

ERC Work Programme 2016



European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

(European Commission C(2015) 5086 of 28 July 2015)

Who should read this document?

This document is the annual work programme for the European Research Council funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. It is established by the Scientific Council of the ERC and subsequently adopted by the European Commission.

Principal Investigators who wish to apply to one of the ERC's calls will need to apply through the Participants Portal. This contains all the information necessary for applying to each ERC call as well as details of your National Contact Point who can provide information and personalised support in your native language at:

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

Potential applicants, and those interested in more information on the ERC in general can find out more about the ERC, including the background to the ERC's mission and organisation, a description of the main funding schemes, a step by step guide to applying to the ERC and details of funded projects here:

<http://erc.europa.eu/>

Summary of main new features in 2016

Three ERC frontier research grants will be available under Work Programme 2016: Starting; Consolidator; and Advanced Grants.

Restrictions on applications will apply to the 2016 calls based on the outcome of the evaluation of previous calls – see restrictions on submission of proposals under “Eligibility criteria” below. NB Principal Investigators whose proposal was evaluated as category B at step 2 in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programme 2015 will not be subject to restrictions in calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2016.

New restrictions on applications will also apply to Principal Investigators whose proposals have been rejected on grounds of breach of research integrity.

ERC Principal Investigators will also continue to be able to apply for Proof of Concept Grants.

Indicative summary of main calls from the 2016 budget¹

	<i>Starting Grant</i>	<i>Consolidator Grant</i>	<i>Advanced Grant</i>
<i>Call identifier</i>	ERC-2016-StG	ERC-2016-CoG	ERC-2016-AdG
<i>Call Opens</i>	29 July 2015	15 October 2015	24 May 2016
<i>Deadline</i>	17 November 2015	2 February 2016	1 September 2016
<i>Budget million EUR (estimated grants)</i>	485 (335)	605 (335)	540 (235)
<i>Planned dates to inform applicants</i>	29 April 2016 1 September 2016	1 July 2016 1 December 2016	16 January 2017 16 March 2017
<i>Indicative date for signature of grant agreements</i>	1 January 2017	1 April 2017	16 July 2017

¹These opening dates and call deadlines are indicative. The Director of the European Research Council Executive Agency may open it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged opening date. The Director may delay the envisaged deadline by up to two months. The budget amounts for 2016 are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the draft budget for 2016 after the adoption of the budget for 2016 by the budgetary authority or if the budget is not adopted as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths.

	<i>Proof of Concept Grant</i>
<i>Call identifier</i>	ERC-2016-PoC
<i>Call Opens</i>	22 October 2015
<i>Deadline(s)</i>	16 February 2016 26 May 2016 4 October 2016
<i>Budget million EUR (estimated grants)</i>	20 (130)
<i>Planned dates to inform applicants</i>	16 May 2016 13 October 2016 17 January 2017
<i>Indicative dates for signature of grant agreements</i>	12 September 2016 14 February 2017 15 May 2017

Table of contents

Summary of main features in 2016	3
Indicative summary of main calls from 2016 budget	4
Objectives and principles of ERC funding	7
Frontier research grants	13
- Funding rates	14
- Eligibility criteria	15
- Starting Grant profile	21
- Consolidator Grant profile	23
- Advanced Grant profile	25
- Proposal submission and description	28
- Evaluation procedure and criteria	30
Proof of Concept grants	35
Other actions	42
Indicative Budget	48
Annexes	50
1. Panel structure	51
2. ERC policy on PhD and equivalent doctoral degrees	54
3. Countries Associated to Horizon 2020 and restrictions applying to some legal entities established in certain third countries	56
Commission Early Warning System and Central Exclusion Database	57

Objectives and principles of ERC funding

The fundamental activity of the ERC is to provide attractive, long-term funding to support excellent investigators and their research teams to pursue ground-breaking, high-gain/ high-risk research.

Research funded by the ERC is expected to lead to advances at the frontiers of knowledge and to set a clear and inspirational target for frontier research across Europe.

Scientific excellence is the sole criterion on the basis of which ERC frontier research grants are awarded

The evaluation of ERC grant applications is conducted by peer review panels composed of renowned scientists and scholars selected by the ERC Scientific Council. The panels may be assisted by independent experts working remotely.

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

Applications can be made in any field of research

The ERC's frontier research grants operate on a 'bottom-up' basis without predetermined priorities.

The ERC puts particular emphasis on the frontiers of science, scholarship and engineering. In particular, it encourages proposals of an interdisciplinary nature which cross the boundaries between different fields of research, pioneering proposals addressing new and emerging fields of research or proposals introducing unconventional, innovative approaches and scientific inventions.

Independent researchers of any age and career stage can apply for attractive long-term funding

The ERC awards funding to excellent investigators looking to set up or consolidate their own independent research team or programme, as well as to already established research leaders.

The ERC awards flexible, long-term funding for a period of up to five years for the Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants. The Scientific Council will review funding conditions regularly to make sure that grants remain competitive both at European and international level.

The maximum grant varies by grant type. An ERC grant can cover up to 100% of the total eligible direct costs of the research plus a contribution towards indirect costs.

ERC grants are portable² as described in the ERC Model Grant Agreement.

The ERC aims to use procedures that maintain the focus on excellence, encourage initiative and combine simplicity and flexibility with accountability. The ERC is continuously looking for further ways to improve its procedures in order to ensure that these principles are met.

Principal Investigators from anywhere in the world can apply for an ERC grant

ERC grants are open to researchers of any nationality who may reside in any country in the world at the time of the application.

The ERC is particularly keen to encourage excellent proposals from Principal Investigators based outside Europe that wish to carry out a project with a host institution in the EU or in one of the Associated Countries.

However the host institution must be established in an EU Member State or Associated Country. In certain conditions team members may be based outside of the EU or an Associated Country (see “Eligible host institution” below).

² *Portability* means that the Principal Investigator may request to transfer the entire grant or part of it to a new beneficiary, under specific conditions included in the ERC Model Grant Agreement. These conditions may include provisions for the transfer of equipment purchased and used exclusively for the implementation of the project.

The ERC frontier research grants aim to empower individual researchers and provide the best settings to foster their creativity

The Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants will support projects carried out by individual teams which are headed by a single Principal Investigator. The constitution of the research teams is flexible. Depending on the nature of a project the research team may involve team members from other research organisations situated in the same or a different country (see “Eligible host institution” below).

The ERC supports individual Principal Investigators. Support for consortia is provided by other calls under Horizon 2020.

Host institutions must provide appropriate conditions for the Principal Investigator to independently direct the research and manage its funding

An ERC grant is awarded to the institution that engages and hosts the Principal Investigator³. Grants are awarded to the

³ Normally the Principal Investigator will be employed by the Host Institution, but cases where, for duly justified reasons, the Principal Investigator's employer cannot become the host institution, or where the Principal Investigator is self-employed, can be accommodated. The specific conditions of engagement will be subject to clarification and approval during the granting procedure or during the amendment procedure for a change of host institution.

host institution with the explicit commitment that this institution offers appropriate conditions for the Principal Investigator to independently manage the ERC funded research. These conditions⁴, including the '*portability*' of the grant, are the subject of a supplementary agreement between the Principal Investigator and the host institution⁵ and must ensure that the Principal Investigator is able to:

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

Public or private institutions, including universities, research organisations and undertakings can host the Principal Investigator and his/her team as long as

⁴ These conditions are consistent with the 'The European Charter for Researchers and The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers'.

