scientific community, other funding agencies and the political institutions of the EU.
- To support and assist the vice-Chairs to ensure their contributing to the efficient operation of the Scientific Council, and the efficient and timely achievement of its objectives in preparing and managing ERC operations under FP7.

The named institution would therefore be the direct beneficiary of up to EUR 300 000.

Indicative overall budget for CSA (grant to named beneficiary): EUR 300 000 for 2013.

10.3.3 Honoraria and meeting expenses for Scientific Council members

In recognition of their personal commitment, the Scientific Council members, constituted as an expert group, 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

⁴⁰ As foreseen in Article 6.4 of the Specific Programme Ideas, Council Decision 2006/972/EC of 19 December 2006.

and travel and subsistence expenses shall be charged to the operational budget allocated to the Specific Programme "Ideas".

Indicative overall budget for CSA (expert group): EUR 375 000 for 2013.

10.4 CSA Evaluation

Proposals for Coordination and Support Actions (CSA) under this chapter will be evaluated as follows.

10.4.1 Eligibility Criteria

Proposals for co-ordination and support actions must be focused on requirements specified in the work programme and/or call for proposals.

Co-ordination and support actions are open to legal entities established in Member States, or Associated Countries, as a legal entity under national law. Applications from International European Interest Organisations (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, and any legal entities established in countries outside the EU or Associated Countries and international organisations are also eligible.

The minimum participation is one independent legal entity.

10.4.2 CSA Evaluation Criteria

Proposals for Coordination and Support Actions (CSA) will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Objectives and impact (award):

Are the objectives of the proposed project consistent with the requirements specified in the work programme and/or call for proposals? Will the project have a substantial impact in the context of the ERC strategic objectives?

2. Quality and effectiveness (award):

Is the proposed methodology and work plan effective in reaching the goals of the project? Does it ensure the highest quality and/or utility of results? Does it, where appropriate, correspond to, or go beyond, best current practice?

3. Resources (selection):

Are the resources (personnel, experience, equipment, other) appropriate for the goals of the project? Will they be used effectively? Are they properly justified?

10.4.3 Application of CSA Evaluation Criteria

Each evaluation criterion will be marked on a scale of 0 to 5 (with half-point resolution) 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.

**11. Indicative budget for the *Ideas*
Work Programme**

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Action	in EUR million⁴¹
ERC-2013-StG	395
ERC-2013-CoG	515
ERC-2013-AdG	660
ERC-2013-SyG	150
ERC-2013-PoC	10
Other Activities:	
1. Support to Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy	0.55
2. Support to Open Access	0.09
3. Support to Scientific Council	0.69
Evaluation, Monitoring And Review Costs	9.97
Budget Source: Budget 2013⁴²	1741.3
Estimated total budget allocation	1741.3

All budgetary figures given in this work programme are indicative. The final budgets may vary following the evaluation of proposals.

The final budget awarded to actions implemented through calls for proposals may vary:

- The total budget of the call may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the indicated budget for each call; and
- Any repartition of the call budget may also vary by up to 10% of the total value of the indicated budget for the call.

For actions not implemented through calls for proposals:

- The final budgets for evaluation, monitoring and review may vary by up to 20% of the indicated budgets for these actions;

⁴¹ The budget figures given in this table are rounded to two decimal points.

⁴² Under the condition that the draft budget for 2013 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority.

- The final budget awarded for all other actions not implemented through calls for proposals may vary by up to 10% of the indicated budget for these actions.

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Annex 1 Primary panels 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:** electronic, communication, optical and systems engineering
- PE8 Products and processes engineering:** product design, process design and control, construction methods, civil engineering, energy systems, 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 interactions, DNA, RNA, protein and lipid synthesis and modification, biochemistry, biophysics, structural biology, biochemistry, metabolism, transport mechanisms and signal transduction
- LS2 Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics and Systems Biology:** genetics, population genetics, molecular 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 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, regeneration, tumorigenesis, cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome

- LS5 Neurosciences and neural disorders:** neurobiology, neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, neurochemistry, neuropharmacology, neuroimaging, systems neuroscience, neurological disorders, psychiatry
- LS6 Immunity and infection:** the immune system and related disorders, infectious agents and diseases, prevention and treatment of infection
- LS7 Diagnostic tools, therapies 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, ecotoxicology, microbial ecology
- LS9 Applied life sciences and non-medical biotechnology:** agricultural, animal, fishery, forestry and food sciences; biotechnology, chemical biology, genetic engineering, synthetic biology, industrial biosciences; environmental biotechnology and remediation;

