

The European Research Council

Information session on ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants

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European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

Overview

- ERC and ERC Grant Schemes
- Eligibility
- Submission and Evaluation Process
- Tips and Tricks

ERC is part of Horizon Europe

HORIZON EUROPE



EUR 16 billion
ERC budget in Horizon Europe



17%
of the entire
Horizon Europe budget



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About the ERC

Scientific governance

- Independent Scientific Council with 22 members including the ERC President, with full authority over strategy
- Supported by a Dedicated Implementation Structure, the ERC Executive Agency; it implements the ERC strategy as set by the Scientific Council and manages ERC operations

ERC's mission

To encourage the highest quality research in Europe through competitive funding and to support investigator-driven frontier research across all fields, on the basis of scientific excellence.

Scientific freedom

- Scientific excellence as the sole criterion
- Support to the individual scientist – *no consortia!*
- No predetermined subjects – “*bottom-up*”
- Support for frontier research in all fields of science and humanities
- International peer-review



Why apply for an ERC grant?

ERC offers independence, recognition & visibility to:

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

ERC funding schemes



Starting Grants

starters (2-7 years after PhD) up to € 1.5 Mio
for 5 years



Consolidator Grants

Consolidators (7-12 years after PhD) up to € 2 Mio
for 5 years



Advanced Grants

track-record of significant research achievements in the
last 10 years up to € 2.5 Mio
for 5 years



Synergy Grants

2 – 4 Principal Investigators up to € 10.0 Mio for 6
years
1 PI can be based outside EU/Associated
Countries



Proof-of-Concept

bridging gap between research - earliest stage of marketable innovation
lump sum €150,000 for ERC grant holders



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Excellence

is the sole evaluation criterion

Excellence of the Research Project

The panels will primarily evaluate the ground-breaking nature and ambition of the research project.

Excellence of the Principal Investigator

Intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment with a focus on the extent to which the Principal Investigator(s) has the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project.

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Preparing your proposal

...for StG and CoG, make sure you are eligible!

1. Reference date for the calculation of the Eligibility window: **1st of January of the year of the Call**
 - StG2026:** 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2023
 - CoG2026:** 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2018
 - *Extensions of eligibility window possible for documented cases*
2. If you previously applied to an ERC call, check **resubmission restrictions**
 - *Indicative submission restrictions for the StG2026 and CoG2026 calls*
- same as in the past
3. Time **commitment on the project:** Min. 50% (StG), 40% (CoG)
4. Minimum 50% of PI **working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country**



PhD eligibility reference date (since WP 2023)

New “PhD eligibility reference date” rule:

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

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

StG and CoG: Extension of the Eligibility windows

For documented situations occurring before the call deadline

- **Maternity leave:** +18 months for each child born before/after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Paternity/parental leave:** documented time taken for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Long-term illness** (>90 days for the PI or a close family member) or **national service:** documented amount of leave taken for each incident that occurred after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Disability:** Extension corresponding to the reduced amount of working time (including leave taken) and/or the degree of disability as documented by the applicant
- **Clinical training:** documented amount of clinical training received **after** the reference date of the 1st eligible degree, **up to a maximum of 4 years**;
- **Major disaster** and for **seeking asylum**;
- **Victims of any kind of violence, including gender-based** after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree **(as from WP2026)**

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2026 Call Calendar

	Starting Grant Call	Consolidator Grant Call	Advanced Grant Call	Synergy Grant Call
Call	ERC-2026-StG	ERC-2026-CoG	ERC-2026-AdG	ERC-2026-SyG
Opening Date	9 July 2025	25 September 2025	28 May 2026	10 July 2025
Deadline	14 October 2025	13 January 2026	27 August 2026	5 November 2025
Budget (EUR, m)	705	673	747	500
Estimated Number of Grants	450	328	294	49

What changes in 2026 – Additional funding

- On top of its standard grants, the ERC has always offered additional funding for major costs not covered by the main grant. Applicants already based in an EU Member State or associated country remain eligible for up to €1 million of additional funding.
- One general category for additional funding without pre-defined sub-categories (for both actual and lump sum cost models).
- **Increased ERC funding for top global researchers moving to Europe:** Additional funding of up to €2 million for researchers currently based outside Europe applying for Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grants.