⁵ This is supplementary to the ERC Grant Agreement and is described in the ERC Model Grant Agreement.

the principles indicated above are respected and the Principal Investigator is not constrained by the research strategy of the entity.

*The ERC welcomes applications from Principal Investigators **hosted by private for-profit research centres**, including industrial laboratories.*

Host institutions are expected to make all appropriate efforts to provide the conditions to attract and retain scientists and scholars of the calibre to be awarded an ERC grant, within the framework provided by the ERC Model Grant Agreement and any other available administrative and legal possibilities.

Open access

The ERC supports the principle of open access to the published output of research, including in particular peer-reviewed articles and monographs, as a fundamental part of its mission. It also supports the basic principle of open access to research data and data related products such as computer code. The ERC considers that providing free online access to all these materials can be the most effective way of ensuring that the fruits of the research it funds can be accessed, read and used as the basis for further research.

Under Horizon 2020, beneficiaries of ERC grants must ensure open access to all peer-reviewed scientific publications relating to its results. The detailed requirements on open access to

publications are contained in the Horizon 2020 ERC Model Grant Agreement.

There is no formal obligation to provide open access to research data and data related products. However, the ERC recommends that all ERC funded researchers follow best practice in their research field and be prepared to share the data they have gathered and used in their project with other researchers whenever they are not bound by copyright restrictions, confidentiality requirements, or contractual clauses⁶.

Ethical principles

The proposed research and innovation activities shall comply with ethical 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. Particular attention shall be paid to the principle of proportionality, the right to privacy, the right to the protection of personal data, the right to the physical and mental integrity of a person, the right to non-

⁶ Beneficiaries of ERC frontier research grants funded under this Work Programme may also opt-in, on an individual and voluntary basis, to the Horizon 2020 Pilot on Open Research Data in order to facilitate access, re-use and preservation of research data generated during their research work. Beneficiaries choosing this option should carefully check the additional obligations that apply to actions that opt-in to the Pilot as described in the ERC Model Grant Agreement under Horizon 2020. Those beneficiaries may still opt out at any stage. By opting out, beneficiaries free themselves from any obligations regarding the digital research data generated in the action.

discrimination and the need to ensure high levels of human health protection. The proposed research and innovation activities shall have an exclusive focus on civil applications.

Funding of human embryonic stem cell research is possible within the ethical framework defined in the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2014 – 2020.

Research Integrity

It is essential to maintain and promote a culture of research integrity at all stages of the evaluation and granting process to make ERC competitions fair and efficient and to maintain the trust of both the scientific community and society as a whole.

Cases of scientific misconduct such as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or misrepresentation of data that may arise during the evaluation or throughout the life cycle of an ERC funded project will be addressed vigorously by the ERC within the applicable legal and procedural framework. Any breach of research integrity by Principal Investigators or beneficiaries may be sanctioned by measures such as the rejection of proposals from evaluation, requests for measures to be taken by the host institution, reduction of the grant and suspension or termination of grants.

However, the host institutions that engage and host ERC Principal Investigators have the primary responsibility for the

detection of scientific misconduct and for the investigation, and adjudication of any breaches of research integrity that may arise. Therefore host institutions are expected to have structures in place to uphold research integrity and to make all appropriate efforts to verify that no allegations of scientific misconduct are pending against any Principal Investigator

applying for or participating in an ERC grant and to bring to the attention of the ERC any such allegations or cases of scientific misconduct.

The ERC applies the same rigour to ensuring that its evaluation process is governed by principles of research integrity, in particular through rules on confidentiality and conflict of interest.

ERC frontier research grants

Funding rates

Maximum size of grant and grant assessment

The maximum grant varies by grant type.

During the peer review evaluation, evaluation panels will assess the funding requested by the applicant against the needs of the project before making any recommendation for funding. The funding requested must be fully justified by an estimation of the real project cost. The panels may suggest modifications to the indicative budgetary breakdown in the application, particularly where they consider funding requests to be not properly justified. In such cases they shall explain in writing any such suggested modification. The Principal Investigator will have the freedom to modify the budgetary breakdown during the course of the project.

Union Contribution

The Union financial contribution will take the form of the reimbursement of up to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and of flat-rate financing of indirect costs on the basis of 25% of the total eligible direct costs⁷. The level of the

awarded grant represents a maximum overall figure – the final amount to be paid must be justified on the basis of the costs actually incurred for the project.

Call budgets

For the Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant calls an indicative budget will be allocated to each panel in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals.

⁷ Excluding the direct costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the host institution.

Eligibility criteria

Eligible proposals

All proposals must be complete and submitted before the relevant call deadline. A complete proposal entails all parts or sections (see “*Proposal submission and description*” below). Incomplete proposals may be declared ineligible.

The content of the proposal must relate to the objectives and to the grant type set out in the call, as defined in this work programme. A proposal will only be deemed ineligible on grounds of ‘scope’ in clear-cut cases.

Where there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision following an eligibility review committee⁸. If it becomes clear before, during or after the peer review evaluation phase, that one or more of the eligibility criteria has not been met, the proposal will be declared ineligible and not considered any further.

Eligible Scientific Fields

Applications may be made in any field of research⁹.

⁸ For further information see ERC rules for submission and evaluation.

⁹ Research proposals within the scope of Annex I to the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed

Eligible Principal Investigator

The ERC actions are open to researchers of any nationality who intend to conduct their research activity in any Member State or Associated Country. Principal Investigators may be of any age and nationality and may reside in any country in the world at the time of the application. However Principal Investigators funded through the ERC frontier research grants shall spend a minimum percentage of their total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country and a minimum percentage of their total working time on the ERC project (see profiles of Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant Principal Investigators below).

Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant proposals are submitted by the Principal Investigator who has scientific responsibility for the project, on behalf of the host institution. There are specific eligibility criteria for a Principal Investigator applying to the Starting or Consolidator Grants based on the date of award of his/her first PhD (or equivalent

towards nuclear energy applications, shall be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom Framework Programme.

doctoral degree¹⁰) as below. This “streaming” allows applicants to be compared with researchers at a similar career stage.

¹⁰ See ERC Scientific Council's note on 'PhD and Equivalent Doctoral Degrees' at Annex 2, including specific provisions for holders of medical degrees.

	Starting Grant	Consolidator Grant	Advanced Grant
Specific Eligibility Criteria	Principal Investigator shall have been awarded his/her first PhD ≥ 2 and ≤ 7 years prior to 1 January 2016	Principal Investigator shall have been awarded his/her first PhD > 7 and ≤ 12 years prior to 1 January 2016	none

The reference date towards the calculation of the eligibility period should be the date of the actual award according to the national rules in the country where the degree was awarded.

*However, the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD taken into consideration for eligibility can be reduced **in the following properly documented circumstances**.*

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

*For long-term illness¹¹, clinical training or national service the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by the documented amount of leave actually taken by the Principal Investigator for each incident which occurred **after** the PhD award.*

¹¹ Over ninety days for the Principal Investigator or a close family member (child, spouse, parent or sibling).

Eligible Host Institution

The host institution (Applicant Legal Entity¹²) must engage the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the project, as defined in the grant agreement. It must either be established in an EU Member State or Associated Country as a legal entity created under national law, or it may be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) or any other entity created under EU law. Any type of legal entity, public or private, including universities, research organisations and undertakings can host Principal Investigators and their teams.

