

ERC info sessions for Widening European Participation

Q&A session: pending replies

Applying for an ERC grant: how to prepare your application

Regarding the eligibility of ERC Starting Grant in 2025 - I completed my PhD defence on 17th Aug 2018 (so 6 years and 6 months until today) and received the degree on 3rd Nov 2018. Can you please let me know if I'm eligible for the grant?	The Starting Grant call opening in 2025 is Starting Grant 2026 call. The ERC 2026 Work Programme has not been published yet. However, assuming the rules for eligibility remain the same as for the Work Programme 2025, to be eligible for the Starting Grant 2026 call, an applicant would need to have a PhD defence date between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2023. With a PhD defence on 17 August 2018, you would need to justify at least 137 days of extension to be eligible for the call. You can find the reasons for extensions to the 2025 calls in the Work Programme 2025, page 24.
What is asked or needs to be prepared for the interviews?	The ERC Executive Agency will send out full instructions to the applicants for the interview. The instructions indicate the type and length of presentation expected and the overall length of the interview.
Have a patent as project supporting is useful?	It depends on the patent. It can be very useful and a big plus if it does not take away the novelty of the research proposal. If the panel considers that the work has already been performed, their enthusiasm might decrease. However, a patent of an idea can be very useful in supporting the proposal hypothesis.
These online info sessions are very useful, but usually focus on individual grants. Will there be a similar event dedicated to Synergy grants? It would be appreciated.	Whilst no dates are currently announced, the ERCEA may hold an info session on Synergy grants in the course of the year. You can also contact the ERC National Contact Point in your country to see if they plan to organise one.
Do the panels differ from StG to CoG?	Yes, the panel members are different, but the panel descriptors setting out the areas of research covered by the panel are the same.
Do ERC proposals primarily emphasize the fundamentals of a field rather than its social relevance?	ERC projects are not required to have societal impact, but of course it is appreciated if they do. Due to its bottom-up nature, it is up to the PI to choose where to put the emphasis, either on the social relevance or the fundamentals of the field. Both are legitimate.
The abstract and the synopsis in B1, should they be treated as completely separate, or will everyone always be reading both? i.e. should we be repeating information from the abstract in the synopsis, or not?	The abstract and synopsis in B1 are two separate items and the panel has access to both. There is no need to repeat it. However, it might be useful to put a short introduction in part B1 to remind the reader about the key information from the abstract.
What panel would you recommend for epidemiology or public health research?	We always advise applicants to look at the extensive descriptors associated with each ERC panel and see where they believe their proposal is best fitted. The panel details and ERC keywords are listed in the information for applicants document (Annex 4.1). Furthermore, on the ERC Dashboard one can search by panel to see what kind of proposals are funded in a given panel.

Are the years after PHD exactly as they are given? That is, with 10 years after PHD, can one apply to the StG?	The eligibility window for Starting Grants is 2-7 years after the PhD. However, the eligibility window can be extended for reasons such as maternity, paternity, illness, national service, training, natural disasters, or asylum. Check out the ERC Work Programme for the specific rules on eligibility criteria as well as the Parental leave page.
If my proposal is rejected, can I apply for the next call (a year later)?	Applicants may be subject to restrictions on submitting proposals to future ERC calls based on the outcome of the evaluation. They need to check the restrictions in place for each call in the admissibility and eligibility criteria section in the ERC Work Programme .
How much shadow of the supervisor on the track record of the PI can affect the application positively or negatively?	Applicants are expected to have a certain degree of independence, or potential for independence (if still at an early career stage). As such, a significant presence of the PhD/postdocs supervisor in the ideas/publications/research achievements might cast some doubts on how much the applicant is able to run their own research endeavour.
What about choosing a Panel/sub panel that can understand your value as scientist even if the project topic does not 100% fit into panel?	Panels are instructed to give more weight to the scientific project rather than the PI. For this reason, in principle you should aim at choosing the panel that you consider might best appreciate your idea, rather than your track record.
Please where could I find instructions to be able to prepare for the second round of the competition in front of the ERC jury? Or a video on YouTube from this second round? Thank you for your reply.	You can contact the ERC National Contact Point in your country. You can also watch this video .
Is funding equally distributed across all fields, or is there less available for disciplines like social sciences?	Each call budget is divided across all panels in accordance with the budgetary value of the proposals submitted to each panel. As a consequence, the success rate in each panel is the same.
I completed my PhD in October 2017 and have had one childbirth. Am I eligible to apply for Starting Grant?	The ERC 2026 Work Programme has not been published yet. However, assuming the rules for eligibility remain the same as for Work Programme 2025, to be eligible for the Starting Grant 2026 call, an applicant would need to have a PhD defence date between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2023. With a PhD defence in October 2017, you would need 15 months of extension to be eligible for the call. The ERC grants 18 months of extension per child born before or after the defence of the PhD. Hence, with one child you would be eligible for the Starting 2026 call. Check out the ERC Work Programme for the specific rules on eligibility criteria.
How is the evaluation process handled, when an applicant (PI) works at the same department as one of the members of the evaluation panel they apply in?	In any such case, the panel member declares a conflict of interest. The panel member is then required to leave the room during all discussion of the proposal concerned.
What other achievements are considered besides publications and H-index? Does the ranking of institutions play a role?	The host institution is not an evaluation criterion and so is not considered in the evaluation of proposals. Consequently, the ranking of host institutions is not relevant. Research achievements can be anything you consider demonstrates your scientific maturity (e.g. field work, organisation of conference, awards etc.). You can of course mention appointments/visiting at top universities among your achievements, if you consider this helps prove your standing in the field.
What type of people should be listed in the “excluded reviewers” section (Part	This is for the judgement and consideration of the applicant. Generally, applicants list as ‘objected reviewers’ people who they