What changes in 2026 – Proposal structure

Grant application

- New structure of the scientific proposal:
 - Scientific Proposal Part I (max 5 pages) should describe the overall idea of the proposed research project: current state of knowledge; objectives of the project; overall approach/research strategy to reach the goals of the project
 - Scientific Proposal Part II (max 7 pages) should describe the implementation in detail: the research methodology, work plan, risk assessment etc.

The panels will use Part I for evaluation at Step 1 and both parts together for their evaluation at Step 2.

CV and Track Record (since 2024 Calls)

No prescriptive Principal Investigator profiles

1. **Personal details:** education, employment
2. **Research achievements and peer recognition** (*applicants can provide a short, factual narrative on the significance of the listed achievements and recognitions in relation to the research field and the proposed project*)
 - Research outputs (≤ 10):
 - ✓ demonstrating advancement in the field
 - ✓ emphasis on more recent achievements
 - Peer recognition: prizes, fellowships, academy membership, etc.
3. **Additional information:**
 - career breaks, diverse career paths, life events
 - other contributions to research community



Proposal Structure

Part A:

- Online administrative form with many sections (many fields are mandatory)
- Proposal budget and resources (evaluated at step 2)

Part B: Scientific Proposal

- Part B1: composed of Part I of the Scientific Proposal, CV and Track Record (evaluated at step 1 and step 2)
- Part B2: composed of Part II of the Scientific Proposal Scientific proposal (evaluated at step 2) and funding ID

Host Institution support letter

PhD certificate

Annexes: Extension request documents, ethics docs, etc

Evaluation panel structure

ERC Panels and panel descriptors available in the [Information for Applicants](#) document:
28 panels (2024 → 8 SH Panels)

- Provides **guidance to applicants**;
- Not a complete scientific classification; descriptors are not exhaustive;
- Panel titles, subtitles, and descriptors don't set priorities; All topics/fields are welcome, regardless of panel mention;
- PIs can flag a "Secondary Review Panel" for cross-panel proposals. Ensure to justify why a proposal is "cross-panel" in Part B1. Reviewers from both panels are utilized if needed
- ERC budget is allocated based on demand per scientific panel. Success rate is consistent across panels. Select the panel that aligns best with your proposal's focus.

Evaluation panel structure (2026)