It is expected that the research project will be implemented within the territory of the Member States or Associated Countries. This does not exclude field work or other research activities in cases where these must necessarily be conducted outside the EU or the Associated Countries in order to achieve the scientific objectives of the project/activity.

It is also expected that the host institution will be the only participating legal entity. However, where they bring scientific added value to the project, additional team members may be hosted by

¹² Please see important information for Principal Investigators, Candidates, Tenderers and Grant Applicants on possible registration of legal entities in the Commission's Early Warning System (EWS) and Central Exclusion Database (CED) on final page.

additional legal entities¹³ which will be eligible for funding, and which may be legal entities established anywhere, including outside the European Union or Associated Countries, or international organisations. Legal entities established outside the European Union or Associated Countries shall be eligible for funding provided that their participation is deemed essential for carrying out the action.

Please also refer to Annex 3 - Countries Associated to Horizon 2020 and Restrictions Applying to Some Legal Entities Established in Certain Third Countries.

Restrictions on submission of proposals

The ERC calls are extremely competitive. Only exceptional proposals are likely to be funded and the number of applications has generally risen faster than the available budget. In order to maintain the quality and integrity of ERC's evaluation process the Scientific Council has therefore applied restrictions on applications since 2009.

The restrictions for submission under the ERC Work Programme 2016 are set out below. The Scientific Council may decide in the light of experience that different restrictions will apply in subsequent years. The restrictions related to the outcome of the evaluation in previous calls are designed to allow unsuccessful Principal

¹³ Consortia agreements are not required for ERC multi-beneficiary grants.

Investigators the time necessary to develop a stronger proposal.

The year of an ERC call for proposals refers to the Work Programme under which the call was made and can be established by its call identifier. A 2015 ERC call for proposals is therefore one that was made

under the Work Programme 2015 and will have 2015 in the call identifier (for example ERC-2015-StG).

Ineligible or withdrawn proposals do not count against any of the following restrictions.

A Principal Investigator may submit proposals to different ERC frontier research grant calls made under the same Work Programme, but only the first eligible proposal will be evaluated.

*A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as **category A** in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programme 2015 may submit a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2016.*

*A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as **category B** at step 2 in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programme 2015 may submit a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2016.*

*A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as **category B** at step 1 in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programme 2015 may not submit a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2016.*

*A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as **category C** in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programmes 2014 or 2015 may not submit a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2016.*

A Principal Investigator whose proposal was rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity in the calls for proposals under Work Programmes 2014 or 2015 may not submit a proposal to the calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2016.

A researcher may participate as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator¹⁴ in only one ERC frontier research project at any one time¹⁵.

¹⁴ Projects with Co-Investigators were supported under the Advanced Grant in ERC Work Programmes from 2008 – 2011. A Co-Investigator was a team-member of the Principal Investigator with particular research responsibilities.

A researcher participating as Principal Investigator in an ERC frontier research project may not submit a proposal for another ERC frontier research grant, unless the existing project ends¹⁶ no more than two years after the call deadline.

A Principal Investigator who is a serving Panel Member for a 2016 ERC call or who served as a Panel Member for a 2014 ERC call may not apply to a 2016 ERC call for the same type of grant¹⁷.

¹⁵ A new frontier research project can only start after the duration of the project fixed in a previous frontier research grant agreement has ended.

¹⁶ According to the duration of the project fixed in the previous frontier research grant agreement.

¹⁷ The members of the ERC panels alternate to allow panel members to apply to the ERC calls in alternate years.

Starting Grant profile

Objectives

ERC Starting Grants are designed to support excellent Principal Investigators at the career stage at which they are starting their own independent research team or programme. Applicant Principal Investigators must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of their scientific proposal.

Size of ERC Starting Grants

Starting Grants may be awarded up to a maximum of **EUR 1 500 000** for a period of **5 years**¹⁸.

However, up to an **additional EUR 500 000** can be requested in the proposal to cover (a) eligible "start-up" costs for Principal Investigators moving to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant and/or (b) the purchase of major equipment and/or (c) access to large facilities¹⁹.

¹⁸ The maximum award is reduced pro rata temporis for projects of a shorter duration. This does not apply to ongoing projects.

¹⁹ As any additional funding is to cover major one-off costs it is not subject to pro-rata temporis reduction for projects of shorter duration. All funding requested is assessed during evaluation.

Profile of the ERC Starting Grant Principal Investigator

The Principal Investigator shall have been awarded their first PhD **at least 2 and up to 7 years prior to 1 January 2016**. The effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD can be reduced in certain properly documented circumstances (see "*Eligible Principal Investigator*" above).

A competitive Starting Grant Principal Investigator must have already shown the potential for research independence and evidence of maturity, for example by having produced **at least one important publication without the participation of their PhD supervisor**. Applicant Principal Investigators should also be able to demonstrate a promising track record of early achievements appropriate to their research field and career stage, including significant publications (as main author) in major international peer-reviewed multidisciplinary scientific journals, or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals of their respective field. They may also demonstrate a record of invited presentations in well-established international conferences, granted patents, awards, prizes etc.

Early achievements track record

In the Track record (see “Proposal description” below) the applicant Principal Investigator should list (if applicable):

- 1. Up to five publications in major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals and/or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals, peer-reviewed conferences proceedings and/or monographs of their respective research fields, highlighting those without the presence as co-author of their PhD supervisor, and the number of citations (excluding self-citations) they have attracted;**
- 2. Research monographs and any translations thereof;**
- 3. Granted patent(s);**
- 4. Invited presentations to peer-reviewed, internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools;**
- 5. Prizes/ Awards/ Academy memberships.**

Expected time commitment of the Starting Grant Principal Investigator

The question of whether the Principal Investigator is strongly committed to the project and demonstrates the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project forms a key part of the evaluation.

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

Principal Investigators shall ensure a sufficient time commitment and presence throughout the course of the project to guarantee its proper execution. The time commitment will be monitored, and in cases where the actual commitment is below the minimum levels set out above, or the levels indicated in the proposal (see proposal description below), appropriate measures may be taken, up to and including reduction of the grant and suspension or termination of grants in accordance with the grant agreement.

Consolidator Grant profile

Objectives

ERC Consolidator Grants are designed to support excellent Principal Investigators at the career stage at which they may still be consolidating their own independent research team or programme. Applicant Principal Investigators must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of their scientific proposal.

Size of ERC Consolidator Grants

Consolidator Grants may be awarded up to a maximum of **EUR 2 000 000** for a period of **5 years**²⁰.

However, up to an **additional EUR 750 000** can be requested in the proposal to cover (a) eligible "start-up" costs for Principal Investigators moving to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant and/or (b) the purchase of major equipment and/or (c) access to large facilities²¹.

²⁰ The maximum award is reduced pro rata temporis for projects of a shorter duration. This does not apply to ongoing projects.

²¹ As any additional funding is to cover major one-off costs it is not subject to pro-rata temporis reduction for projects of shorter duration. All funding requested is assessed during evaluation.

Profile of the ERC Consolidator Grant Principal Investigator

The Principal Investigator shall have been awarded their first PhD **over 7 and up to 12 years prior to 1 January 2016**. The effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD can be reduced in certain properly documented circumstances (see "*Eligible Principal Investigator*" above).

