

The IDEAS Work Programme

EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME 2012

Established by the ERC Scientific Council
and transmitted for adoption to the Commission on 21 of March 2011

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) 4961 of 19 July 2011)

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/index.cfm>

Parts 1 and 2 describe the background to the WP, the broad policy objectives and the underlying principles of ERC funding. **Parts 3 - 6** give details of the ERC grant schemes, **Part 7** covers "proof of concept funding" for existing ERC grantees, while **Part 8** lists other activities to allow the Scientific Council of the ERC to carry out its duties. **Part 9** 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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Prior Information of Candidates, Tenderers and Grant Applicants (Article 8 of Decision on the Early Warning System and Article 13 of Regulation on the Central Exclusion Database):

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:

- the 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
- the 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.

1. Background and objectives

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 2012 which will be implemented through calls for proposals in the latter half of 2011, 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 both European and third countries, 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 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 system**. In this way the ERC supports research excellence across the whole of the European Union and associated countries.

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.

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 Open to all researchers

The ERC grants are open to **researchers from any country in the world**. However, the ERC-funded research should be carried out in one of the [27 EU Member States](#) or in one of the [associated countries](#). The ERC grants are open to researchers from both **public and private institutions**.

Moreover, **independent researchers of any age can apply**. The only requirements are that for ERC Starting Grants they should normally be between two and twelve years after PhD award and for Advanced Grants active researchers with a track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years (see section 3.4.2). 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 Lead Principal Investigator.

2.3 Scientific excellence is the sole evaluation criterion

Scientific excellence is the sole criterion on the basis of which ERC 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 around 14 renowned scientists and scholars selected by the ERC Scientific Council. The panels may be assisted by remote referees.

2.4 Three types of grants

Three types of ERC grant will be available in 2012. The two established schemes will remain as the core of the ERC's operations for the duration of the 7th Framework Programme.

- The ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grants (ERC Starting Grants) boost the independent careers of excellent researchers by providing adequate support at the critical stage where they are starting or consolidating their own independent research team or programme.

- The ERC Advanced Investigator Grants (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.

Under this work programme a third type of grant will be available on a pilot basis for exceptional proposals.

- The ERC Synergy Grants will enable small groups of Principal Investigators (with a designated Lead Principal Investigator) and their teams to bring together complementary skills, knowledge, and resources, in order to jointly address research problems at the frontier of knowledge going beyond what the individual Principal Investigators could achieve alone.

In addition, as introduced in the revised Work Programme 2011³ ERC grantees can now apply for additional Proof of Concept funding to establish the innovation potential of ideas arising from their ERC-funded frontier research projects.

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

2.5 Attractive long-term funding

Depending on the specific project and field:

- ERC Starting Grants are normally up to **EUR 1 500 000** for a period of up to five years;
- ERC Advanced Grants are normally up to **EUR 2 500 000** for a period of up to five years; and
- ERC Synergy Grants may be up to **EUR 15 000 000** for a period of up to six years.

Additional funding can be made available under the Starting and Advanced Grants for Principal Investigators moving from a third country or for the purchase of major equipment. See sections 4.3 and 5.3.

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.

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.

³ European Commission C (2011) 1848 of 24 March 2011.

2.6 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 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 3.4.3).

ERC Synergy Grants will support small groups of 2 – 4 Principal Investigators (with a designated Lead Principal Investigator) 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 3.4.3).

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.**

2.7 The role of the Host Institution

An ERC grant is awarded to the institution (Applicant Legal Entity) that engages and hosts the Principal Investigator or Lead Principal Investigator. Normally the Principal Investigator or Lead Principal Investigator will be employed by the host institution, but under certain conditions, cases where the Principal Investigator's employer is not the host institution, or where the Principal Investigator is self employed, can be accommodated (in these cases, the specific conditions of engagement will be subject to clarification and approval during the granting procedure).

Grants are awarded to the host institution with the explicit **commitment that this institution offers appropriate conditions for the Principal Investigator or Lead Principal Investigator independently to direct the research and manage its funding for the duration of the project**. These conditions, including the '*portability*' of the project⁴, are the subject of a supplementary agreement between the Principal Investigator or Lead Principal Investigator and the host institution⁵ and must ensure that the Principal Investigator or Lead Principal Investigator may:

- apply for funding independently
- manage the research and the funding for the project and make appropriate resource allocation decisions

⁴ A new 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).

⁵ This is supplementary to the ERC Grant Agreement and is described in the ERC Model Grant Agreement C(2007)1625.

- 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'.

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

2.8 Reinforcing European research

The ERC's funding schemes aim to foster a healthy competitive dynamic across Europe, helping to drive up the quality of the overall research system.

The host institution must be 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 3.4.3).

The ERC is particularly keen to encourage excellent proposals which involve the establishment of a new research activity in the EU or the associated countries by a Principal Investigator who is moving from a third country to the EU or an associated country. Such projects may request additional funding (see Starting Grant section 4.3 and Advanced Grant section 5.3) to provide additional assistance to cover eligible “start-up” costs, which may include the purchase of major equipment.

In order to strengthen the ERC's role in the innovation chain, from blue sky research to commercialisation, **ERC grant holders will be given the opportunity to apply for additional funding to establish the innovation potential of ideas arising from their ERC-funded frontier research projects.** This "proof of concept" funding aims to cover gaps which can occur at the earliest stages of an innovation, and can be used for activities such as technical validation, market research, clarifying IPR position and strategy or investigating commercial and business opportunities. See Chapter 7 for details.

3. Common features and requirements for ERC grants

This section sets out the common features and requirements for the three main ERC grants. The specific features and requirements of these grants are set out in the subsequent individual chapters. **Proof of concept funding has its own features and requirements which are set out in Chapter 7.**

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 and 6.3.