Life Sciences

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

Physical Sciences & Engineering

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

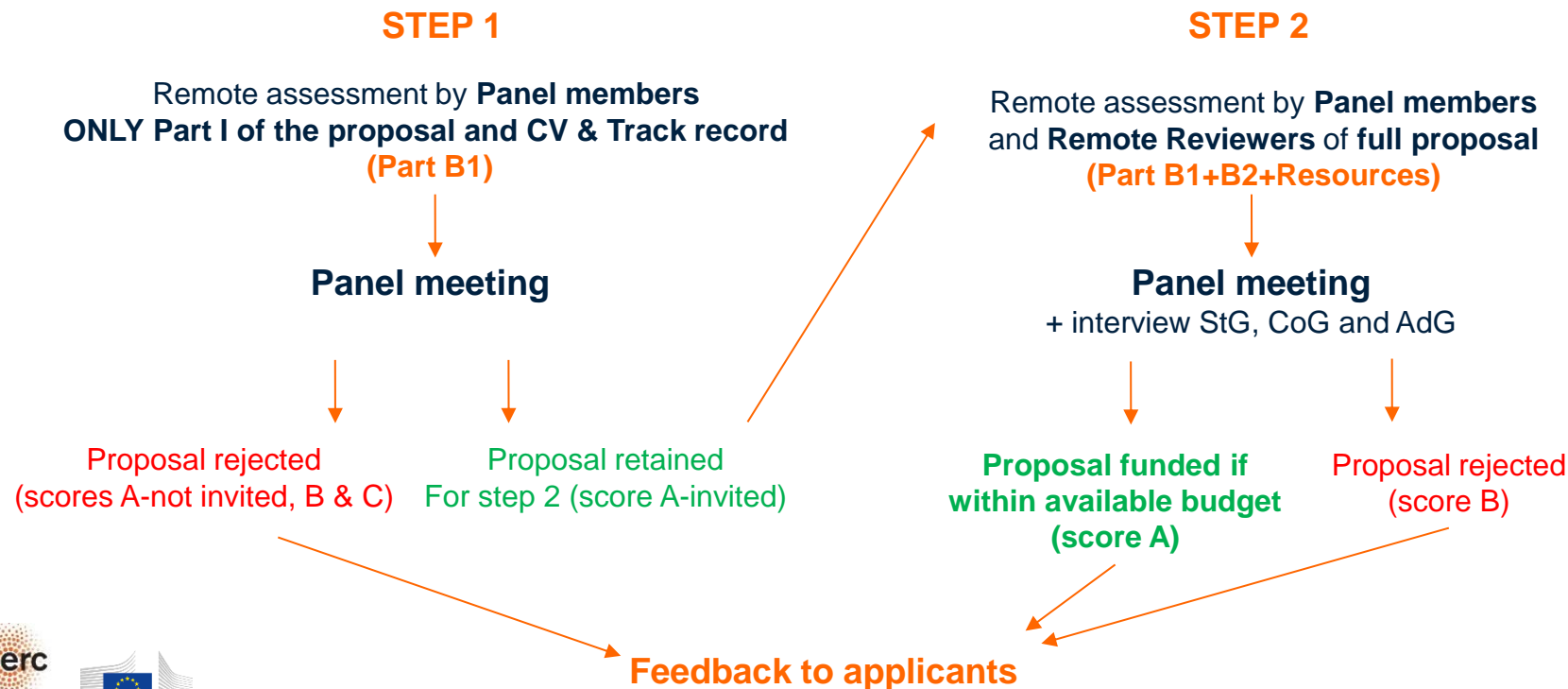
Social Sciences and Humanities

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



Evaluation: process

For individuals calls: a single submission but a two-step evaluation



Preparing your proposal

- **In Step 1: Panel members** see only Part I of the Scientific proposal (prepare it accordingly!)
 - Part I forms the basis for the Panel's decision whether to evaluate the proposal in the next step. Therefore, all essential information must be covered in this section.
- **In Step 2: Part I + Part II** of the Scientific proposal + **Budget and Resources** - evaluated by Panel Members & Remote Referees
 - Part II: detailed explanation of the project implementation (feasibility), including research methodology, work plan, risk assessment, and mitigating measures (no repetition of Part I!). **New => 7 pages**
 - Justification for the requested budget and resources – especially additional funding
Panels have to ensure that the requested resources are reasonable and well justified.