A competitive Consolidator Grant Principal Investigator must have already shown research independence and evidence of maturity, for example by having produced **several important publications without the participation of their PhD supervisor**. Applicant Principal Investigators should also be able to demonstrate a promising track record of early achievements appropriate to their research field and career stage, including significant publications (as main author) in major international peer-reviewed multidisciplinary scientific journals, or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals of their respective field. They may also demonstrate a record of invited presentations in well-established international conferences, granted patents, awards, prizes etc.

Early achievements track record

In the Track Record (see “Proposal description” below) the applicant Principal Investigator should list (if applicable):

- 1. Up to ten publications in major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals and/or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals, peer-reviewed conferences proceedings and/or monographs of their respective research fields, highlighting those without the presence as co-author of their PhD supervisor, and the number of citations (excluding self-citations) they have attracted;**
- 2. Research monographs and any translations thereof;**
- 3. Granted patent(s);**
- 4. Invited presentations to peer-reviewed, internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools;**
- 5. Prizes/ Awards/ Academy memberships.**

Expected time commitment of the Consolidator Grant Principal Investigator

The question of whether the Principal Investigator is strongly committed to the project and demonstrates the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project forms a key part of the evaluation.

Principal Investigators funded through the ERC Consolidator Grants shall spend a minimum of 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country and a minimum of 40% of their total working time on the ERC project.

Principal Investigators shall ensure a sufficient time commitment and presence throughout the course of the project to guarantee its proper execution. The time commitment will be monitored, and in cases where the actual commitment is below the minimum levels set out above, or the levels indicated in the proposal (see proposal description below), appropriate measures may be taken, up to and including reduction of the grant and suspension or termination of grants in accordance with the grant agreement.

Advanced Grant profile

Objectives

Advanced Grants are designed to support excellent Principal Investigators at the career stage at which they are already established research leaders with a recognised track record of research achievements. Applicant Principal Investigators must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of their scientific proposal.

Size of ERC Advanced Grants

Advanced Grants may be awarded up to a maximum of **EUR 2 500 000** for a period of **5 years**²².

However, up to an **additional EUR 1 000 000** can be requested in the proposal to cover (a) eligible "start-up" costs for Principal Investigators moving to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant, and/or (b) the purchase of major equipment and/or (c) access to large facilities²³.

²² The maximum award is reduced pro rata temporis for projects of a shorter duration. This does not apply to ongoing projects.

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

Profile of the ERC Advanced Grant Principal Investigator

ERC Advanced Grant Principal Investigators are expected to be active researchers and to have a track record of significant research achievements **in the last 10 years** which must be presented in the application. There is little prospect of an application succeeding in the absence of such a record, which identifies investigators as exceptional leaders in terms of originality and significance of their research contributions.

Thus, in most fields, Principal Investigators of Advanced Grant proposals will be expected to demonstrate a record of achievements appropriate to the field and at least matching one or more of the following benchmarks:

- 10 publications as senior author (or in those fields where alphabetic order of authorship is the norm, joint author) in major international peer-reviewed multidisciplinary scientific journals, and/or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals and peer-reviewed conferences proceedings of their respective field;
- 3 major research monographs, of which at least one is translated

into another language. This benchmark is relevant to research fields where publication of monographs is the norm (e.g. humanities and social sciences).

Other alternative benchmarks that may be considered (individually or in combination) as indicative of an exceptional record and recognition in the last 10 years:

- 5 granted patents;
- 10 invited presentations in well-established internationally organised conferences and advanced schools;
- 3 research expeditions led by the applicant Principal Investigator;
- 3 well-established international conferences or congresses where the applicant was involved in their organisation as a member of the

steering and/or organising committee;

- International recognition through scientific or artistic prizes/awards or membership in well-regarded Academies or artefact with documented use (for example, architectural or engineering design, methods or tools);
- Major contributions to launching the careers of outstanding researchers;
- Recognised leadership in industrial innovation.

Ten-year track record

In the Track Record (see “Proposal description” below) the applicant Principal Investigator should list (if applicable):

1. Up to ten representative publications, from the last ten years, as main author (or in those fields where alphabetic order of authorship is the norm, joint author) in major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals and/or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals and peer-reviewed conferences proceedings of their respective research fields, also indicating the number of citations (excluding self-citations) they have attracted;

2. Research monographs and any translations thereof;

3. Granted patents;

4. Invited presentations to peer-reviewed, internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools;

5. **Research expeditions** that the applicant Principal Investigator has led;
6. Organisation of **international conferences** in the field of the applicant (membership in the steering and/or organising committee);
7. **Prizes/ Awards/ Academy memberships**;
8. **Major contributions to the early careers of excellent researchers**;
9. **Examples of leadership in industrial innovation or design.**

If a Principal Investigator so chooses, their achievements over a longer period than the past ten years can be considered in the following circumstances which should be highlighted in the CV.

For maternity, the track record considered can be extended by 18 months for each child born **before or during** the last ten years. For paternity, the track record considered can be extended by the documented amount of paternity leave actually taken for each child born **before or during** the last ten years. For long-term illness²⁴, clinical qualification or national service the track record considered can be extended by the amount of leave actually taken by the Principal Investigator and clearly explained in the career break section of their CV for each incident which occurred **during** the last ten years.

Expected time commitment of the Advanced Grant Principal Investigator

The question of whether the Principal Investigator demonstrates the level of

commitment to the project necessary for its execution and demonstrates the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project forms a key part of the evaluation.

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

Principal Investigators shall ensure a sufficient time commitment and presence throughout the course of the project to guarantee its proper execution. The time commitment will be monitored, and in cases where the actual commitment is below the minimum levels set out above, or the levels indicated in the proposal (see proposal description below), appropriate measures may be taken, up to and including reduction of the grant and suspension or termination of grants in accordance with the grant agreement.

²⁴ Over ninety days for the Principal Investigator or a close family member (child, spouse, parent or sibling)

Proposal submission and description

Proposal Submission

Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant proposals are submitted by the Principal Investigator who has scientific responsibility for the project, on behalf of the host institution.

*Proposal submission is made electronically. **Early registration and submission is strongly recommended and should be done as early as possible in advance of the call deadline.***

For each call, Information for Applicants²⁵ is published on the ERC website and Participants Portal, which describes in detail how the electronic forms should be completed.

Proposal description

A complete proposal shall consist of the following elements²⁶.

Extended Synopsis: 5 pages

Curriculum Vitae: 2 pages

Track Record: 2 pages

²⁵ As well as other relevant documents, including the ERC Rules for submission and evaluation.

²⁶ Incomplete proposals may be declared ineligible, see "Eligibility criteria" above.

Scientific Proposal: 15 pages

Host Institution Binding Statement of Support

Ethics Review Table

PhD record and supporting documentation for eligibility checking (for Starting and Consolidator Grants only).

The host institution must confirm its association with and its support to the project and the Principal Investigator. As part of the application, the institution must provide a binding statement that the conditions of independence are already fulfilled or will be provided to the Principal Investigator if the application is successful, according to the template provided in the Information for Applicants. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement may be declared ineligible.

