Horizon Europe

European Research Council (ERC) Frontier Research Grants

Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant Calls

European Research Council
Executive Agency

Established by the European Commission

Version 6.0
03 August 2022

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1.0	25.02.2021	▪ Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2021 Calls
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3.0	21.09.2021	▪ Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2022 Calls
4.0	09.11.2021	▪ Updated version (the link to the Guide for Peer Reviewers on page 2 has been corrected)
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6.0	03.08.2022	▪ Updated version (clarifications added to the sections: 2.4 Supporting documentation and 4.4 Supporting documents for the PhD reference date and extension requests)

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Warning: The budget table, description of resources and time commitment are part of the online submission form (Section 3 - Budget). Do NOT include them in Part B2.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

The present document is based on the legal documents setting the rules and conditions for the ERC frontier research grants, in particular:

- the ERC Work Programme 2023[1],
- the European Research Council rules of submission, and the related methods and procedures for peer review and proposal evaluation relevant to the specific programme implementing Horizon Europe (hereinafter ERC Rules of Submission and Evaluation under Horizon Europe), and
- the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions.

This document complements and does not supersede the afore-mentioned documents, which are legally binding and prevail in case of discrepancies. The European Commission, the ERC Executive Agency or any person or body acting on their behalf cannot be held responsible for the use made of this document.

The Guide for ERC Peer Reviewers applicable to Starting and Consolidator grant calls, provides practical information on the evaluation process.

National Contact Points (ERC NCPs) have been set up across Europe[2] by the national governments to provide information and personalised support to ERC applicants in their native language. The mission of the ERC NCPs is to raise awareness, inform and advise on ERC funding opportunities as well as to support potential applicants in the preparation, submission and follow-up of ERC grant applications. For details on the ERC NCP in your country, please consult the ERC website or the Funding & Tenders Portal.

For any questions related to the call, please contact the relevant Call coordination team:
ERC-2023-STG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu or ERC-2023-COG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu

Abbreviations

AC - Associated Country[3]
ADG - Advanced Grant
COG - Consolidator Grant
ERC - European Research Council
ERC WP - ERC Work Programme
ERC panel - ERC peer review evaluation panel
ERC NCP - ERC National Contact Points
ERCEA - ERC Executive Agency
EU MS - EU Member States
F&T Portal - Funding & Tenders Portal (Single Electronic Data Interchange Area (SEDIA))
HE - Horizon Europe Framework Programme
HI - Host Institution
PI - Principal Investigator
PM - Panel Member
PIC - Participant Identification Code
SEP - Submission and Evaluation of Proposals (online tool)
STG - Starting Grant
SYG - Synergy Grant
ScC - ERC Scientific Council

[1] European Commission C(2022) 4861 of 11 July 2022.
[2] This applies to EU Member States and Associated Countries. Some other countries also provide this service.
[3] Please check the Horizon Europe Programme Guide on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal for up-to-date information on the current position for Associated Countries.

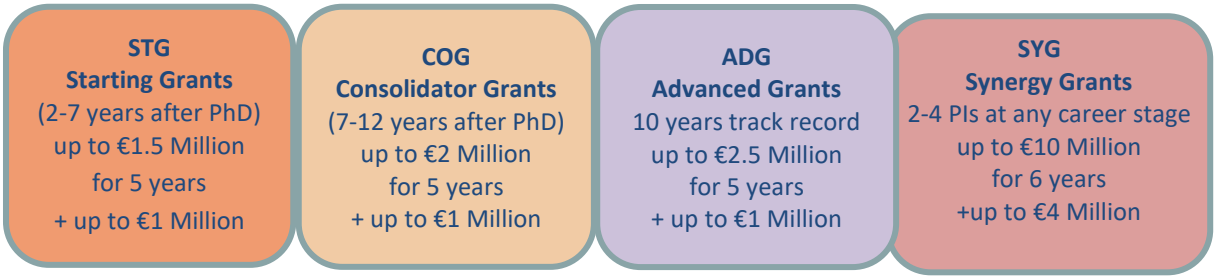
Content

1. ERC STARTING AND CONSOLIDATOR GRANTS 2023

1.1 ERC FUNDING PRINCIPLES

The ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants are part of the main ERC frontier research grants 2023 funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

The ERC's main frontier research grants aim to empower individual researchers and provide the best settings to foster their creativity. **Scientific excellence** is the sole criterion of evaluation. Please see below an overview of all ERC 2023 main frontier research calls.



Single Principal Investigator (PI) heading research teams

The ERC STG and COG grants support individual researchers that are starting or consolidating their own independent research team or programme, and who can demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of their scientific proposal. In certain fields (e.g. in the humanities and mathematics), where research is often performed individually, the 'team' may consist solely of the Principal Investigator.

Research fields – no predetermined priorities

The ERC's frontier research grants operate on a 'bottom-up' basis and applications can be made in any field of research with an emphasis on the frontiers of science, scholarship and engineering[4]. In particular, the ERC encourages proposals of a multi- or interdisciplinary nature, which cross the boundaries between different fields of research, pioneering proposals addressing new and emerging fields of research or proposals introducing unconventional, innovative approaches and scientific inventions. The focus is on the PI and on the individual team. Support for consortia is provided by other calls under Horizon Europe. Projects wholly or largely consisting of the collation and compilation of existing material in new databases, editions or collections are unlikely to constitute ground-breaking or frontier research, however useful such resources might be to subsequent original research. Such projects are therefore unlikely to be recommended for funding by the ERC panels.

Careful consideration should be given so to propose truly novel ideas, not just continuations of ongoing work or existing collaboration. Frontier research is funded by the ERC, research proposals are expected to be risky. It remains important, however, that the risk and how it will be managed is well thought through and explained in the proposal.

Evaluation and peer review

The ERC's evaluation process is conducted by peer review panels composed of renowned scientists and scholars. The panels may be assisted by independent external experts working remotely. The

[4] Research proposals within the scope of Annex I to the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications shall be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom Framework Programme.

panel chair and members are selected by the ERC Scientific Council on the basis of their scientific merits.

Open Science

Open science is a core principle of the ERC. The ERC is committed to the principle of open access to the published output of research, including in particular peer-reviewed articles and monographs. It also supports the basic principle of open access to research data and data-related products such as computer code, algorithms, software, workflows, protocols, electronic notebooks or any other forms of research output. The ERC considers that providing free online access to all these materials can be the most effective way of ensuring that the results of the research it funds can be accessed, read and used as the basis for further advancement.

Under Horizon Europe, beneficiaries of ERC grants must ensure immediate open access to all peer-reviewed scientific publications[5] related to their results as set out in the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions. Open access has to be provided with full re-use rights[6]. Beneficiaries must ensure that they or the authors retain sufficient intellectual property rights to comply with their open access requirements and the grant agreement obligations. Publishing costs can be considered as eligible costs provided that the publishing venue (e.g., journal, book) is fully open access.

In addition, beneficiaries of ERC frontier research grants funded under the Work Programme 2023 will be covered by the provisions on research data management as set out in the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions. In particular, whenever a project generates research data, beneficiaries are required to manage it in line with the principles of findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reusability as described by the FAIR principles initiative[7], and establish a data management plan within the first six months of project implementation. Open access to research data should be ensured under the principle 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary'. These provisions are designed to facilitate access, re-use and preservation of the research data generated during the ERC funded research work.

Funding

Starting Grants can be up to a maximum of EUR 1 500 000 for a period of 5 years. Consolidator Grants can be up to a maximum of EUR 2 000 000 for a period of 5 years. For projects of shorter duration, the maximum amount of the grant is reduced pro rata.

Additional funding up to EUR 1 000 000 can be requested in the proposal for STG and COG to cover the following eligible costs when these are necessary to carry out the proposed work:

(a) "start-up" costs for PIs moving to the EU or an AC from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant and/or
(b) the purchase of major equipment and/or
(c) access to large facilities and/or
(d) other major experimental and field work costs, excluding personnel costs.

Additional funding is not subject to pro rata temporis reduction for projects of shorter duration[8]. All funding requested is assessed during evaluation.

[5] This includes peer-reviewed book chapters and long-text publications such as monographs, edited collections, critical editions, scholarly exhibition catalogues, or PhD theses.
[6] For monographs and other long-text formats, commercial re-use and derivative works may be excluded.
[7] https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2016.18
[8] The maximum award is reduced pro rata temporis for projects of a shorter duration (e.g. for a Consolidator Grant project of 48 months duration the maximum requested EU contribution allowed is 1.600.000 €). Additional funding to cover major one-off costs is not subject to pro-rata temporis reduction for projects of shorter duration (e.g. with additional funding it is possible to request a maximum EU contribution of 2.600.000 € for a project of 48 months duration).

Eligible project costs will be reimbursed at a funding rate of 100% for direct costs plus a flat-rate of 25% for indirect costs[9].

Research integrity

Cases of scientific misconduct such as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or misrepresentation of data[10] may result in the rejection of proposals in accordance with section 3.11 of the ERC Rules of Submission and Evaluation under Horizon Europe. Please also note that a plagiarism detection software is used to analyse all submitted proposals in order to detect similar proposals submitted by different PIs. A procedure is in place to assess alleged or suspected cases of scientific misconduct. Scientific misconduct may result in the rejection of the proposal from the current call and in a possible restriction on submission of proposals to future calls, as provided in the relevant ERC Work Programme.

Starting and Consolidator grant profiles

Principal Investigator must provide a list of achievements reflecting their track record. A short narrative describing the scientific importance of the research outputs and the role played by the Principal Investigator in their production may also be included.

Applicants are encouraged to evaluate their track record and research independence against the below-mentioned benchmarks, in order to judge their likelihood for success and to avoid investing efforts in proposals that are very unlikely to succeed.

Starting Grant	Consolidator Grant
A competitive STG PI must have already shown the potential for research independence and evidence of maturity, for example by having produced at least one important publication as main author or without the participation of their PhD supervisor.	A competitive COG PI must have already shown research independence and evidence of maturity, for example by having produced several important publications as main author or without the participation of their PhD supervisor.
All PIs should also be able to demonstrate a promising track record of early achievements appropriate to their research field and career stage, including e.g. significant publications (as main author) in major international peer-reviewed multidisciplinary scientific journals, or significant publications in leading international peer-reviewed journals of their respective field or research monographs. Publications may be listed with their field relevant bibliometric indicators, however without mentioning the Journal Impact Factor. The PI may also demonstrate a record of invited presentations in well-established international conferences, granted patents, awards, prizes, or any other scientific achievements the PI deems relevant in relation to their research field and project.	

In the context of the Covid-19 outbreak, applicants may mention in their research proposal (Curriculum Vitae) any specific situation caused by the pandemic that had a negative impact on their CV or track record.

[9] Excluding the direct eligible costs for subcontracting and internally invoiced goods and services.

[10] For example if (i) in the list of publications, the order of authors does not appear as indicated in the original publications; (ii) the written consent of the research collaborators mentioned in the proposal is not obtained by the call submission deadline.

1.2 ADMISSIBILITY AND ELIGIBILITY

Admissible and eligible proposals

All proposals must be complete, readable, and accessible. They must be submitted by eligible Principal Investigators before the relevant call deadlines. Please see section 2.1 for an overview of a complete ERC proposal. Proposals that do not meet these criteria may be declared inadmissible. All scientific fields are eligible for ERC funding[11].

All applications and the related supporting information are reviewed to ensure that all admissibility and eligibility criteria are met. The proposal's content should be related to the objectives of the Starting and Consolidator Grant calls and must meet all admissibility and eligibility requirements as defined in the 2023 ERC Work Programme. Where there is a doubt about the admissibility or eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision following an admissibility and eligibility review committee. The fact that a proposal is evaluated in such circumstances does not constitute a proof of its admissibility or eligibility. If it becomes clear before, during, or after the peer review evaluation phase, that one or more of the admissibility or eligibility criteria has not been met (for example, due to incorrect or misleading information), the proposal will be declared inadmissible or ineligible and it will be rejected.

Host institution

The HI must engage the PI for at least the duration of the project, as defined in the grant agreement[12]. It must either be established in an EU Member State or Associated Country[13] as a legal entity created under national law, or it may be an international European research organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) or any other entity created under EU law. International organisations with headquarters in an EU MS or AC will be deemed to be established in this EU MS or AC. Any type of legal entity, public or private, including universities, research organisations and undertakings can host Principal Investigators and their teams. To be eligible, legal entities from an EU MS or AC that are public bodies, research organisations or higher education institutions (including private research organisations and private higher education institutions) must have a gender equality plan (GEP) or an equivalent strategic document in place for the duration of the project. The gender equality plan or equivalent must fulfil the mandatory requirements listed in Annex 5 of the ERC Work Programme 2023. The ERC welcomes applications from PIs hosted by private for-profit research centres, including industrial laboratories. Normally the PI will be employed by the HI, but cases where, for duly justified reasons, the PI's employer cannot become the HI, or where the PI is self-employed, can be accommodated. The specific conditions of engagement will be subject to clarification and approval during the granting procedure or during the amendment procedure for a change of HI. During the granting process, the financial capacity of applicant legal entities will be assessed, if required[14].

Principal Investigator

ERC grants are open to researchers of any nationality who intend to conduct their research activity in any EU MS or an AC[15]. The research team may be of national or trans-national character. The PI does not need to be employed by the HI at the time when the proposal is submitted. If not already

[11] Research proposals within the scope of Annex I to the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications shall be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom Framework Programme.
[12] Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions.
[13] See footnote 3.
[14] Applicants must have stable and sufficient resources to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects. The financial capacity of applicant legal entities will be verified in accordance with Article 198(5) of the Financial Regulation and Article 27 of the Horizon Europe Regulation.
[15] See footnote 3.

employed by the HI, the PI must be engaged by the latter at least for the duration of the grant. Grant proposals are submitted by the PI who takes scientific responsibility for the project, on behalf of the host institution.

The requirements in terms of PhD successful defence date[16] are as follows:

Starting Grant	Consolidator Grant
The first PhD shall have been successfully defended > 2 and ≤ 7 years prior to 1 January 2023 Cut-off dates: **Successful defence of PhD** **from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2020** (inclusive)	The first PhD shall have been successfully defended > 7 and ≤ 12 years prior to 1 January 2023 Cut-off dates: **Successful defence of PhD** **from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2015** (inclusive)

The eligibility periods set out in the table above can be extended beyond 7 and 12 years for the Starting and Consolidator Grants, respectively, for certain properly documented circumstances such as for maternity and paternity leaves, clinical training, long-term illness, national service, natural disaster or seeking asylum (see Annex 4.4 for further details). The ERC policy on PhD and equivalent doctoral degrees, including specific provisions for holders of medical degrees, is provided in Annex 4.3.

Expected time commitment

With the support of the HI, the successful PIs are expected to lead their individual teams and devote a significant amount of time to the project. They will be expected to spend a minimum of 50% for STG and 40% for COG of their working time on the ERC project and a minimum of 50% of their working time in an EU MS or an AC.