Evaluation elements: read the evaluation questions in the Work Programme

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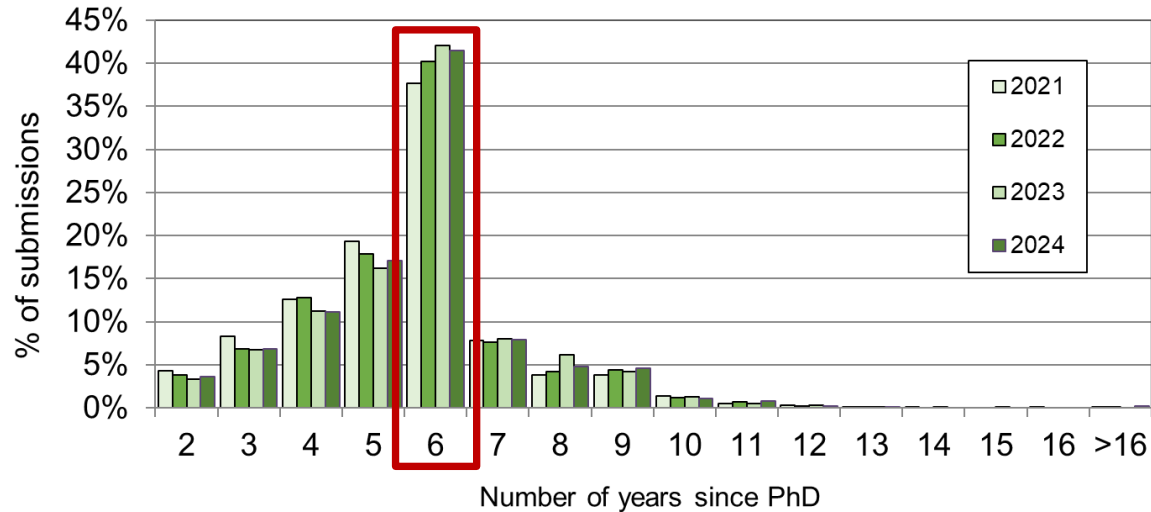
Contrary to what you may think

- The **budget** is distributed among the scientific panels as a function of demand
- The **panel descriptors** do not represent ERC scientific priorities - **any topic/field** is equally welcome
- The **Host Institution** is not an evaluation criterion
- Proposals **shorter than five years** are welcome. The content of the proposed research determines its budget
- Do not include unnecessary partners and collaborators; it is not a "consortium"
- **Publication record** is not decisive in selection decisions
- The **success rate** is not linked to academic age