*In fairness to all applicants, **these page limits will be applied strictly.** Only the material that is presented within these limits will be evaluated (peer reviewers will only be asked, and will be under no obligation to read beyond, the material presented within the page limits).*

Extended Synopsis: This should be a concise presentation of the full scientific proposal, with particular attention to the ground-breaking nature of the research project and the feasibility of the outlined scientific approach. At step 1 the full scientific proposal is not assessed so all essential information must be covered in the synopsis. The applicant will choose a primary evaluation panel and may also indicate a secondary evaluation panel. He/she should indicate when they believe that their proposal is of a cross-panel or cross-domain nature.

Curriculum Vitae: The CV should include the standard academic and research record as well as a succinct "funding ID" which must specify any current research grants and their subject, and any on-going application for work related to the proposal. Any research career gaps and/or unconventional paths should be clearly

explained so that they can be fairly assessed by the evaluation panels.

Track Record: The Principal Investigator must provide a list of achievements reflecting their track record. The type of achievements expected for Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant applicant Principal Investigators are set out in the relevant profiles above.

Scientific Proposal: Description of the scientific and technical aspects of the project, demonstrating the ground-breaking nature of the research, its potential impact and research methodology. The proposal will also need to clearly specify the percentage of the applicant's total working time that will be spent in the EU or an Associated Country and the percentage of the applicant's total working time that will be devoted to the project, as well as a full estimation of the real project cost.

*Applications where the Principal Investigator proposes to commit less time in the EU or an Associated Country or to the project than the minimum percentages set out under the profiles of Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant Principal Investigators above **will be declared ineligible.***

Evaluation procedure and criteria

Evaluation procedure

A **single submission of the full proposal** will be followed by a **two-step evaluation**.

The evaluation will be conducted by means of a structure of high level peer review panels as listed in Annex 1. The panels may be assisted by independent experts working remotely.

Applicant Principal Investigators can request during the electronic proposal submission that up to three specific persons should not act as an evaluator in the evaluation of their proposal²⁷.

At step 1, the extended synopsis and the Principal Investigator's track record and CV will be assessed (and **not** the full scientific proposal). **At step 2** the complete version of the retained proposals will be assessed (including the full scientific proposal).

The allocation of the proposals to the various panels will be based on the expressed preference of the applicant Principal Investigator (see "*Proposal description*" above). Proposals may be allocated to a different panel with the agreement of both Panel Chairs concerned.

The panel to which a proposal is allocated may request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional remote experts.

*The ERC strongly encourages **multi- and inter-disciplinary research proposals**. Proposals of this type are evaluated by ERC's regular panels with the appropriate external expertise.*

Proposals will be retained for step 2 based on the outcome of the evaluation at step 1 (see below) and a budgetary cut-off level of three times the panel's indicative budget.

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

²⁷ The persons identified may be excluded from the evaluation of the proposal concerned, as long as it remains possible to have the proposal evaluated.

Evaluation criteria

For all ERC frontier research grants, **excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation**. It will be applied in conjunction to the evaluation of both: the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of the research project; and the intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment of the Principal Investigator.

During the evaluation, the phase of the Principal Investigator's transition to independence, possible breaks in the research career of the applicant and/or unconventional research career paths should be taken into account. Benchmarks set in the relevant profiles above including the expected minimum working times to be spent in the EU or an Associated Country and on the ERC project, will also be taken into consideration.

In general, projects wholly or largely consisting in the collation and compilation of existing material in new databases, editions or collections are unlikely to constitute ground-breaking or "frontier" research in themselves, however useful such resources might be to subsequent original research. Such projects are therefore unlikely to be recommended for funding by the ERC's panels.

Plagiarism detection software may be used to analyse proposals submitted to the ERC.

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

1. Research Project

Ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility

Starting, Consolidator and Advanced

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project

To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?

To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development across disciplines)?

To what extent is the proposed research high risk/high gain?

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)?

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

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

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

2. Principal Investigator

Intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment

Starting and Consolidator

Intellectual capacity and creativity

To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to propose and conduct ground-breaking research?

To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking?

To what extent have the achievements of the PI typically gone beyond the state of the art?

Commitment

To what extent does the PI demonstrate the level of commitment to the project necessary for its execution and the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project (min 50% for Starting and 40% for Consolidator of the total working time on it and min 50% in an EU Member State or Associated Country) (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?

Advanced

Intellectual capacity and creativity

To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to propose and conduct ground-breaking research?

To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking?

To what extent have the achievements of the PI typically gone beyond the state of the art?

To what extent has the PI demonstrated sound leadership in the training and advancement of young scientists?

Commitment

To what extent does the PI demonstrate the level of commitment to the project necessary for its execution and the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project (min 30% of the total working time on it and min 50% in an EU Member State or Associated Country) (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?

Outcome of evaluation

At each evaluation step, each proposal will be evaluated and marked for each of the two main elements of the proposal: the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of the research project; and the intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment of the Principal Investigator.

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

At the end of **step 1** of the evaluation applicants will be informed that their proposal:

- A.** is of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;
- B.** is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to step 2 of the evaluation;
- C.** is not of sufficient quality to pass to step 2 of the evaluation.

At the end of **step 2** of the evaluation applicants will be informed that their proposal:

- A.** fully meets the ERC's excellence criterion and is recommended for

funding **if sufficient funds are available;**

- B.** meets some but not all elements of the ERC's excellence criterion and will not be funded.

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

Projects recommended for funding will be funded by the ERC if sufficient funds are available. Proposals will be funded in priority order based on their rank.

Applicants may also 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 (for 2016 calls see restrictions on submission of proposals under “Eligibility criteria” above).

Proof of Concept grants

**for Principal Investigators of
ERC frontier research grants**

Objectives

Frontier research often generates unexpected or new opportunities for commercial or societal application. The ERC Proof of Concept Grants aim to maximise the value of the excellent research that the ERC funds, by funding further work (i.e. activities which were not scheduled to be funded by the original ERC frontier research grant) to verify the innovation potential of ideas arising from ERC funded projects. Proof of Concept Grants are therefore on offer only to Principal Investigators whose proposals draw substantially on their ERC funded research.

Ethical Principles

All proposals will be subject to ethics review as with proposals for the ERC's frontier research grants.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible Principal Investigator

All Principal Investigators in an ERC frontier research project, that is either on going or has ended²⁸ less than 12 months before the opening date of this call, are eligible to participate and apply for an ERC Proof of Concept Grant.

A Principal Investigator whose proposal was rejected on the grounds of a breach of

²⁸ Where the duration of the project fixed in the ERC Grant Agreement has ended.

research integrity in the calls for proposals under Work Programmes 2014 or 2015 may not submit a proposal to the calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2016.

Eligible projects

All proposals must be complete and be submitted before the relevant call deadline. Incomplete proposals may be declared ineligible.

The content of the proposal must relate to the objectives and to the grant type set out in the call, as defined in this work programme. A proposal will only be deemed ineligible on grounds of 'scope' in clear-cut cases.

Where there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision following an eligibility review committee. If it becomes clear before, during or after the peer review evaluation phase, that one or more of the eligibility criteria has not been met, the proposal will be declared ineligible and not considered any further.

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

More than one Proof of Concept Grant may be awarded per ERC funded frontier research project but only one Proof of Concept project may be running at any

one time for the same ERC frontier research project²⁹.

Eligible Host Institution

The host institution (Applicant Legal Entity³⁰) must engage the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the proof of concept project as defined in the grant agreement and must be established in a Member State or an Associated Country³¹.