Submission restrictions

Thousands of high quality proposals are received each year and only outstanding proposals are likely to be funded. In order to maintain the quality and integrity of ERC's evaluation process, restrictions on applications have been put in place.

The following general restrictions apply:

- A researcher may participate as PI in only one ERC main frontier research grant project at any one time[17]. A new project can only start after the duration of the project fixed in a previous grant agreement for one of the main frontier research grants has ended.

[16] The reference date towards the calculation of the eligibility period should be the date of the successful defence/viva of the PhD. Whenever the PhD certificate does not show the PhD defence date, applicants should provide a written confirmation from the awarding institution stating the said date.

[17] Including all PIs supported under the Synergy Grant.

- A researcher participating as PI in one of the main frontier research grant may not submit another proposal for a main ERC grant, unless the existing project ends[18] no more than two years after the call deadline.
- A PI who is a serving Panel Member for a 2023 ERC call or who served as a Panel Member for a 2021 ERC call may not apply to a 2023 ERC call for the same type of grant[19];
- If a PI applies to more than one main ERC frontier research grant call published under the same Work Programme (i.e. from the same 'call year'), only the first eligible proposal will be evaluated.

Additional restrictions are related to the outcome of the evaluation in previous calls (see table below). They are designed to allow unsuccessful PIs the time necessary to develop a stronger proposal. Inadmissible, ineligible or withdrawn proposals do not count against any of the restrictions listed below.

Call to which the PI applied under previous ERC WP and proposal evaluation outcome		2023 Calls to which a PI is ***NOT*** eligible
2021 and 2022 Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, or 2022 Synergy Grant	Rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity	STG, COG, ADG, SYG
2021 Starting, Consolidator, or Advanced Grant	C at Step 1	STG, COG, ADG
2022 Starting, Consolidator, or Advanced Grant	A, or B at Step 2	No restrictions
	B or C at Step 1	STG, COG, ADG
2022 Synergy Grant	A, or B at Step 3	No restrictions
	B at Step 1 or 2	No restrictions
	C at Step 1	ADG, SYG

The year of an ERC call refers to the WP under which the call was published and can be established by its call identifier. A 2023 ERC call is therefore one that was published under the WP 2023 and will have 2023 in the call identifier (for example ERC-2023-StG).

1.3 EVALUATION PROCESS

The ERC's peer review evaluation process has been carefully designed to identify scientific excellence irrespective of gender, age, nationality or institution of the PI and other potential biases, and to take career breaks as well as unconventional research career paths into account[20]. The evaluations are monitored to guarantee transparency, fairness and impartiality in the treatment of proposals.

A single submission of the full proposal is followed by a two-step evaluation.

[18] According to the duration of the project fixed in the previous grant agreement of the main frontier research grant.
[19] The members of the ERC panels alternate to allow panel members to apply to the ERC calls in alternate years.
[20] Regarding negative impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak on a Principal Investigator's curriculum vitae or track record, see the section 2.3 Research proposal of this guide.

ERC evaluation panels

The peer review evaluation is handled by 27 peer review evaluation panels (ERC panels), covering all fields of science, engineering and scholarship (see panel details and ERC keywords in Annex 4.1). For operational reasons, they are subdivided into three main research domains:

- Physical Sciences and Engineering (11 Panels),
- Life Sciences (9 Panels) and,
- Social Sciences and Humanities (7 Panels).

Before the deadline of a call, the names of the 27 panel chairs are published on the ERC website. The names of panel members are published after the evaluation process is concluded and the final results have been communicated to the applicants.

No Contact allowed with Peer Reviewers

Please note that, in accordance with section 3.2 of the ERC Rules of Submission and Evaluation under Horizon Europe, any direct or indirect contact about the ERC peer review evaluation between an applicant legal entity or a PI submitting a proposal on behalf of an applicant legal entity, and any independent external expert involved in the peer review evaluation under the same call, in view of attempting to influence the evaluation process is strictly forbidden. Such contact can constitute an exclusion situation and, may result in the decision to reject the proposal concerned from the call in question (Article 141 of the Financial Regulation).

In addition any contact with Peer Reviewers to obtain confidential information on the evaluation process is not allowed. ERC Peer Reviewers are bound to confidentiality during the evaluation and afterwards. Hence, they are not allowed to communicate about the evaluation and/or specific proposal(s) with the principal investigators or potential team members or persons linked to them even after the completion of the evaluation process.

Panel allocation and panel budgets

It is the applicant's responsibility to choose and indicate the most relevant ERC panel ('primary evaluation panel') for the evaluation of the proposed research and to indicate one or more ERC keywords representing the research fields involved. The PI may indicate a secondary evaluation panel.

When choosing the panel, please take careful note of the panel details and ERC keywords in Annex 4.1. This version was first introduced for the 2021 calls after the ERC Scientific Council reviewed the ERC panel structure to redefine the contours of panels and enrich the descriptors to optimise scientific coverage while taking into account previous application numbers. This also resulted in the addition of two new panels: SH7 - Human Mobility Environment and Space and PE11 – Materials Engineering. While the number of panels in the Life Sciences Domain has remained the same, the scope of some panels has been changed to address the multidisciplinary aspect of the domain and the continuum between its different areas, with translational work often seamlessly emerging from basic studies.

The initial allocation of the proposal to a panel will be based on the preference expressed by the applicant. However, when necessary due to the expertise required for the evaluation, a proposal may be reallocated to a different panel with the agreement of both panel chairs concerned. In such cases, applicants are informed of the reallocation of the proposal through the notification for the invitation to the interview (if applicable) or in the Evaluation Report attached to the information letter with the final outcome of the evaluation of their respective proposal.

The composition of the ERC evaluation panels are by nature multi-disciplinary. The primary panel will determine if additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional remote experts are needed to evaluate the proposal.

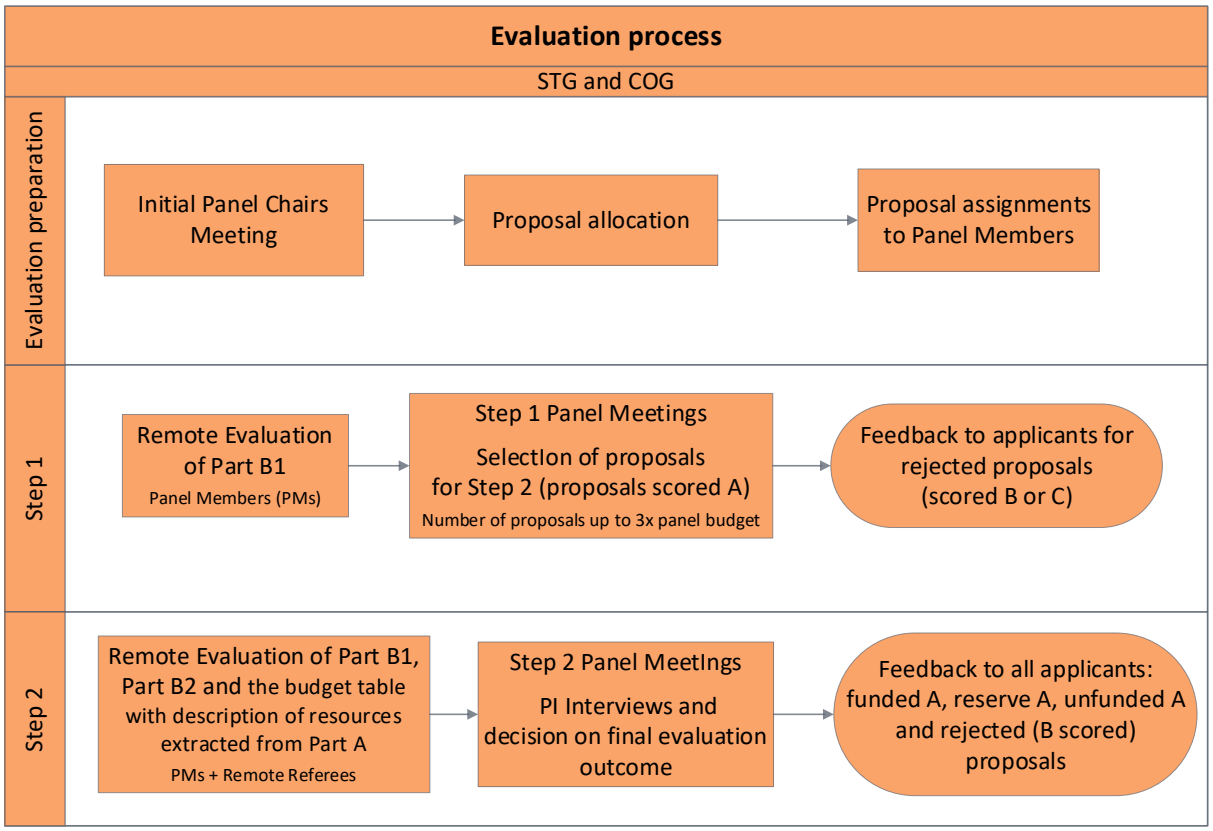
An indicative budget is allocated to each panel in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals. **This important principle ensures comparable success rates between the individual panels regardless of how many proposals each panel evaluates.** Depending on the budget available for the call, a budgetary cut-off applies to the call ranking list at both Step 1 and Step 2. Only proposals ranked A at Step 1 will be further evaluated and only the highest ranked A proposals at Step 2 will be invited for grant preparation until the call budget is spent. The remaining proposals recommended for funding may be funded by the ERC if additional funds become available.

Evaluation process and important dates

An indicative evaluation timeline is available for the Starting Grant and Consolidator Grant Call on the ERC web-site.

At both evaluation steps, every proposal will be evaluated for each of the two main elements of the proposal: the Research Project and the Principal Investigator. The ERC independent external experts deliver individual proposal reviews in a remote evaluation phase at both Step 1 and Step 2. The ERC panels assess and score the proposals on the basis of the individual reviews they have received and on the basis of the panels' overall appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses.

Resubmitted proposals will be evaluated as new proposals without any reference or comparison to the previous score and/or with previous assessments. The score received by a proposal submitted in a previous ERC call will neither be taken into account in the current evaluation nor affect its outcome, as the two evaluations are independent from each other and the competition each year is different. In addition, the content of the reviews from an ERC call will not be made available to reviewers of the resubmitted proposal in a subsequent ERC call.



STEP 1

At Step 1, the extended synopsis together with the PI's track record and CV will be evaluated (Part B1 – see section 2.3). After a remote evaluation phase, each panel meets to discuss all proposals assigned to the panel. Proposals will proceed to Step 2 based on the outcome of the Step 1 evaluation. The maximum number of proposals evaluated by the panel at Step 2 may not exceed three times the panel's indicative budget. At the end of Step 1 of the evaluation, the proposal will receive one of the following scores:

A score - is of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;
B score - is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to step 2 of the evaluation[21];
C score - is not of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation[22].

The Step 1 evaluation outcome is provided to the applicants receiving a B or a C score through an information letter together with an evaluation report. It includes the final panel score and ranking range of their proposal, the panel comment explaining the panel decision as well as the individual comments given by each reviewer. This communication is uploaded to the F&T Portal accounts of the PI and HI contacts (see section 3.2). Applicants who receive an A score are invited for an interview to present their project at the Step 2 panel meeting. Each panel decides on the exact format of its interviews (duration, number of slides allowed, time allocated to the presentation and the question and answer session), which will be communicated to the applicants after Step 1. Applicants who pass to Step 2 do not receive a Step 1 evaluation report.

STEP 2

At Step 2, the full proposal (Part B1, Part B2 and Section 3 – Budget, present in the submission form) will be evaluated. After a remote evaluation phase, the panels meet again. Step 2 includes an

[21] The applicants may be subject to restrictions on submitting proposals to future ERC calls based on the outcome of the evaluation. Applicants will need to check the restrictions in place for each call.
[22] See footnote 21.

interview of approximately 30 minutes of each applicant[23]. During the Step 2 panel meeting, the applicants will be interviewed remotely, while the physical or virtual presence of the panel members will be decided depending on the Covid-19 pandemic situation and other factors. The first part of the interview will be devoted to a presentation on the outline of the research project by the PI. The remaining time will be devoted to a question and answer session. The PI may expect questions also related to the detailed budget table and resources, which is part of the application. The evaluation panels will review the requested budget for proposals recommended for funding and, if appropriate, recommend adjustments. In exceptional and justified cases such as illness, maternity or force majeure, if unable to attend in person a physical meeting, a panel member may participate in the panel meeting remotely by electronic means (video-conferencing or telephone-conferencing), subject to ERCEA's agreement.

*In view of the confidentiality of the evaluation process, applicants invited to a Step 2 interview **should not share the identity of panel members** within their scientific communities until their names have been published on the ERC website.*

The assessment by the panels will take into account the interview alongside the individual reviews. At the end of Step 2, following the timeline described above, applicants will be informed about the outcome of the evaluation. The score of their proposal can be either A or B:

- **A score** proposals fully meet the ERC's excellence criterion and are recommended for funding. Such projects will be funded in priority order based on their rank if sufficient funds are available. This means that it is very likely that not all proposals scored 'A' will eventually be funded by the ERC.
- **B score** proposals meet some but not all elements of the ERC's excellence criterion and will not be funded.

Evaluation outcome

The Step 2 evaluation outcome is provided to all applicants through an information letter together with an evaluation report. It includes the final panel score and ranking range of their proposal, the panel comment explaining the panel decision as well as the individual comments given by each reviewer[24]. This communication is uploaded to the F&T Portal accounts of the PI and HI contacts (see section 3.2).

After each peer review evaluation, a report is prepared by the ERCEA services and made available to the Programme Committee. The report provides information on the proposals received, it includes names of Host Institutions and personal data (i.e. names of applicant PIs, evaluation scores of proposals, ranked lists as well as panel comments and individual reviews). A subset of information is also made available to the National Contact Points. The NCP report provides names of Host Institution and personal data (i.e. names applicant PIs, evaluation scores of proposals and ranked lists). Applicants have different rights as regards the processing of their personal data[25].

[23] Should a planned interview not be possible for reasons beyond the control of the ERCEA, the panel will have to take its decision based on the information made available to it.

[24] The pre-defined responses related to the questions regarding the Principal Investigator can be the following: Exceptional/ Excellent/Very Good/Good/Non-competitive.

[25] Applicants have the right to access their personal data, the right to rectify them, if necessary, and/or to restrict their processing or erase them. They are also entitled to object to the processing of their personal data, where applicable. If they would like to exercise their rights under the Regulation 2018/1725, if they have comments, questions or concerns, regarding the collection and use of their personal data, applicants are free to contact the ERCEA Controller at ERCEA-B2-CALL-COORDINATION@ec.europa.eu.