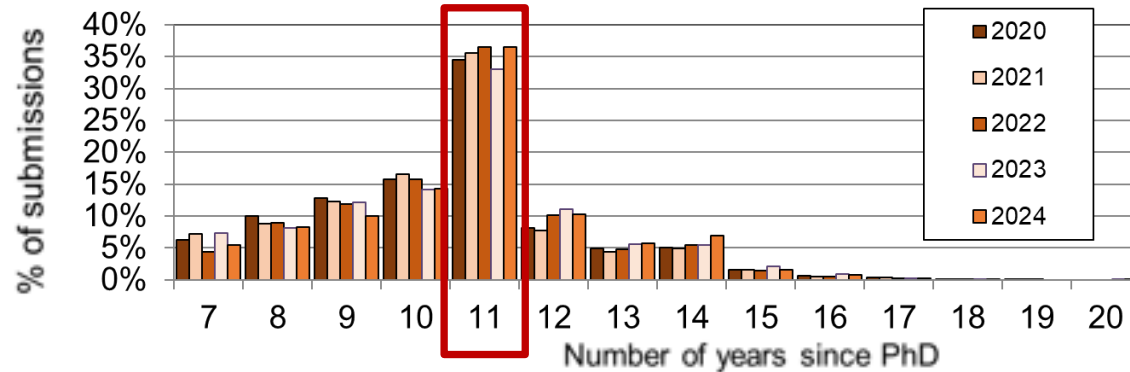


Submissions by years since PhD

STG 2021-2024



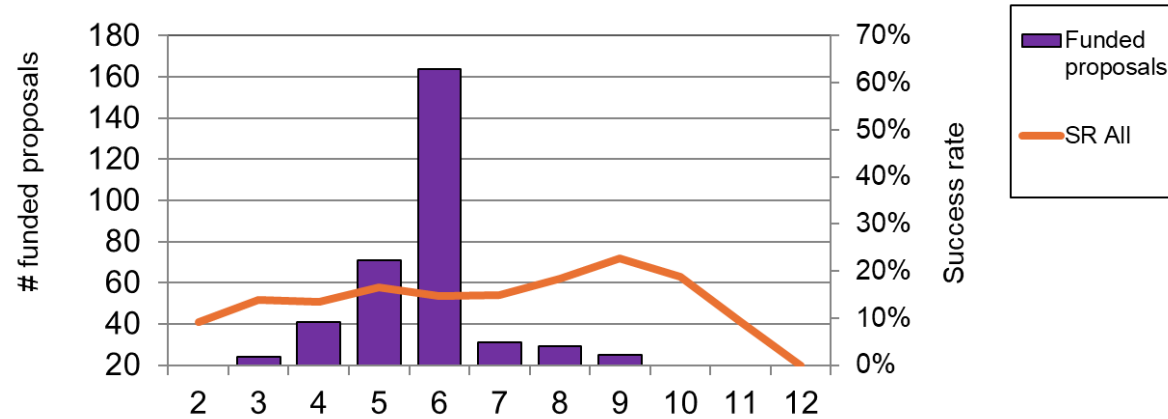
COG 2020-2024



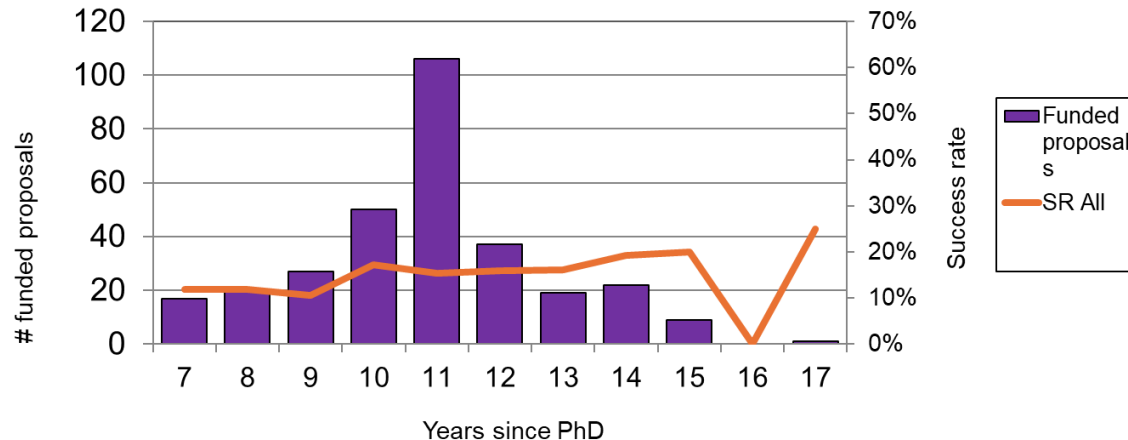
Shall I apply now or wait another year?

STG and COG 2023 - Results of step 2

STG 2023



COG 2023



Key points:

- Writing is hard and requires time: devote plenty of time to the “job”
- Writing a proposal = rewriting it many times
- Proofread and/or secondary read by a friend, colleague, family member (avoid: spelling mistakes, grammatical slips, exceeding the word and page limits)
- Do not work right up to the deadline: it can undo weeks/months of hard work (e.g. submission of early draft, connection failure, IT malfunctions)
- A submitted proposal can be revised until the call deadline by submitting a new version and overwriting the previous one.