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 Lead 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 costs⁶. 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 project⁷.

3.1.4 Call budgets

For the Starting 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.

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 sections 4.6, 5.6 and 6.6). Given this, it is no longer considered necessary to establish an indicative percentage budget to fund proposals

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

of a cross-panel and/or cross-domain nature. Funding for such proposals will come from the regular panels which perform the evaluation.

There is no indicative breakdown by domain for the ERC Synergy Grants call.

3.2 Restrictions on submission of proposals

The current restrictions are set out below. These apply to the Starting, Advanced and ERC Synergy Grants⁸. They may be modified in subsequent years by the Scientific Council in light of experience.

- A Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator⁹ may hold only one grant from the ERC at any one time;
- A Principal Investigator may submit only one proposal to the ERC per calendar year¹⁰;
- A Principal Investigator who holds an ERC grant cannot submit a proposal for the ERC Synergy Grant unless that grant expires before 15 November 2013;
- A Principal Investigator who has submitted an eligible proposal to a 2011 ERC call may not apply to a 2012 ERC call for the same type of grant, unless his/her proposal was evaluated above the quality threshold at the end of step 1¹¹;
- A Principal Investigator who is a serving Panel Member for a 2012 ERC call or who served as a Panel Member for a 2010 ERC call may not apply to a 2012 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 2011 ERC call is therefore one that was made under the Ideas Work Programme 2011 and will have 2011 in the call identifier (for example ERC-2011-StG).

3.3 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 Programme¹².

⁸ Principal Investigators can apply for additional proof of concept funding while holding or applying for an ERC grant – see Chapter 7.

⁹ Co-Investigator projects were supported under the Ideas Work Programmes from 2008 – 2011.

¹⁰ Ineligible proposals do not count against this limit.

¹¹ In the Ideas Work Programme 2011 the quality threshold was defined as a proposal marked at least **2** on both of the main evaluation criteria.

¹² See also Commission statement, OJ L 412 of 30.12.2006, p. 42.

3.4 Eligibility Criteria

Proposals where parts or sections of the proposal (including for the Starting Grant the PhD-related documents and/or supporting documentation justifying the extension of the eligibility period - see section 3.4.2 below) and/or the host institution's binding statement of support are missing will be considered incomplete and as a consequence may be ruled ineligible for evaluation¹³. The proposal must be submitted to the appropriate primary ERC panel (i.e. the panel which covers the main scientific areas of the research proposed or the dedicated panel for ERC Synergy Grants) before the respective deadline. In addition, only proposals which satisfy the rules restricting applications (as specified in section 3.2 above) will be considered eligible to be evaluated.

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 is declared ineligible and is withdrawn from any further examination.

3.4.1 Eligible Scientific Fields

Applications may be made in any field of research¹⁴.

3.4.2 Eligible Principal Investigator

The ERC actions are open to researchers of any nationality who intend to establish and 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.

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 5.4 and ERC Synergy Grant applicants in 6.4).

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 Lead Principal Investigator.

Starting Grants

Special requirements apply to Principal Investigators applying to the Starting Grant. The Principal Investigator must have been awarded his/her first PhD (or equivalent doctoral degree¹⁵) **at least 2 and up to 12 years prior to the publication date of the call for**

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, should be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom 7th Framework Programme.

¹⁵ See ERC Scientific Council's note on 'PhD and Equivalent Doctoral Degrees' at Annex 8, including specific provisions for holders of medical degrees.

proposals of the ERC Starting 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, 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 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 illness (over ninety days), clinical qualification or national service the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by the **documented** 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 16 years and six months. No allowance will be made for part-time working (two years of part-time working count as two full-time years).

3.4.3 Eligible Host Institution (Applicant Legal Entity)

The host institution must engage the Principal Investigator or the Lead Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the grant, and must be 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). Any type of legal entity, 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 established anywhere, including outside the European Union or associated countries¹⁶. 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.

¹⁶ In accordance with Article 29.2(a) of the FP7 rules for participation Regulation (EC) No1906/2006 of 18 December 2006.

4. ERC Starting Grant

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 well placed to go beyond previous modest efforts to address this issue and 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 Independent Researcher Grants are designed to support researchers (Principal Investigators) at the stage at which they are starting or consolidating their own independent research team or programme. The scheme will support the creation of independent and excellent new individual research teams and will strengthen others that have been recently created.

The evaluation panels will be empowered to conclude whether the grant and the conditions specified by the host institution will allow the Principal Investigator to make or consolidate the transition to independence. The Principal Investigators will be assessed by the evaluation panels as either "starters" or "consolidators" (see section 4.6.).

The ERC is particularly keen to encourage excellent proposals which involve the establishment of a new research activity in the EU or the associated countries by a Principal Investigator who is moving from a third country into the EU or the associated countries. To provide additional assistance to cover “start-up” and relocation costs, which may include the purchase of major equipment, proposals with these features may request an additional element of funding (see 4.3), the justification for which will be assessed by the evaluation panels.

4.3 Size of ERC Starting Grants

Starting Grants can normally 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 third country to the EU or an associated country as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant and/or (b) the purchase of major equipment.

4.4 Profile of the ERC Starting Grant Applicant

A competitive Starting Grant Principal Investigator must have already shown the potential for research independence and evidence of maturity. For example, it is normally 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.

Normally, the Principal Investigator must have been awarded their first PhD **at least 2 and up to 12 years prior to the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Starting Grant** (see sections 3.4.2 and 4.6).

4.5 ERC Starting Grant proposal submission procedure and proposal description

4.5.1 Proposal Submission

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.