A)? Close friends or collaborators (who can be biased in favour of the proposal)? Or “scientific” (or personal) “opponents” who may be biased against it?	may consider as scientific rivals who may negatively assess their proposal.
What panel would you recommend for a topic related to technology innovation management and entrepreneurship studies?	We always advise applicants to look at the extensive descriptors associated with each ERC panel and see where they believe their proposal is best fitted. The panel details and ERC keywords are listed in the information for applicants document (Annex 4.1). Furthermore, on the ERC Dashboard one can search by panel to see what kind of proposals are funded in a given panel.
Why must I write down any details about my idea in part B2? If someone gets a rejection, what is happening with the idea? Who has access to this pool of ideas-proposals?	Only the ERC Agency staff and the reviewers - Panel Members and External Referees – have access to the proposals. Both ERC staff and reviewers have confidentiality as contractual obligation, so they cannot share details of your proposal with anybody outside of the evaluation panel.
Good morning, could you please explain whether the employment is necessary for submission? For instance, is it possible to apply for the ERC Starting Grant as a visiting researcher at the university?	The PI must be hosted and employed by the host institution. Specific situations might be accommodated (such as ‘retired PI’), if the conditions are similar to an employment relationship. Usually ‘visiting researcher’ status does not comply with the requirements.
Please confirm, "A, not invited" is possible at step 1 review?	‘A not invited’ is a possible outcome at Step 1, as a maximum of 44 proposals ranked as ‘A’ can be invited to interview.
On the page about the rejection reasons, do you mean that it is better to show research grants in CV where the applicant acts as the only PI but not one of the PIs? Thank you!	In the CV you can share all research grants where you participate either as single PI or co-PI in collaboration with others. In the slide on the common reasons for rejection it was stated that you need to be careful not to present your proposal as a consortium, i.e. a group effort where you are only one of the team members. You should have a clear leading role in your project.
Submitting evaluation reports of previous closed research projects is acceptable?	If you mean whether you can submit these together with your proposal, then this is <u>not</u> possible. You can only submit Part B1, B2 and the additional info requested. Reference letters, evaluation reports of past successful projects are not accepted.
For those who received a B score in an ERC Starting Grant proposal, what strategies do you recommend for improving and resubmitting in the future? Additionally, how should the percentage shown in the evaluation reports be interpreted?	The best way to improve the proposal is to try to take on board as much as possible the feedback given by the reviewers. The percentage shown in the evaluation report tells you how far you were for the threshold for passing to Step 2.
Do all panel members have read the B1 part before the interviews? Or only those who have made the report on step 1 have read the whole proposal (B1+B2)? Thanks	In the step 1 evaluation, panel members do not read part B1 of all proposals, but only the ones that they have been allocated to review in this step of the evaluation. At step 2, generally 4 panel members review part B1 and part B2. This may be the same panel members as in step 1 or could be different.
The CV template emphasizes the project's impact on the research community. What about the impact on society? Should we talk about that? How important is that?	You can ‘talk’ about the impact on society and panels might even appreciate it, but that is not, strictly speaking, an evaluation criterion. In other words, ERC grants are not requested to have a direct impact on society.
For an ERC, can a PI have a collaboration with a researcher in a non-EU country such as the USA?	Yes, team members can also be based outside Europe if it brings added value to the project.
Regarding the 10 selected research outputs in the CV and Track record: Can	Yes, you can.