Panel comments

Comments by the individual reviewers may reflect divergent views. Differences of opinions about the proposal are part of scientific debate and are legitimate. Furthermore, the ERC panel may take a position that is different from what could be inferred from the individual reviews. A panel discussion could reveal an important weakness that was not identified by the individual reviewers. The panel comment reflects the final decision taken by the panel either by consensus decision or by majority vote based on the individual assessments and discussion in the panel.

Evaluation criteria

The "scientific excellence" evaluation criterion will be applied in conjunction of both: (i) the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of the research project, and (ii) the intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment of the PI. The detailed evaluation elements applying to these two categories are set out below.

1. Research Project - Ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility
Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project • To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges? • To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines)? • To what extent is the proposed research high risk-high gain (i.e. if successful the payoffs will be very significant, but there is a high risk that the research project does not entirely fulfil its aims)?
Scientific Approach • To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the extent that the proposed research is high risk/high gain *[based on the Extended Synopsis at Step 1]*? • To what extent are the proposed research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project *[to be assessed at Step 2 based on the research proposal]*? • To what extent does the proposal involve the development of novel methodology *[to be assessed at Step 2 based on the research proposal]*? • To what extent are the proposed timescales, resources and PI commitment adequate and properly justified *[to be assessed at Step 2 based on the research proposal]?*
2. Principal Investigator - Intellectual capacity and creativity
• To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research? • To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking? • To what extent does the PI have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

1.4 ETHICS AND SECURITY

Ethics

Every project funded by the ERC in Horizon Europe is subject to an ethics review process. The ethics review process is independent from the evaluation procedure and the evaluation panels do not have access to the ethics documents.

Please see Annex A to the ERC Rules of Submission and Evaluation under Horizon Europe for a detailed description of the ERC Ethics Review procedure.

The process is aimed at ensuring that all the research and innovation activities under Horizon Europe comply with ethics principles and relevant national, Union and international legislation, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols.

The main areas that are addressed during the ethics review process include:

1. Human embryonic stem cells and human embryos
2. Human participants
3. Human cells/tissues
4. Personal data
5. Animals
6. Non-EU countries
7. Environment, health and safety
8. Artificial Intelligence

When submitting their proposal, applicants must complete the ethics issues table as part of the submission forms and provide an ethics self-assessment and supporting documentation where needed. Please see the How to Complete your Ethics Self-Assessment document for guidance.

It is important to provide a complete overview of all ethics issues during the submission phase in order to speed up the ethics review process. Applicants should be aware that no grant agreement can be signed by ERCEA prior to a satisfactory conclusion of the ethics review procedure.

Security[26]

Under Horizon Europe applicants are requested to identify if the proposed activity will use and/or generate information which might raise security concerns. When submitting their proposal, applicants must complete the security issues table (section 4 of the online proposal submission form; please also see section 2.2(4) of this guide for further details) and provide, if applicable, available supporting documentation (as separate annexes). For proposals selected for funding, additional information regarding security issues may be requested at a later stage.

1.5 MEANS OF REDRESS, ENQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS

Please see section 3.9 of the ERC Rules of Submission and Evaluation under Horizon Europe for a detailed description of the admissibility, eligibility and evaluation review procedures and enquiries and complaints.

Means of redress:

Upon reception of the information letter with the evaluation report or with the results of the admissibility or eligibility review, the PI and/or the HI (applicant legal entity) may request for admissibility, eligibility or evaluation review if there is an indication that the results of the admissibility or eligibility checks were incorrect or that there has been a procedural shortcoming or a manifest error of assessment.

A request can be made if the PI and/or the HI consider that the applicable evaluation procedure has not been correctly applied to its proposal. The evaluation review procedure is not meant to call into question the scientific judgement made by the peer review panel. It will look into procedural shortcomings and – in rare cases – into factual errors.

The information letter will provide a link to be used by the PI and/or the HI to introduce the request. The letter will specify a deadline for the receipt of any such requests, which will be 30 days from the

[26] Further guidance on tackling various security aspects and mitigating associated risks in research has been published by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation: Tackling R&I Foreign Interference: Staff Working Document, 2022 (https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/513746).

date of receiving the information letter[27]. A formal notification is considered to have been accessed by the applicant 10 calendar days after sending, if not accessed before in the system.[28]

Request must be:

- related to the evaluation process, or admissibility/eligibility checks, for the call and grants in question;
- set out using the online form, including a clear description of the grounds for complaint;
- received within the time limit specified in the information letter;
- sent by the PI and/or the HI.

Requests that do not meet the above-mentioned conditions, or do not deal with the admissibility, eligibility or evaluation of a specific proposal, will not be admitted.

A redress committee may be convened to examine the request for the review of the admissibility, eligibility or evaluation process. The redress committee will bring together staff of the ERC Executive Agency with the requisite scientific, technical and legal expertise. The committee shall be chaired by and include staff of ERCEA who were not involved in the evaluation of the proposals. The committee's role is to ensure a coherent interpretation of the requests, based on all available information related to the proposals and their evaluation, and fair and equal treatment of all applicants.

In the case of evaluation review procedure, the committee itself, however, does not re-evaluate the proposal. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the committee may review the evaluation report, the individual comments and examine the profile and expertise of the experts. The committee may also contact the panel chair/panel member(s) concerned. **The committee will not call into question the scientific judgement of appropriately qualified panels of experts**. In the light of its review, the committee will recommend a course of action to the Responsible Authorizing Officer (RAO) for the call. If there is clear evidence of a shortcoming that could affect the eventual funding decision, it is possible that all or part of the proposal will be re-evaluated.

Please note that:

- a partial or a total re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the quality of the assessment of a proposal;
- the committee may uphold the initial outcome if it concludes that the errors identified would not substantially have affected the outcome of the evaluation nor the ranking of the project;
- the evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score;
- only one request at the time for evaluation review per proposal will be considered by the committee;
- all requests for evaluation review will be treated in confidence.

Other means of redress:

The above procedure does not prevent the applicants from resorting to other means of redress, such as:

- requesting a legal review of the Agency decision under Article 22 of Council Regulation 58/2003[29] ('Article 22 request'), within 1 month of receiving the ERCEA's letter ; or

[27] Applicants of proposals selected for funding will normally not receive information on the means of redress in their information letter but if the applicant considers that there are grounds for such request, they can redress.

[28] Evaluation result letters are formal notifications. This means that deadlines triggered by these letters (evaluation review request, etc.) must be counted accordingly (i.e. access date + 1 day (event) + 30 days (deadline) OR sending date + 1 day (event) + 10 days (embargo period) + 30 days (deadline), if the letter was not accessed in the system).

- bringing an action for annulment under Article 263 of the TFEU[30] ('Article 263 action') against the Agency, within 2 months of receiving the ERCEA's letter.

Applicants may choose which means of redress they wish to pursue[31]. Applicants are asked not to take more than one formal action at a time. Once the Agency/Commission communicates the final decision on an action, applicants can take a further action against that decision. Deadlines for further action will start to run from when applicants receive the final decision[32].

Other types of complaints on decisions affecting the involvement of applicants in the programme:

Any other complaint against a decision affecting the involvement of applicants in Horizon Europe shall be addressed to the Agency Director within 30 calendar days from the receipt of the communication of the Agency decision[33].

1.6 QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE CALL

You can find useful information on the ERC website and more specifically on the pages dedicated to the Starting Grant Call and Consolidator Grant Call.

An extended set of Frequently Asked Questions for the ERC calls is available at the ERC website. They can be filtered by calls or categories, and answer the most common questions on how to prepare and submit an ERC application.

You can also find on the funding page of the ERC website a series of explanatory videos that will give you concrete information about the ERC application process, including frequently made mistakes and tips.

For additional questions related to the call, please contact the relevant Call coordination team:
ERC-2023-STG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu OR ERC-2023-COG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu

For questions related to the ethics issues of the proposal, please contact the Ethics Support team: ERC-ETHICS-REVIEW@ec.europa.eu

For questions on open access to scientific publications and research data management, please see the section on Open Science in the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions or contact ERC-OPEN-ACCESS@ec.europa.eu.

[29] Council Regulation (EC) No 58/2003 of 19 December 2002 laying down the statute for executive agencies to be entrusted with certain tasks in the management of Community programmes (O J L 11, 16.01.2003, p.1).
[30] Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (OJ C 326, 26.10.2012, p. 47–390).
[31] Even though applicants may freely choose which means of redress to pursue, first submitting a request for evaluation review will ensure that the applicants' case can be heard on all the above mentioned possible instances.
[32] Please be aware that, as per Article 22 of Regulation 58/2003, reaching a final decision on an Article 22 request may generally take more than 30 days. Therefore, if you first file an Article 22 request you may not be able afterwards to submit an evaluation review request within the 30 days deadline. Please note as well that applicants of proposals put on the reserve list may not file an Article 22 request because their information letter does NOT constitute a final position concerning funding.
[33] A formal notification that has not been accessed within 10 calendar days after sending is considered to have been accessed by the applicant.

2. COMPLETING AN APPLICATION

2.1 OVERVIEW OF AN ERC APPLICATION

An ERC application is composed of:

- the administrative form (Part A) including the detailed budget table, description of resources (Section 3 – Budget) and time commitment (Section 5 – Other questions);
- completed Part B1 template (Extended Synopsis, Curriculum Vitae, Track Record);
- completed Part B2 template (Scientific Proposal);
- mandatory supporting documentation (PhD certificate, HI support letter, and, if relevant, any documentation needed on eligibility);
- if applicable, additional supporting documentation related to ethics and security issues.

2.2 THE ADMINISTRATIVE FORM

The submission form is accessed via the call submission link in the Funding & Tenders Portal. The electronic form has 5 sections (approximately 25 pages in total), which need to be completed before a submission can take place. Many fields are mandatory and specific to the ERC calls, and we therefore advise you to create your draft proposal well in advance of the submission deadline. **All mandatory fields are marked in red if left empty. Failure to fill in any mandatory field will block submission (see Annex 4.5).**

1 – 'General Information' section contains information about the research proposal, including the project duration, title, acronym and abstract. Furthermore, in this section, you will select the ERC evaluation panel which you believe is best fit to evaluate the research proposal (for further details, see section 1.3 Evaluation process of this guide). If the proposal covers several scientific disciplines, you may indicate a 'secondary review panel'. You may indicate up to four ERC keywords as listed in Annex 4.1 that cover your proposal subject. The abstract should provide a clear understanding of the objectives of the research proposal and how they will be achieved. The abstract will be used as a short description of your research proposal in the evaluation process. Please note that in case your proposal is funded this abstract will be published. It must therefore be short and precise, and should not contain confidential information. The section 'General Information' also contains general declarations related to the proposal and participation in Horizon Europe. They have to be filled in by the Principal Investigator on behalf of the Host Institution and "We" has to be understood as both "the Principal Investigator" and "the Host Institution".

2 – 'Participants' section contains information about the PI and the HI. One section will appear for each beneficiary. The name and e-mail of contact persons -including the PI and HI contact- are **read-only.** Further details such as ORCID number, researcher ID, other ID, last name at birth, gender, nationality etc., should be filled for the PI as well as the address and telephone number of each contact person. The PI mobile number is an essential information for the Step 2 interview logistics.

This section contains also the following fields:

- Gender Equality Plan (GEP): 'yes/no' tick box question to be filled in by the HI contact person. Only Public bodies, higher education institutions (including private research organisations and private higher education institutions) must answer this question. This answer and the absence of GEP at submission stage will not affect the evaluation of the proposal. In case the proposal is selected for funding, the HI must have a Gender Equality Plan or an equivalent strategic document in place for the duration of the project. The GEP or equivalent must fulfil

the mandatory requirements[34] listed in Annex 5 of the Work Programme 2023and will be necessary before the signature of the grant agreement.

- Departments carrying out the proposed work: the data field "Links with other proposal participating organisations" is optional and only to be filled if there are dependencies with other participating Host Institutions (for example, team members from another HI). This field should not to be filled for mono-beneficiary grants.
- Person in charge of the proposal (Principal Investigator): on this page, there is a new field on the 'career stage' of the PI. This information will not be provided to the evaluators and it will not be evaluated. The field on the career stages refers to the ones defined in Frascati 2015 manual (see below). Please choose the appropriate option.

  Category A – Top grade researcher: the single highest grade/post at which research is normally conducted. Example: 'Full professor' or 'Director of research'.

  Category B – Senior researcher: Researchers working in positions not as senior as top position but more senior than newly qualified doctoral graduates (IsCED level 8). Examples: 'associate professor', or 'senior researcher' or 'principal investigator'.

  Category C – Recognised researcher: the first grade/post into which a newly qualified doctoral graduate would normally be recruited. Examples: 'assistant professor', 'investigator' or 'post-doctoral fellow'.

  Category D – First stage researcher: Either doctoral students at the IsCED level 8 who are engaged as researchers, or researchers working in posts that do not normally require a doctorate degree. Examples: 'PhD students' or 'junior researchers' (without a PhD).

3 – 'Budget' section contains the proposal budget including the total eligible project costs and the requested EU contribution for the project. The costs are given in whole Euros (not kilo Euros). A description and justification of the resources should be provided in the text box (Section C. Resources) under the budget table. **The budget table and description of resources will be made available to the experts evaluating the proposal. The section C. Resources has a maximum length of 8000 characters (including spaces). Please refer to section 2.3 for further instruction on how to draw up the budget.**

4 – 'Ethics and security' section has two parts: the ethics issues table and the security issues table.

The ethics issues table serves to identify any ethical aspects of the proposed work. This table has to be completed even if there are no issues (simply confirm that none of the ethical issues applies to the proposal). In case you answer YES to any of the questions, you are requested to provide an ethics self-assessment (and available supporting documentation as annexes), as detailed in the 'How to Complete your Ethics Self-Assessment guidance'. Please refer to section 1.4 for further details.

The security issues table serves to identify if the proposed activity will use and/or generate information which might raise security concerns. The table provided has to be completed by answering YES or NO to all questions. Where necessary and applicable, you are requested to provide

[34] A Gender Equality Plan of an Applicant Legal Entity must cover the following minimum process-related requirements:

- Publication: formal document published on the institution's website and signed by the top management.
- Dedicated resources: commitment of resources and gender expertise to implement it.
- Data collection and monitoring: sex/gender disaggregated data on personnel (and students for institutions concerned) and annual reporting based on indicators.
- Training: Awareness raising/training on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers.

Content-wise, recommended areas to be covered and addressed via concrete measures and targets are the following:

- work-life balance and organisational culture.
- gender balance in leadership and decision-making.
- gender equality in recruitment and career progression.
- integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content.
- measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment..

Other strategic documents such as a development plan, an inclusion strategy or a diversity strategy are considered as equivalent if they meet the requirements listed above.

available documentation as annexes. For proposals selected for funding, additional information regarding security issues may be requested at a later stage.