Please also refer to Annex 3 - Countries Associated to Horizon 2020 and Restrictions Applying to Some Legal Entities Established in Certain Third Countries.

Maximum size of grant and grant assessment

The financial contribution will be up to a maximum of **EUR 150 000** for a period of **18 months**. The ERC expects that normally, proof of concept projects should be completed within 12 months. However, to allow for those projects that require

²⁹ This limit also applies to Synergy projects.

³⁰ Please see important information for Principal Investigators, Candidates, Tenderers and Grant Applicants on possible registration of legal entities in the Commission's Early Warning System (EWS) and Central Exclusion Database (CED) on final page.

³¹ It may also be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), or an entity created under EU law. Any type of legal entity, public or private, including universities, research organisations as well as undertakings can host the Principal Investigator and his/her team.

more preparation time, projects will be signed for 18 months. Given this initial flexibility, extensions of the duration of proof of concept projects may be granted only exceptionally.

The overall level of the funding offered will be assessed during the evaluation. The funding requested by the applicant will be judged against the needs of the proposed activity before award. The funding requested by the Principal Investigator must be fully justified by an estimation of the actual costs for the proposed activities.

The Union financial contribution will take the form of the reimbursement of up to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and of flat-rate financing of indirect costs on the basis of 25% of the total eligible direct costs³². The level of the awarded grant represents a maximum overall figure – the final amount to be paid must be justified on the basis of the costs actually incurred for the project.

The indicative budget for this call for 2016 is **EUR 20 000 000** (approximately one-third of which will be for each of the three evaluation rounds following three specific deadlines - proposals submitted before each cut-off date will be evaluated with the proposals submitted before the same cut-off date).

³² Excluding the direct costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the host institution.

ERC Proof of Concept Grant proposal submission and description

Proposal Submission

Funding for the Proof of Concept Grant will be awarded through a call for proposals. Proposals are submitted by a single Principal Investigator, who has responsibility for the proposed activities, on behalf of the host institution which is the applicant legal entity.

Applications can be submitted at any time from the opening date of the call until the final deadline and will be evaluated and selected in three rounds, based on three specific deadlines. A Principal Investigator may submit only one application per call.

*Proposal submission is made electronically. **Early registration and submission is strongly recommended and should be done as early as possible in advance of the call deadline.***

Proposal description

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

- A short **description of the idea** to be taken to proof of concept. This should include an indication of the ERC-funded project from which the idea is substantially drawn and briefly demonstrate the relation

between the idea and the ERC-funded project in question.

- Outline the **innovation potential** of the idea to be taken to proof of concept. This should include a clear description of how the proof of concept activities will lead to a commercial or social innovation.
- Outline the **economic and/or societal impact** expected from the project, including the identification of customer and societal benefits; definition of the process to be followed leading to concrete application; initial steps of analysis of the advantages of the project's outcomes over existing products, policies, or processes; and, where applicable, brief explanation of the activities to be undertaken in terms of clarification of IPR position and strategy, testing in real world contexts, plans for contacts with commercial and/or societal partners.
- Outline a reasonable and plausible **plan of the activities** proposed for establishing the feasibility of the project, including a list of requested resources necessary for the implementation of the proposed project and a full estimation of the real project cost.
- **Ethics Review** table.

*In fairness to all applicants a **strict limit of seven pages** will be applied to the length of proposals. Only the material that is presented within this limit will be evaluated (peer reviewers will only be asked to evaluate, and will be under no obligation to read beyond, the material presented within the page limit).*

ERC Proof of Concept Grant evaluation

A single-stage submission and single-step evaluation procedure will be used. The evaluation will be conducted by independent experts. These experts may work remotely and may if necessary meet as an evaluation panel as set out below on the application of the evaluation criteria.

Evaluation criteria

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

The activities to be funded shall draw substantially on this scientifically excellent ERC-funded research. However the additional funding is not aimed at extending the original research or predominantly concerned with overcoming obstacles to practical application.

The funding will cover activities at the very early stage of turning research outputs into a commercial or socially valuable proposition, i.e. the initial steps of pre-competitive development.

Proof of Concept Grants are not ERC frontier research grants and may be evaluated against other evaluation criteria than excellence. The evaluation criteria for selection of proposals for Proof of Concept Grants are excellence, impact and quality and efficiency of the implementation as below:

1. Excellence (Innovation potential)

Does the proposed proof of concept activity greatly help move the output of research towards the initial steps of a process leading to a commercial or social innovation?

2. Impact

2.1 Is the project to be taken to proof of concept expected to generate economic and/or societal benefits which are appropriately identified in the proposal?

2.2 Does the proposal indicate a suitable process that is designed to result in a concrete application, including outlining a process of commercialisation or a process of generating social benefits?

The proposal should include:

- plans for the analysis of whether the project's outcomes are innovative or distinctive compared to existing solutions;*
- plans for seeking confirmation of the actual effectiveness of the project's results;*
- plans to clarify the IPR position and strategy³³;*
- plans for setting up contacts with industry partners, societal organisations or potential 'end users' of the projects' results.*

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Quality of the proof of concept plan)

Does the proposal provide a reasonable and acceptable plan of activities against clearly identified objectives and towards establishing the feasibility of the project?

This should include:

- a sound project-management plan, including appropriate risk and contingency planning;*
- demonstration that the activities will be conducted by persons well qualified for the purpose;*
- demonstration that the budget requested is necessary for the implementation of the project and properly justified.*

³³ Any application for funding of IPR activities under the ERC Proof of Concept will not discharge beneficiaries from their prior obligations under their pre-existing ERC Grant Agreement in respect of protecting IPR capable of industrial or commercial application. If any foreground was potentially protectable in the pre-existing ERC project, beneficiaries had the legal obligation to seek for adequate and effective protection according to the Rules for Participation and the ERC Model Grant Agreement.

Outcome of evaluation

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

In order to be considered for funding, proposals will have to be awarded a pass mark by a majority of peer reviewers on each of the three evaluation criteria. A proposal which fails one or more of the criteria will not be ranked and will not be funded.

If there is not enough budget to fund all the proposals which pass all three evaluation criteria, those proposals which pass all three evaluation criteria will be ranked according to the marks which they received from peer reviewers sorted by the order in which the evaluation criteria appear above. Proposals will be funded in order of this ranking.

If necessary, the peer reviewers will meet as an evaluation panel in order to determine a priority order for proposals which have the same ranking.

Other actions

The different actions described in this chapter aim to allow the Scientific Council of the ERC to carry out its duties and mandate, including its obligations to establish the ERC's overall strategy and to monitor and quality control the programme's implementation from the scientific perspective.

Support to programme monitoring, and evaluation

1. Qualitative evaluation of frontier nature of ERC funded research

The ERC will continue the work started under Work Programme 2015 to analyse the scientific output of its funded projects with a particular focus on the frontier nature of the research, and any potential research breakthroughs and discoveries. During this analysis the ERC will be assisted by experts.

Type of action: Experts.

Indicative budget: EUR 400 000 from the 2016 budget.

2. Support for evaluation of Proof of Concept Grant

The ERC will analyse the first four years of the Proof of Concept Grant. During this analysis the ERC will be assisted by experts.

Type of action: Experts.

Indicative budget: EUR 130 000 from the 2016 budget.