we include in this section (next to a standard citation) a DOI link to each of these outputs?	
B1, CV + Track record: "All authors in the same order as published" should be listed. In some fields, there are publications with many authors. How many authors a paper must have to make not listing all of them acceptable? (20 authors? 50?)	There is no strict rule, but rather some common sense is needed. Of course, it would be problematic to list all 50 authors for a publication, but try to do so as much as possible, in line with a reasonable formatting of the page.
If a researcher earned their PhD over 12 years ago but has worked mostly in research support services rather than research, is eligible to apply for ERC grants? If so, would it be for the Starting or Advanced grant?	Yes, you would be eligible for Advanced grants (unless you have some valid eligibility extension options). You would be asked to show that you have made significant contribution to the field during your career.
Is it true that one has a better chance of getting a grant if one has done an extended research stay in the US? I hear this a lot from professors in physics.	Not necessarily. But it is true that applicants who had the opportunity to have research stays in other countries during their career and work in different environments, tend to have a broader network and diverse set of research achievements that might benefit their CV. Nevertheless, panels are instructed that mobility is not an evaluation criterion and should not, per se, be used as a parameter to assess the applicants.
When is the first meeting of the panels after the submission deadline?	Three-four months after the submission deadline.
Can you say a bit more about Starting Grants especially in the humanities (not social sciences)? A lot of the requirements (first author publication) are more applicable to natural sciences, and it's difficult to judge track record.	<p>The track record of an applicant can include among other publications, articles deposited in a publicly available preprint server, books, book chapters, conference proceedings, data sets, software, patents, licenses, standards, start-up businesses or <u>any other research outputs that they deem relevant in relation to their research field and the project</u>.</p> <p>The applicant may also include a short, factual explanation of the significance of the selected outputs, their role in producing each of them, and how they demonstrate their capacity to successfully carry out the proposed project.</p> <p>Furthermore, the applications are judged by their peers that know what kind of outputs are applicable in a specific panel/field of research.</p>
Is there a chance interviews (AdG) will be back online?	There have not been any discussions or requests from the Scientific Council to return to in-person interviews for the ERC Advanced Grant calls.
Regarding high risk/high gain, is this to be emphasized or not anymore?	The philosophy of the ERC has not changed, so the ambitious nature of the frontier research you plan to carry out should still be emphasised.
Are the years in the industry also considered to extend the eligibility window for a StG? If not, is it possible to apply for a CoG if technically I am not a PI but a postdoc with an independent research line?	Years working in the industry are not a valid reason to extend the eligibility window. Please check the ERC Work Programme (page 24) for the valid reasons of extension. You do not already need to be a Principal investigator to apply to an ERC grant. Researchers of any age and career stage can apply to the ERC grant schemes.
What if the panel has just been created-how can we have more info about who will read our proposal?	The list of panel members is published on the ERC website once the evaluation process is completed.

Can I still apply for a Starting grant if I am beyond 7 years since PhD? Does it have to be a Consolidator Grant?	The eligibility window can be extended for reasons such as maternity, paternity, illness, national service, training, natural disasters, or asylum. Check out the ERC Work Programme for the specific rules on eligibility criteria.
What is the expected technology readiness level of the proposed project?	There is no expected level.
Is it recommended to involve as more scholars/researchers as possible (the larger the team the more it will be possible to be funded)?	It depends on the discipline and the project. It might be necessary to have more team members or collaborations with certain expertise to execute the project, but having more team members does not mean more chance of success.
I am eligible to apply for ERC CoG only in the next two calls. Is it better to wait for the second (and last) or should I go for the first? My worry is that if I get a score of B in Step 1, I then cannot go for the second call.	This really depends on how mature you consider your proposal to be.
Is it possible to put collaborators or advisors time in the budget?	Personnel costs of team members can be budgeted in the proposal if they are employed by the host institution. Fees for advisers or collaborators from other institution must comply with the general eligibility criteria (Art. 6 MGA) and specific eligibility criteria either of subcontracting or purchase costs depending on the work performed by these collaborators.
About the eligibility criteria of the ERC Starting Grant - Since it has changed to the date of PhD defence and NOT the date of receiving the degree, what if someone completes 7 years, say just 2 months before the deadline?	Since 2023, the date of the PhD considered for the calculation of the eligibility period is the date of the successful defence of the PhD degree. For Starting Grants an applicant should have defended their PhD between 2 and 7 years before 1 January of the year of the call. Hence, should the PhD defence date does not fall within this period, because the defence was 7 years and 2 months before the 1 January of the year of the call (for WP2025, the reference day is 1 January 2025), they would not be eligible unless they can document a valid reason to extend the eligibility window.
I defended my first dissertation 17 years ago. Moved to live in another country and defended my second dissertation one year ago. Can I apply to AdG?	Yes, you can, if you satisfy all the eligibility criteria.
Is it recommended to protect the idea with IP (intellectual property)?	It depends on the idea and competition in the field. ERC does not have any specific requirement in this regard.
It is well known that success rates for smaller countries is as low as 3% comparing to 13-15% overall. What do you think are reasons for this? Do you see this improving anytime soon?	<p>Success rates (SR) in ERC grants are not lower for smaller EU Member States or Associated Countries. For instance, the Netherlands and Austria, even though small countries, have success rates that are higher than the average (for example, in 2023 AdG call, the Netherlands had a SR of 21%, and Austria 19.6%, when the average for the call was 14.6%; Sweden and Finland had a SR 14% and 14.5%, respectively).</p> <p>On the other hand, Widening countries (those that are less performing in research and innovation) have significantly lower SR. In 2023, around 10% of all proposals submitted to the AdG call were from Widening countries, but their success rate was only 4.4 % (versus 14.6% for the call overall). There are several reasons for their lower performance and disentangling those requires a thorough analysis of existing data. Widening countries invest fewer resources in research and innovation</p>