5 –'Other questions' section contains information on the academic training of the PI, as well as declarations related to eligibility and expected working time in EU or in an AC. Here, you are also asked to specify your commitment in terms of percentage of working time you are willing to devote to the proposed project. You are expected to spend a minimum of 50% for STG and 40% for COG of your working time on the ERC project, and a minimum of 50% of your working time in an EU MS or an AC. The personnel cost for the PI provided in section "3-Budget" cannot be higher than the percentage indicated here. This information will be provided to the experts at Step 2 together with the section "3-Budget" (see Annex 4.6). This section also contains permission statements on sharing evaluation data. These data-related consents are entirely voluntary. In addition, this section contains a specific declaration as regards the consent obtained from participants and researchers. **The PI will have to declare that they have the written consent of all participants on their involvement and the content of their proposal, as well as of any researcher mentioned in the proposal on their participation in the project** (either as team member, collaborator, other PI or member of the advisory board). Please note that the ERCEA may request the applicant PI at any time during the evaluation, to provide proof of the written consent obtained prior to the call submission deadline. As , established in section 3.3 of the ERC Rules of Submission and Evaluation under Horizon Europe, you may identify up to three reviewers who you wish to exclude from the evaluation of your proposal.

2.3 THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The "research proposal" (Part B) consists of Part B1, Part B2 and Part A Section 3 – Budget and time commitment from section 5 – Other questions (present in the administrative online submission form). The templates of Part B1 and Part B2 that are provided in the submission system (zip-file) should be used. Each proposal page shall carry a **header** presenting the **PI's last name**, the **acronym of the proposal**, and the reference to the respective proposal section (**Part B1** and **Part B2**).

The following parameters **must** be respected for the layout:

Page Format	Font Type	Font Size	Line Spacing	Margins
A4	Times New Roman Arial or similar	At least 11	Single	2 cm side 1.5 bottom

In fairness to all applicants, the **page limits will be strictly applied**. Only the material that is presented within these limits will be evaluated. Peer reviewers will be asked to read the material presented within the page limits only (provided that the instructions regarding font type and size are respected), and will be under no obligation to read beyond them[35].

Be aware that at **Step 1 only Part B1** is evaluated by the panel members (they have no access to other parts and sections). At **Step 2, Part B1, Part B2, Section 3 – Budget and time commitment** are evaluated by panel members and remote reviewers.

When drafting Part B1, pay particular attention to the Extended Synopsis (section a) and do not think of it as simply complementing Part B2. It is important that Part B1 contains all essential information.

[35] The working language of the ERC evaluation panels is English. Therefore, the evaluation reports will be available in English only. If the proposal is not in English, the ERCEA will provide to the evaluation panels a version of the proposal translated using computer-aided technology. An English translation of the abstract must be included in the proposal.

During the Step 1 evaluation, the panel members' expertise covers a wide range of proposals within a research field. The panel members are asked to act as generalists when evaluating the proposals. Further expertise on each proposal retained to Step 2 is brought to the evaluation by Remote Reviewers. Remote Reviewers are scientists and scholars who do not participate in the panel meetings and who deliver their individual reviews before the Step 2 panel meeting.

Part B1 (References should be included – they do not count towards the page limit)

The Part B1 cover page should list the name of the PI and HI, the title, acronym and abstract of the proposal as well as the project duration (in months). The abstract should be half a page and must be a copy/paste of the abstract from the submission form (section 1 General Information). For inter-disciplinary/cross-panel proposals, please indicate the additional ERC review panel(s) and explain why the proposal needs to be considered by more than one panel.

Section a: Extended Synopsis of the scientific proposal (max. **5** pages) should contain all essential information including the feasibility of the scientific proposal since the panel will only evaluate Part B1 at Step 1. References should be included (they do not count towards the page limits).

Section b: Curriculum Vitae (max. 2 pages) should follow the suggested template. Include (and explain) any career breaks or unconventional career paths, so that your career stage is fairly assessed by the evaluation panels. If applicable, the Covid-19 impact on the scientific productivity may be listed[36]. In the funding ID table, you should list your current research grants and their subject as well as on-going and submitted grant applications (this table does not count towards the page limits).

Section c: Early achievements track record (max. 2 pages). PIs should list their important achievements (if applicable, and in addition to any other scientific achievements deemed relevant by the applicant in relation to their research field and project):

- Most important publications[37] (up to five for Starting Grant and up to ten for Consolidator Grant) in major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals and/or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals, peer-reviewed conferences proceedings and/or monographs of their respective research fields, highlighting those as main author and/or without the co-authorship of their PhD supervisor (properly referenced; field relevant bibliometric indicators, except the Journal Impact Factor, may also be included).
- Research monographs and any translations thereof.
- Granted patent(s); invited presentations to internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools; Prizes/Awards/Academy memberships, etc.

The publications should be properly referenced, including all authors in the published order (Please see section 1.1 on Research integrity).

A short narrative describing the scientific importance of the research outputs and the role played by the Principal Investigator in their production may be included.

Part B2 (References should be included – they do not count towards the page limit)

The limit of 14 pages for the 'Scientific Proposal' applies to Part B2.

Section a: State-of-the-art and objectives. Specify the proposal objectives in the context of the state of the art in the research field. It should be clear how and why the proposed work is important for the field, and what impact it will have if successful, such as how it may open up new horizons or opportunities for science, technology or scholarship. Specify any particularly challenging or unconventional aspects of the proposal, including multi- or inter-disciplinary aspects.

[36] In the context of the Covid-19 outbreak, any specific situation caused by the pandemic with a negative impact on the curriculum vitae or track record should be mentioned under this section.

[37] Preprints may be included if freely available from a preprint server (they should be properly referenced and either a link to the preprint or a DOI should be provided).

Section b: Methodology. Describe the proposed methodology in detail including any key intermediate goals. Explain and justify the methodology in relation to the state of the art, and particularly novel or unconventional aspects addressing the 'high-risk/high-gain' balance. Highlight any intermediate stages where results may require adjustments to the project planning. In case you ask that team members are engaged by another host institution, their participation has to be fully justified by the scientific added value they bring to the project.

Section 3 – Budget (included in the online submission form)

PLEASE NOTE: The Budget Table and description of resources are part of the online submission form (Section 3 – Budget).

The Section C. Resources text box (under the budget table) should provide a clear description and justification of the proposal budget and, if applicable, of the additional funding If additional funding is requested, the costs must be indicated in the budget table in the appropriate cost category.

With the exception of clear mistakes (detected cases of obvious clerical error[38]), in case of inconsistency between the budget table and the description of resources, the figures entered in the budget table will prevail.

Budget table

The ERC funds up to 100% of the total eligible costs. The costs cover the full project duration[39]. This includes the direct costs of the project plus a flat-rate financing of indirect costs calculated as 25% of the total eligible direct costs excluding the direct eligible costs for subcontracting and internally invoiced goods and services, which already include indirect costs. The flat rate is automatically calculated by the system.

The budget is subdivided in different cost categories:

A. **Direct personnel costs** (PI, senior staff, post docs, students, other personnel costs).
B. **Subcontracting costs** (no indirect costs).
C. **Purchase costs** [travel and subsistence, equipment (including major equipment), consumables (including fieldwork and animal costs), publications (including any costs related to Open Access fees) and dissemination, and other additional direct costs].
D. **Internally invoiced goods and services** (no indirect costs).
E. **Indirect costs.**

If additional funding[40] above the ceiling of 1.500.000 € for STG and 2.000.000 € for COG **is requested** for (a) covering eligible 'start-up' costs for a PI moving from another country to the EU or an AC as a

[38] See Articles 151 and 200 (3) of the Financial Regulation and section 2.3 of the ERC Rules of Submission and Evaluation under Horizon Europe.
[39] The maximum award is reduced pro rata temporis for projects of a shorter duration (e.g. for a Consolidator Grant project of 48 months duration the maximum requested EU contribution allowed is 1.600.000 €). Additional funding to cover major one-off costs is not subject to pro-rata temporis reduction for projects of shorter duration (e.g. with additional funding it is possible to request a maximum EU contribution of 2.600.000 € for a project of 48 months duration).
[40] Additional funding costs of ERC frontier research grants are a separate cost category in the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions. These costs will be eligible if they fulfil the eligibility conditions set out in the Model Grant Agreement for this cost category, if they are incurred for the activities and objectives for which the additional funding may be awarded, and if they are in line with the specific eligibility conditions for the other relevant cost categories as set out in the Model Grant Agreement (e.g. costs related to a purchase of major equipment must also fulfil the specific eligibility conditions for the cost category for "Equipment").

consequence of receiving an ERC grant and/or (b) the purchase of major equipment and/or (c) access to large facilities and/or (d) other major experimental and field work costs, excluding personnel costs, **then it needs to be fully justified it in the description of resources**. An additional funding request under (a), (b) or (d) may be subject to 25% overhead. The 25% flat-rate does not apply to costs related to subcontracting or internally invoiced goods and services.

Additional funding is meant to cover relatively large costs that would exceed the normal grant maximum. Any cost requested under additional funding must be necessary for the implementation of the proposed research activities.

Please note that for relocation costs under (a) 'start-up' costs category, the cost of the PI's one-way ticket to EU or AC country may be requested, only if in line with the normal practice and the accounting policy of the host institution, and within the duration of the project; other personal costs (e.g. tickets of family members and all relocation costs related to them) incurred because of moving to the EU or AC cannot be claimed on the grant.

Purchases of equipment, infrastructure, or other assets used for the action must be declared as depreciation costs. Moreover, an applicant can request to include in the Grant Agreement equipment, infrastructure or other assets purchased specifically for the action (or developed as part of the action tasks) that may exceptionally be declared as full capitalised costs[41].

In case the 'total eligible costs' differ from the 'requested EU contribution', specify in the Resources section what exactly is funded from other sources. Please carefully check all values of the budget table. Use only Euro integers when preparing the budget table. **Please note that while the 'total eligible costs' in the budget table are calculated automatically based on the figures inserted in the individual columns, the 'requested EU contribution' has to be filled manually. Please make sure to update the 'Requested EU contribution' if updates are made in any of the cost categories.**

For more information on eligible- and non-eligible direct and indirect costs as well as the different cost categories, applicants should consult the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions.

Section C. Resources (text box below the budget table)

To facilitate the assessment of resources by the panels:

1. State the amount of funding considered necessary to fulfil the research objectives. The project cost estimation should be as accurate as possible. The requested budget should be fully justified and in proportion to the actual needs. Describe all the cost categories considered necessary for the project. The evaluation panels assess the estimated costs carefully; **unjustified budgets will be reduced**.

2. Describe the size and nature of the team, indicating, where appropriate, the key team members and their roles. In case one or more team members are engaged by another host institution, their participation has to be fully justified with respect to the scientific added value they bring to the project and in relation to the additional cost this may impose. When estimating your personnel costs take into account the working time dedicated to the project.

3. Explain and describe in detail any additional funding requested for the project (the requested additional funding must be included in the budget table). Please also indicate under which of the above-mentioned four cost categories the request falls.

4. Include a short technical description of any requested equipment, why you need it and how much you plan to use it for the project.

[41] Where needed for the viability of the action (including its financial viability), and recorded under a fixed asset account of the beneficiary in compliance with international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual cost accounting practices.

5. Include a realistic estimation of the costs for Open Access to project outputs. Costs for providing immediate Open Access to publications are eligible if the publishing venue is fully open access (i.e., a fully open access journal, book or publishing platforms including APCs or BPCs) and if they are incurred during the lifetime of the project. This concerns article processing charges, book processing charges and other publishing fees such as page charges or colour charges.

6. Describe any existing resources not requiring EU funding that will be used for the project, such as infrastructure and equipment.

7. If applicable, specify the cost items covered by your 'Other personnel costs' category (e.g. technician, etc.) and the cost items covered by your 'Other additional direct costs' category (e.g. certificate on the financial statement).

The information entered in section 3 - Budget (including “Section C. Resources”) of the administrative form (Part A) together with the time commitment enter in section 5 of the administrative form (Part A) will be provided to the independent external experts in the form of Proposal Budget Report for their assessment. An example of Proposal Budget Report is shown in Annex 4.6 for an example of the Proposal Budget Report. It shows how experts will see the information entered in section 3 - Budget (including “Section C. Resources”) and the time commitment in section 5 of the administrative form (Part A).

2.4 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

A scanned copy of the following supporting documentation needs to be submitted with the proposal by uploading them electronically in PDF format:

- **PhD certificate.** You must submit scanned copies of documents proving your eligibility for the grant, i.e. the PhD certificate (or equivalent doctoral degree, see Annex 4.3 to this document) **clearly indicating** the date of successful defence of PhD. Whenever the PhD certificate does not show the date of the successful defence of PhD, applicants should provide a written confirmation from the awarding institution stating the said date. In case the PhD defence was not successful (failed) it is the date when the PhD requirements were met and/or the date of the following successful defence. In case no defence/viva was organised in the awarding institution, the applicant should provide a written confirmation from that awarding institution stating that no defence/viva was organised and indicating the date when the PhD was approved.
  If you request an **extension of the eligibility window** (beyond 7 years after PhD for STG applicants and beyond 12 years after PhD for COG applicants), the relevant documentary evidence should be uploaded together with the PhD certificate (and document from the awarding institution indicating the successful defence date if applicable) or as separate annexes. Please see Annex 4.4 for details.

- **Host Institution support letter -** As the applicant's legal entity, the HI must confirm its support to the project and to the PI. As part of the application, the host institution must provide a binding statement that the conditions of independence are already fulfilled or will be provided to the PI if the application is successful. The template letter is part of the zip-file available in the submission system (see Annex 4.2). The complete wording should be printed on paper with the official letterhead of the HI, blue-inked signed, stamped and dated by the institution's legal representative. In case it is digitally signed, there is no need to stamp it. A PDF version must be uploaded in the submission system. **Proposals that do not include this institutional statement may be declared inadmissible.**

- Documents related to the **ethics** issues (i.e. supporting documentation). Where necessary, the applicant(s) shall provide any available documentation, such as: (a) favourable opinion(s) of relevant ethics committee(s); (b) regulatory approval(s) or authorisation(s) of the competent national or local authority(ies) in the country(ies) in which the research is to be carried out; (c) templates of information sheets and informed consent forms, etc. The supporting documentation must be provided to the ERCEA at the latest during the ethics review. If such documentation is available and provided with the application at submission stage, it may help speed up the ethics review process following evaluation. **Please note that the ethics self-assessment is included in section 4 of the online proposal submission form.**

- Documents related to the **security** issues (i.e. supporting documentation). Where necessary, the applicant(s) shall provide available documentation at submission stage. For proposals selected for funding, additional information regarding security issues may be requested at a later stage. **Please note that the ethics self-assessment is included in section 4 of the online proposal submission form.**

Copies of official documents can be submitted in any of the EU official languages. **Document(s) in any other language must be provided together with a certified translation into English or into any other official EU language**.