3. Follow-up study on ERC impact

The ERC will launch one new study in order to deepen the understanding of the impact of ERC funding on advancing the careers of the ERC Principal Investigators and their teams, with a focus on younger researchers.

Type of action: Public procurement.

Indicative timeline: First quarter of 2016.

Indicative budget: EUR 250 000 from the 2016 budget.

Support to Open Access

4. Study on open access, research data management and sharing within ERC projects

In the context of the new legal framework for open access under Horizon 2020 and the increasing emphasis on open access to research data, the ERC would like to understand better current attitudes and practices among ERC funded researchers to:

- the provision of open access to publications;
- research data management and sharing.

The study will aim to identify common obstacles in these two areas, the associated costs, as well as the support available to researchers, in particular at the level of ERC host institutions. The study will need to take into account in

particular the different approaches in different scientific disciplines.

The outcomes of the study will provide evidence for the further development of the ERC Scientific Council's strategy to encourage and support open access to the published output of research and responsible research data management and sharing by the researchers it funds.

Up to two contracts will be awarded.

Type of action: Public procurement.

Indicative timeline: First quarter of 2016.

Indicative budget: EUR 500 000 from the 2016 budget.

Support to widening participation to the ERC calls

5. NCP project on strengthening competitiveness in ERC calls

The ERC wishes to strengthen national and local support to potential ERC applicants, in particular to those from countries with weak participation in the ERC programme.

Support will be given to a consortium of formally nominated ERC National Contact Points (NCPs) with a view to identifying and sharing good NCP practices and raising the general standard of support to ERC applicants, taking into account the diversity of actors and experiences.

The activities will be tailored to harmonise the quality of the services provided between the more and less experienced NCPs and level the quality of support provided to ERC applicants between more

and less competitive countries in the ERC's calls.

Various activities may be included, such as joint workshops, coaching, twinning/tripling, webinars and other IT tools and fora for enhanced cross-border brokerage events, training sessions and organisation of workshops/meetings.

An integral part of the project will be the organisation of transnational workshops for coaching potential ERC applicants with all stakeholders involved in the ERC application process, and the provision of support for dedicated local ERC stakeholder events. The travel and subsistence expenses of participants should be covered for both types of event.

Special attention will be given to enhancing the competence and capacity-building of ERC NCPs, including helping less experienced NCPs rapidly acquire the know-how accumulated in other countries. Building up cooperation with other relevant stakeholder networks to increase the support to potential ERC applicants will also be encouraged.

The focus throughout should be on issues specific to the ERC and should not overlap with actions foreseen in other NCP networks.

The actions shall be implemented under the guidance of a group comprising representatives of the NCP project, of the ERC Working Group on Widening European Participation and of the ERCEA.

Additional eligibility criterion

Only ERC NCPs host organisations which have been officially appointed by the relevant national authorities are eligible to participate in and receive funding for this action.

The evaluation of the potential impact of the project will take into account in particular whether the consortium has a good representation of NCPs from more and less competitive countries in the ERC's calls.

Submission of a single proposal is encouraged.

The maximum duration of the project shall be for 36 months.

Type of action: *Call for proposals.*

Indicative timeline: *opening date 6 October 2015; deadline 7 January 2016; date to inform applicants 15 March 2016; indicative date for signature of grant agreement 15 July 2016.*

Indicative budget: *EUR 850 000 from the 2016 budget.*

Support to the ERC Scientific Council

6. ERC Scientific Council Standing Identification Committee

Future members of the Scientific Council shall be appointed by the Commission following an independent and transparent procedure for their identification agreed with the Scientific Council, including a consultation of the scientific community

and a report to the European Parliament and the Council. For this purpose, a high level standing Identification Committee of independent experts has been set up as an expert group with honoraria of EUR 450 per day charged to the operational budget allocated to the ERC.

Type of action: *Experts. This activity will be directly implemented by the Commission services (DG RTD).*

Indicative budget: *EUR 50 000 from the 2016 budget.*

7. Support to the Vice-Chairs

Support will be provided to the three Vice-Chairs of the Scientific Council to ensure adequate local administrative assistance at their home institutes for their tasks of assisting the President of the ERC in representing the ERC and organising its work. For this purpose, the ERC Executive Agency will provide a grant to an identified beneficiary.

Type of action: *Grant to an identified beneficiary.*

Legal entity: *Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Plaça de la Mercè 10-12, Barcelona, 08002, Spain.*

Indicative budget: *EUR 300 000 from the 2016 budget.*

8. Honoraria and meeting expenses for Scientific Council members

In recognition of their personal commitment, the Scientific Council members shall be compensated for the tasks they perform by means of an honorarium for their attendance at

Scientific Council plenary meetings, reflecting their responsibilities and benchmarked against similar provisions in similar entities and Member States. The honoraria and those travel and subsistence expenses related to the performance of tasks of the Scientific Council shall be charged to the operational budget allocated to the ERC.

Type of action: Experts.

Indicative budget: EUR 555 000 from the 2016 budget.

Union Contribution

The Union financial contribution will take the form of the reimbursement of up to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and of flat-rate financing of indirect costs on the basis of 25% of the total eligible direct costs³⁴. The level of the awarded grant represents a maximum overall figure – the final amount to be paid must be justified on the basis of the costs actually incurred for the project.

Proposal Evaluation

Proposals for grants under this part will be evaluated as follows.

Eligibility Criteria

Proposals under this part must be focused on requirements specified in the work programme and/or call for proposals.

³⁴ Excluding the direct costs for subcontracting, the costs for financial support to third parties and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the host institution.

Actions under this part are open to legal entities³⁵ established in a Member State or an Associated Country as a legal entity created under national law, International European Interest Organisations (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) or an entity created under EU law. Legal entities established in countries outside the EU or Associated Countries and international organisations are also eligible.

Please also refer to Annex 3 - Countries Associated to Horizon 2020 and Restrictions Applying to Some Legal Entities Established in Certain Third Countries.

All proposals must be complete and be submitted before the relevant deadline. A complete proposal entails all requested elements. Incomplete proposals may be declared ineligible.

The content of the proposal must relate to the objectives of the grant and/or call for proposals, as defined in this work programme and/or call. A proposal will only be deemed ineligible on grounds of 'scope' in clear-cut cases.

Where there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, the evaluation may proceed pending a decision following an eligibility review committee. If it becomes clear

³⁵ Please see important information for Principal Investigators, Candidates, Tenderers and Grant Applicants on possible registration of legal entities in the Commission's Early Warning System (EWS) and Central Exclusion Database (CED) on final page.

before, during or after the evaluation phase, that one or more of the eligibility criteria has not been met, the proposal

will be declared ineligible and not considered any further.

Evaluation Criteria

1. Excellence

Are the objectives of the proposed project consistent with the requirements specified in the work programme and/or call for proposals? Do they, where appropriate, correspond to, or go beyond, best current practice?

2. Impact

Will the project have a substantial impact in the context of the ERC objectives?

3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation

Is the proposed methodology and work plan effective in reaching the goals of the project? Do they ensure the highest quality and/or utility of results?

Application of Evaluation Criteria

Each evaluation criterion will be marked on a scale of 0 to 5 and an overall quality threshold of 80% will be used to establish the retained list of proposals which will be ranked in order of priority for funding.