	<p>than the average national investment in R&I in the EU (for country specific data see here).</p> <p>The ERC has a dedicated Working Group on Widening European Participation that seeks to strengthen the participation of researchers in ERC calls from Europe less research-performing regions. As presented in the 12 March session, the ERC has in place Visiting Fellowship Programmes that can be available via national or regional funding agencies to support prospective applicants in preparing an ERC research proposal. Furthermore, the ERC Mentoring Initiative targets local offices in the EU Member States and Associated Countries that organise, region/nation-wide, hands-on sessions for pre-selected PIs preparing an ERC research proposal.</p>
Is the funding also available for non-EU countries?	ERC grantees need to be hosted and employed in a host institution in EU MS or Associated countries. Entities established in third countries may participate as well, but to be eligible for funding, they should host team members bringing scientific added value to the project, or their participation must be considered essential for the project implementation.
How important are service commitments (e.g. academic administration, panel memberships) in the evaluation process?	It plays an important role in the PI assessment, together with the research output.
Referring an Advisory board to the proposal (not funded) would be helpful for the evaluation process (Advanced Grant)?	This question is not entirely clear to us. It should be clarified before an answer can be provided.
Hi. Is it allowed or could prejudice the proposal submission at ERC if I'm also trying to get a grant in another agency?	Yes, a Principal Investigator applying for an ERC grant may also apply for a grant in another agency. This will not in any way prejudice the assessment of the ERC project. Applicants are required to provide information on whether they apply and/or have received funding for a project that is the same or like the one for which they are applying to the ERC, in the funding ID section of the ERC proposal, however this does not have any impact on the evaluation. In case they are awarded and accept funding for the same project from another agency, they must report this to ERC, and they cannot be double-funded.
Can a proposer who got B in the 2nd round of review (B2) apply for the next call?	Yes. You can check the restrictions in place for each call in the Admissibility and eligibility criteria section in the ERC Work Programme .
What if I've never supervised a PhD student because I didn't have funds to hire one. Would that harm my chances of proving that I have PI leadership?	No, PhD supervision is not a criterion per se. However, it's best if you explain in your CV/track record why you have not supervised students, so to help reviewers get the full picture.
Should I describe the collaborations related to the project with the name of scientific researchers?	Not necessarily.
One of the points that was raised was the association with the PhD supervisor as showing no growth in the field. What about other networks, for example, during the postdoc? Does this also count against you as a PI?	Not necessarily, and it depends on specific cases. For example: if you have worked as postdoc with a well-known expert in the field, you have published all your papers with this person and your research topics fully overlap, the evaluators might wonder to which extent your research efforts/ideas are different from those of your postdoc supervisor.

Do topics from previous years matter? I have a project on vision degradation in the elderly. But last year somebody had an ERC on how vision is represented in the infant's brain. The topic is completely different but the theme is the same.	No, there are no predefined themes. All calls are on a bottom-up basis and evaluated separately.
Can expertise be demonstrated with preliminary data or only with published papers?	Both are perfectly acceptable. Of course, published papers might be seen as more reliable since they have undergone the peer review process.
How important is it that your proposal is socially relevant?	ERC projects are not required to have societal impact, but of course it is appreciated if they do.
How is the independence of an ERC Starting grant applicant evaluated? I am 3 years post-graduation, with many publications co-authored with my supervisor. My research is interdisciplinary and innovative. Can my independence be defended?	You should show what your original contribution has been, beyond that of your supervisor.
In a project on environmental research specifically focusing on pollution and water security, can my study sites be in the global South, for example, or does everything have to be done in an EU Country?	Field studies can be anywhere in the world.
How can ERC guarantee that every idea will not be forwarded to third parties like companies?	Panel members and ERC staff dealing with evaluations are bound by the confidentiality rules.
In which ways do criteria for social sciences differ from criteria for STEM applicants?	The evaluation criteria are the same for all domains.
How are the reviewers assigned to sub-panels (I.e. SH7-7 or SH7-8)?	There are no sub-panels. The sub-categories are defined by key words that help in the assignment of the proposal based on the expertise of the panel members.
Is the application for an Advanced Grant compatible with a Synergy Grant?	<p>In principle, a researcher can apply both for an ERC 2025 Advanced Grant (AdG) and for a 2026 Synergy Grant (SyG). However, according to ERC rules, a researcher may participate as Principal Investigator in only one main frontier research grant at any one time.</p> <p>Based on the above, “An applicant Principal Investigator, whose proposal has been selected for funding and who is preparing a grant agreement under a 2023 or 2024 ERC call, may not apply for a Starting, Consolidator, Advanced or Synergy Grant under a 2025 ERC call” (see ERC 2025 Work Programme, p. 28). If, for example, a researcher applied for a 2026 SYG while they were awarded (and accepted) a 2025 AdG, they would become ineligible in the middle of the SYG evaluation (as evaluations of AdG and SYG usually overlap). In that case, if one of the Principal Investigators (PIs) in a SYG proposal withdraws, the respective proposal from that moment on would be at risk: either it would be evaluated with one fewer PI (provided that the Synergy Grant team, would still have <u>a minimum of two</u> and a maximum of four PIs, is respected), or it would become ineligible (if it would be left with fewer than two PIs). We would advise applicants to consult the 2026 ERC Work Programme,</p>