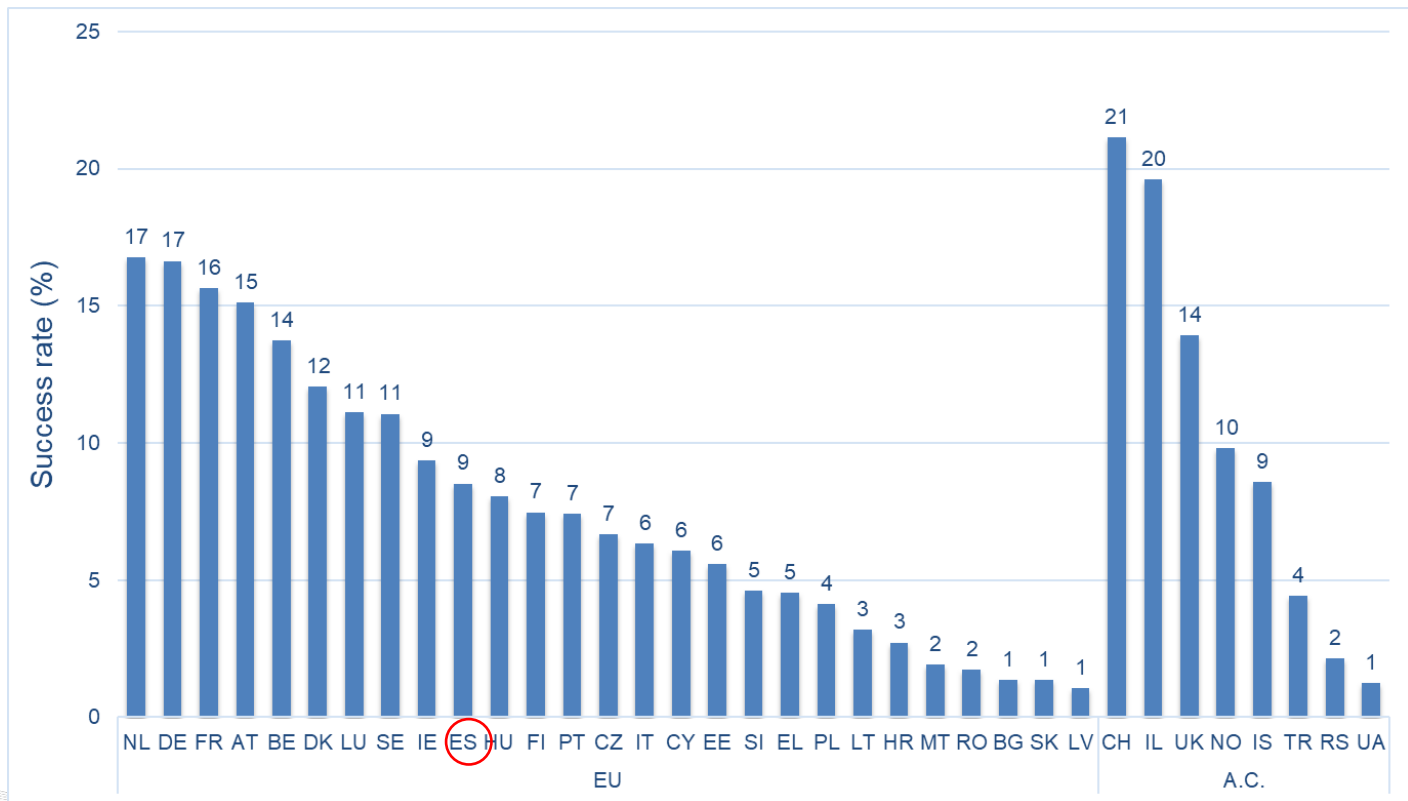
Main tips, but no tricks!

1. Consult call documents (Work Programme, Information for Applicants, Guide for Peer Reviewers, etc)
2. Register early on the F&T Portal
3. Have your documentation ready
4. Look at funded projects in your field (search tool on ERC website), testimonials, tutorials ([ERC homepage](#); [ERC videos](#))
5. Contact the ERCEA and ask all your questions well ahead of the submission deadline – dedicated mailboxes for each call ([ERC contacts](#))
6. Get the written consent of your collaborators before the submission deadline (a simple email exchange is OK)