Budget

	<i>2016 budget in EUR million (rounded)</i>
Main Calls	
ERC-2016-StG	485
ERC-2016-CoG	605
ERC-2016-AdG	540
ERC-2016-PoC	20
Other Actions	
Experts ³⁶	15.12
Grants to identified beneficiaries	0.3
Other calls for proposals	0.85
Public procurements	0.75
Estimated total budget	1 667.02

³⁶ EUR 13.98 million of this amount correspond to the cost of experts involved in the evaluation of proposals.

The budget amounts for 2016 are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the draft budget for 2016 after the adoption of the budget for 2016 by the budgetary authority or if the budget is not adopted as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths.

Budgetary figures given in this work programme are indicative. Unless otherwise stated, final budgets may vary following the evaluation of proposals. The final figures may vary by up to 20% with respect to those indicated in this work programme for the following budgeted activities:

- Total expenditure for each call for proposals;

- Any repartition of the call budget within a call, up to 20% of the total expenditure of the call;
- Evaluation and monitoring, up to 20% of the total expenditure for all these activities;
- Each other individual action not implemented through calls for proposals.

If additional credits become available the Scientific Council shall set the rules by which they will be allocated to the calls based on a judgement of the scientific need, number of applications and predicted success rates of the calls.

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

Annexes

Annex 1

Primary panel structure and description

Physical Sciences & Engineering

PE1 Mathematics

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

PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter

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

PE3 Condensed Matter Physics

Structure, electronic properties, fluids, nanosciences, biophysics.

PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences

Analytical chemistry, chemical theory, physical chemistry/chemical physics.

PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials

Materials synthesis, structure-properties relations, functional and advanced materials, molecular architecture, organic chemistry.

PE6 Computer Science and Informatics

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

PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering

Electrical, electronic, communication, optical and systems engineering.

PE8 Products and Processes Engineering

Product design, process design and control, construction methods, civil engineering, energy processes, material engineering.

PE9 Universe Sciences

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

PE10 Earth System Science

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

Life Sciences

LS1 Molecular and Structural Biology and Biochemistry

Molecular synthesis, modification and interaction, biochemistry, biophysics, structural biology, metabolism, signal transduction.

LS2 Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics and Systems Biology

Molecular and population genetics, genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics, metabolomics, bioinformatics, computational biology, biostatistics, biological modelling and simulation, systems biology, genetic epidemiology.

LS3 Cellular and Developmental Biology

Cell biology, cell physiology, signal transduction, organogenesis, developmental genetics, pattern formation in plants and animals, stem cell biology.

LS4 Physiology, Pathophysiology and Endocrinology

Organ physiology, pathophysiology, endocrinology, metabolism, ageing, tumorigenesis, cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome.

LS5 Neurosciences and Neural Disorders

Neurobiology, neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, neurochemistry, neuropharmacology, neuroimaging, systems neuroscience, neurological and psychiatric disorders.

LS6 Immunity and Infection

The immune system and related disorders, infectious agents and diseases, prevention and treatment of infection.

LS7 Diagnostic Tools, Therapies and Public Health

Aetiology, diagnosis and treatment of disease, public health, epidemiology, pharmacology, clinical medicine, regenerative medicine, medical ethics.

LS8 Evolutionary, Population and Environmental Biology

Evolution, ecology, animal behaviour, population biology, biodiversity, biogeography, marine biology, eco-toxicology, microbial ecology.

LS9 Applied Life Sciences and Non-Medical Biotechnology

Applied plant and animal sciences, food sciences, forestry, industrial, environmental and non-medical biotechnologies, bioengineering, synthetic and chemical biology, biomimetics, bioremediation.

Social Sciences & Humanities

SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations

Economics, finance and management.

SH2 Institutions, Values, Environment and Space

Political science, law, sustainability science, geography, regional studies and planning.

SH3 The Social World, Diversity, Population

Sociology, social psychology, demography, education, communication.

SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity

Cognitive science, psychology, linguistics, philosophy of mind.

SH5 Cultures and Cultural Production

Literature, philology, cultural studies, anthropology, study of the arts, philosophy.

SH6 The Study of the Human Past

Archaeology and history.

Annex 2

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 been awarded a PhD or equivalent doctoral degree. First-professional degrees will not be considered in themselves as PhD-equivalent, even if recipients carry the title "Doctor". See below for further guidelines on PhD degree equivalency.

2. PhD Degrees

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

3. Independent research

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

4. Degrees equivalent to the PhD:

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

- EURYDICE: "Examinations, qualifications and titles - Second edition, Volume 1, European glossary on education" published in 2004³⁷. Please note that some titles that belong to the same

³⁷

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

category with doctoral degrees (ISCED 6) may correspond to the intermediate steps towards the completion of doctoral education and they should not be therefore considered as PhD-equivalent.

- 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)³⁸.

5. First Professional Degrees (for medical doctors 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. Medical Doctors (or applicants holding a degree in medicine):

For medical doctors (or applicants holding a degree in medicine), **a medical doctor degree will not be accepted by itself as equivalent to a PhD award**. To be considered an eligible Principal Investigator, medical doctors (or applicants holding a degree in medicine)

need to provide the certificates of **both a medical doctor 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 doctor degree completion plus two years is the time reference for calculation of the eligibility time-window (i.e. 4 - 9 years past the medical doctor degree for Starters, and over 9 - 14 years past the medical doctor degree for Consolidators).

For medical doctors who have been awarded both an MD and a PhD, **the date of the earliest degree that makes the applicant eligible** takes precedence in the calculation of the eligibility time-window (2 - 7 years after PhD or 4 - 9 years past the medical doctor degree for Starters, and over 7 - 12 years after PhD or 9 - 14 years past the medical doctor degree for Consolidators)

38

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

Annex 3

Countries Associated to Horizon 2020 and Restrictions Applying to Some Legal Entities Established in Certain Third Countries

Please check the online manual for up-to-date information on the current position for Associated Countries³⁹.

The eligibility criteria formulated in Commission notice Nr. 2013/C 205/05⁴⁰ shall apply for all actions under this Work Programme.

Some entities from third countries are covered by the Council sanctions in place and are not eligible to participate in Union programmes. Please see: the consolidated list of persons, groups and entities subject to EU financial sanctions⁴¹.

Given that the EU does not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, legal persons established in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea or the city of Sevastopol are not eligible to participate in any capacity. This criterion also applies in cases where the respective action involves financial support given by grant beneficiaries to third parties established in the Autonomous Republic

of Crimea or the city of Sevastopol in accordance with Article 137 of the EU's Financial Regulation. Should the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol end, this Work Programme shall be revised.

³⁹

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/international-cooperation_en.htm

⁴⁰ OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp.9-11.

⁴¹

http://eeas.europa.eu/cfsp/sanctions/consolidated_en.htm.

Prior Information of Principal Investigators, Candidates, Tenderers, Grant Applicants and remunerated experts - registration of warnings in the Commission's Early Warning System (EWS) and Central Exclusion Database (CED).

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

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

Commission Decision of 13.11.2014 (2014/792/EU) on the Early Warning System (EWS) to be used by authorising officers of the Commission and by the executive agencies (OJ L 329, 14.11.2014, p. 68); or

Commission Regulation of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database – CED (OJ L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 12);

their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the EWS only or both in the EWS and CED, and communicated to the persons and entities listed in the above-mentioned Decision and Regulation, in relation to the award or the execution of a procurement contract, expert contract or a grant agreement.