	which we expect to be adopted in the summer, in case there are changes in the above submission restrictions.
How much of the information shared today is transferrable to Synergy Grants?	It is advisable to follow a specific info session on Synergy grants. You can also contact the ERC National Contact Point in your country to see if they plan to organise one.
What are the essential requirements to be eligible for an Advanced Grant and what distinguishes it from the other grant categories?	You can have a look at the dedicated page for AdG on the ERC. ERC-2025-ADG call should open on 22 May 2025.
Hello, can the research project be conducted in other regions than the EU? Thank you	The PI must be affiliated to a host institution in an EU MS or Associated Country to Horizon Europe. Field studies can be conducted everywhere.
Are panel members involved in the 1st and 2nd step of evaluation the same?	Yes, they are.
Is it disadvantageous if you have a smaller scale ongoing project related to the topic in terms of the novelty of the idea?	Not <i>per se</i> , it would depend on the degree of overlap. If you can show that these are preparatory work for the ERC grant and help support its feasibility, that should not be an issue.
Could being the project and scientific manager of a project even if not the PI be considered an achievement that prove our capacity for independence?	It could be. It is up to you to assess which achievements you want to pick among the 10 you are asked to showcase.
Does your appointment at the host institution need to be a permanent one? Or can you also have a fixed-term position for the length of the project?	The PI must be hosted and employed for the whole duration of the project. A permanent position is not necessary.
Is there a template for a CV and a defined length? Usually, in academia, there could be very long CVs. For additional information, is it acceptable to shorten them to provide links to publicly accessible files?	Yes, there is a recommended CV that we encourage you to use. You can include links, but you cannot be sure that the panel members would open them. Also, links to external documents might be seen as a shortcut to overcome the page limit, so not ideal.
If a secondary panel is chosen, does the number of panellists reviewing the proposal in the primary panel remain the same as for proposals that select only one panel?	The panel chair decides if an additional review from another panel is necessary or not. It is often the case that if a secondary panel is indicated an additional review is submitted.
Does one have to be a group leader when applying for ERC Consolidator Grant? If not, how to show your independence? Thank you for your answer.	No, you do not need to be. Your independence can be proved by listing achievements for which you have been the main actor: papers where you have given a unique contribution, funding secured, students supervised, awards, software developed, field work you led, conferences organised, etc.
Is there a requirement about number of first author publications? How much this number affect the evaluation process?	No, there is no requirement. And with the new rules, since 2024 the Scientific Council has made two important changes: 1) a change to the CV template and to ask applicants to list up to 10 research achievements (not only publications) and 2) to put explicitly more emphasis on the project than the CV of the PI. So, the weight of publications on the evaluation process is less.
I am planning to submit a Consolidator Grant from my current institution but there is a possibility to change institutions within EU after submission date. Can I update the institution during the evaluation process?	Yes, it is possible to change your proposed host institution to another legal entity in the EU or an Associated Country. This can be carried out at any point during the grant.