Please provide only the documents requested above. Unless specified in the call, any hyperlinks to other documents, embedded material, and any other documents (company brochures, support

letters, reports, audio, video, multimedia, etc.) will be disregarded. **Experts will not have access to any supporting documentation during the evaluation.**

All annexes, including the PhD documentation, the host institution support letter (and where relevant, documentation related to ethics and security issues or requests for eligibility extensions) should be provided and uploaded as separate pdf documents. They do not count towards the maximum page limits for the proposal.

3. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

3.1 IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Regularly consult the F&T Portal call page for updated information on the calls.

- Make sure that the personal information added in the Submission Form is accurate as this information is used to personalise the communications to applicants and the Evaluation Reports.

- In case of technical problems with the submission system, please contact **EC-FUNDING-TENDER-SERVICE-DESK@ec.europa.eu** or get in touch with the **helpdesk** directly on **+32 (2) 29 92222** to receive immediate assistance.

- Registration and submission via the F&T Portal submission system should be done as early as possible and well in advance of the call deadline. **Applicants, who wait until shortly before the close of the call to start uploading their proposal, take a serious risk that the uploading will not be concluded in time and thus the 'SUBMIT' button will not be active anymore in order to conclude the submission process**.

- Only the person creating the draft proposal will have the right to manage the access rights of other people to the proposal and will be able to modify any parts of the proposal and to submit it, whereas the other contacts will only be able to edit the parts related to their personal data.

- Be aware that only one person should work on the forms at any given time. If two persons work on the forms at the same time, in case of a save conflict, the last save wins, which means that you risk overwriting changes made by another person if you are working in parallel. We therefore recommend that you give 'read-only' access to your partners/additional contact persons (other contacts) unless it is absolutely necessary to grant full access. Please remember that the HI main contact person has full access – it is not possible to grant them 'read-only access'.

- Up to the call deadline, it is possible to re-edit, download or withdraw a proposal. **ONLY the last updated version of your proposal submitted before the deadline will be evaluated**; no later version can be accepted and no earlier version can be recovered from the submission system. Once the deadline has passed, no further additions, corrections or resubmissions are accepted. However, a read-only access to the submitted proposal is available for 90 days after the call deadline.

- **Do submit your proposal as early as possible** (at least 48 hours prior to the deadline of the call) to avoid being confronted with last minute issues shortly before the call deadline. There is no reason in delaying the submission for confidentiality concerns as the system does not allow any access to the proposals before call deadline (other than to selected data that is part of the Submission and Evaluation of Proposals Assent Disclaimer).

- In some rare occasions, the proposal may be altered while converted into a PDF file. Before uploading the file, please check that everything is correct. Additionally, please download and verify all uploaded files in due time before the submission deadline.

Submission is deemed to occur only if the sequence described in point 3.2 below has been followed and not when the applicant starts uploading the proposal.

3.2 HOW TO APPLY

The ERC grant applications can only be submitted in response to a 'call for proposals' and only via the Electronic Submission Service. Calls announced in the ERC Work Programme 2023 are published on the ERC website and the F&T Portal.

USER GUIDANCE

- proposals must be submitted electronically using the electronic submission system of the web-based F&T Portal [42];

- the user manual of the Submission Service is available online;

- the F&T Portal Online Manual describes the standard process of proposal submission.

The electronic submission system is an online wizard that guides you step-by-step through the preparation of your proposal. The submission of an ERC proposal includes 6 steps as described below.

Steps "Login" and "Topic Selection" (1 & 2)
To be able to submit a proposal and, in general, to login to the F&T Portal, you must first register an EU Login account (Step 1). Each time you access the proposal for editing, this user ID is requested. The same user ID is used for all later interactions with the ERCEA, including notification of the results of the evaluation[43]. Under 'Search Topics' you may search for 'ERC' to select an open ERC call (Step 2). Soon after the opening of the call, you may access the Electronic Submission Service via the F&T Portal call page. The 'Start Submission' button is available in the 'Submission Service' section of the call. When you click 'Start Submission' and confirm the call selection, you will arrive to Step 3 – Create a Draft proposal.

Step "Create proposal" (3)
At this step, you fill in pre-registration data for the proposal. These details will be used by the ERCEA in order to plan the evaluation. You will not have access to this page again once it is completed and you have progressed to Step 4, but certain data such as Acronym (maximum 20 characters) and Short Summary (abstract) can be modified at a later stage (at Step 5, when editing the submission form). **Be careful to choose the correct Participant Identification Code (PIC) number for your Host Institution.** An online tool is available to search for existing PICs and the related organisations. Organisations not yet having a PIC must self-register (via the same page) before starting the application process.

[42] In duly justified exceptional circumstances, the ERCEA may authorise submission by other means than the electronic submission system.

[43] Further details are available here: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/cpnp/public/ecas-signup.cfm

Step "Participants" (4)

At this step, you MUST enter the name and e-mail of the PI and the Main Host Institution Contact person[44]. You may also add the LEAR as a contact person (e.g. as a team member with read-only rights). **Please note that these contact details are saved directly from this step into the administrative form. Hence, this data is not editable in the application form itself. Still you can at any point return to Step 4 to add or delete any contact person or to change the access rights**. **Remember to save your data before leaving Step 4 and to open and save the form as well** (step 5 below)**.** Once the coordinator saves the changes, an automatic invitation is sent to all contacts' e-mail addresses. The invited persons can access the proposal after logging in to the F&T Portal – with the EU login account linked to the given e-mail address – under the 'My Proposals' tab.

If they have not yet registered an EU login account, the PI or the applicant legal entity's contact person will receive an activation e-mail inviting them to activate their EU login account. Following to this first activation, the EU login account will be maintained for following communications or feedback. **In order to be able to submit your proposal after saving changes made in Step 4, you have to re-open the administrative form ('edit forms' button), revise the changes, validate and save the form.** Failure to do so will prevent you from submitting your proposal. Further details are available in the Submission Service user manual.

Step "Proposal forms" (5)

This step is the core of the submission process, as from this step, you **can edit** the online administrative **forms** ('edit forms' button), you can go back to the 'Participants' step, you can view the 'history', 'print preview' the draft proposal, 'download' **Part B templates**, '**upload' files, 'validate' the forms** and '**submit' the proposal** by clicking on the relevant buttons. Guidance on how to fill in the administrative forms is provided directly in the form as ghost text for the single entries or as additional help text hidden behind question-marks  . Some parts of the form will be prefilled based on the data entered at pre-registration or in the Beneficiary Register. **Please use the functionality 'Validate' button to check the validity and completeness of your data.** Any warning or error will be listed at the end of the validated form. Please see Annex 4.5 for a list of mandatory fields. **If one or several mandatory fields are not filled, it will prevent you from submitting your proposal.**

Further information on the preparation of the application (the online administrative forms and Proposal Parts B1 and B2) is given in section 2 of this document.

- **All files must be uploaded in the submission system as PDF ('portable document format'). Other file formats will not be accepted by the system.** Irrespective of any page limits specified in this document, there is an **overall limit of 10 Mbytes to the size of each uploaded document (Part B1, Part B2, and supporting documentation)**. However, it is advised to limit the size of Parts B1 and B2 to 2 Mbytes each.
- Unless specified in the call, embedded material and any other documents (company brochures, scientific papers, reports, audio, video, multimedia, etc.) sent either electronically or by post to the ERCEA or uploaded directly in the F&T Portal will be disregarded.

There are also restrictions to the name given to the Part B files: use alphanumeric characters; special characters and spaces must be avoided. You are advised to clean your document before converting it to PDF (e.g. accept all tracked changes, delete notes). Check that your conversion software has

[44] Be careful to type the correct e-mail address of the PI and all contact persons at this step. Please note that if the Principal Investigator and the administrative contact person is the same person (because the PI is self-employed), you must use two different e-mail addresses as the system does not allow two identical e-mail addresses to be entered.

successfully converted all the pages of your original document (e.g. there is no problem with page limits or page view), and that captions and labels have not been lost from your diagrams.

Completing the Proposal submission forms in the submission system and uploading all the necessary files does not yet mean that your proposal is submitted (mandatory files: Part B1, Part B2, PhD certificate, Host Institution support letter and -if applicable- supporting documentation for eligibility extension and/or ethics and security issues). Once there is a consolidated version of the proposal, **the 'SUBMIT' button must be pressed**. The system performs a limited automatic validation of the proposal. Any problems such as missing data, wrong file format or excessive file size will appear as a list of warnings and/or errors on the screen. You may submit your proposal with warnings (marked in yellow), but it is not possible to submit a proposal until all errors (marked in red) are corrected**.** Please note that the electronic checks by the submission system do not replace the formal admissibility and eligibility review and do not confirm that the contents of these files respond to the requirements of the call.

Step "Submit" (6)

Reaching this step means that the proposal is submitted (i.e. sent to the ERCEA for evaluation). It does not mean that the proposal is valid, admissible and eligible in all respects. Within a few minutes of submission, your proposal will be available for download with an e-receipt in the system. You will receive a confirmation e-mail with the summary data of the submitted proposal. The mail can end up in the spam folder or be blocked by the anti-spam system of your organisation. This automatic message is not the official acknowledgement of receipt. In Step 6, you can re-edit the proposal, going back to Step 5. **You may continue to modify the proposal and submit revised versions overwriting the previous one right up until the call deadline.** The sequence above must be repeated each time. The most recent version of your proposal submitted before the deadline is the one which will be evaluated. No earlier version can be recovered from the submission system.

Check if the proposal is complete. Once submitted, it is recommended to verify the proposal and its content by downloading all the submitted files. We strongly advise that you submit a first version of your proposal at least 48 hours in advance of the call deadline. Incomplete proposals (where parts or sections of the proposal and/or the host institution's commitment statement are missing) may be declared inadmissible and will not be evaluated[45]. The proposal must be submitted **before the relevant deadline of the call** to the appropriate primary ERC panel (i.e. the panel which covers the main scientific areas of the research proposed).

Warning: Please note that in the last hours prior to call closure, the download option of checking your submitted proposal may be disabled due to a high pressure on the system. In this case, the ERCEA will inform the applicants via the call page on the F&T Portal (under 'call summary') that the function has been disabled. **If the e-receipt and download option have been disabled, you may review your submitted proposal by going back to Step 5 in order to check the data in the administrative forms and click on 'View History' to verify which attachments have been uploaded.**

[45] See also section 2.4 'Admissibility and eligibility check' in the ERC Rules of Submission and Evaluation under Horizon Europe and in the section "Proposal submission and description" of the ERC Work Programme 2023.

3.3 HOW TO WITHDRAW A PROPOSAL

To withdraw a proposal **before the call deadline,** use the "withdraw proposal" button from the 'My proposals' tab when logged in at the F&T Portal. After the call deadline, proposals may be withdrawn at any moment **until the day preceding the panel meeting** where a final decision on the outcome of the evaluation of the proposal is established. A withdrawn proposal will not be considered for evaluation nor count against possible re-application restrictions as set out in the ERC Work Programme 2023.

To withdraw a proposal **after the call deadline,** please send an e-mail to the call-specific mailbox ERC-2023-STG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu or ERC-2023-COG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu and include a signed scanned letter requesting the formal withdrawal. The letter should mention the name and the acronym of the proposal as well as the call identifier (for example ERC-2023-StG). In the case of two or more proposals submitted by the same PI, the ERCEA services may ask the PI to withdraw one or more of those proposals. In the case of absence of reaction by the PI to this request, only the first eligible submitted proposal will be evaluated.

4. ANNEXES

4.1 ERC EVALUATION PANELS AND KEYWORDS

Physical Sciences and Engineering

PE1 Mathematics

All areas of mathematics, pure and applied, plus mathematical foundations of computer science, mathematical physics and statistics

PE1_1 Logic and foundations
PE1_2 Algebra
PE1_3 Number theory
PE1_4 Algebraic and complex geometry
PE1_5 Lie groups, Lie algebras
PE1_6 Geometry and global analysis
PE1_7 Topology
PE1_8 Analysis
PE1_9 Operator algebras and functional analysis
PE1_10 ODE and dynamical systems
PE1_11 Theoretical aspects of partial differential equations
PE1_12 Mathematical physics
PE1_13 Probability
PE1_14 Mathematical statistics
PE1_15 Generic statistical methodology and modelling
PE1_16 Discrete mathematics and combinatorics
PE1_17 Mathematical aspects of computer science
PE1_18 Numerical analysis
PE1_19 Scientific computing and data processing
PE1_20 Control theory, optimisation and operational research
PE1_21 Application of mathematics in sciences
PE1_22 Application of mathematics in industry and society

PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter

Particle, nuclear, plasma, atomic, molecular, gas, and optical physics

PE2_1 Theory of fundamental interactions
PE2_2 Phenomenology of fundamental interactions
PE2_3 Experimental particle physics with accelerators
PE2_4 Experimental particle physics without accelerators
PE2_5 Classical and quantum physics of gravitational interactions
PE2_6 Nuclear, hadron and heavy ion physics
PE2_7 Nuclear and particle astrophysics
PE2_8 Gas and plasma physics
PE2_9 Electromagnetism
PE2_10 Atomic, molecular physics
PE2_11 Ultra-cold atoms and molecules
PE2_12 Optics, non-linear optics and nano-optics
PE2_13 Quantum optics and quantum information
PE2_14 Lasers, ultra-short lasers and laser physics
PE2_15 Thermodynamics
PE2_16 Non-linear physics
PE2_17 Metrology and measurement
PE2_18 Equilibrium and non-equilibrium statistical mechanics: steady states and dynamics

PE3 Condensed Matter Physics

Structure, electronic properties, fluids, nanosciences, biological physics

PE3_1 Structure of solids, material growth and characterisation
PE3_2 Mechanical and acoustical properties of condensed matter, lattice dynamics
PE3_3 Transport properties of condensed matter
PE3_4 Electronic properties of materials, surfaces, interfaces, nanostructures
PE3_5 Physical properties of semiconductors and insulators
PE3_6 Macroscopic quantum phenomena, e.g. superconductivity, superfluidity, quantum Hall effect
PE3_7 Spintronics
PE3_8 Magnetism and strongly correlated systems
PE3_9 Condensed matter – beam interactions (photons, electrons, etc.)
PE3_10 Nanophysics, e.g. nanoelectronics, nanophotonics, nanomagnetism, nanoelectromechanics
PE3_11 Mesoscopic quantum physics and solid-state quantum technologies
PE3_12 Molecular electronics
PE3_13 Structure and dynamics of disordered systems, e.g. soft matter (gels, colloids, liquid crystals), granular matter, liquids, glasses, defects
PE3_14 Fluid dynamics (physics)
PE3_15 Statistical physics: phase transitions, condensed matter systems, models of complex systems, interdisciplinary applications
PE3_16 Physics of biological systems

PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences

Analytical chemistry, chemical theory, physical chemistry/chemical physics

PE4_1 Physical chemistry
PE4_2 Spectroscopic and spectrometric techniques
PE4_3 Molecular architecture and Structure
PE4_4 Surface science and nanostructures
PE4_5 Analytical chemistry
PE4_6 Chemical physics
PE4_7 Chemical instrumentation
PE4_8 Electrochemistry, electrodialysis, microfluidics, sensors
PE4_9 Method development in chemistry
PE4_10 Heterogeneous catalysis
PE4_11 Physical chemistry of biological systems
PE4_12 Chemical reactions: mechanisms, dynamics, kinetics and catalytic reactions
PE4_13 Theoretical and computational chemistry
PE4_14 Radiation and Nuclear chemistry
PE4_15 Photochemistry
PE4_16 Corrosion
PE4_17 Characterisation methods of materials
PE4_18 Environment chemistry

PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials

New materials and new synthetic approaches, structure-properties relations, solid state chemistry, molecular architecture, organic chemistry

PE5_1 Structural properties of materials
PE5_2 Solid state materials chemistry
PE5_3 Surface modification
PE5_4 Thin films
PE5_5 Ionic liquids
PE5_6 New materials: oxides, alloys, composite, organic-inorganic hybrid, nanoparticles
PE5_7 Biomaterials synthesis

PE5_8 Intelligent materials synthesis – self assembled materials
PE5_9 Coordination chemistry
PE5_10 Colloid chemistry
PE5_11 Biological chemistry and chemical biology
PE5_12 Chemistry of condensed matter
PE5_13 Homogeneous catalysis
PE5_14 Macromolecular chemistry
PE5_15 Polymer chemistry
PE5_16 Supramolecular chemistry
PE5_17 Organic chemistry
PE5_18 Medicinal chemistry

PE6 Computer Science and Informatics

Informatics and information systems, computer science, scientific computing, intelligent systems

PE6_1 Computer architecture, embedded systems, operating systems
PE6_2 Distributed systems, parallel computing, sensor networks, cyber-physical systems
PE6_3 Software engineering, programming languages and systems
PE6_4 Theoretical computer science, formal methods, automata
PE6_5 Security, privacy, cryptology, quantum cryptography
PE6_6 Algorithms and complexity, distributed, parallel and network algorithms, algorithmic game theory
PE6_7 Artificial intelligence, intelligent systems, natural language processing
PE6_8 Computer graphics, computer vision, multimedia, computer games
PE6_9 Human computer interaction and interface, visualisation
PE6_10 Web and information systems, data management systems, information retrieval and digital libraries, data fusion
PE6_11 Machine learning, statistical data processing and applications using signal processing (e.g. speech, image, video)
PE6_12 Scientific computing, simulation and modelling tools
PE6_13 Bioinformatics, bio-inspired computing, and natural computing
PE6_14 Quantum computing (formal methods, algorithms and other computer science aspects)

PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering

Electrical, electronic, communication, optical and systems engineering

PE7_1 Control engineering
PE7_2 Electrical engineering: power components and/or systems
PE7_3 Simulation engineering and modelling
PE7_4 (Micro- and nano-) systems engineering
PE7_5 (Micro- and nano-) electronic, optoelectronic and photonic components
PE7_6 Communication systems, wireless technology, high-frequency technology
PE7_7 Signal processing
PE7_8 Networks, e.g. communication networks and nodes, Internet of Things, sensor networks, networks of robots
PE7_9 Man-machine interfaces
PE7_10 Robotics
PE7_11 Components and systems for applications (in e.g. medicine, biology, environment)
PE7_12 Electrical energy production, distribution, applications

PE8 Products and Processes Engineering

Product and process design, chemical, civil, environmental, mechanical, vehicle engineering, energy processes and relevant computational methods

PE8_1 Aerospace engineering
PE8_2 Chemical engineering, technical chemistry

PE8_3 Civil engineering, architecture, offshore construction, lightweight construction, geotechnics
PE8_4 Computational engineering
PE8_5 Fluid mechanics
PE8_6 Energy processes engineering
PE8_7 Mechanical engineering
PE8_8 Propulsion engineering, e.g. hydraulic, turbo, piston, hybrid engines
PE8_9 Production technology, process engineering
PE8_10 Manufacturing engineering and industrial design
PE8_11 Environmental engineering, e.g. sustainable design, waste and water treatment, recycling, regeneration or recovery of compounds, carbon capture & storage
PE8_12 Naval/marine engineering
PE8_13 Industrial bioengineering
PE8_14 Automotive and rail engineering; multi-/inter-modal transport engineering

PE9 Universe Sciences

Astro-physics/-chemistry/-biology; solar system; planetary systems; stellar, galactic and extragalactic astronomy; cosmology; space sciences; astronomical instrumentation and data

PE9_1 Solar physics – the Sun and the heliosphere
PE9_2 Solar system science
PE9_3 Exoplanetary science, formation and characterization of extrasolar planets
PE9_4 Astrobiology
PE9_5 Interstellar medium and star formation
PE9_6 Stars – stellar physics, stellar systems
PE9_7 The Milky Way
PE9_8 Galaxies – formation, evolution, clusters
PE9_9 Cosmology and large-scale structure, dark matter, dark energy
PE9_10 Relativistic astrophysics and compact objects
PE9_11 Gravitational wave astronomy
PE9_12 High-energy and particle astronomy
PE9_13 Astronomical instrumentation and data, e.g. telescopes, detectors, techniques, archives, analyses

PE10 Earth System Science

Physical geography, geology, geophysics, atmospheric sciences, oceanography, climatology, cryology, ecology, global environmental change, biogeochemical cycles, natural resources management

PE10_1 Atmospheric chemistry, atmospheric composition, air pollution
PE10_2 Meteorology, atmospheric physics and dynamics
PE10_3 Climatology and climate change
PE10_4 Terrestrial ecology, land cover change
PE10_5 Geology, tectonics, volcanology
PE10_6 Palaeoclimatology, palaeoecology
PE10_7 Physics of earth's interior, seismology, geodynamics
PE10_8 Oceanography (physical, chemical, biological, geological)
PE10_9 Biogeochemistry, biogeochemical cycles, environmental chemistry
PE10_10 Mineralogy, petrology, igneous petrology, metamorphic petrology
PE10_11 Geochemistry, cosmochemistry, crystal chemistry, isotope geochemistry, thermodynamics
PE10_12 Sedimentology, soil science, palaeontology, earth evolution
PE10_13 Physical geography, geomorphology
PE10_14 Earth observations from space/remote sensing
PE10_15 Geomagnetism, palaeomagnetism
PE10_16 Ozone, upper atmosphere, ionosphere
PE10_17 Hydrology, hydrogeology, engineering and environmental geology, water and soil pollution
PE10_18 Cryosphere, dynamics of snow and ice cover, sea ice, permafrosts and ice sheets
PE10_19 Planetary geology and geophysics
PE10_20 Geohazards
PE10_21 Earth system modelling and interactions

PE11 Materials Engineering

Advanced materials development: performance enhancement, modelling, large-scale preparation, modification, tailoring, optimisation, novel and combined use of materials, etc.

PE11_1 Engineering of biomaterials, biomimetic, bioinspired and bio-enabled materials
PE11_2 Engineering of metals and alloys
PE11_3 Engineering of ceramics and glasses
PE11_4 Engineering of polymers and plastics
PE11_5 Engineering of composites and hybrid materials
PE11_6 Engineering of carbon materials
PE11_7 Engineering of metal oxides
PE11_8 Engineering of alternative established or emergent materials
PE11_9 Nanomaterials engineering, e.g. nanoparticles, nanoporous materials, 1D & 2D nanomaterials
PE11_10 Soft materials engineering, e.g. gels, foams, colloids
PE11_11 Porous materials engineering, e.g. covalent-organic, metal-organic, porous aromatic frameworks
PE11_12 Semi-conducting and magnetic materials engineering
PE11_13 Metamaterials engineering
PE11_14 Computational methods for materials engineering

Life Sciences

LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions

For all organisms:

Molecular biology, biochemistry, structural biology, molecular biophysics, synthetic and chemical biology, drug design, innovative methods and modelling

LS1_1 Macromolecular complexes including interactions involving nucleic acids, proteins, lipids and carbohydrates
LS1_2 Biochemistry
LS1_3 DNA and RNA biology
LS1_4 Protein biology
LS1_5 Lipid biology
LS1_6 Glycobiology
LS1_7 Molecular biophysics, biomechanics, bioenergetics
LS1_8 Structural biology
LS1_9 Molecular mechanisms of signalling processes
LS1_10 Synthetic biology
LS1_11 Chemical biology
LS1_12 Protein design
LS1_13 Early translational research and drug design
LS1_14 Innovative methods and modelling in molecular, structural and synthetic biology

LS2 Integrative Biology: from Genes and Genomes to Systems

For all organisms:

Genetics, epigenetics, genomics and other 'omics studies, bioinformatics, systems biology, genetic diseases, gene editing, innovative methods and modelling, 'omics for personalised medicine

LS2_1 Genetics
LS2_2 Gene editing
LS2_3 Epigenetics
LS2_4 Gene regulation
LS2_5 Genomics
LS2_6 Metagenomics
LS2_7 Transcriptomics
LS2_8 Proteomics
LS2_9 Metabolomics
LS2_10 Glycomics/Lipidomics
LS2_11 Bioinformatics and computational biology
LS2_12 Biostatistics
LS2_13 Systems biology
LS2_14 Genetic diseases
LS2_15 Integrative biology for personalised medicine
LS2_16 Innovative methods and modelling in integrative biology

LS3 Cellular, Developmental and Regenerative Biology

For all organisms:

Structure and function of the cell, cell-cell communication, embryogenesis, tissue differentiation, organogenesis, growth, development, evolution of development, organoids, stem cells, regeneration, therapeutic approaches

LS3_1 Cell cycle, cell division and growth
LS3_2 Cell senescence, cell death, autophagy, cell ageing
LS3_3 Cell behaviour, including control of cell shape, cell migration
LS3_4 Cell junctions, cell adhesion, the extracellular matrix, cell communication

LS3_5 Cell signalling and signal transduction, exosome biology
LS3_6 Organelle biology and trafficking
LS3_7 Mechanobiology of cells, tissues and organs
LS3_8 Embryogenesis, pattern formation, morphogenesis
LS3_9 Cell differentiation, formation of tissues and organs
LS3_10 Developmental genetics
LS3_11 Evolution of developmental strategies
LS3_12 Organoids
LS3_13 Stem cells
LS3_14 Regeneration
LS3_15 Development of cell-based therapeutic approaches for tissue regeneration
LS3_16 Functional imaging of cells and tissues
LS3_17 Theoretical modelling in cellular, developmental and regenerative biology

LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing

Organ and tissue physiology, comparative physiology, physiology of ageing, pathophysiology, inter-organ and tissue communication, endocrinology, nutrition, metabolism, interaction with the microbiome, non-communicable diseases including cancer (and except disorders of the nervous system and immunity-related diseases)

LS4_1 Organ and tissue physiology and pathophysiology
LS4_2 Comparative physiology
LS4_3 Physiology of ageing
LS4_4 Endocrinology
LS4_5 Non-hormonal mechanisms of inter-organ and tissue communication
LS4_6 Microbiome and host physiology
LS4_7 Nutrition and exercise physiology
LS4_8 Impact of stress (including environmental stress) on physiology
LS4_9 Metabolism and metabolic disorders, including diabetes and obesity
LS4_10 The cardiovascular system and cardiovascular diseases
LS4_11 Haematopoiesis and blood diseases
LS4_12 Cancer
LS4_13 Other non-communicable diseases (except disorders of the nervous system and immunity-related diseases)

LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System

Nervous system development, homeostasis and ageing, nervous system function and dysfunction, systems neuroscience and modelling, biological basis of cognitive processes and of behaviour, neurological and mental disorders

LS5_1 Neuronal cells
LS5_2 Glial cells and neuronal-glial communication
LS5_3 Neural development and related disorders
LS5_4 Neural stem cells
LS5_5 Neural networks and plasticity
LS5_6 Neurovascular biology and blood-brain barrier
LS5_7 Sensory systems, sensation and perception, including pain
LS5_8 Neural basis of behaviour
LS5_9 Neural basis of cognition
LS5_10 Ageing of the nervous system
LS5_11 Neurological and neurodegenerative disorders
LS5_12 Mental disorders
LS5_13 Nervous system injuries and trauma, stroke
LS5_14 Repair and regeneration of the nervous system
LS5_15 Neuroimmunology, neuroinflammation
LS5_16 Systems and computational neuroscience

LS5_17 Imaging in neuroscience
LS5_18 Innovative methods and tools for neuroscience

LS6 Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy

The immune system, related disorders and their mechanisms, biology of infectious agents and infection, biological basis of prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, innovative immunological tools and approaches, including therapies

LS6_1 Innate immunity
LS6_2 Adaptive immunity
LS6_3 Regulation of the immune response
LS6_4 Immune-related diseases
LS6_5 Biology of pathogens (e.g. bacteria, viruses, parasites, fungi)
LS6_6 Infectious diseases
LS6_7 Mechanisms of infection
LS6_8 Biological basis of prevention and treatment of infection
LS6_9 Antimicrobials, antimicrobial resistance
LS6_10 Vaccine development
LS6_11 Innovative immunological tools and approaches, including therapies

LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases

Medical technologies and tools for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of human diseases, therapeutic approaches and interventions, pharmacology, preventative medicine, epidemiology and public health, digital medicine

LS7_1 Medical imaging for prevention, diagnosis and monitoring of diseases
LS7_2 Medical technologies and tools (including genetic tools and biomarkers) for prevention, diagnosis, monitoring and treatment of diseases
LS7_3 Nanomedicine
LS7_4 Regenerative medicine
LS7_5 Applied gene, cell and immune therapies
LS7_6 Other medical therapeutic interventions, including transplantation
LS7_7 Pharmacology and toxicology
LS7_8 Effectiveness of interventions, including resistance to therapies
LS7_9 Public health and epidemiology
LS7_10 Preventative and prognostic medicine
LS7_11 Environmental health, occupational medicine
LS7_12 Health care, including care for the ageing population
LS7_13 Palliative medicine
LS7_14 Digital medicine, e-medicine, medical applications of artificial intelligence
LS7_15 Medical ethics

LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution

For all organisms:

Ecology, biodiversity, environmental change, evolutionary biology, behavioural ecology, microbial ecology, marine biology, ecophysiology, theoretical developments and modelling

LS8_1 Ecosystem and community ecology, macroecology
LS8_2 Biodiversity
LS8_3 Conservation biology
LS8_4 Population biology, population dynamics, population genetics
LS8_5 Biological aspects of environmental change, including climate change
LS8_6 Evolutionary ecology
LS8_7 Evolutionary genetics
LS8_8 Phylogenetics, systematics, comparative biology