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.**

4.5.2 Proposal description

Part A of the electronic forms requests administrative information about the project and the Principal Investigator. Part B requests the main proposal where the following elements are required.

Part B - Section 1

Scientific leadership potential: 1 page

Curriculum Vitae: 2 pages

Early achievements track-record: 2 pages

Extended Synopsis: 5 pages

Part B - Section 2

Scientific Proposal: 15 pages

In fairness to all applicants, strict limits will be applied to the length of proposals, as above. 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).

Additional necessary elements of the proposal:

1. Host Institution Binding Statement of Support
2. Ethical Review table (incorporated in Section 2 of the proposal)
3. 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

Principal Investigator if the application is successful, according to the template provided¹⁷. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement will not be considered for evaluation.

Part B - Section 1

1(a) Scientific leadership potential: A description of the applicant's scientific leadership potential should include:

- a presentation of the content of the early scientific or scholarly achievements of the applicant to his or her own research field, demonstrating the applicant's qualifications and potential to go significantly beyond the state of the art;
- the recognition and diffusion that these early contributions have received from others (publications, citations or appropriate equivalents/additional funding/ students/international prizes and awards/ institution-building/other);

Applicants should also explain their career stage ("starter" or "consolidator") based on whether they are applying to start their transition to independence or to consolidate their own independent team/activity (see sections 3.4.2, 4.6 and the ERC Guide for Applicants).

1(b) 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.

1(c) Early achievements track-record: The applicant should list:

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, indicating the ten best, those without the presence as co-author of their PhD supervisor, and the number of citations (excluding self-citations) they have attracted.
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).

1(d) Extended Synopsis: concise presentation of the scientific proposal, with particular attention to the ground-breaking nature of the research project, which will allow evaluation panels to assess, in step 1 of the evaluation, the feasibility of the outlined scientific approach.

¹⁷ 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 EPSS with the proposal.

Part B - Section 2

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.

4.6 ERC Starting Grant peer review evaluation

A **single submission of the full proposal** will be followed by a **two-step evaluation**. At step 1, Section 1 of the proposal 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 this panel. 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.

The Principal Investigators will be assessed by the evaluation panels as "starters" or "consolidators". The allocation of the proposals to the two streams will be based on the number of years since the award of their PhD. "Starters" being normally those awarded their PhD from 2 up to 7 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication, and "consolidators" being normally those awarded their PhD over 7 and up to 12 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication. However, in making the final streaming decision, panels will also take into account the specific stage of the Principal Investigator's research career at the time of the application based on the information and supporting documents provided. Applicants wishing to be evaluated in a stream different than that corresponding to the years past PhD must make their case in the leadership profile in Section 1 of the application (see sections 4.5, 3.4.2 and the ERC Guide for Applicants).

In order to assure comparable success rates for the "starters" and "consolidators" the indicative budget of each panel will be divided in proportion to the budgetary demand of the proposals submitted in these two categories.

Principal Investigators whose proposals will be retained for the second step of the evaluation 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 Grant proposals is set out in Annex 9.

4.7 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.

Evaluation panel members should take into account 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. Evaluation panel members should also take into consideration the benchmarks set in section 4.4.

The detailed elements applying to the two Sections of the proposal are as follows:

1. Principal Investigator

Intellectual capacity and creativity:

To what extent are the achievements and publications of the Principal Investigator ground-breaking and demonstrative of independent creative thinking and capacity to go significantly beyond the state of the art?

To what extent will an ERC Starting Grant make a significant contribution to the establishment or consolidation of independence?

Commitment:

Is the Principal Investigator strongly committed to the project and willing to devote a significant amount of time to it (they will be expected to devote at least 50% of their total working time to the ERC-funded project and spend at least 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or associated country)? (assessed at step 2)

2. Research project

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research:

To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges at the frontiers of the field(s) addressed?

To what extent does it have suitably ambitious objectives, which go substantially beyond the current state of the art (e.g. including inter- and trans-disciplinary developments and novel or unconventional concepts and/or approaches)?

Methodology:

To what extent does the possibility of a major breakthrough with an impact beyond a specific research domain/discipline justify any highly novel and/or unconventional methodologies ("high-gain/high-risk balance")?

To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible? (assessed at step 1)

To what extent is the proposed research methodology (including the proposed timescales and resources) appropriate to achieve the goals of the project? To what extent are the resources requested necessary and properly justified? (assessed at step 2)

If it is proposed that team members engaged by another host institution participate in the project is their participation fully justified by the scientific added value they bring to the project? (assessed at step 2)

4.8 Outcome of evaluation

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

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, on the basis of the assessment of part B-section 1 of the proposal, 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 resubmission limitations in the next call¹⁸.

At the end of **step 2** of the evaluation, on the basis of the assessment of the full proposal 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, at the end of both steps applicants will be told 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

¹⁸ Applicants will need to check the restrictions in place for each call.

5. ERC Advanced Grant

5.1 Background

Pursuing non-conventional or high-risk research projects is a well recognised way to promote major scientific advances but many funding agencies find it difficult to set aside significant amounts of funding for this purpose. 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.

As well as leading researchers already established in Europe, recipients are expected to include leading researchers from third countries and returnees from the European 'diaspora' who wish to establish themselves in Europe.

5.2 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.

The ERC is particularly keen to encourage excellent proposals which involve the establishment of a new research activity in the EU or the associated countries by a Principal Investigator who is moving from a third country into the EU or the associated countries. To provide additional assistance to cover “start-up” and relocation costs, which may include the purchase of major equipment, proposals with these features may request an additional element of funding (see 5.3), the justification for which will be assessed by the panels.