The statistics show a balanced outcome despite fewer applications from women, are there formal criteria to ensure gender parity and inclusion? Do panellist follow specific criteria or are there mechanisms in place to promote diversity?	You can check here what the ERC Scientific Council has put in place to promote gender parity and inclusion.
Regarding the eligibility periods. Is there any plan or chance to consider career gaps/unemployment periods into the calculation to reduce the eligibility?	Career gaps and unemployment per se are not valid reasons for extension. The only reasons for extension of the eligibility window are those mentioned in the Work Programme. However, if the unemployment situation/career gap was taken to take care of a child or sibling, and the applicant can justify that this was the reason for an early termination of a contract or later start of a new job, the situation would be analysed by the ERCEA Eligibility Committee who could decide to grant an extension.
Are indirect costs applying to the additional funds? I mean to the extra 1M€. Thank you	The additional funding is max. 1 million EUR including overheads where applicable.
Regarding "Additional funding": Are personnel costs excluded just in option (d) (but e.g., in (c) access to large facilities, are personnel costs eligible)? Or are personnel costs excluded from "Additional funding" altogether?	Personnel costs are excluded from the other categories as well given the scope of the other categories (major equipment, access to large facilities and start-up costs).
Do the proposed research outcomes need to be all open access (as publications, data, etc.), OR can they be patented, potentially leading to a startup and then publications?	Open Access to data and publications policies concern ways of publishing. When the beneficiaries of EU funded research consider publishing outputs in peer-reviewed articles and monographs, the EU and the ERC consider that providing free online access to these materials is the most effective way of ensuring that the fruits of the research they funds can be accessed, read, and used as the basis for further research. Therefore, when the beneficiaries' decision is to publish, you can find related obligations here: Open Science in ERC Projects European Research Council However, the EU and the ERC also support beneficiaries who consider that they do not want to publish their discoveries, but rather opt for a patent application. In this case, they will not publish, and therefore, open access obligations will not apply.
In the budget justification, particular suppliers (companies) should not be named. Is this correct?	Names of suppliers should in principle not be indicated in the proposal as there must be first a selection procedure ensuring best value for money and no conflict of interest. At the time of the proposal submission, that selection procedure has in principle not taken place yet.
How much information on the team is required? What has to be highlighted?	Ideally you should be able to identify the right size of the team you need depending on the work you plan to do, the length of their contracts and which expertise they should have. Of course, any additional info might help, but these are somewhat the basic info expected.
Do the names and affiliations of identified collaborators must be mentioned in the proposal?	If you have already identified them (and agreed to collaborate) feel free to mention them in the proposal. It is not a requirement but might help to demonstrate that you have carefully thought about it.
Is hiring a person for outreach seen as a "positive point" for the success of a proposal?	The only evaluation criterion is excellence (of the proposal and the PI). Depending on the nature of the research proposal, outreach work may enhance the excellence of the proposed work.

Does the ERC encourage having more PhD students or more postdocs? What is the difference? Would it be to my disadvantage if I don't have any PhDs in my proposed project?	No, it has no repercussions but make sure to explain why. Some reviewers might find it unusual not to have any PhD students. For example: postdocs appointments are usually around 2 years long, how do you ensure proper transfer of knowledge and a long-term commitment to the project? Make sure to explain why you prefer to have only postdocs and this should not be an issue.
Do all the Post-docs and PhD students have to spend the whole time in the lab or can they work remotely from their respective countries?	Post-doc and PhD students can work remotely in compliance with the teleworking rules of their employer.
Are there any advice on what percentage of time devoted for AdG grant for PI sounds reasonable?	This strictly depends on the work you promise to do. If the project is extremely ambitious, maybe with a high degree of field work/experiments, a 30%-time commitment might seem unrealistic. On the other hand, the panel knows that AdG applicants might have other grants or teaching duties, so a 100%-time commitment might as well look unrealistic.
What panels do they have the maximum of 44 interviews? Maksym mentioned not all have. Is then limited to LS?	Some panels receive fewer applications or less high-quality applications that will be ranked as A in step 1. The maximum limit of 44 interviews applies to all panels.
Can the PI work 100% of the time on the project? If so, do they receive the full max amount of person/months proposed in the proposal?	The time commitment of the PI on the project must be in line with the needs of the project and must be realistic. If it makes sense to dedicate full working time on the project, the budget will be established accordingly. This means that the PI will have no other activities during the project duration.
Can you explain more about the "requested EU contribution"? Does it mean your project can be funded by 2 or more funding agencies, including the EU?	When the applicant establishes the budget, the total eligible costs are included in the budget and based on this, the applicant will indicate what is the requested EU contribution (the amount that may be awarded after evaluation). It is possible to request less than the total eligible costs. The difference is then covered by the institution itself. Note that the same activities cannot be funded twice by the EU budget.
Can I pay research stays (3 months) for the PhD students of my ERC?	Without context, it is not possible to answer this question. An assessment on a case-by-case basis is necessary.
What are audit requirements for the grants (internal/external audits)?	See Annotated grant agreement, Art. 25 CHECKS, REVIEWS, AUDITS AND INVESTIGATIONS, p. 246: aga_en.pdf . For Certificate on Financial Statement, see Art. 24.2, p. 238.
Can you please elaborate further on what exactly is "Precision cost"? Is it possible to buy equipment and keep it in the lab after the project is over or not?	Only depreciation costs are eligible costs. More information on the depreciation, in the Annotated Grant Agreement, p.92 aga_en.pdf . The beneficiary is the owner of the equipment. Therefore, the equipment can be kept in the lab once the project is over.
For paternity leave, in case of part time working, how the extension is calculated?	For paternity leave, the extension granted corresponds to the documented time of paternity leave actually taken (both full time and part time leave). For a part time leave, the extension would correspond to the leave duration as stated in the official supporting document signed by the Host Institution/employer. E.g. a 25% part-time leave for 4 months of paternity leave, will correspond to one month of extension.
Does the jury look into previous themes? If last year a project on lung cancer was funded, can a very different idea, but still on lung cancer be funded next year?	No, the panels do not look into previous funded projects on the same theme. Every call is evaluated separately and independently.
For the Starting Grant, if I do an experimental project and need funding for lab/hardware to build a new instrument prototype, can I access the	If needed for the project, you can request additional funding to purchase major pieces of equipment. You will have to explain in the resources section why the equipment cannot be funded within the regular ceiling. The level of details should allow the