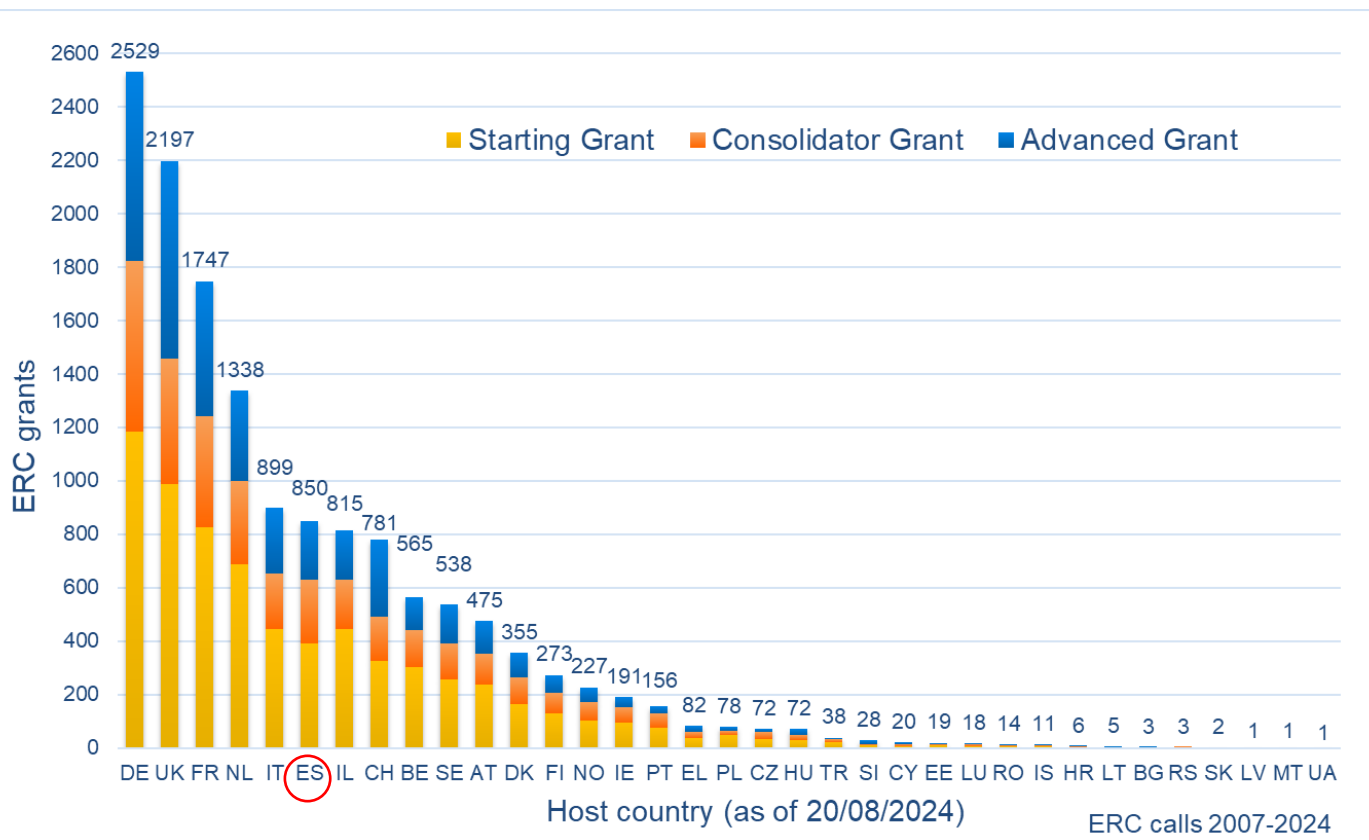
Some final messages

- Don't exclude yourself from participating in ERC calls.
- If you have an idea that you think will make a significant change in your field of research or some other area, consider writing it down and apply to ERC.
- Be ambitious, explain your project's high scientific impact if you reach your aims, and provide evidence that you can do it.
- Consider the balance between addressing generalists and specialists, and the difference between part I and part II of the scientific proposal.
- If you fail, try again! Gain experience from evaluation. Panel feedback is useful and resubmissions have higher success rate (typically 1.5 times higher).

Success rate by country of Host Institution



ERC-funded projects by country of Host Institution



Thank You!

More information: erc.europa.eu

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

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