Social Sciences & Humanities:

- SH1 Individuals, institutions and markets:** economics, finance and management
- SH2 Institutions, values, beliefs and behaviour:** sociology, social anthropology, political science, law, communication, social studies of science and technology
- SH3 Environment, space and population:** environmental studies, geography, demography, migration, regional and urban studies
- SH4 The Human Mind and its complexity:** cognitive science, psychology, linguistics, education
- SH5 Cultures and cultural production:** literature and philosophy, visual and performing arts, music, cultural and comparative studies
- SH6 The study of the human past:** archaeology, history and memory

Annex 2 Starting Grants Call for Proposals

Call Title: Call for proposals for *ERC Starting Grant*

Call identifier: ERC-2013-StG

Date of publication⁴³: 10 July 2012

Electronic proposal submission deadline⁴⁴ (single submission of full proposal)⁴⁵: 17 October 2012, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 386m from 2013 budget⁴⁶. The ERC Scientific Council has established the following indicative percentage budgets for each of the three main research domains:

Physical Sciences & Engineering: 44%

Life Sciences: 39%

Social Sciences & Humanities: 17%

An indicative budget is then allocated to each panel within each domain, in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals.

The final budget awarded to this call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call.

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 20% of the total eligible direct costs⁴⁷. 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 project⁴⁸.

Objective: ERC Starting Grants boost the independent careers of excellent researchers by providing adequate support at the critical stage where they are starting their own independent research team or programme.

Minimum number of participants: At least one independent legal entity established in one of the Member States, or one of the Associated Countries (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement).

⁴³ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication.

⁴⁴ The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months.

⁴⁵ Please consult Annex 1 to the Ideas Work Programme for the panel description.

⁴⁶ Under the condition that the draft budget for 2013 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority.

⁴⁷ 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.

⁴⁸ Commission Decision C(2009)1942 of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

Eligibility criteria: See eligibility criteria in the work programme section 3.3. The Principal Investigator shall have been awarded their first PhD **at least 2 and up to 7 years prior to the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Starting Grant**. However, Principal Investigators who were awarded their first PhD more than 7 years prior to the publication date of the call may still be eligible in certain properly documented circumstances such as maternity.

Evaluation criteria: Excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation. It will be applied to the evaluation of both the Principal Investigator and the research project in conjunction. For the detailed elements applying to the two parts of the proposal see section 8.4 of the work programme.

Evaluation procedure: The evaluation will be conducted by means of a structure of high level peer review panels⁴⁹ as listed in Annex 1. The panels may be assisted by remote referees. Principal Investigators whose proposals will be retained for step 2 of the evaluation may be invited for an interview to present their project to the evaluation panel meeting in Brussels. They will be accordingly reimbursed for their travel and subsistence expenses⁵⁰. See section 8.2 and Annex 10 of the work programme.

Grant starting date: Due to the ground-breaking nature of frontier research projects, it is expected that all projects start within 6 months from the award of the grant. ERC reserves the right to cancel a grant if the proposed start date goes beyond this limit.

Information on the modalities of the call and guidance to applicants on how to submit projects is available on:

<http://erc.europa.eu>

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

⁴⁹ Panel members will be compensated on the evaluation tasks they perform. Additional reimbursement of travel and subsistence will be made for assignments involving travel. Referees who may assist the evaluation panels will not be compensated.

⁵⁰ In duly justified and exceptional cases, the ERCEA may agree, subject to technical feasibility, on other ways of interviewing successful Principal Investigators such as video link, teleconference or similar means, and on the reimbursement of their possible related travel and subsistence expenses. Relevant provisions for the reimbursement of expenses incurred in relation to Principal Investigators' interviews are included in the ERC Rules for submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the 7th Framework Programme.

Annex 3 Consolidator Grants Call for Proposals

Call Title: Call for proposals for *ERC Consolidator Grant*

Call identifier: ERC-2013-CoG

Date of publication⁵¹: 7 November 2011

Electronic proposal submission deadline⁵² (single submission of full proposal)⁵³: 21 February 2013, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 507m from 2013 budget⁵⁴. The ERC Scientific Council has established the following indicative percentage budgets for each of the three main research domains:

Physical Sciences & Engineering: 44%

Life Sciences: 39%

Social Sciences & Humanities: 17%

An indicative budget is then allocated to each panel within each domain, in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals.

The final budget awarded to this call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call.

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 20% of the total eligible direct costs⁵⁵. 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 project⁵⁶.

Objective: ERC Consolidator Grants boost the independent careers of excellent researchers by providing adequate support at the critical stage where they are consolidating their own independent research team or programme.

⁵¹ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication.

⁵² The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months.

⁵³ Please consult Annex 1 to the Ideas Work Programme for the panel description.

⁵⁴ Under the condition that the draft budget for 2013 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority.

⁵⁵ 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.

⁵⁶ Commission Decision C(2009)1942 of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

Minimum number of participants: At least one independent legal entity established in one of the Member States, or one of the Associated Countries (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement).

Eligibility criteria: See eligibility criteria in the work programme section 3.3. The Principal Investigator shall have been awarded their first PhD **over 7 and up to 12 years prior to the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Starting Grant**. However, Principal Investigators who were awarded their first PhD more than 12 years prior to the publication date of the call may still be eligible in certain properly documented circumstances such as maternity.

Evaluation criteria: Excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation. It will be applied to the evaluation of both the Principal Investigator and the research project in conjunction. For the detailed elements applying to the two parts of the proposal see section 8.4 of the work programme.

Evaluation procedure: The evaluation will be conducted by means of a structure of high level peer review panels⁵⁷ as listed in Annex 1. The panels may be assisted by remote referees. Principal Investigators whose proposals will be retained for step 2 of the evaluation may be invited for an interview to present their project to the evaluation panel meeting in Brussels. They will be accordingly reimbursed for their travel and subsistence expenses⁵⁸. See section 8.2 and Annex 10 of the work programme.

Grant starting date: Due to the ground-breaking nature of frontier research projects, it is expected that all projects start within 6 months from the award of the grant. ERC reserves the right to cancel a grant if the proposed start date goes beyond this limit.

Information on the modalities of the call and guidance to applicants on how to submit projects is available on:

<http://erc.europa.eu>

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

⁵⁷ Panel members will be compensated on the evaluation tasks they perform. Additional reimbursement of travel and subsistence will be made for assignments involving travel. Referees who may assist the evaluation panels will not be compensated.

⁵⁸ In duly justified and exceptional cases, the ERCEA may agree, subject to technical feasibility, on other ways of interviewing successful Principal Investigators such as video link, teleconference or similar means, and on the reimbursement of their possible related travel and subsistence expenses. Relevant provisions for the reimbursement of expenses incurred in relation to Principal Investigators' interviews are included in the ERC Rules for submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the 7th Framework Programme.

Annex 4 Advanced Grant Call for Proposals

Call Title: Call for proposals for *ERC Advanced Grant*

Call identifier: ERC-2013-AdG

Date of publication⁵⁹: 10 July 2012

Electronic proposal submission deadline⁶⁰ (single submission of full proposal)⁶¹: 22 November 2012, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 646m from 2013 budget⁶². The ERC Scientific Council has established the following indicative percentage budgets for each of the three main research domains:

Physical Sciences & Engineering: 44%

Life Sciences: 39%

Social Sciences & Humanities: 17%

An indicative budget is then allocated to each panel within each domain, in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals.

The final budget awarded to this call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call.

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 20% of the total eligible direct costs⁶³. 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 project⁶⁴.

Objective: ERC Advanced Grants encourage substantial advances at the frontier of knowledge by supporting excellent, leading advanced investigators to pursue ground-breaking, high-risk/high gain research.

Minimum number of participants: At least one independent legal entity established in one of the Member States, or one of the Associated Countries (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement).

Eligibility criteria: See eligibility criteria in the work programme section 3.3.

⁵⁹ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication.

⁶⁰ The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months.

⁶¹ Please consult Annex 1 of the Ideas Work Programme for the panel description.

⁶² Under the condition that the draft budget for 2013 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority

⁶³ 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.

⁶⁴ Commission Decision C(2009)1942 of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

Evaluation criteria: Excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation. It will be applied to the evaluation of both the Principal Investigator and the research project in conjunction. For the detailed elements applying to the two Sections of the proposal see section 8.4 of the work programme.

Evaluation procedure: The evaluation will be conducted by means of a structure of high level peer review panels⁶⁵ as listed in Annex 1. The panels may be assisted by remote referees. See section 8.2 and Annex 10 of the work programme.

Grant starting date: Due to the ground-breaking nature of frontier research projects, it is expected that all projects start within 6 months from the award of the grant. ERC reserves the right to cancel a grant if the proposed start date goes beyond this limit.

Information on the modalities of the call and guidance to applicants on how to submit projects is available on:

<http://erc.europa.eu>

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

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⁶⁵ Panel members will be compensated on the evaluation tasks they perform. Additional reimbursement of travel and subsistence will be made for assignments involving travel. Referees who may assist the evaluation panels will not be compensated.

Annex 5 ERC Synergy Grant Call for Proposals

Call Title: Call for proposals for *ERC Synergy Grant*

Call identifier: ERC-2013-SyG

Date of publication⁶⁶: 10 October 2012

Electronic proposal submission deadline⁶⁷ (single submission of full proposal): 10 January 2013, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 150m from 2013 budget⁶⁸.

The final budget awarded to this call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call.

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 20% of the total eligible direct costs⁶⁹. 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 project⁷⁰.

Objective: European Research Council ERC Synergy Grants will enable small groups of Principal Investigators and their teams bringing together complementary skills, knowledge, and resources, to jointly address research problems at the frontier of knowledge *going beyond what the individual Principal Investigators could achieve alone*.

Minimum number of participants: At least one independent legal entity established in one of the Member States, or one of the Associated Countries (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement).

Eligibility criteria: Groups applying for ERC Synergy Grants should be made up of a minimum of two and a maximum of four Principal Investigators and, as necessary, their teams. One of the Principal Investigators must be designated as the Corresponding Principal Investigator. See eligibility criteria in the work programme section 3.3.

⁶⁶ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication.

⁶⁷ The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months.

⁶⁸ Under the condition that the draft budget for 2013 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority.

⁶⁹ 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.

⁷⁰ Commission Decision C(2009)1942 of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

Evaluation criteria: Excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation. It will be applied to the evaluation of both the Principal Investigators and the research project in conjunction. For the detailed elements applying to the two Sections of the proposal see section 8.4 of the work programme.

Evaluation procedure: The evaluation will be conducted by means of dedicated high level peer review panels. Panels may be assisted by independent experts⁷¹. Principal Investigators whose proposals will be retained for step 2 of the evaluation may be invited for an interview to present their project to the evaluation panel meeting in Brussels. They will be accordingly reimbursed for their travel and subsistence expenses⁷². See section 8.3 and Annex 10 of the work programme.

Grant starting date: Due to the ground-breaking nature of frontier research projects, it is expected that all projects start within 6 months from the award of the grant. ERC reserves the right to cancel a grant if the proposed start date goes beyond this limit

Information on the modalities of the call and guidance to applicants on how to submit projects is available on:

<http://erc.europa.eu>

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

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⁷¹ According to section 3.1.6.3 of the ERC Rules for the submission of proposals, peer reviewers will be compensated on the evaluation tasks they perform. Additional reimbursement of travel and subsistence will be made for assignments involving travel.

⁷² In duly justified and exceptional cases, the ERCEA may agree, subject to technical feasibility, on other ways of interviewing successful Principal Investigators such as video link, teleconference or similar means, and on the reimbursement of their possible related travel and subsistence expenses. Relevant provisions for the reimbursement of expenses incurred in relation to Principal Investigators' interviews are included in the ERC Rules for submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the 7th Framework Programme.

Annex 6 Proof of Concept Grant Call for Proposals

Call Title: Call for proposals for *ERC Proof of Concept Grant*

Call identifier: ERC-2013-PoC

Date of publication⁷³: 10 January 2013

Electronic proposal submission deadlines⁷⁴:

First deadline: 24 April 2013, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Final deadline: 3 October 2013, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 10m from 2013 budget⁷⁵ (approximately half of which will be for each of the two evaluation rounds following the deadlines above).

The final budget awarded to this call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call.

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 7% of the total eligible direct costs⁷⁶. 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 project⁷⁷.

Objective: European Research Council ERC Proof of Concept Grant (Coordination and Support Action) provides additional funding to ERC grant holders to establish proof of concept, identify a development path and an Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) strategy for ideas arising from an ERC-funded project.

Minimum number of participants: At least one independent legal entity established in one of the Member States, or one of the Associated Countries (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement).

Eligibility criteria: All Principal Investigators benefitting from an ERC grant that is either ongoing or, where the project has ended⁷⁸ less than 12 months before the publication date of this call are eligible to participate and apply for an ERC Proof of Concept Grant. See section 9.3 of the work programme.

⁷³ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication.

⁷⁴ The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months.

⁷⁵ Under the condition that the draft budget for 2013 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority.

⁷⁶ 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.

⁷⁷ Commission Decision C(2009)1942 of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

⁷⁸ The end date of the project which is indicated in the ERC Grant Agreement:

Evaluation criteria: Innovation potential, quality of the proof of concept plan and budget. See Section 9.7 of the work programme.

Evaluation procedure: The evaluation will be conducted by peer reviewers⁷⁹. These experts may work remotely and may if necessary meet as an evaluation panel. See sections 9.6 and 9.8 of the work programme.

Starting date: Due to the ground-breaking nature of frontier research projects, it is expected that all projects start within 6 months from the award of the grant. ERC reserves the right to cancel a grant if the proposed start date goes beyond this limit.

Information on the modalities of the call and guidance to applicants on how to submit projects is available on:

<http://erc.europa.eu>

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

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⁷⁹ According to section 3.1.6.3 of the ERC Rules for the submission of proposals, peer reviewers will be compensated on the evaluation tasks they perform. Additional reimbursement of travel and subsistence will be made for assignments involving travel.

Annex 7 ERC proposal submission, peer review and gender mainstreaming - CSA Call for Proposals

Call Title: Call for proposals to support ERC monitoring and evaluation strategy (gender aspects) - Coordination and Support Action.

Call identifier: ERC-2013-Support-1

Date of publication⁸⁰: 1 October 2012

Electronic proposal submission deadline⁸¹ (single submission of full proposal): 14 January 2013 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 200 000⁸² from 2012 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 7% of the total eligible direct costs⁸³. 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 project⁸⁴.

Objective: Support to ERC monitoring and evaluation strategy. Applications must address topics on ERC proposal submission, peer review and gender mainstreaming as specified in the work programme (section 10.1).

Minimum number of participants: At least one independent legal entity established in one of the Member States, or one of the Associated countries (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement).

Eligibility criteria: Proposals for Coordination and Support Actions must be focused on requirements specified in the work programme and/or call for proposals.

Coordination and Support Actions are open to legal entities situated in Member States, or Associated countries. Applications from International European Interest Organisations (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, and legal entities established in third countries are also eligible. Legal entities established in third countries can receive funding if their participation is essential for carrying out the action.

⁸⁰ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication.

⁸¹ At the time of the publication of the call, the Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months.

⁸² Under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2013 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority.

⁸³ 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.

⁸⁴ Commission Decision C(2009)1942 of 23 March 2009 on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within grants for indirect actions shall apply to grants awarded under this work programme.

The minimum participation is one independent legal entity (CSA-Support).

Evaluation criteria: See the work programme (section 10.4.2) for the applicable criteria.

Evaluation procedure: The evaluation is carried out through evaluation panels. Proposals may be evaluated remotely.

Information on the modalities of the call and guidance to applicants on how to submit projects is available on:

<http://erc.europa.eu>

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

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Annex 8 Acquisition of data sets to benchmark ERC performance - CSA Call for Tenders information

Call Title: Call for tenders for ERC CSA (Coordination and Support Action) – acquisition of data sets to benchmark ERC performance.

Call identifier: ERC-2013-Support-2

Date of publication and call deadline⁸⁵: A call for tenders with further details and specifications will be issued in the final quarter of 2012 to acquire data sets which can be used to build indicators against which ERC performance can be assessed and benchmarked both at European and global level.

Indicative budget: EUR 350 000⁸⁶ from 2013 budget.

Objective: Support to ERC monitoring and evaluation strategy.

Minimum number of participants: At least one independent legal entity established in one of the Member States, or one of the Associated countries (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement).

Eligibility criteria: Tenders for Coordination and Support Actions must be focused on requirements specified in the work programme and/or call for tenders.

Coordination and Support Actions are open to legal entities situated in Member States, or Associated countries.

⁸⁵ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication.

⁸⁶ Under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2013 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority.

Annex 9 PhD and Equivalent Doctoral Degrees: The ERC Policy

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 student selects an academic adviser and a subject for the dissertation, is assigned a dissertation committee, and designs his/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 student'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/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:

- a. EURYDICE: "Examinations, qualifications and titles - Second edition, Volume 1, European glossary on education" published in 2004⁸⁷. Please note that some titles that belong to the same category with doctoral degrees (ISCED 6) may correspond to the intermediate steps towards the completion of doctoral education and they should not be therefore considered as PhD-equivalent.
- b. List of research doctorate titles awarded in the United States that enjoy the same status and represent variants of the Ph.D. within certain fields. These doctorate titles are also recognised as PhD-equivalent by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF)⁸⁸.

5. First Professional Degrees:

It is important to recognize 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.**

⁸⁷ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/thematic_studies_archives_en.php

⁸⁸ <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-structure-us.html>

6. Doctor of Medicine (MD):

For medical doctors, an MD will not be accepted by itself as equivalent to a PhD award. To be considered an eligible Principal Investigator medical doctors (MDs) need to provide the certificates of both basic studies (MD) and a PhD or completion of clinical specialty training or proof of an appointment that requires doctoral equivalency (i.e. 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 MD completion plus two years is the time reference for calculation of the eligibility time-window (i.e. 4-9 years past MD for Starters, and over 9-14 years past MD for Consolidators).

For medical doctors who have been awarded both an MD and a PhD, **the date of the first 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 MD for Starters, and over 7-12 years after PhD or 9-14 years past MD for Consolidators).

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Annex 10 Evaluation procedure for ERC frontier research grants

Evaluation procedure for *ERC Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants*

A **single submission of the full proposal** will be followed by a **two-step evaluation**. At step 1, the extended synopsis and the Principal Investigator's track-record and CV will be assessed. At step 2 the complete version of the retained proposals will be assessed. 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 remote referees.

The allocation of the proposals to the various panels will be based on the expressed preference of the applicant. The applicant must submit the proposal to his/her chosen primary evaluation panel before the submission deadline of the call. The applicant may also indicate a secondary evaluation panel. Proposals may be allocated to a different panel with the agreement of both Panel Chairs concerned.

An indicative budget will be allocated to each panel, in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals. This indicative budget is calculated as the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the panel⁸⁹ divided by the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the domain of the call, multiplied by the total indicative budget of the domain.

Step 1: Following the submission of the proposal, the extended synopsis and the Principal Investigator's track-record and CV will be assessed.

Panel Members will evaluate and mark each proposal for each of the two sections of the proposal (Principal Investigator and research project).

In cases where panels determine that a proposal is of a cross-panel or cross-domain nature, panels may request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s).

Each panel will determine its budgetary cut-off level as a multiple of its indicative budget. The budgetary cut-off level may be set by each panel anywhere up to 3 times the panel's indicative budget.

At the end of step 1, the proposals will be ranked by the panels on the basis of the marks they have received and the panels' overall appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses. Proposals will be retained for step 2 based on the ranked list and the determined budgetary cut-off level. Applicants will therefore 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. The applicant may also be subject to restrictions on submitting proposals to future ERC calls⁹⁰.

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

Step 2: The complete version of the retained proposals will be assessed.

⁸⁹ Proposals containing grant requests above the maximum limit will be treated as at the limit for the purpose of calculating these indicative budgets.

⁹⁰ Applicants will need to check the restrictions in place for each call.

The retained proposals will be evaluated and marked for each of the two sections of the proposal (Principal Investigator and research project).

In cases where panels determine that a proposal is of a cross-panel or cross-domain nature, panels may request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional remote referees.

Principal Investigators whose proposals have been retained for step 2 of the evaluation for the Starting and Consolidator Grants may be invited for an interview to present their project to the evaluation panel meeting in Brussels. They will be accordingly reimbursed for their travel and subsistence expenses.

At the end of step 2, the proposals will be ranked by the panels on the basis of the marks they have received and an overall appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses. Applicants will therefore 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, applicants will receive an evaluation report which will include the ranking range of their proposal out of 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 from the respective panel budgets based on their rank. If any funds are still available from the panel budgets or additional funds become available, proposals will then be funded in order of their "normalised accumulated budget"⁹¹.

Evaluation procedure for *ERC Synergy Grant*

A **single submission of the full proposal** will be followed by a **two-step evaluation**. At step 1, the full proposal will be assessed. At step 2 the most competitive of the retained proposals will be identified and interviews may be conducted with their Principal Investigators. The evaluation will be conducted by means of a structure of dedicated panels. The panels may be assisted by independent experts.

In step 1 the evaluation will be conducted by means of five high level peer review panels which will be formed from around 60 panel members in a dynamic way to ensure the best expertise for a group of proposals. In step 2, the evaluation will be conducted by a single panel of around 15 experts. The panels will work under the guidance of chairs. The panels may be assisted by independent experts as necessary. These may include remote referees and Panel Members from the ERC's regular panels (see Annex 1).

The allocation of the proposals to the various panels will be done by grouping proposals and experts dynamically to ensure the best expertise for each proposal. An indicative budget will be allocated to each panel, in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals. This indicative budget is

⁹¹ Additional funds can become available from eventualities such as the failure of the granting procedure to projects, the withdrawal of proposals, budget savings agreed during the granting procedure, or the availability of additional budget from other sources. The recommended normalised accumulated budget (NAB) for every panel is calculated by summing the normalised budget (recommended budget divided by panel's indicative budget) of each proposal from the top position down to the actual position of the given proposal. Thus, the normalised accumulated budget takes into account the position of the proposal in its panel ranking, the recommended budget of the proposal and of all proposals ranked higher in the same panel and the indicative budget of the panel.

calculated as the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the panel⁹² divided by the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the call, multiplied by the total indicative budget of the call.

Step 1: Following the submission of the proposal the full proposal will be assessed.

Panel members will evaluate and mark each proposal for each of the two sections of the proposal (group research project and Principal Investigators). The panels may be assisted by independent experts.

At the end of step 1, the proposals will be ranked by the panels on the basis of the marks they have received and the panels' overall appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses. Proposals will be retained for step 2 based on a ranked list constructed in order of their "normalised accumulated budget"⁹³ and a budgetary cut-off level of 2.5 times the indicative call budget.

Depending on the outcome of evaluation, some applicants may be subject to restrictions on applying to subsequent calls. Applicants will therefore 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. The applicants may also be subject to restrictions on submitting proposals to future ERC calls⁹⁴.

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

If necessary, and in order to assure the quality of the evaluation in the case of heavy oversubscription to the call⁹⁵, at step 1 panel members may identify the less competitive applications by assessing the proposals on the basis of the extended synopsis and the Principal Investigators' track-records and CVs. These proposals will not be further evaluated and will be rejected, allowing the panel to focus on thorough evaluation of the retained proposals.

Step 2: The complete version of the retained proposals will be assessed by a newly constituted dedicated panel.

The retained proposals will be assessed by a single, newly constituted dedicated panel. Based on this assessment a subset of proposals will be selected based on a budgetary cut-off level set anywhere up to 2 times the indicative call budget.

The Principal Investigators of this subset of proposals may be invited for an interview to present their project to a panel meeting in Brussels. They will be accordingly reimbursed for their travel and

⁹² Proposals containing grant requests above the maximum limit will be treated as at the limit for the purpose of calculating these indicative budgets.

⁹³ The recommended normalised accumulated budget (NAB) for every panel is calculated by summing the normalised budget (recommended budget divided by panel's indicative budget) of each proposal from the top position down to the actual position of the given proposal. Thus, the normalised accumulated budget takes into account the position of the proposal in its panel ranking, the recommended budget of the proposal and of all proposals ranked higher in the same panel and the indicative budget of the panel.

⁹⁴ Applicants will need to check the restrictions in place for each call.

⁹⁵ Defined as the requested budget of the submitted proposals being more than seven times the indicative call budget.

subsistence expenses. As part of the preparation for interviews site visits may be conducted in cases where features of the site form a significant part of the proposal.

At the end of step 2, the proposals will be ranked by the panel on the basis of the marks they have received and an overall appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses. 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, applicants will receive an evaluation report which will include the ranking range of their proposal out of 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 final rank.

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