additional funding of major equipment? If possible, how much detail is needed? Quotation?	panel to understand the need of the additional funds for the project implementation.
Are projects with additional funding less likely to get funded, compared to those that do not have it, as these will be more expensive for the ERC?	The request of additional funding is not an evaluation criterion and does not have an impact on the award decision. If the additional funding is not considered justified by the panel, the corresponding budget will be cut.
Can I ask for additional funding to open up an independent research center where I can run the project - if my host institution does not have adequate facilities for this?	Additional funding can be requested only for the purposes mentioned in the Work Programme of a given call. Investing/building/purchasing an independent research centre is not currently foreseen in the Work Programme.
Can we ask for funding for additional salary for the PI even though the PI has a full salary position at the hosting institution?	This will depend on the rules within your host institution and national/regional regulations. If allowed, you may budget the amount corresponding to the percentage time commitment in the proposal.
If I move between countries within EU/AC, can I still ask for the startup cost coverage?	Additional funding related to start-up costs is foreseen only when the PI will move from a third country to a HI established in a Member State or Associated Country. For moving within EU/AC, you cannot request additional funding.
Are wastewater samples considered human cells/tissue?	Human tissue and cells include cells, skin, body parts, organs, bone, blood, urine, saliva, faeces, etc. The section in the Ethics issues table referring to human cells or tissues includes human foetal or embryonic tissues or cells, other than human embryonic stem cells (hESC), as there is a special section covering the using of embryos and hESC.
How should costs for senior collaborators with the PI be encoded? How should I encode costs if I want to transfer resources to a local organisation supporting participatory research in a third country where the PI will conduct fieldwork?	Organisations from a third country can be added as an additional beneficiary when their participation brings added value to the project. Other forms of involvement are possible, but this needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis at the time of the grant preparation once the project is retained for funding.
Can the additional (1mio euro) funding be used to support external collaborators (who are not a large scale facility). For example in a computational-driven project where an experimental collaborator has direct costs related to the project?	Additional funding can be requested only for the purposes mentioned in the Work Programme of a given call. Funding/supporting collaborators is not currently foreseen in the Work Programme.
Extensions for parental leave: can a mother get an extension if there was no official maternity leave? (She worked part time the whole time)	For maternity, applicants are granted a flat rate of 18 months extension per each child born before or after the PhD defence date. They do not need to justify an official leave, but they need to provide proof of the birth of the child/ren and a document showing the link with the mother. Applicants can also claim an extension for the leave actually taken, if this leave was longer than the flat rate. In this case, they will need to provide an official document indicating the actual leave taken and the reason for the leave.
If my requested budget is 1.2M (<1.5M) in CoG, shall I still request the startup costs in the additional budget?	Additional funding can be requested only for the purposes mentioned in the Work Programme of a given call. Start-up costs is only foreseen for cases where the PI is moving from a third country to an institution established in a Member State or Associated Country.

Concerning ethics: What exactly is meant by “animals”? (Vertebrates? All Animalia?)	The use of non-vertebrate animals does not raise ethics issues. The use of vertebrates in research is protected by the directive on animal experimentation and is considered an ethics issue in HE. The Ethics issues table asks first if you use animals and then if those are vertebrates, to determine if there is an ethics issue.
Is the ethics of iPSC use as complicated as those for hESCs? ie. Requiring ethics committee vote for its use.	No, the use of iPSC is much less regulated and does not require comitology.
What if I hire a postdoc or a PhD student, and they don't fulfil their responsibilities or want to leave the project after a year or two?	This can happen and there is no problem on ERC side. You have quite some flexibility in reallocating the personnel budget so to adapt it to changing circumstances over 5 years: if a person leaves the team, in case one of them wins a fellowship and you want to rearrange the budget to pay something else, etc.
Could you explain the ethical issues related to non-Eu countries in more detail and provide examples?	Activities carried outside the reach of the European laws and standards can raise issues such as exploitation of participants, exploitation of local resources, risks to project teams and staff, carrying out activities that are prohibited in the EU. In Horizon Europe, activities carried out in a non-EU country must also be allowed in said non-EU country and in at least one EU Member State.
When preparing your AdG application, can you specify exactly who you will be working with (which senior/postdoc researcher from which country in which subject area as your team member), or should it be left open?	If you know already, you can mention it and it might even give the impression that you have been very thorough and have thought carefully about your team and expertise needs. There is no restriction on our side on how you should do it.
Are all forms available on the portal or web to prepare before the call?	Yes, they are available on the Funding and Tenders Portal once the call is open.
If the host university doesn't have a position for PI, is it possible to put a salary (and if it is needed visa costs) into the project budget?	The PI must be hosted and employed for the whole duration of the project (i.e. as of the start date of the project). At the time of the submission, this is not a requirement that the PI should be already employed by the HI. Personnel costs of the PI might be budgeted in prevision of the future employment contract. Visa costs might not be eligible (to be eligible all costs must be incurred as of the start date of the project, visa costs in this case will be incurred before the start date).
If I will receive the grant is it possible to postpone the beginning of the project?	In principle, the project should start within 6 months as of the invitation letter. A request for a later start date is subject to approval by the ERC Executive Agency at the time of the grant preparation.
When should the PI start the work after the grant positive decision?	In principle, the project should start within 6 months as of the invitation letter. Later start date request is subject to approval by the ERC Executive Agency at the time of the grant preparation.
Can preliminary data demonstrate your experience or it is only valid with published papers? Thanks	Preliminary data are always helpful as they show the panel that you are already working on your hypothesis. Of course, data in published papers are preferable as they have gone through the peer-review process. However, if you have some preliminary data, mention them in the proposal!
My PhD defence date was the 14th March 2019. Can you confirm whether I am eligible to apply for the Starting Grant please?	The ERC 2026 Work Programme has not been published yet. However, assuming the rules for eligibility remain the same as for work programme 2025, to be eligible for the Starting Grant 2026 call, an applicant would need to have a PhD defence date between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2023. With a PhD defence on 14 March 2019, you would be eligible to apply to the 2026 Starting Grant call.

Can you please describe the basic aspects of addressing ethics issues of artificial intelligence in the research project? What are the key reference documents that should be consulted?	Applicants should be aware of the recently published Artificial Intelligence Act (2024/1689/EU) (AI Act) and assess its applicability. Special attention must be paid towards AI systems categorised as "High risk" to which many AI systems in healthcare are classified due to their potential impact on patient health and safety. Depending on the use of AI, different ethical considerations need to be made. For example, if research participants are interacting with AI, applicants might need to inform them about their interaction with an AI system/technology (if relevant); the abilities, limitations, risks and benefits of the AI system/technique; the manner in which decisions are taken and the logic behind them (if relevant).
How do I know how many collaborators - particularly PhD's and post docs - I should apply for? I would like two of each but how do I justify it? (For a Starting Grant)	This depends purely on the work you plan to do. As PI, you should be able to estimate the number of people needed to carry it out. Depending on the time required to carry out the work, arrangements at the Host Institution and level of knowledge you need, you will decide whether you need PhD students or post-docs.
Can you explain more about funding overheads?	Direct eligible costs budgeted in the proposal will be increased by a flat rate of 25%, except for subcontracting and internally invoiced goods and services. Note that the calculations are automated.
Can all the amount be funded by the ERC? Or should the hosting institution participate to some extent?	In the budget, you can encode a requested EU contribution that will cover 100% of the total eligible costs.
Will StG and CoG go lump sum?	For the moment, lump sums are used only for AdG.
Inflation rates fluctuate. How do I address the fluctuations? Would ERC consider a top up for this?	There is no top-up foreseen to address inflation.
How is the official start date of an ERC project decided? Until how long can a PI delay the start date and under what justification(s)?	In principle, the project should start within 6 months as of the invitation letter. A request for a later start date is subject to approval by the ERC Executive Agency at the time of the grant preparation.
Funding senior members is also acceptable for an AdG proposal?	Personnel costs for senior members can be budgeted under "personnel costs – senior staff" if their participation is necessary for the project.
If I change the host institution to another country after receiving the grant, can the salaries be increased to the level of that host institution?	The maximum EU contribution cannot be increased after the evaluation. Budget re-allocations are possible within the awarded amount as long as the objectives of the project are not jeopardised.
If unexpected delays are encountered during the project implementation stage, is there a possibility to extend the project duration?	With duly justified reasons, an amendment to the grant agreement can be requested.
I am currently an associate professor at a Chinese University. I want to ask what is the acceptance ratio for individual funding for countries outside Europe. And whether I can apply for it or not? What are the prospects?	ERC projects are hosted only in EU MS and Associated Countries to Horizon Europe.

Applying for an ERC grant: where to seek support

Are there other training sessions organised in countries other than Baltic states?	NCPs regularly organise training sessions. You can contact the NCP in your country.
It seems that some courses offered by NCPs are not free (not the short webinars or info sessions) but I am referring to the trainings over a couple of days, is that correct? Do you know if support could be provided to cover these fees?	NCPs offer their services for free. There are no fees for the participants.
MSCA applicants can also benefit from these initiatives?	Mentoring Initiative and Visiting Fellowships are only for ERC applicants.
Visiting fellowship are available only for non-Europe researchers?	Visiting Fellowships are for researchers of any nationality based in the EU Member States that have joined the programme: https://erc.europa.eu/apply-grant/additional-opportunities#Visiting_Research_Fellowships