LS8_9 Macroevolution and paleobiology
LS8_10 Ecology and evolution of species interactions
LS8_11 Behavioural ecology and evolution
LS8_12 Microbial ecology and evolution
LS8_13 Marine biology and ecology
LS8_14 Ecophysiology, from organisms to ecosystems
LS8_15 Theoretical developments and modelling in environmental biology, ecology, and evolution

LS9 Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering

Biotechnology using all organisms, biotechnology for environment and food applications, applied plant and animal sciences, bioengineering and synthetic biology, biomass and biofuels, biohazards

LS9_1 Bioengineering for synthetic and chemical biology
LS9_2 Applied genetics, gene editing and transgenic organisms
LS9_3 Bioengineering of cells, tissues, organs and organisms
LS9_4 Microbial biotechnology and bioengineering
LS9_5 Food biotechnology and bioengineering
LS9_6 Marine biotechnology and bioengineering
LS9_7 Environmental biotechnology and bioengineering
LS9_8 Applied plant sciences, plant breeding, agroecology and soil biology
LS9_9 Plant pathology and pest resistance
LS9_10 Veterinary and applied animal sciences
LS9_11 Biomass production and utilisation, biofuels
LS9_12 Ecotoxicology, biohazards and biosafety

Social Sciences and Humanities

SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations

Economics, finance, management

SH1_1 Macroeconomics; monetary economics; economic growth
SH1_2 International trade; international management; international business; spatial economics
SH1_3 Development economics; structural change; political economy of development
SH1_4 Finance; asset pricing; international finance; market microstructure
SH1_5 Corporate finance; banking and financial intermediation; accounting; auditing; insurance
SH1_6 Econometrics; operations research
SH1_7 Behavioural economics; experimental economics; neuro-economics
SH1_8 Microeconomic theory; game theory; decision theory
SH1_9 Industrial organisation; entrepreneurship; R&D and innovation
SH1_10 Management; strategy; organisational behaviour
SH1_11 Human resource management; operations management, marketing
SH1_12 Environmental economics; resource and energy economics; agricultural economics
SH1_13 Labour and demographic economics
SH1_14 Health economics; economics of education
SH1_15 Public economics; political economics; law and economics
SH1_16 Historical economics; quantitative economic history; institutional economics; economic systems

SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems

Political science, international relations, law

SH2_1 Political systems, governance
SH2_2 Democratisation and social movements
SH2_3 Conflict resolution, war, peace building, international law
SH2_4 Legal studies, constitutions, human rights, comparative law
SH2_5 International relations, global and transnational governance
SH2_6 Humanitarian assistance and development
SH2_7 Political and legal philosophy
SH2_8 Big data in political and legal studies

SH3 The Social World and Its Diversity

Sociology, social psychology, social anthropology, education sciences, communication studies

SH3_1 Social structure, social mobility, social innovation
SH3_2 Inequalities, discrimination, prejudice
SH3_3 Aggression and violence, antisocial behaviour, crime
SH3_4 Social integration, exclusion, prosocial behaviour
SH3_5 Attitudes and beliefs
SH3_6 Social influence; power and group behaviour
SH3_7 Kinship; diversity and identities, gender, interethnic relations
SH3_8 Social policies, welfare, work and employment
SH3_9 Poverty and poverty alleviation
SH3_10 Religious studies, ritual; symbolic representation
SH3_11 Social aspects of teaching and learning, curriculum studies, education and educational policies
SH3_12 Communication and information, networks, media
SH3_13 Digital social research
SH3_14 Social studies of science and technology

SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity

Cognitive science, psychology, linguistics, theoretical philosophy

SH4_1 Cognitive basis of human development and education, developmental disorders; comparative cognition
SH4_2 Personality and social cognition; emotion
SH4_3 Clinical and health psychology
SH4_4 Neuropsychology
SH4_5 Attention, perception, action, consciousness
SH4_6 Learning, memory; cognition in ageing
SH4_7 Reasoning, decision-making; intelligence
SH4_8 Language learning and processing (first and second languages)
SH4_9 Theoretical linguistics; computational linguistics
SH4_10 Language typology; historical linguistics
SH4_11 Pragmatics, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, discourse analysis
SH4_12 Philosophy of mind, philosophy of language
SH4_13 Philosophy of science, epistemology, logic

SH5 Cultures and Cultural Production

Literary studies, cultural studies, study of the arts, philosophy

SH5_1 Classics, ancient literature and art
SH5_2 Theory and history of literature, comparative literature
SH5_3 Philology; text and image studies
SH5_4 Visual and performing arts, film, design and architecture
SH5_5 Music and musicology; history of music
SH5_6 History of art and architecture, arts-based research
SH5_7 Museums, exhibitions, conservation and restoration
SH5_8 Cultural studies, cultural identities and memories, cultural heritage
SH5_9 Metaphysics, philosophical anthropology; aesthetics
SH5_10 Ethics and its applications; social philosophy
SH5_11 History of philosophy
SH5_12 Computational modelling and digitisation in the cultural sphere

SH6 The Study of the Human Past

Archaeology and history

SH6_1 Historiography, theory and methods in history, including the analysis of digital data
SH6_2 Classical archaeology, history of archaeology, social archaeology
SH6_3 General archaeology, archaeometry, landscape archaeology
SH6_4 Prehistory, palaeoanthropology, palaeodemography, protohistory, bioarchaeology
SH6_5 Palaeography and codicology
SH6_6 Ancient history
SH6_7 Medieval history
SH6_8 Early modern history
SH6_9 Modern and contemporary history
SH6_10 Colonial and post-colonial history
SH6_11 Global history, transnational history, comparative history, entangled histories
SH6_12 Social and economic history
SH6_13 Gender history, cultural history, history of collective identities and memories, history of religions
SH6_14 History of ideas, intellectual history, history of economic thought
SH6_15 History of science, medicine and technologies

SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space

Human geography, demography, health, sustainability science, territorial planning, spatial analysis

SH7_1 Human, economic and social geography
SH7_2 Migration
SH7_3 Population dynamics: households, family and fertility
SH7_4 Social aspects of health, ageing and society
SH7_5 Sustainability sciences, environment and resources
SH7_6 Environmental and climate change, societal impact and policy
SH7_7 Cities; urban, regional and rural studies
SH7_8 Land use and planning
SH7_9 Energy, transportation and mobility
SH7_10 GIS, spatial analysis; big data in geographical studies

4.2 HOST INSTITUTION SUPPORT LETTER TEMPLATE 2023

Print on paper bearing the official letterhead of the host institution

Commitment of the Host Institution for ERC Calls 2023[46, 47, 48]

The <<please fill in here the name of the legal entity that is associated to the proposal and may host the principal investigator and the project (action) in case the application is successful>>, which is the applicant legal entity,

confirms its intention to sign a supplementary agreement with
<<please fill in here the name of the principal investigator>>

in which the obligations listed below will be addressed should the proposal be retained.

Performance obligations of the *applicant legal entity* (Host Institution) that will become the coordinator of the HE ERC Grant Agreement (hereafter referred to as the Agreement), should the proposal be retained and the preparation of the Agreement be successfully concluded:

The applicant legal entity (Host Institution) commits itself to ensure that the action tasks described in Annex 1 of the Agreement are performed under the guidance of the principal investigator who is expected to devote:

- in the case of a Starting Grant at least 50% of her/his working time to the ERC-funded project (action) and spend at least 50% of her/his working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country;
- in the case of a Consolidator Grant at least 40% of her/his working time to the ERC-funded project (action) and spend at least 50% of her/his working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country;
- in the case of an Advanced Grant at least 30% of her/his working time to the ERC-funded project (action) and spend at least 50% of her/his working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country.

The applicant legal entity (Host Institution) commits itself to respect the following conditions for the principal investigator and their team:

a) host and engage the principal investigator for the whole duration of the action;
b) take all measures to implement the principles set out in the Commission recommendation on the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers[49] — in particular regarding working conditions, transparent recruitment processes based on merit and career development — and

[46] A scanned copy of the signed statement should be uploaded electronically via the Funding & Tenders Portal Submission Service in PDF format.
[47] The statement of commitment of the host institution refers to most obligations of the host institution, which are stated in the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions (MGA). The MGA is available on the Funding & Tenders Portal. The reference to the time commitment of the Principal Investigator is stated in the ERC Work Programme 2023.
[48] This statement (on letterhead paper) shall be signed (in blue ink or digitally) by the institution's legal representative indicating their name, function, email address and, in case of blue ink signature, along with the stamp of the institution.
[49] Commission Recommendation 2005/251/EC of 11 March 2005 on the European Charter for Researchers and on a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (OJ L 75, 22.3.2005, p. 67).

ensure that the principal investigator, researchers and third parties involved in the action are aware of them;

c) enter — before grant signature— into a Supplementary Agreement with the principal investigator, that specifies the obligation of the applicant legal entity to meet its obligations under the Agreement;
d) provide the principal investigator with a copy of the signed Agreement;
e) guarantee the principal investigator scientific independence, in particular for the:
    i) use of the budget to achieve the scientific objectives;
    ii) authority to publish as senior author and invite as co-authors those who have contributed substantially to the work;
    iii) preparation of scientific reports for the action;
    iv) selection and supervision of the other team members, in line with the profiles needed to conduct the research and in accordance with the beneficiary's usual management practices;
    v) possibility to apply independently for funding;
    vi) access to appropriate space and facilities for conducting the research;
f) provide — during the implementation of the action — research support to the principal investigator and the team members (regarding infrastructure, equipment, access rights, products and other services necessary for conducting the research);
g) support the principal investigator and provide administrative assistance, in particular for the:
    i) general management of the work and their team;
    ii) scientific reporting, especially ensuring that the team members send their scientific results to the principal investigator;
    iii) financial reporting, especially providing timely and clear financial information;
    iv) application of the beneficiary's usual management practices;
    v) general logistics of the action;
    vi) access to the electronic exchange system;
h) inform the principal investigator immediately (in writing) of any events or circumstances likely to affect the Agreement;
i) ensure that the principal investigator enjoys adequate:
    i) conditions for annual, sickness and parental leave;
    ii) occupational health and safety standards;
    iii) insurance under the general social security scheme, such as pension rights;
j) allow the transfer of the Agreement to a new beneficiary, if requested by the principal investigator and provided that the objectives of the action remain achievable (portability; see Article 41 of the Agreement);
k) respect the fundamental principle of research integrity and ensure that persons carrying out research tasks under the action follow the good research practices and refrain from the research integrity violations described in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity[50]. If any such violations or allegations occur, verify and pursue them and bring them to the attention of the Agency.

[50] The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity of ALLEA (All European Academies, Berlin 2017).

For the applicant legal entity (Host Institution):

Date

……

Name and Function

…… ; ……

Email and Signature (blue ink or digitally signed[51]) of legal representative

…… ; ……

Stamp of the applicant legal entity (Host Institution)[52]

IMPORTANT NOTE: In order to be complete, all the above mentioned items are mandatory and shall be included in the commitment of the host institution.

[51] The digital signature must have the same legal value (i.e. must be the electronic equivalent) of a handwritten signature and a stamped seal.

[52] No need to stamp this letter of support when it is digitally signed.

4.3 PHD AND EQUIVALENT DOCTORAL DEGREES

The ERC Policy on PhD and equivalent doctoral degrees is detailed in Annex 2 of the ERC Work Programme 2023 'ERC Policy on PhD and equivalent doctoral degrees':

1. The necessity of ascertaining PhD equivalence

In order to be eligible to apply to the ERC Starting or Consolidator Grant, a Principal Investigator must have successfully defended a PhD or equivalent doctoral degree. First-professional degrees will not be considered in themselves as PhD-equivalent, even if recipients carry the title "Doctor". See below for further guidelines on PhD degree equivalency.

2. PhD Degrees

The research doctorate is the highest earned academic degree. It is always awarded for **independent research** at a professional level in either academic disciplines or professional fields. Regardless of the entry point, doctoral studies involve several stages of academic work. These may include the completion of preliminary course, seminar and laboratory studies and/or the passing of a battery of written examinations. The PhD candidate selects an academic adviser and a subject for the dissertation, is assigned a dissertation committee, and designs his or her research (some educators call the doctoral thesis a dissertation to distinguish it from lesser theses). The dissertation committee consists usually of 3-5 faculty members in the candidate's research field, including the adviser.

3. Independent research

Conducting the research and writing the dissertation usually requires one to several years depending upon the topic selected and the research work necessary to prepare the dissertation. In defending his or her thesis, **the PhD candidate must establish mastery of the subject matter, explain and justify his or her research findings, and answer all questions put by the committee**. A successful defence results in the award of the PhD degree.

4. Degrees equivalent to the PhD:

It is recognised that there are some other doctoral titles that enjoy the same status and represent variants of the PhD in certain fields. All of them have **similar content requirements**. Potential applicants are invited to consult the following for useful references on degrees that will be considered equivalent to the PhD:

- EURYDICE: "Examinations, qualifications and titles - Second edition, Volume 1, European glossary on education" published in 2004[53]. Please note that some titles that belong to the same category with doctoral degrees (ISCED 6 – 1997 classification or ISCED 8 – 2011 classification[54]) may correspond to the intermediate steps towards the completion of doctoral education and they should not be therefore considered as PhD-equivalent.

- List of research doctorate titles awarded in the United States that enjoy the same status and represent variants of the PhD within certain fields. These doctorate titles are also recognised as PhD-equivalent by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF)[55].

[53] http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/european-glossary-on-education-pbEC3212292/
[54] http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf
[55] http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-structure-us.html

5. First Professional Degrees (for applicants holding a degree in medicine please see below):

It is important to recognise that the initial professional degrees in various fields are **first degrees, not graduate research degrees**. Several degree titles in such fields include the term "Doctor", **but they are neither research doctorates nor equivalent to the PhD**.

6. Applicants holding a degree in medicine:

A first degree in medicine will not be accepted by itself as equivalent to a PhD degree. To be considered an eligible Principal Investigator, applicants holding a degree in medicine need to provide **the certificates of both the medical degree and a PhD or proof of an appointment that requires doctoral equivalency** (e.g. post-doctoral fellowship, professorship appointment). Additionally, candidates must also provide information on their research experience (including peer reviewed publications) in order to further substantiate the equivalence of their overall training to a PhD.

In these cases, the certified date of the medical degree completion plus two years is the reference date of the actual award used for the calculation of the eligibility period established for Starting and Consolidator Grants in the section “Eligible Principal investigator(s)” of the ERC Work programme 2023.

For applicants holding both a degree in medicine and a PhD, **the date used for the calculation of the eligibility period** (i.e. medical degree plus two years or the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree) **is the date of the earliest degree that makes the applicant eligible.**

_____

Further explanation on point 6 for applicants holding several degrees:

A medical degree[56] takes precedence over a PhD degree **only** when an applicant has held an appointment that requires doctoral equivalency (e.g. post-doctoral fellowship, professorship appointment) **before** a the date of successful defence of a PhD.