5.3 Size of ERC Advanced Grants

Advanced Grants can normally 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 third country to the EU or an associated country as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant, and/or (b) the purchase of major equipment.

5.4 Profile of the ERC Advanced Grant Applicant

Applicants 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:

- Normally 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;
- Normally 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:

- Normally 5 granted patents;
- Normally 10 invited presentations in well-established internationally organised conferences and advanced schools;
- Normally 3 research expeditions led by the applicant;
- Normally 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;
- Major contributions to launching the careers of outstanding researchers;
- Recognised leadership in industrial innovation.

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. No allowance will be made for part-time working (two years of part-time working count as two full-time years).

5.5 ERC Advanced Grant proposal submission procedure and proposal description

5.5.1 Proposal Submission

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.

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.**

5.5.2 Proposal description

Part A of the electronic forms requests administrative information about the project and the Principal Investigator. Part B requests the main proposal where the following elements are required.

Part B - Section 1

Curriculum Vitae: 2 pages

10-year track-record: 2 pages

Extended Synopsis: 5 pages

Part B - Section 2

Scientific Proposal: 15 pages

In fairness to all applicants, strict limits will be applied to the length of proposals, as above. Only the material that is presented within these limits will be evaluated (evaluators will only be asked, and will be under no obligation to read beyond, the material presented within the page limits).

Additional necessary elements:

1. Host Institution binding statement of support
2. Ethical Review table (incorporated in Section 2 of the proposal)

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 of support 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 provided¹⁹. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement will not be considered for evaluation.

¹⁹ 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 EPSS with the proposal.

Part B - Section 1

1(a) 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.

1(b) 10-year track-record: The applicant should list his/her activity over the past 10 years as regards:

1. The **top 10 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.
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).
8. **Major contributions to the early careers of excellent researchers** (if applicable).
9. **Examples of leadership in industrial innovation** (if applicable).

1(c) Extended Synopsis: concise presentation of the scientific proposal, with particular attention to the ground-breaking nature of the research project, which will allow evaluation panels to assess, in step 1 of the evaluation, the feasibility of the outlined scientific approach.

Part B - Section 2

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.

5.6 ERC Advanced Grant peer review evaluation

A **single submission of the full proposal** will be followed by a **two-step evaluation**. At step 1, Section 1 of the proposal 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 this panel. 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.

A more detailed description of the evaluation process for Advanced Grant proposals is set out in Annex 9.

5.7 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.

Evaluation panel members should take into account possible breaks in the research career of the applicant and/or unconventional research career paths. Evaluation panel members should also take into consideration the benchmarks set in section 5.4.

The detailed elements applying to the 2 Sections of the proposal are as follows:

1. Principal Investigator

Intellectual capacity and creativity:

To what extent is the Principal Investigator's record of research, collaborations, project conception, supervision of students and publications ground-breaking and demonstrative of independent creative thinking and the capacity to go significantly beyond the state of the art?

Commitment:

Is the Principal Investigator strongly committed to the project and willing to devote a significant amount of time to it (they will be expected to devote at least 30% of their total working time to the ERC-funded project and spend at least 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or associated country)? (assessed at step 2)

2. Research project

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research:

To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges at the frontiers of the field(s) addressed?

To what extent does it have suitably ambitious objectives, which go substantially beyond the current state of the art (e.g. including inter- and trans-disciplinary developments and novel or unconventional concepts and/or approaches)?

Methodology:

To what extent does the possibility of a major breakthrough with an impact beyond a specific research domain/discipline justify any highly novel and/or unconventional methodologies ("high-gain/high-risk balance")?

To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible? (assessed at step 1)

To what extent is the proposed research methodology (including the proposed timescales and resources) appropriate to achieve the goals of the project? To what extent are the resources requested necessary and properly justified? (assessed at step 2)

If it is proposed that team members engaged by another host institution participate in the project is their participation fully justified by the scientific added value they bring to the project? (assessed at step 2)

5.8 Outcome of evaluation

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

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, on the basis of the assessment of part B-section 1 of the proposal, 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 resubmission limitations in the next call²⁰.

At the end of **step 2** of the evaluation, on the basis of the assessment of the full proposal applicants will be informed that their proposal:

²⁰ Applicants will need to check the restrictions in place for each call.

- 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, at the end of both steps applicants will be told 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.

6. ERC Synergy Grant

6.1 Background

Major advances in science can emerge from many types of setting. Individual Principal Investigators and their teams have consistently proven to be among the most important producers of new ideas, while major collaborations between hundreds of researchers using large-scale tools and facilities might be required to address certain kinds of problems.

In recent years, small research groups of Principal Investigators and their teams, frequently constituted around interdisciplinary problems and shared facilities, have emerged as an increasingly productive unit of research. Building on the success of its support for individual PIs, the ERC is therefore extending its portfolio of instruments to cover such small group scale research efforts, based on the principle of providing excellent researchers with all the means necessary, including the right intellectual and material environments, to push forward the frontiers of knowledge.

6.2 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 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 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.**

6.3 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).

6.4 Profile of the ERC Synergy Grant Applicants

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 Lead 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 perhaps built around specialized infrastructure, or 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, and will be physically located in the same place to ensure face to face contact for significant periods of "core time" over the course of the project. However, any group which can demonstrate the synergies, complementarities and added value that will

make the whole greater than the sum of the parts in order to promote substantial advances in the frontiers of knowledge will be considered.

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.**

6.5 ERC Synergy Grant proposal submission procedure and proposal description

6.5.1 Proposal Submission

Proposals are submitted by a Lead 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 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.**

6.5.2 Proposal description

Part A of the electronic forms requests administrative information about the project and the Principal Investigators. Part B requests the main proposal where the following elements are required.

Part B - Section 1

Scientific Proposal: 15 pages

Part B - Section 2

Extended Synopsis: 5 pages

Curriculum Vitae: 2 pages per PI

track-record: 2 pages per PI

In fairness to all applicants, strict limits will be applied to the length of proposals, as above. Only the material that is presented within these limits will be evaluated (evaluators will only be asked, and will be under no obligation to read beyond, the material presented within the page limits).

Additional necessary elements:

3. Host Institution binding statement of support
4. Ethical Review table (incorporated in the scientific proposal)

The host institution of the Lead Principal Investigator must confirm its association with and its support to the group's project. As part of the application, the institution must provide a binding statement of support that the conditions of independence are already fulfilled or will be provided to the group if the application is successful, according to the template provided²¹.

²¹ 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

The host institution is expected to be in full agreement and to provide flexible support for the innovative ways in which the group intends to work together. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement will not be considered for evaluation.

Part B - Section 1

Scientific Proposal: description of scientific and technical aspects of the project, demonstrating how it will create significant synergies and **added value beyond the current work of the Principal Investigators** allowing it 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. The proposal will also need to indicate the fraction of the applicants' research effort that will be devoted to the group, a full estimation of the real project costs and any ethical considerations raised by the project.

Part B - Section 2

Extended Synopsis: A concise summary of the group's scientific proposal. This will be used to facilitate the evaluation (for example, to show to prospective referees) or in the event of oversubscription (see section 6.6).

Curriculum Vitae of the PIs: The CVs 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.

Each of the Principal Investigators must provide a list reflecting their track record. This can be either an **early achievement track-record** (see section 4.5) or **10-year track-record** (see section 5.5) chosen by the applicants based on which is most appropriate for their career stage.

6.6 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 will be assisted by independent experts as necessary. These may include remote referees and Panel Members from the ERC's regular panels (see Annex 1).

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 will 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 call²², at Step 1 the panels may identify the less competitive applications by assessing the proposals on the basis of the extended synopsis and the Principal

of the ERC Model Grant Agreement (C (2007)1625, 16/04/2007). The letter should be scanned and uploaded to EPSS with the proposal.

²² Defined as the requested budget of the submitted proposals being more than 10 times the indicative call budget.

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 ERC Synergy proposals is set out in Annex 9.

6.7 Evaluation criteria

Excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation. It will be applied to the evaluation of both the Principal Investigators and the group's research project in conjunction.

Evaluation panel members should take into account possible breaks in the research career of the applicants and/or unconventional research career paths.

The detailed elements applying to the two Sections of the proposal are as follows:

1. Group Research Project

Added value of the Group

To what extent does the group's proposal demand and demonstrate novel working arrangements, significant synergies, complementarities and added value to enable it to achieve its scientific objectives going beyond what the individual Principal Investigators could achieve alone?

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project:

To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges at the frontiers of the field(s) addressed?

To what extent does it have suitably ambitious objectives, which go substantially beyond the current state of the art (e.g. including inter- and trans-disciplinary developments and novel or unconventional concepts, methods and/or approaches)?

Methodology:

To what extent does the possibility of a major breakthrough with an impact beyond a specific research domain/discipline justify any highly novel and/or unconventional methodologies ("high-gain/high-risk balance")?

To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible?

To what extent is the proposed research methodology (including the proposed timescales and resources) appropriate to achieve the goals of the project? To what extent are the resources requested necessary and properly justified?

If it is proposed that Principal Investigators or team members engaged by another host institution participate in the project to what extent is their participation fully justified by the scientific added value they bring to the project?

2. Principal Investigators

Intellectual capacity and creativity:

To what extent are the Principal Investigators' records of research, collaborations, project conception and publications ground-breaking and demonstrative of independent creative thinking and the capacity to go significantly beyond the state of the art?

Commitment:

To what extent are the Principal Investigators committed to the group project and willing to devote a significant amount of time to it including significant "core time" spent together at the same physical location (they will be expected to devote at least 30% of their total working time to the ERC-funded project and spend at least 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or associated country)? What are the novel working arrangements they propose towards this aim?

6.8 Outcome of evaluation

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

At the end of each evaluation step, the proposals will be ranked by the panel or 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 applicants may also be subject to resubmission limitations in the next call²³.

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.

²³ Applicants will need to check the restrictions in place for each call.

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.

7. ERC Proof of Concept

The activity described in this chapter will be implemented through Coordination and Support Actions²⁴. The implementation method to be used is given in the description below.

7.1 Background

It is widely recognised that Europe offers insufficient opportunities for funding in the earliest stage of an innovation, where a potentially commercial 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 with near term market potential get lost in the period of transition when they are already deemed promising, but too new to validate their commercial 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 technological 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.

7.2 Objectives

The ERC Proof of concept 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. The objective is to provide funds to enable ERC-funded ideas to be brought to a pre-demonstration stage where potential commercialisation opportunities have been identified.

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 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. Innovations can also feed into ventures aimed at addressing social and environmental goals which may be in the voluntary and not-for-profit sectors.

The ERC Proof of concept aims 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.

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 whether, in principle, this idea has near term market potential. This would help:

²⁴ 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.

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

The ERC Proof of concept funding may be used for conducting further work (i.e. activities which were not scheduled to be funded by the ERC Starting and Advanced Grants) to verify the innovation potential of an idea arising from an ERC-funded project.

7.3 Eligibility Criteria

7.3.1 Eligible Principal Investigator

All Principal Investigators benefitting from an ERC Grant, that is either ongoing or where the project has ended²⁵ less than 12 months before the publication date of this call, are eligible to participate and apply for an ERC proof of concept funding.

Fundamental research often generates unexpected or new opportunities for commercial 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. The proof of concept funding looks to build upon ideas which draw substantially from research that has been funded by the ERC and it is therefore an offer only to Principal Investigators whose proposals draw substantially on the outputs of previous ERC-funded research.

Applicants will need to demonstrate the relation between the idea to be taken to proof of concept and the ERC Advanced or Starting Grant in question.

Proof of concept funding may be awarded only once per ERC funded project.

7.3.2 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 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, including universities, research organisations as well as undertakings can host the Principal Investigator and his/her team.

7.4 Size of ERC Proof of concept

7.4.1 Maximum financial contribution

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

Proof of concept funding may be awarded only once per ERC funded project.

²⁵ The end date of the project which is indicated in the ERC Grant Agreement:

7.4.2 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 justified²⁶.

7.4.3 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 costs²⁷. 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 project²⁸.

7.4.4 Call budget

The indicative budget for this call for 2012 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.

7.5 *ERC Proof of concept proposal submission procedure and proposal description*

7.5.1 Proposal Submission

Funding for the proof of concept 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.**

²⁶ 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"

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ 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.

7.5.2 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.

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 provided²⁹. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement will not be considered for evaluation.

7.6 ERC Proof of concept evaluation

A one-step submission and evaluation procedure will be used. The evaluation will be conducted by peer reviewers³⁰. These experts may work remotely and may if necessary meet as an evaluation panel as set out in section 7.8 on the application of the evaluation criteria.

7.7 Evaluation criteria

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

²⁹ 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 EPSS with the proposal.

³⁰ According to section 3.1.6.3 of the ERC Rules for the submission of proposals.

The proof of concept opportunity to be funded will have arisen from scientifically excellent ERC-funded research that has already been subject to rigorous peer review. The activities to be funded draw substantially on the outputs of ERC-supported research, but they are 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 proposition, i.e. the initial steps of pre-competitive development of commercial potential.

The evaluation criteria for selection of proposals for proof of concept funding are the following:

1. Innovation potential:

Proposals demonstrate that the proposed proof of concept activity could greatly help move the output of research towards the initial steps of pre-commercialisation.

1.1 The **economic and societal benefits** of the project to be taken to proof of concept are identified and an indication on whether the project will lead to a new product, a new process or enabling technologies (instrumentation, software, *etc.*) for further discoveries is included.

1.2 The proposal indicates the definition of the **commercialisation process** to be followed (licenses to a new or existing company, a venture funded start-up, a spin-off company, other forms).

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

1.4 (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

1.5 (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)³¹. This includes plans for sufficient protection to get the technology/product/process to market and attain at least a temporal competitive advantage

1.6 (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

³¹ 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.

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.

7.8 Outcome of evaluation

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

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 number 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 number of pass marks.

8. 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 Actions³². The implementation method to be used in each case is given in the description under each of the topics below.

8.1 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 2012 the Scientific Council wishes to launch two calls. The first will support the ongoing work of the Gender Balance Working Group of the ERC Scientific Council in formulating recommendations to the Scientific Council to improve the gender balance in ERC funding activities. The second will look at the organisational characteristics of those institutions hosting ERC grantees.

ERC-2012-Support-1 call on "Gender aspects in career structures and career paths"

The focus of the studies should be on gender aspects in career structures and career paths of male and female ERC grantees and non-successful ERC applicants as well as of potential applicants that never apply as a control group. The studies could be limited to, but should include, researchers relevant for the Starting Grant Life Science domain. Furthermore it

³² 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.

should be longitudinal studies including all stages of the careers from the university degree to the current position of ERC grantees. The studies may include:

- Differences in terms of publications, invitations to conferences, citations, positions, teaching, funding, or recruitment;
- Differences in mobility behaviour and international networking;
- The career impact of work balance, family background or specific support measures of ERC host institutions (e.g. spouses, child care, moving allowances etc.);
- Career breaks and unconventional career paths;
- Future career perspectives taking into account national research systems;

Project durations could be of up to one year. It is foreseen that a range of different methods could be appropriate, recognising that different approaches may be appropriate for different disciplines. In all cases, the expected output of the studies should have an impact on the ERC's operations and should not be of a theoretical nature.

Indicative overall budget for CSA (supporting action – call for proposals): EUR 150 000 for 2012.

ERC-2012-Support-2 call on "Organisational characteristics of ERC Host Institutions"

The focus of the studies should be on the organisational characteristics of those institutions that have been most successful and unsuccessful in hosting ERC grantees. In particular studies should examine whether successful institutions have established specific administrative arrangements, strategies or incentives in relation to the ERC's calls. Studies should also look at the local, regional and national legal and institutional frameworks in which the successful and unsuccessful institutions operate.

A call for tenders with further details and specifications will be issued in the final quarter of 2011 if it is not possible to implement the Coordination and Support Action through a specific contract of a framework contract signed by the European Commission.

Indicative overall budget for CSA (public procurement): EUR 300 000 for 2012

8.2 Support to the ERC Scientific Council

8.2.1 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 2012.

8.2.2 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 2012.

8.2.3 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 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 2012.

8.3 CSA Evaluation

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

8.3.1 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 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.

The minimum participation is one independent legal entity.

8.3.2 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?

8.3.3 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.

9. Indicative budget for the *Ideas* Work Programme

Action	in EUR million³³
ERC-2012-StG	729.98
ERC-2012-AdG	679.98
ERC-2012-SyG	150
ERC-2012-PoC	10
Other Activities:	
1. Support to Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy	0.45
2. Support to Scientific Council	0.69
Evaluation, Monitoring And Review Costs	7
Budget Source: Budget 2012³⁴	1,578.1
Estimated total budget allocation	1,578.1

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:

³³ The Budget figures given in this table are rounded to two decimal points.

³⁴ Under the condition that the draft budget for 2012 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority.

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

Annex 1 Primary panels structure and description and corresponding deadlines

Physical Sciences & Engineering:

Starting Grant 2012: 12 October 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Advanced Grant 2012: 16 February 2012 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

- 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
- 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, ecology, global environmental change, biogeochemical cycles, natural resources management

Life Sciences:

Starting Grant 2012: 9 November 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Advanced Grant 2012: 14 March 2012 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

- LS1 Molecular and Structural Biology and Biochemistry:** molecular biology, biochemistry, biophysics, structural biology, biochemistry of 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
- 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:** immunobiology, aetiology of immune disorders, microbiology, virology, parasitology, global and other infectious diseases, population dynamics of infectious diseases, veterinary medicine
- 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, prokaryotic biology
- LS9 Applied life sciences and biotechnology:** agricultural, animal, fishery, forestry and food sciences; biotechnology, chemical biology, genetic engineering, synthetic biology, industrial biosciences; environmental biotechnology and remediation;

Social Sciences & Humanities:

Starting Grant 2012: 24 November 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Advanced Grant 2012: 11 April 2012 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

- 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, demography, social geography, urban and regional studies
- SH4 The Human Mind and its complexity:** cognition, psychology, linguistics, philosophy and education
- SH5 Cultures and cultural production:** literature, visual and performing arts, music, cultural and comparative studies
- SH6 The study of the human past:** archaeology, history and memory

Annex 2 Starting Independent Researcher Grants Call for Proposals

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

Call identifier: ERC-2012-StG

Date of publication³⁵: 20 July 2011

Electronic proposal submission deadlines³⁶ (single submission of full proposal):³⁷

Domain Physical Sciences & Engineering (Panels PE1 - PE10): 12 October 2011, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Domain Life Sciences (Panels LSI – LS9): 9 November 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Domain Social Sciences & Humanities (Panels SH1 – SH6): 24 November 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 729.98m from 2012 budget³⁸ 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 costs³⁹. 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 project⁴⁰.

³⁵ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication.

³⁶ The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months.

³⁷ Please consult Annex 1 to the Ideas Work Programme for the panel description.

³⁸ Under the condition that the draft budget for 2012 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ 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.

Objective: ERC Starting Grants boost the independent careers of excellent researchers by providing adequate support at the critical stage where they are starting or consolidating 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).

Eligibility criteria: See eligibility criteria in the work programme section 3.4. Normally, the Principal Investigator must have been awarded their first PhD **at least 2 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 4.7 of the work programme.

Evaluation procedure: The evaluation will be conducted by means of a structure of high level peer review panels⁴¹ as listed in Annex 1. The panels may be assisted by remote referees. Principal Investigators whose proposals will be retained for the second step 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 expenses⁴². See section 4.6 and Annex 9 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>

⁴¹ 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.

⁴² 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 Advanced Investigator Grant Call for Proposals

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

Call identifier: ERC-2012-AdG

Date of publication⁴³: 16 November 2011

Electronic proposal submission deadlines⁴⁴ (single submission of full proposal):⁴⁵

Domain Physical Sciences & Engineering (Panels PE1 - PE10):

16 February 2012 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Domain Life Sciences (Panels LS1 – LS9):

14 March 2012 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Domain Social Sciences & Humanities (Panels SH1 – SH6):

11 April 2012 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 679.98m from 2012 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.

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 of the Ideas Work Programme for the panel description.

⁴⁶ Under the condition that the draft budget for 2012 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.

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 3.4.

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 5.7 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. See section 5.6 and Annex 9 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.

Annex 4 ERC Synergy Grant Call for Proposals

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

Call identifier: ERC-2012-SyG

Date of publication⁵⁰: 25 October 2011

Electronic proposal submission deadline⁵¹ (single submission of full proposal): 25 January 2012 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 150m from 2012 budget⁵².

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 costs⁵³. 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 project⁵⁴.

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 Lead Principal Investigator. See eligibility criteria in the work programme section 3.4.

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

⁵⁰ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication.

⁵¹ The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months.

⁵² Under the condition that the draft budget for 2012 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority.

⁵³ 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.

⁵⁴ 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.

detailed elements applying to the two Sections of the proposal see section 6.7 of the work programme.

Evaluation procedure: The evaluation will be conducted by means of dedicated high level peer review panels. Panels will be assisted by independent experts as necessary⁵⁵. Principal Investigators whose proposals will be retained for the second step 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 expenses⁵⁶. See section 6.6 and Annex 9 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>

⁵⁵ 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.

⁵⁶ 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 5 Proof of Concept Call for Proposals

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

Call identifier: ERC-2012-PoC

Date of publication⁵⁷: 2 February 2012

Electronic proposal submission deadlines⁵⁸:

First deadline: 3 May 2012 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Final deadline: 3 October 2012 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 10m from 2012 budget⁵⁹ (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 costs⁶⁰. 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 project⁶¹.

Objective: European Research Council ERC Proof of Concept (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 ended⁶² less than 12 months before the publication date of this call are eligible to participate and apply for an ERC proof of concept funding. See section 7.3 of the work programme.

⁵⁷ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication.

⁵⁸ The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months.

⁵⁹ Under the condition that the draft budget for 2012 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority.

⁶⁰ 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.

⁶¹ 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.

⁶² 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 7.7 of the work programme.

Evaluation procedure: The evaluation will be conducted by peer reviewers⁶³. These experts may work remotely and may if necessary meet as an evaluation panel. See sections 7.6 and 7.8 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>

⁶³ 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 6 Gender aspects in career structures and career paths - 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-2012-Support-1

Date of publication⁶⁴: 12 October 2011

Electronic proposal submission deadline⁶⁵ (single submission of full proposal): 12 January 2011 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 150 000⁶⁶ 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 costs⁶⁷. 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 project⁶⁸.

Objective: Support to ERC monitoring and evaluation strategy. Applications must address topics on gender aspects in career structures and career paths as specified in the work programme (section 8.1).

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.

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

⁶⁴ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication.

⁶⁵ At the time of the publication of the call, the Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months.

⁶⁶ Under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2012 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority.

⁶⁷ 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.

⁶⁸ 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: See the work programme (section 8.3.2) 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>

Annex 7 Organisational characteristics of ERC Host Institutions - CSA Call for Tenders information

Call Title: Call for tenders for ERC CSA (Coordination and Support Action) - Organisational characteristics of ERC Host Institutions .

Call identifier: ERC-2012-Support-2

Date of publication and call deadline⁶⁹: A call for tenders with further details and specifications will be issued in the final quarter of 2011 to acquire service studies on the organisational characteristics of those institutions that have been most successful and unsuccessful in hosting ERC grantees. The call for tenders will be launched if it is not possible to implement the Coordination and Support Action through a specific contract of a framework contract signed by the European Commission. It is expected that this call will result in one contract.

Indicative budget: EUR 300 000⁷⁰ from 2012 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.

⁶⁹ At the time of the publication of the call, the Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months.

⁷⁰ Under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2012 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority.

Annex 8 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 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 2004⁷¹. 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)⁷².

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.**

⁷¹ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/thematic_studies_archives_en.php

⁷² <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. 4-14 years past MD).

For medical doctors who have been awarded both an MD and a PhD, the date of their PhD award takes precedence in the calculation of the eligibility time-window (2-12 years after PhD).

Annex 9 Evaluation procedure for the Starting, Advanced and ERC Synergy Grants

Evaluation procedure for *ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grant*

(see also Chapter 4 of the work programme).

A **single submission of the full proposal** will be followed by a **two-step evaluation**. At step 1, Section 1 of the proposal 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 this panel. 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 panel⁷³ divided by the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the domain of the call, multiplied by the total indicative budget of the domain.

Following the same rationale and in order to assure comparable success rate for the "starters" and the "consolidators", the indicative budget of each panel will be further divided in proportion to the budgetary demand of the proposals submitted in these two categories ("starters" and "consolidators").

Step 1: Following the submission of the proposal, Section 1 of the proposal (see section 4.5 of the work programme) 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.

The Principal Investigators will be assessed by the evaluation panels as "starters" or "consolidators". The allocation of the proposals to the two streams will be based on the number of years since the award of their PhD. "Starters" being normally those awarded their PhD from 2 up to 7 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication, and "consolidators" being normally those awarded their PhD over 7 and up to 12 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication. However, in making the final streaming decision, panels will also take into account the specific stage of the Principal Investigator's research career at the time of the application based on the information and supporting documents provided. Applicants wishing to be evaluated in a stream different than that corresponding to the years past PhD must make their case in the leadership profile in Section 1 of the application (see sections 4.5, 3.5.2 and the ERC Guide for Applicants).

⁷³ Proposals containing grant requests above the maximum limit will be treated as at the limit for the purpose of calculating these indicative budgets.

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 resubmission limitations in the next call⁷⁴.

In addition, applicants will be told the ranking range of their proposal out of the proposals evaluated by the panel. Depending on the outcome of evaluation, some applicants may be subject to restrictions on applying to subsequent calls.

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

Panel Members and remote referees 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) or additional remote referees.

Principal Investigators whose proposals have been retained for the second step 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 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 be told 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"⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ Applicants will need to check the restrictions in place for each call.

⁷⁵ 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.

Evaluation procedure for *ERC Advanced Investigators Grant*
(see also Chapter 5 of the work programme)

A **single submission of the full proposal** will be followed by a **two-step evaluation**. At step 1, Section 1 of the proposal 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 this panel. 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 panel⁷⁶ 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, Section 1 of the proposal (see section 5.5 of the work programme) 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. 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 applicant may also be subject to resubmission limitations in the next call⁷⁷.

In addition, applicants will be told 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.

⁷⁶ Proposals containing grant requests above the maximum limit will be treated as at the limit for the purpose of calculating these indicative budgets.

⁷⁷ Applicants will need to check the restrictions in place for each call.

Panel Members and remote referees 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) or additional remote referees.

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 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 be told 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"⁷⁸.

Evaluation procedure for *ERC Synergy Grant*

(see also Chapter 6 of the work programme)

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 will be conducted with their Principal Investigators. The evaluation will be conducted by means of a structure of dedicated panels.

In step 1 the evaluation will be conducted by means of five high level peer review panels which will be formed from around 50 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 will 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

⁷⁸Additional 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.

is calculated as the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the panel⁷⁹ 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.

At least four panel members and four external experts will evaluate and mark each proposal for each of the two sections of the proposal (group research project and Principal Investigators).

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"⁸⁰ 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 applicant may also be subject to resubmission limitations in the next call⁸¹.

In addition, applicants will be told the ranking range of their proposal out of the proposals evaluated by the panels.

If necessary, and in order to assure the quality of the evaluation in the case of heavy oversubscription to the call⁸², at step 1 panels 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 reassessed.

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

The principal PIs 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 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.

⁷⁹ Proposals containing grant requests above the maximum limit will be treated as at the limit for the purpose of calculating these indicative budgets.

⁸⁰ 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.

⁸¹ Applicants will need to check the restrictions in place for each call.

⁸² Defined as the requested budget of the submitted proposals being more than 10 times the indicative call budget.

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 be told 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.