Example 1

A PI who was awarded a degree in medicine in 2008, completed clinical specialty training in 2013 and then defended a PhD on 1 January 2018, is eligible to apply to the Starting Grant 2023 call based on the date of the successful defence of the PhD. As the medical degree by itself is not accepted as equivalent to a PhD award, the earliest eligible degree is the PhD – defended 5 years prior to 1 January 2023 and within the eligibility window (2 – 7 years after PhD).

Example 2

A PI who was awarded a degree in medicine on 1 January 2004, completed clinical training in 2007 and held one or several research positions (e.g. post-doctoral fellowship or professorship appointment) prior to successfully defending a PhD in 2017, is ineligible for both the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2023 calls. The medical degree together with the research experience acquired during the research position(s) is considered equivalent to a PhD. Therefore, the earliest eligible degree is the medical degree – awarded 19 years prior to 1 January 2023 and not within the eligibility window (the date of the medical degree + 2 years = 1 January 2006, is used for the calculation of the eligibility window of 2-7 years for StG and 7-12 years for CoG). An extension for three years of clinical training is not enough to make the applicant eligible for the Consolidator grant call.

[56] The basic medical degree (first graduate degree in medicine) applicable to all countries.

Example 3

A PI who was awarded a medical degree on 1 January 2015, followed by a Dr. Med. degree awarded on 11 July 2016 and who then held one or several research positions requiring PhD equivalence (e.g. post-doctoral fellowship or professorship appointment) is eligible to apply to the Starting Grant 2023 call based on the award date of the medical degree. As the Dr. Med. degree by itself is not accepted as equivalent to a PhD degree, the earliest eligible degree is the MD degree – awarded 8 years prior to 1 January 2023 and within the eligibility window (the date of the medical degree + 2 years = 1 January 2017, is used for the calculation of the eligibility window of 2-7 years for StG and 7-12 years for CoG). The certified date of the MD degree completion plus two years is the time reference for calculation of the eligibility time-window and thus 1 January 2017 is the PhD equivalence date, which should be entered in the application form for this applicant.

Example 4

A PI who was awarded an MD Univ. degree on 8 August 2009, followed by a Dr. Med. degree awarded on 25 October 2010 and then defended a PhD on 1 January 2013 is eligible to apply to the Consolidator Grant 2023 call based on the defence date of the PhD degree. As the Dr. Med. degree by itself is not accepted as equivalent to a PhD award, and as the applicant has not held any research positions requiring PhD equivalence between the MD Univ. degree and the PhD, the earliest eligible degree is the PhD degree – awarded 10 years prior to 1 January 2023 and within the eligibility window (7 – 12 years past PhD) for Consolidator grant applicants.

4.4 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR THE PHD REFERENCE DATE AND EXTENSION REQUESTS

The date of the first PhD considered for the calculation of the eligibility period is the date of the successful defence of the PhD degree.

The eligibility periods set out in the table above can be extended beyond 7 and 12 years for the Starting and Consolidator Grants respectively for the following properly documented circumstances[57], provided they started before the call deadline:

*- **Maternity**: 18 months extension for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree. If the applicant can document a longer total maternity leave, the eligibility period will be extended by the documented amount of actual leave(s) for all children taken before the call deadline.*

*- **Paternity**: extension by the documented time of paternity leave taken before the call deadline for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.*

*- **Long-term illness**[58] or **national service**: extension by the documented amount of leave taken by the Principal Investigator before the call deadline for each incident which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.*

*- **Clinical training**: extension by the documented amount of clinical training received by the Principal Investigator **after** the reference date of the first eligible degree and before the call deadline, **up to a maximum of 4 years**.*

*- **Natural Disaster**[59]: extension by the documented time of a Principal Investigator's inability to work[60] before the call deadline due to a natural disaster, which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.*

*- **Seeking Asylum**: extension by the documented time of the Principal Investigator's inability to work before the call deadline due to seeking asylum[61], which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree.*

In case the PhD certificate does not show the date of defence of the PhD, the PI should provide an official confirmation from the awarding institution of the successful defence date of their PhD.

In case the defence did not take place, the PI should provide an official confirmation from the awarding institution that no defence/viva was required (was not part of the PhD programme) and a date when the PhD was approved (typically this should be an approval date before the PhD was awarded, similar to a defence date).

The official transcript of the PhD course noting any of the dates above is also acceptable.

[57] For applicants whose first eligible degree is their medical degree such incidents can be considered from the date of completion of their medical degree.

[58] Over 90 days for the Principal Investigator or a close family member (child, spouse, parent or sibling).

[59] Large-scale geological or meteorological events that have the potential to cause the loss of life or property.

[60] For a minimum of 30 days.

[61] The possible period of extension runs from the start date of asylum/refugee application to the date of decision on the applicant Principal Investigator's refugee status and/or receipt of specific residence permit.

All applicants are entitled to an extension of their eligibility window if properly documented and related to the specific circumstances defined in the annual ERC work programme[62]. Please note that any such circumstance must have started before the call deadline. The reference date for calculating the eligibility window is the reference date of the first eligible degree according to the national rules of the awarding country[63]. The extension time is calculated based on the supporting documentation submitted with the application. There is no limit to the total extension timeframe. Please note however, that a maximum of 4 years have been introduced for extensions due to clinical training. The individual extensions for different periods are additive and the total extension time can thus be based on several reasons.

Maternity leave

For maternity[64], a flat rate of 18 months extension is granted for each child born **before or after** the PhD defence. In case of one child, if a maternity leave or the combined maternity and parental leave was longer than 18 months, an extension will be granted for the documented leave actually taken. In case of more than one child, if the maternity leaves or the combined maternity and parental leaves were longer than the total flat rate, an extension will be granted for the documented leave(s) actually taken. The same principle also applies for child adoption.

Supporting documents: any official document that links the mother and the child(ren), i.e. birth certificate(s) or passport(s) of the child(ren) or family book. For extension requests above the flat rate, an official signed document[65] from the employer certifying start and end dates of the individual leave(s) must be submitted. Any document should mention the reason for the leave. If the leave was conducted as a part-time leave, this should be stated. It is acceptable if the time off work happened over several periods.

A couple of examples are provided below to further clarify the guidance for maternity leave-based extension requests:

Example 1:

A PI has two children. She took a maternity leave of 4 months for the first child and 6 months for the second child. She also took part-time parental leave at 50% during two years. In this case, the total documented leave would be 4 months + 6 months + 12 months (2 years * 50 %) = 22 months. The flat rate, which is 18 months per child born before or after the PhD award, would be 2 * 18 months = 36 months. As the flat rate gives a longer extension than the accumulated documented leaves taken, the PI would be given the 36 months of flat rate as an extension to the eligibility reference date.

Example 2:

A PI has two children. She took a maternity leave of 6 months for the first child and 10 months for the second child. She also took full-time parental leave during two years. In this case, the total documented leave would be 6 months + 10 months + 24 months = 40 months. The flat rate, which is 18 months per child born before or after the PhD award, would be 2 * 18 months = 36 months. As the total documented leaves taken corresponds to a longer extension than the flat rate, the PI would be given the 40 months of documented leaves taken as an extension to the eligibility reference date.

Paternity leave

For paternity leaves, an extension will be granted corresponding to the documented time of paternity and/or parental leave actually taken for each child born **before or after** the PhD defence

[62] E.g., no extension to the eligibility window can be accepted for periods of unemployment.
[63] Please see footnote 14.
[64] Different family and couple scenarios can be considered provided they are properly documented.
[65] The certificate should be issued by a person within the employing organisation empowered to certify the actual leave taken (i.e. an authorised officer from the HR Department).

(counting up until the call deadline). Both full time and part time leaves can be accepted if properly documented[66]. The same principle also applies for child adoption.

Supporting documents: an official signed document[67] from the employer certifying start and end dates of the individual leave(s). Any document should mention the reason for the leave. If the leave was conducted as a part-time leave, this should be stated. It is acceptable if the time off work happened over several periods.

Long-term illness

For long-term illness (more than ninety days for the Principal Investigator or a close family member such as a child, spouse, parent or sibling), an extension can be granted corresponding to the documented time of leave actually taken after the PhD defence (counting up until the call deadline). Full time and part time leaves as well as reduced working capacity can be accepted if properly documented.

Supporting documents:

- For the PI: an official, signed document from the employer certifying start and end dates of the individual leave(s) or a medical record that indicates work incapability with the start and end dates of the illness period(s). Any document should mention the reason for the leave. If the leave was conducted as a part-time leave, this should be stated. It is acceptable if the time off work happened over several periods, as long as the leaves were related to the same illness or condition. Furthermore, the request should be supported by an official document explaining the long-term nature of the illness or condition (e.g. from a hospital, a doctor or an insurance company).
- For taking care of close family members: an official signed document from the employer certifying start and end dates of the individual leave(s). Any document should mention the reason for the leave. If the leave was conducted as a part-time leave, this should be stated. It is acceptable if the time off work happened over several periods, as long as the leaves were related to the same illness or condition. Furthermore, the request should be supported by an official document explaining the long-term nature of the illness or condition of the close family member (e.g. from a hospital, a doctor or an insurance company). The supporting documents should also prove the family relationship in case the extension request relates to caring for a seriously ill close family member.

National (military) service

For national military service, an extension can be granted corresponding to the documented amount of leave actually taken after the PhD defence (counting up until the call deadline).
Supporting documents: document signed by official authority with start and end date of the service.

Clinical training

For clinical training, an extension can be granted corresponding to the documented time of clinical training received by the PI after the award of the first eligible degree up to a maximum of 4 years (counting up until the call deadline). For applicants whose first eligible degree is a medical degree, clinical training can be accepted from the date of the completion of their medical degree. No extension will be accepted for serving as a house doctor or hospital doctor unless it is part of a clinical training programme. In case of part-time clinical training, the exact total training time will be accepted on a pro-rata basis to extend the eligibility window of the applicant.
Supporting documents: an official document signed by the employer (usually a hospital) certifying start and end dates of the individual training period(s). Any document should mention the type of

[66] An official document proving the PI's right to social paternity benefits can also be accepted.
[67] The certificate should be issued by a person within the employing organisation empowered to certify the actual leave taken (i.e. an authorised officer from the HR Department).

training. If the training was conducted part-time, this should be stated. It is acceptable if the training happened over several periods and for different clinical specialties.

Natural Disaster

An extension can be granted corresponding to the documented time of a Principal Investigator's inability to work for a minimum number of 30 days before the call deadline due to a natural disaster[68], which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree. Please note that events other than natural disasters will not be considered (e.g. fire/flood in the building due to a human mistake or technical problem).

Supporting documents: An official, signed document from the employer certifying start and end date(s) of the inability/reduced capacity to work due to a natural disaster.

Seeking Asylum:

An extension can be granted corresponding to the documented time of the Principal Investigator's inability to work before the call deadline due to seeking asylum, which occurred after the date of the successful defence of their PhD degree. The possible period of extension runs from the start date of asylum/refugee application to the date of decision on the applicant Principal Investigator's refugee status and/or receipt of specific residence permit.

Supporting documents: an official, signed document from the competent authorities confirming the PI's inability to work due to seeking asylum indicating a start date of asylum/refugee application and a date of the decision on the applicant Principal Investigator's refugee status and/or receipt of specific residence permit. This information can be provided within several documents. An official document proving the Acknowledgement of receipt of the request/application for the asylum /refugee status could be also accepted.

[68] Large-scale geological or meteorological events that have the potential to cause the loss of life or property.

4.5 LIST OF BLOCKING FIELDS IN THE ONLINE SUBMISSION FORM

Section 1 – General Information

Acronym

Title

Duration

Primary ERC Review Panel

ERC Keyword 1

Abstract

Declaration on written consent of all participants

Section 2 – Participants

PI: First name, Last name and e-Mail (can only be entered at Step 4/Participants in the submission system)

PI: Nationality, Date of birth, Gender, Country of birth, Place of birth, Town and Country.

Main contact person (for ERC HI contact person): contact First name, Last name and e-Mail (can only be entered at Step 4/ in the submission system).

Section 3 - Budget

Total Eligible Costs and Requested EU contribution per beneficiary

Section 4 – Ethics and security

No blocking fields

Section 5 – Other questions

Date of earliest award (PhD or equivalent)

Percentage of working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country over the period of the grant

Percentage of working time the PI dedicates to the project over the period of the grant

Eligibility declaration

Consent obtained from participants and researchers

4.6 PROPOSAL BUDGET REPORT[69]

Proposal number	999999
Acronym	ERC proposal
Title	Title describing the ERC proposal
Evaluation panel	XXx
Principal Investigator	First Name, Last Name
Host Institution	Name of Host Institution, country
Project duration	xx months (this information will be extracted from the administrative form, section 1 - General information)
Time commitment of the PI to the project	xx% (this information will be extracted from the administrative form, section 5 - Other questions)

Budget summary

Beneficiary organisation(s)	**Total cost (€)**	**Requested AMT (€)**
1. Name of Institution, country	x,xxx,xxx.00	xxx,xxx.00

Budget details

Cost Category / Beneficiary			Name of Institution	**Total**
A. Personnel costs	PI		xx	Xx
	Senior Staff		xx	Xx
	Postdocs		xx	Xx
	Students		xx	Xx
	Other Personnel costs		xx	Xx
Total Personnel costs			Xxx	Xxx
B. Subcontracting costs (no indirect costs)			xx	Xx
C. Purchase costs	**C.1 Travel and subsistence**		xx	Xx
	C.2. Equipment incl. major equipment		xx	Xx
	C.3 Other goods, works and services	Consumables incl. fieldwork and animal costs	xx	Xx
		Publications (incl. Open Access fees) and dissemination	xx	Xx
		Other additional direct costs	xx	Xx
		C.3 Total other goods, works and services	Xx	Xx
Total Purchase costs (C1 + C2 + C3)			Xxx	Xxx
D. Internally invoiced goods and services (no indirect costs)			Xx	Xx
E. Indirect costs (= 25% * (A + C1 + C2 + C3))			Xxx	Xxx
Total eligible costs (A + B + C + D + E)			X.xxx.xxx	X.xxx.xxx
Requested EU contribution			**X.XXX.XXX**	**X.XXX.XXX**

[69] This is an example of how the Proposal Budget Report looks like for the experts. Please note that the layout may be further adapted when needed.

Section C. Resources

I plan to allocate …. (one to max. two descriptive text pages) – max. 8000 characters.

State and fully justify the amount of funding considered necessary to fulfil the objectives for the duration of the project. The project cost estimation should be as accurate as possible. The evaluation panels assess the estimated costs carefully; unjustified budgets will be consequently reduced. Please specify if you will use third parties giving in-kind contributions to the action.

If applicable, please specify the cost items covered by your 'Other personnel costs' category and the cost items covered by your 'Other additional direct costs' category.

Request for additional funding if applicable (All items MUST be included in the overall budget table above in the appropriate cost category): xxx (Cost in EUR).

Justification: