Postdoctoral Grant Opportunities
&
Project Writing

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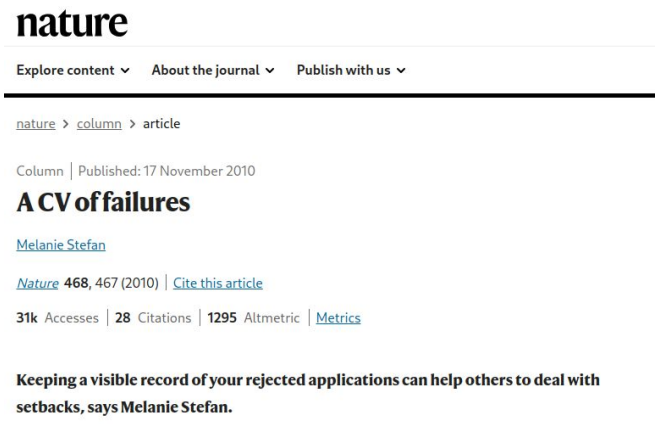
Overview of fellowship/grant opportunities

- **Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA)**
- **European Research Council (ERC)**
- **Italy**
  - FIS, INFN/CNR/ASI fellowships, (PRIN)
  - Della Riccia (for fundamental physics)
  - Rita Levi Montalcini (for researchers abroad, quite randomic)
- **Sapienza**
  - Departmental postdoc calls every year
  - SAPIExcellence: SEAL, ADD, BE-FOR-ERC (2-7 yr after PhD), SEED OF ERC
- **Each country/institution has its own scheme, for example:**
  - **UK**: Royal Society, EPSRC-UKRI, Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), Rutherford, Hawking, Newton…
  - **France**: CNRS (historically support ECRs), IHES, ANR, ENS
  - **Germany**: von Humboldt Foundation, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), Max Planck, Helmholtz Association
  - **Netherlands:** NWO Veni, Vidi, Vici
  - **Spain**: Ramón y Cajal, Juan de la Cierva, La Caixa, Ikerbasque
  - **Portugal**: Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT), Gulbenkian
  - **USA**: Hubble, Einstein, NSF, DOE, Simons, KITP (visiting), Carnegie, …
  - **Others**: CERN Fellowships, …, (area-dependent)
- Hard to navigate, research area-dependent, and might require sponsor: *get in touch with relevant groups*!

CV of Failures



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nature › column › article

Column | Published: 17 November 2010

A CV of failures

Melanie Stefan

Nature **468**, 467 (2010) | Cite this article

31k Accesses | **28** Citations | **1295** Altmetric | Metrics

Keeping a visible record of your rejected applications can help others to deal with setbacks, says Melanie Stefan.

For each position/grant one gets,
…many more failures!

- Don't be afraid of applying
- Don't be discouraged of rejections
- ..yet, keep highest quality, competition is high!

Johannes_Haushofer

Degree programs I did not get into

2008	PhD Program in Economics, Stockholm School of Economics
2003	Graduate Course in Medicine, Cambridge University Graduate Course in Medicine, UCL PhD Program in Psychology, Harvard University PhD Program in Neuroscience and Psychology, Stanford University
1999	BA in International Relations, London School of Economics

Academic positions and fellowships I did not get

2014	Harvard Kennedy School Assistant Professorship UC Berkeley Agricultural and Resource Economics Assistant Professorship MIT Brain & Cognitive Sciences Assistant Professorship This list is restricted to institutions where I had campus visits; the list of places where I had first-round interviews but wasn't invited for a campus visit, and where I wasn't invited to interview in the first place, is much longer and I will write it up when I get a chance. The list also shrouds the fact that I didn't apply to most of the top economics departments (Harvard, MIT, Yale, Stanford, Princeton, Chicago, Berkeley, LSE) because one of my advisors felt they could not write a strong letter for them.

Research funding I did not get

2016	MQ Mental Health Research Grant
2015	Russell Sage Research Grant (two separate ones)
2013	National Science Foundation Research Grant
2010	University of Zurich Research Grant Swiss National Science Foundation Research Grant
2009	Financial Innovation Grant International Labor Organization Research Grant 3ie Research Grant

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Individual Fellowships

Website: Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

- Funded by European Commission, support career development and training of researchers within and beyond Europe
- Foster knowledge transfer and collaboration between academia and non-academic sectors
- **Duration:** 1-2 years (European Fellowship) or 2-3 years (Global Fellowship).
- **Eligibility:**
    a. Researchers from anywhere in the world. Applicants must be *experienced researchers*: doctoral degree or at least four years of full-time equivalent research experience by the deadline.
    b. Researchers must not have resided or carried out their main activity in the country of the host organization for more than *12 months in the 3 years* immediately before the call deadline →you can apply during first postdoc abroad!

1) **European Fellowships:** for researchers moving within Europe or coming to Europe from anywhere. Can be held in EU Member States or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries
2) **Global Fellowships**: for researchers based in Europe who wish to gain experience outside Europe. The fellowship consists of an outgoing phase in a third country and a mandatory return phase in a European host institution.

- **PROS:**
    a. Prestigious; independence is crucial for future steps in your career!
    b. Research, training, and networking costs covered
    c. Very generous salary, with living, mobility, and family allowances
- **CONS:**
    a. Competition is very high
- **Application process:**
    a. **Proposal**: Researchers, in collaboration with their host institution (HI), prepare a detailed research proposal including objectives, methodology, work plan, and impact (***B1****: Excellence, Impact, and Implementation;* ***B2****: CV and Capacities*)
    b. **Evaluation**: Proposals are evaluated by independent experts based on criteria of excellence, impact, and implementation.

My Two Cents as an applicant/referee (Paolo)

- **Common comments (MSCA or ERC):**
  a. Start planning/writing very well in advance, every detail is important
  b. Panelists/reviewers are physicists, but might have different backgrounds → *strike balance between clarity & rigour*
  c. Read carefully the evaluation grid, reviewers will have to follow those instructions
  d. Ask several feedback from supervisor/peers

- **MSCA:**
  a. Project + Applicant + Supervisor (Excellence 50%, Impact 30%, Implementation 20%, typical funding score >90%)
  b. Ask supervisor for advices and possibly template proposals to have a reference
  c. Training, Transfer of Knowledge, Career Development are key
  d. IMHO: super-strong CV or super-interesting proposal do NOT guarantee funding!
  e. IMHO: Some level of randomness in the evaluation
  f. Great opportunity to independence

The European Research Council

All you need to know
before applying for an ERC grant

Sapienza University of Rome- PhD Seminars

26/6/2024

Odeta Limaj

Panel Coordinator – PE3 Condensed Matter Physics

Odeta.limaj@ec.europa.eu

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What we will talk about

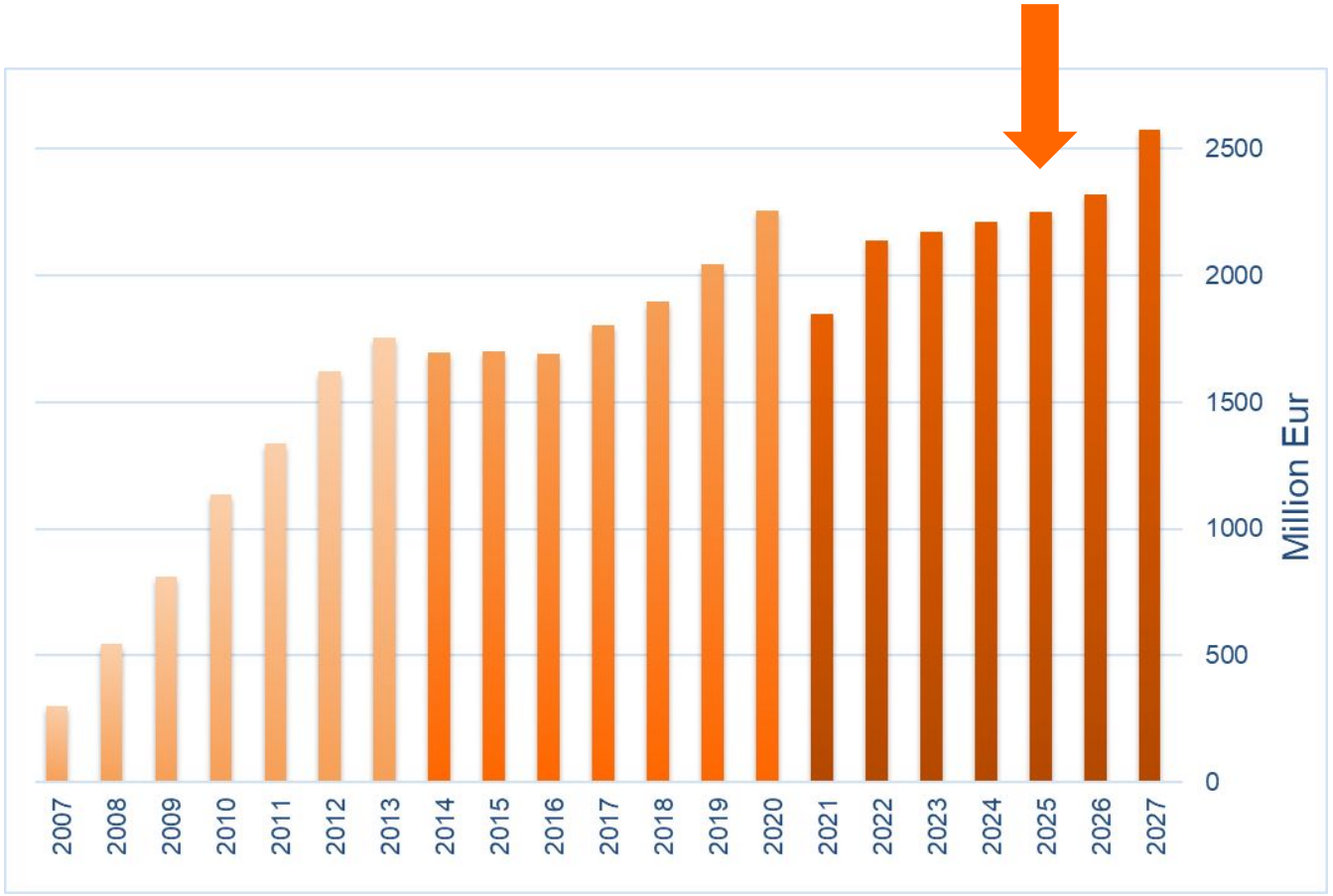
1. **What is the ERC**
2. How to apply: prepare your proposal step-by-step
3. Statistics

ERC Budget 2007 – 2027: EUR 36.5 billion

FP7: €7.5 billion

H2020: €13 billion

HE: €16 billion



ERC is….

1. Scientific Council Members

Life Sciences

Geneviève ALMOUZNI
(Molecular Cell Biology)

Liselotte HØJGAARD
(Medicine)

Leszek KACZMAREK
(Neurobiology)

Dirk INZÉ
(Plant Biology)

Luke O'NEILL
(Biochemistry & Immunology)

Jesper SVEJSTRUP
Vice-President
(Biochemistry)

Maria LEPTIN
ERC President
(Cell Biology)

Gerd GIGERENZER
(Psychology)

Eystein JANSEN
Vice-President
(Earth Science)

Social Sciences and Humanities

Harriet BULKELEY
(Geography)

Mercedes GARCÍA-ARENAL
(History)

Torsten PERSSON
(Economics)

Giovanni SARTOR
(Law)

Milena ŽIC FUCHS
(Linguistics)

Physical Sciences and Engineering

Ben FERINGA
(Organic Chemistry)

Tom HENZINGER
(Computer Science)

Chryssa KOUVELIOTOU
(High-Energy Astrophysics)

Sylvie LORENTE
(Mechanical Engineering)

László LOVÁSZ
(Mathematics)

Björn OTTERSTEN
(Electric Engineering)

Nicola SPALDIN
(Materials Theory)

Alice VALKÁROVÁ
(Physics)

ERC is….
2. The ERC Executive Agency (ERCEA)

The ERC Dedicated Implementation Structure

Implements the ERC strategy as set by the Scientific Council and manages ERC operations

By courtesy of Art & Build Architect / Montois Partners / credits: S. Brison

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ERC grants are substantial long-term grants

Starting Grants
starters (2-7 years after PhD)
- normal max € 1.5 Mio for 5 years

Consolidator Grants
Consolidators (7-12 years after PhD)
- normal max € 2 Mio for 5 years

Advanced Grants
track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years
- normal max € 2.5 Mio for 5 years

Reasons for additional funds:
- start-up costs for moving to Europe
- access to large facilities
- major equipment
- other major experimental and field work costs, excluding personnel costs.

Synergy Grants
2 – 4 Principal Investigators
- normal max € 10.0 Mio for 6 years
1 PI can be based outside EU/AC

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

Excellence as the sole evaluation criterion!

Excellence of the Research Project

- ✔ Ground-breaking nature
- ✔ Scientific Impact
- ✔ Scientific approach

Excellence of the Principal Investigator

- ✔ Intellectual Capacity
- ✔ Creativity
- ✔ Commitment

Panels will primarily evaluate the excellence of the project, while evaluating the ability of the PI to carry out the project

Why Should one Apply for an ERC grant?

- Research topic of own choice, with a team of own choice
- True financial autonomy for 5 years
- Negotiate with the host institution the best conditions of work
- Attract top team members (EU and non-EU) and collaborators
- Portability of grants within Europe
- Attract additional funding

What we will talk about

1. What is the ERC
2. **How to apply: prepare your proposal step-by-step**
3. Statistics

Step 1: Get the information (early on)!

- Register early, get familiar with the European Commission's Funding and Tender portal and download the templates

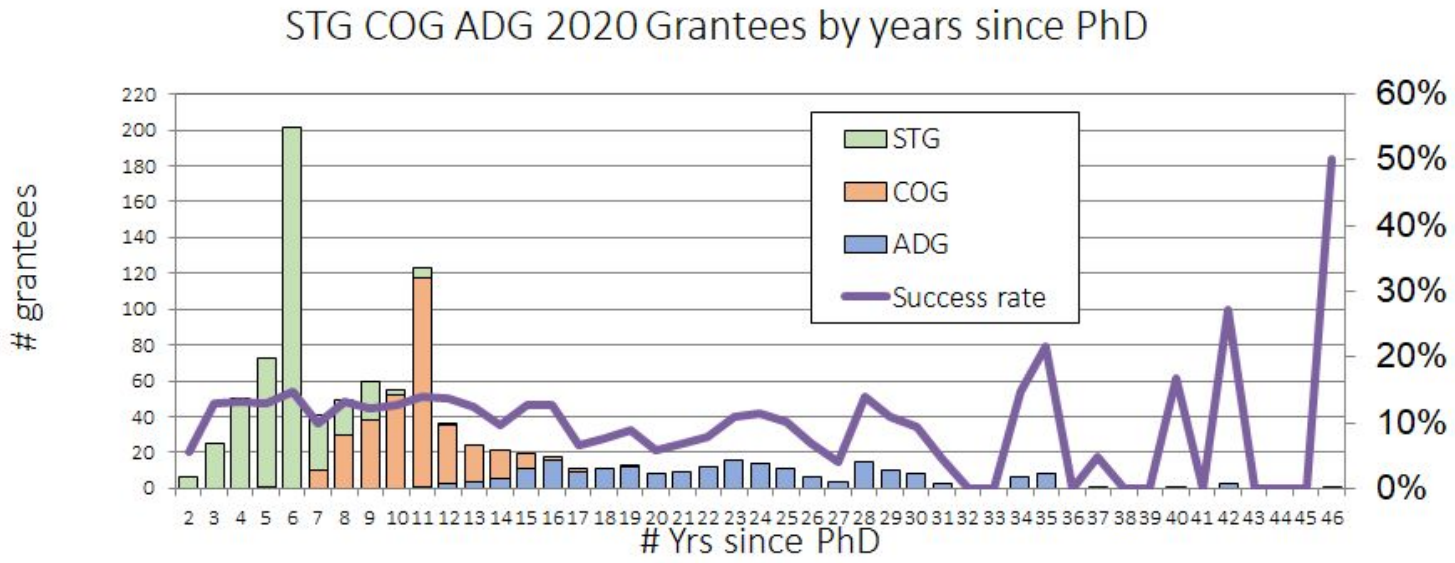
  https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home

- Read the call documents (Information for Applicants, Work Programme, Frequently Asked Questions) that explain how to prepare your proposal
- Talk to your Institution's grant office
- Talk to ERC grantees
- Contact the ERCEA to ask all your questions well ahead of the submission deadline– e.g., ERC-2024-ADG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu , ERC-2025-STG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu
- Get in touch with prospective collaborators

Step 3: Decide whether to apply.

Rumour: I should wait until the end of the eligibility window in order to accumulate enough seniority: only then I will be competitive.

- NOT true: The success rate is virtually flat across the eligibility window (StG, CoG).



Step 4: Choose your Panel!

Evaluation Panel Structure 2024

Life Sciences

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

Physical Sciences & Engineering

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

Social Sciences and Humanities

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

Choosing the right Panel is very important!

- Proposals are initially assigned to the Panel of the PI's choice.
- The PI can flag one “Secondary Review Panel” □ the PI must explain the interdisciplinary nature of the proposal in Part B1.
- Transfer of proposals between panels may occur if:
  - there is a clear mistake on part of the applicant.
  - the necessary expertise is available in a different panel.

Rumour: Choose the panel "strategically" in order to increase chances of success

- **NOT true**: Choose the panel that best fits the proposal. The budget is distributed among the scientific panels as a function of demand □ success rate is equal amongst panels!

Choose your descriptors and free keywords carefully in Part A!

Descriptors and free keywords

- influence which Panel will evaluate your proposal
- are the basis of allocation to the panel members
- will determine whether a cross-panel evaluation is necessary

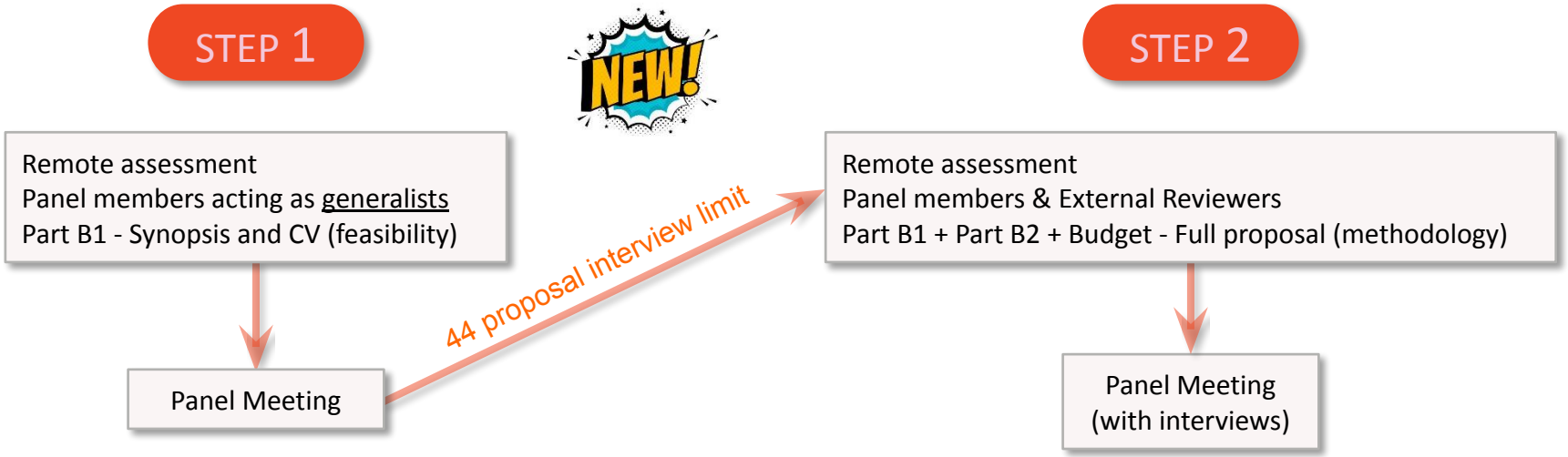
Rumour: The panel descriptors represent ERC scientific priorities

- **NOT true**: The panel descriptors are indicative so that PIs can see what expertise is in the Panel. It is the PIs that choose the subject of their proposal and the Panels use the excellence criterion to judge whether it should be funded.

Rumour: The more cross-panel descriptors I indicate, the higher the funding chances, since I emphasize like this the interdisciplinarity of my proposal.

- **NOT true**: even though these are used to allocate proposals to Panel Members, once the proposals are allocated, the Panel Members do not see the keywords and descriptors used.

Evaluation procedure and scoring system - **individual** grants



A The proposal is of sufficient quality to pass to Step 2 of the evaluation

B The proposal is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to Step 2 of the evaluation

C The proposal is not of sufficient quality to pass to Step 2 of the evaluation

Feedback to applicants

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Preparing your application

PART A – admin forms online

Section 1 Proposal and PI info
Section 2 Host Institution info
Section 3 Budget
Section 4 Ethics
Section 5 Call-specific Questions

Annexes – submitted as .pdf

- Statement of support of HI
- copy of PhD or equiv. (StG & CoG)

If applicable:

- document for extension of eligibility window (StG & CoG)
- explanatory info on ethical issues

Seen by the panel

PART B1 – submitted as .pdf

Abstract and Cross-Panel explanation 1 p.
Extended Synopsis
5 p.
CV & Track Record
up to 4 p.

PART B2 – submitted as .pdf

Scientific Proposal 14 p.
Funding ID 1 p.

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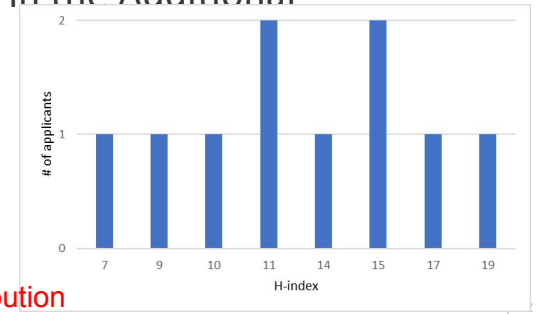
Part B1- writing your CV and Track Record

- Use the recommended template with the 3 sections as much as possible.
- Explain what has been your own contribution to your publications/how they have impacted the field.
- Convince the panel that you are the forefront of your research field – this may be (very) different for different people so make sure you highlight your key strengths and accomplishments.
- Explain publishing habits in your field and country if needed.
- Describe accurately any other activity that can indicate scientific maturity.
- If you know that you have gaps or other issues in your CV, explain them in the Additional Information section.

Rumour : *One needs publications in Nature/Science/High IF journals to succeed.*

- **NOT true**: however, publishing with senior scientists (former supervisors) may raise doubts about maturity/scientific independence.



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Part B1- writing your CV and Track Record

Questions to ask yourself

- Have I shown my scientific leadership?
- Am I able to work independently, and to manage a 5-year project with a substantial budget? List prior research endeavours, explain your role and contribution.
- Am I internationally active? Speaker in international conferences, served in committees, have become an editor, given expert service, etc. Do I have any international collaborations?

Intellectual capacity and creativity

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

To what extent does the PI provide **evidence of creative and original thinking**?

To what extent does the PI have the **required scientific expertise and capacity** to successfully execute the project?

Part B1- CV and Track Record

- No prescriptive Principal Investigator profiles
- Instead, 3 sections

1. Personal Details

   PI's education and key qualifications, current position(s) and relevant previous positions they have held.

2. Research achievements (<=10) and Peer Recognition
   - demonstrating advancement in the field, with emphasis on more recent achievements
   - prizes, fellowships, academy membership, etc.

   *The applicant can provide a **short, factual narrative** on the significance of the listed achievements and recognitions in relation to the research field and the proposed project.*

3. Additional Information

   Relevant additional information on their research career to provide context when assessing their research achievements and peer recognition.
   - career breaks, diverse career paths, life events
   - other noteworthy contributions to research community

Part B1- CV and Track Record

Proposals will continue to be evaluated on the sole criterion of *scientific excellence*.

Evaluation **primarily focused** on the ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility of the **proposed research project.**

No numerical scoring of the Principal Investigator. Instead, an overall assessment of PI's intellectual *capacity and creativity*, with a focus **on the extent to which the PI has the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project.**

Part B1- Research project

Questions to ask yourself

- Is my project new, innovative, bringing in new solutions/theories?
- Does it promise to go substantially beyond the state of the art?
- Why is my project important? Answering a complete question (not only ‘what’ but also ‘why’) - Think Big! Make sure that your idea needs an ERC to do it
- How can I prove/support my case? Do I have a hypothesis? Do I have supporting evidence? Have I proven the project's feasibility? Are my goals realistic?
- Is it timely? (Why wasn't it done in the past?)
- What's the risk? Is it justified by a substantial potential gain? Do I have a plan for managing the risk? Make sure that your risk is not too early on in the project. Have I proposed alternatives?
- Why am I the best/only person to carry it out? Know your competitors – what is the state of play, and why is your idea and scientific approach outstanding compared to them?
- Have I given a realistic picture of my collaborations? Show that you can drive the collaborations but that it is *you* who will be leading the project.

Part B1- Research Project

- Streamlined evaluation questions
- No explicit reference to ‘high-risk/high-gain’
  - Instead: ‘ground-breaking, ambitious, and feasible’.
  - **The ERC will always encourage risky research.**
- No explicit reference to ‘novel methodologies’
  - ‘Novel methodologies’ is an element that may be positive but is not strictly necessary for an excellent proposal.

Ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility

To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?

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

*To what extent is the outlined scientific approach **feasible** bearing in mind the groundbreaking nature and ambition of the proposed research (Step 1)?*

*To what extent are the proposed research **methodology and working arrangements** appropriate to achieve the goals of the project (Step 2)?*

*To what extent are the **proposed timescales, resources, and PI commitment** adequate and properly justified (Step 2)?*

Part B1 is all about finding the right balance

Part B1 gives the first impression of your project/yourself and will determine if you pass to Step 2. Thus,

- avoid jargon
- no excessive highlighting
- do not oversell it
- make sure there are no typos
- Make it as accessible as possible to a generalist (have it proofread by many people)
- make sure that there are proper legends to the figures/tables as well as that the figure axes are clearly visible

Part B2 is for filling in the details

- Make sure that there is an obvious link between B1 and B2- no surprises
- Do not repeat the synopsis, go into details on your methodology and work plan
- Explain your hypothesis or provide supporting evidence (if it exists)
- Make sure that the quantitative and qualitative differences to the state-of-the-art are clear and referenced - show you did your homework!
- Provide alternative strategies to mitigate risks.
- Fill in your Funding ID fully.

Part B2 is for filling in the details

- Make the project "easy to read and attractive"
- Use full space available (14 p.)
- Make sure you give full references (these are excluded from page count so there is no excuse)
- You should add/describe some sort of timeline
- Think the project as a team - explain involvement of team members and collaborators (be careful though: ERC proposals are NOT consortium proposals)

Explain properly your resources and budget

- Budget analysis carried out in Step 2 evaluation.
- Panels have responsibility to ensure that resources requested are reasonable and well justified.
- Budget cuts need to be justified on a proposal-by-proposal basis (no across-the-board cuts).
- Costs can be cut when they have not been explained
- Panels do not “micro-manage” project finances.
- Awards made on a “take-it-or-leave-it” basis: no negotiations.
- Ask for funding for Open Access – this is obligatory in HorizonEurope

Rumour 1: *If I do not ask for a large sum, I have no chances- only complex and expensive projects get funded.*

- **NOT true**: There are many areas where it may make little or no sense to ask for the maximal amount of funds. No grant was ever rejected for asking too few funds.

Rumour 2: *Ask for funding beyond the max, the panel will anyhow cut it down.*

- **NOT true**: unexplained or non-motivated requests can be cut down, so if you artificially inflate your budget, the extra funding will be indeed cut.

Lump Sum Funding (Advanced Grant)

Pilot lump sum model for the Advanced Grant 2024 call:

- A lump sum contribution for the entirety of the project defined upfront and by project (capped at funding scheme ceiling):
  - budget based on estimated costs
  - assessed during the evaluation (justification/plausibility)
  - broken down by beneficiary
- One scientific mid-term report, one single payment at the end of the project
- Payment based on completion of activities and not on successful outcome
- Additional funding and portability available; deviations/amendments - possible

I have been invited for an interview – now what?

- Have clear and representative slides and focus on SCIENCE! Don’t try to make a business presentation – you are talking to scientists.
- Keep the time
- Try to anticipate questions. Prepare also for cases where you do not have an answer
- Give to the point answers- be mindful not to talk too much in an unfocussed way
- Know the details of your proposal and methods, as well as your research area – who are your main competitors/collaborators?
- If you have new work on the topic – present it!

Typical reasons for rejection

Research Project

- Scope: Too narrow □□ too broad/unfocussed
- Not clear groundbreaking aspects/Incremental research
- Collaborative project, several PIs
- Work plan not detailed enough/unclear
- Insufficient risk management
- Part B2 did not give sufficient information on the methodology- concerns on feasibility

Principle Investigator

- Insufficient track-record
- Not clear they can carry out the project (not independent, lack of relevant expertise)

If rejected, KEEP TRYING

Reapplications have a higher success rate

Use the feedback from evaluation reports

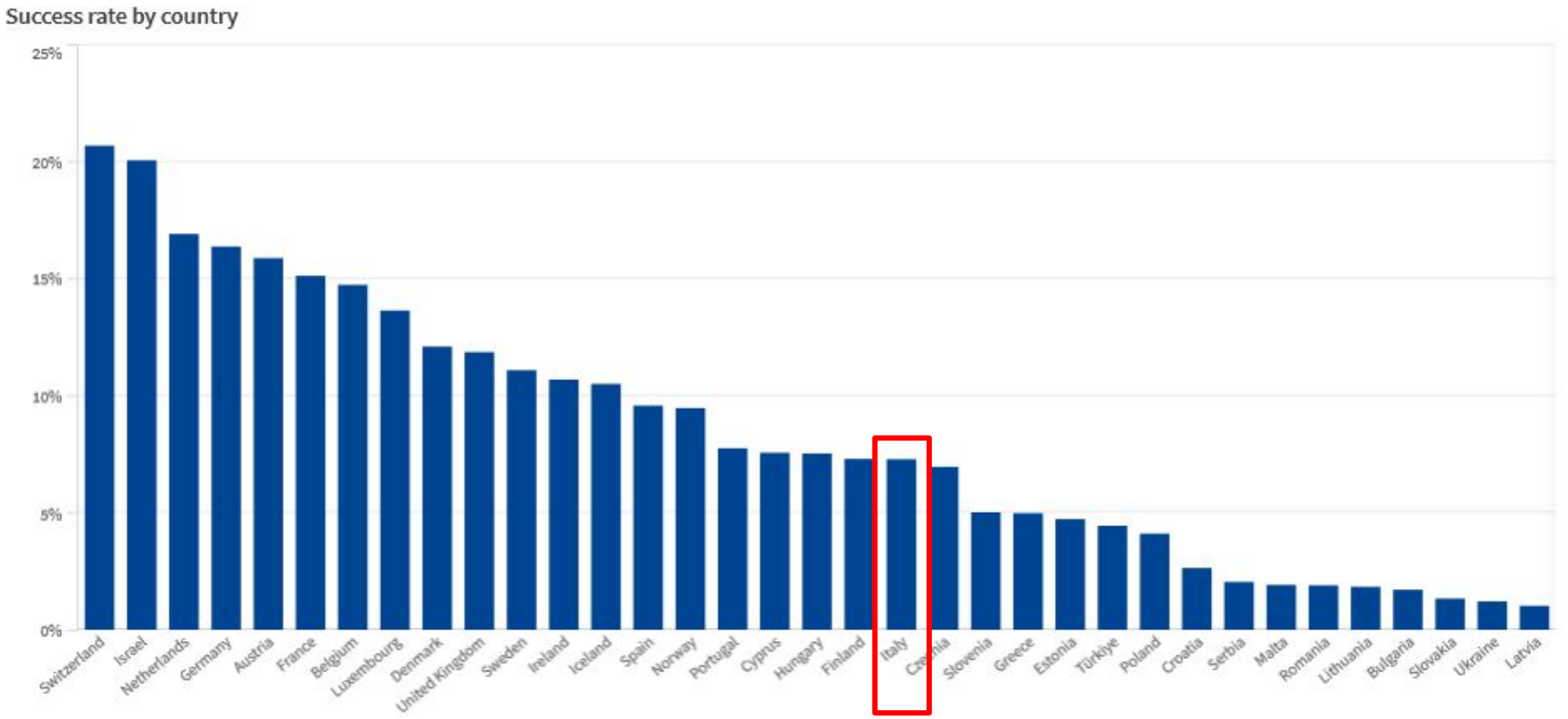
Summary of Novelties – Work Programme 2024

Assessment	No prescriptive PI profiles	Evaluation Procedure	Lump Sum Pilot	Panels
FOCUS ON RESEARCH • Ground-breaking • Ambitious • Feasible	• Up to 10 research outputs • Short narrative • Career breaks, diverse paths	• Up to 44 proposals in step 2 (exc. SyG) • 'A not invited' can reapply next year	• AdG only • One amount • Payment based on the work done (not success) • Additional funding and portability	• New Panel –SH8 • Changes in description of LS3/LS5 panels

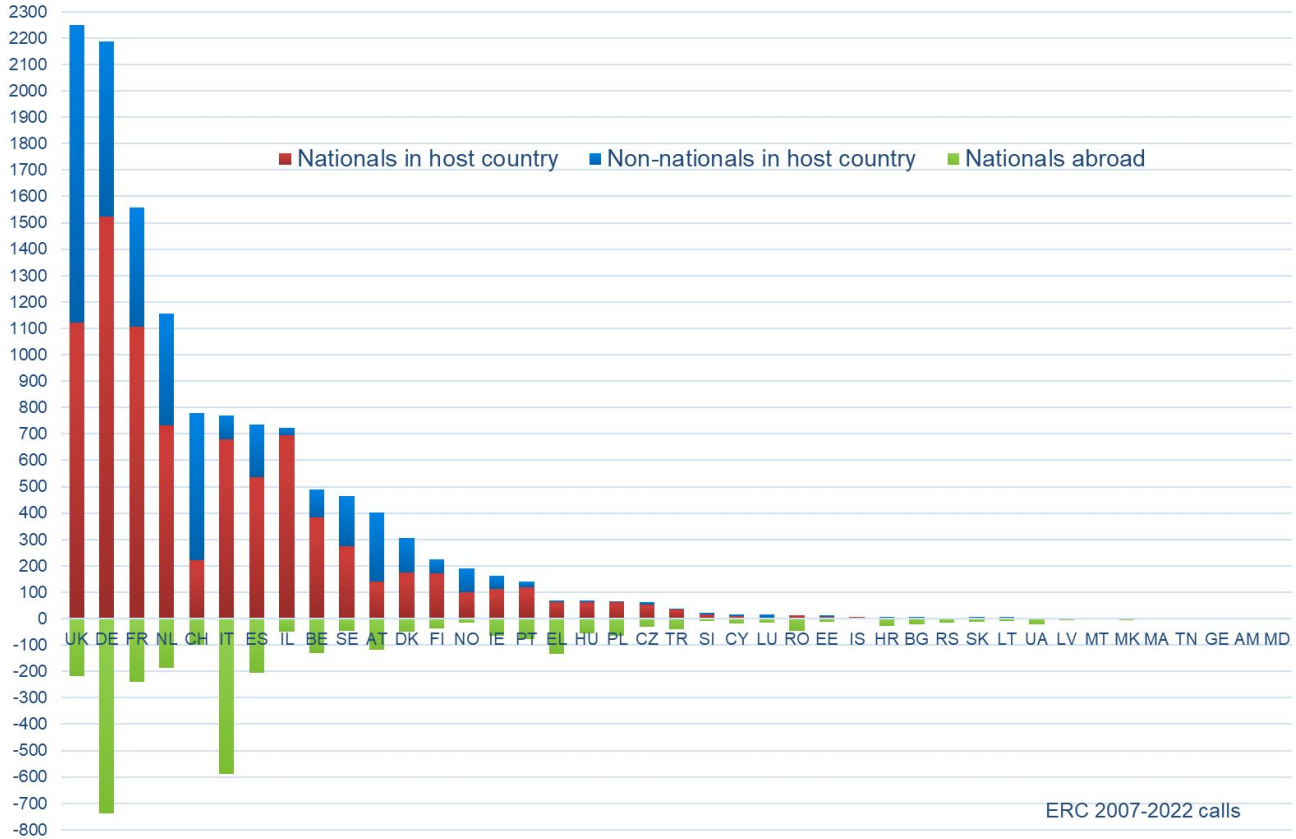
What we will talk about

1. What is the ERC
2. How to apply: prepare your proposal step-by-step
3. **Statistics**

Success rate by country- 2007-2023 (partial)



Distribution of researchers – Nationalities (to 2022)



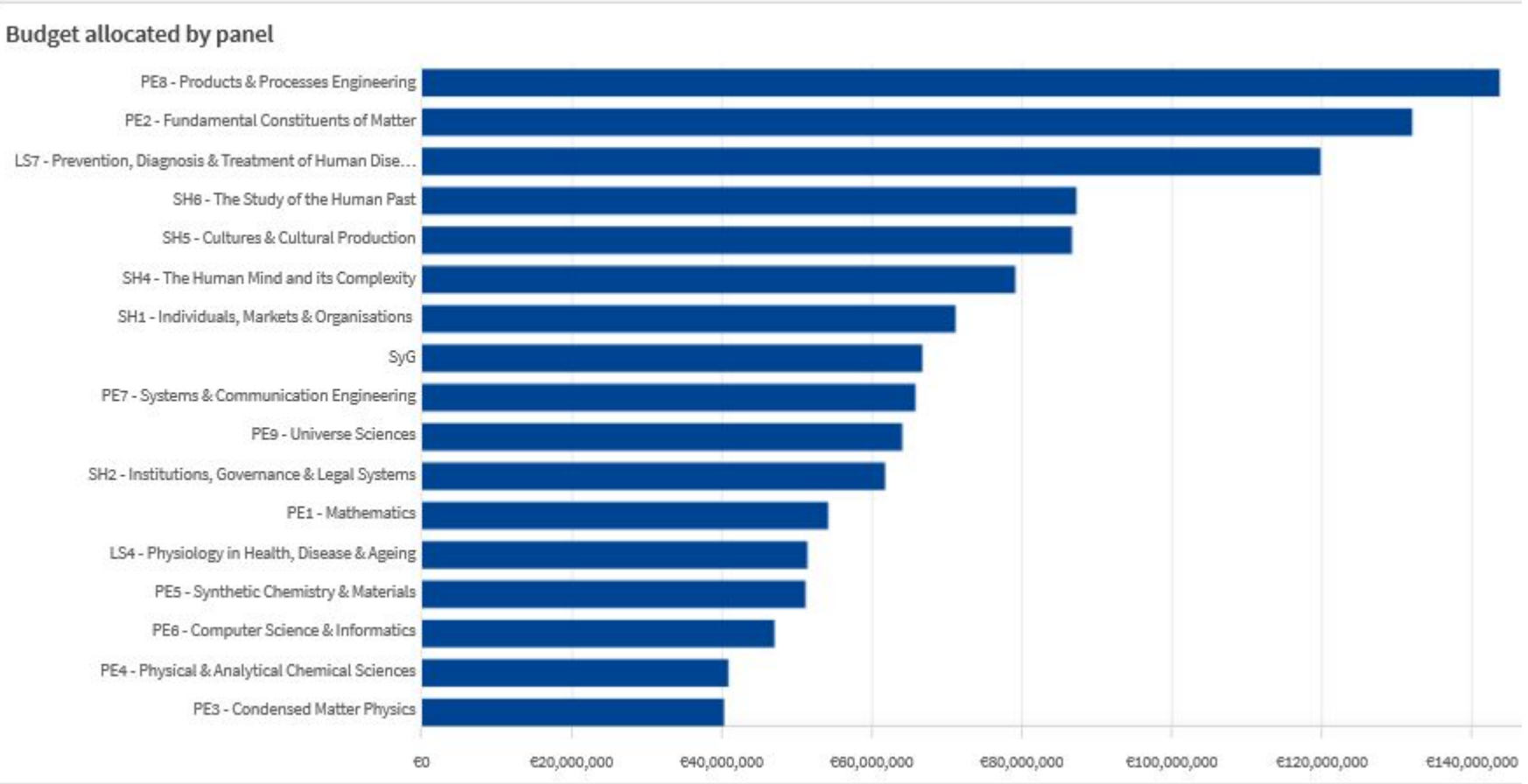
The ERC and Italy

- Italian Nationals are the **2nd most successful** in ERC competitions
  - 1319 grants: 715 hosted in Italy, 604 abroad (UK, FR, DE)

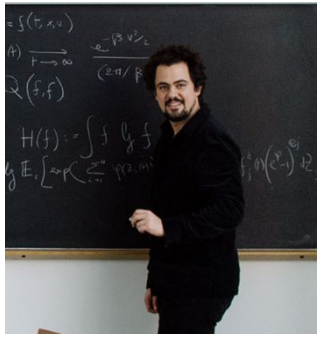
- Italy hosts **840 grants**, totalling **1.49 billion Euro**
  - PIs of **30 nationalities**
  - **31.2 % female PIs** (ERC avg. 26.8 %)

- Over **13,450 Italian proposals** evaluated (StG, CoG, AdG, SyG) evaluated
  - Success rate ca. **6%** (increasing:10% 2021, 11% 2022)

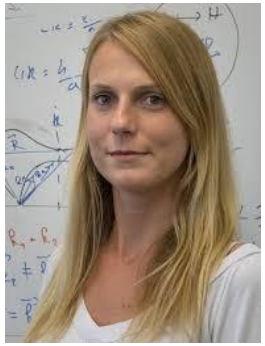
Most funded panels in Italy 2007-2023 (partial)



Sergio Simonella PE1



Marta De Luca PE3



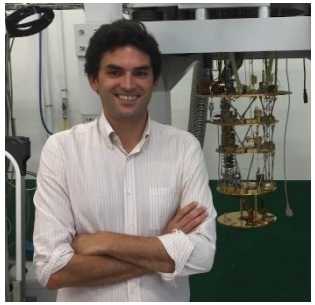
Fabio Sciarrino PE2

Roberto di Leonardo PE3

ERC @ Sapienza and CNR

Claudio Conti PE7

Marco Vignati PE9



John Russo PE3

Emanuela Zaccarelli PE3

Andrea Cavagna PE2

Thank You!

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Host Institution

- Your choice (in an EU Member State/Associated Country)
- You can change it during the project's life
- Negotiate with the HI (your position, equipment, administrative support, access to infrastructure, etc.)

Rumour: *The quality/fame of the HI is increasing my chances/scores.*

- **NOT true**: the HI is not an evaluation criterion!

Step 2: choose your grant type & make sure you are eligible!

- Window is calculated as according to the 1st of January of the year of the Call.

  StG 2025: **1 January 2018** to **31 December 2022 (inclusive)**

  CoG 2025: **1 January 2013** to **31 December 2017 (inclusive)**

The reference date shall be the certified date of the successful defence of the first PhD degree.

- If you previously applied to an ERC call, check resubmission restrictions (see also next slides)
- Minimum 50% of PI working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country
- Time commitment on the project: Min. 50% (StG), 40% (CoG), 30% (AdG/SyG)

Step 2: choose your grant type & make sure you are eligible!

- Extensions of eligibility window possible for StG and CoG for documented cases of:
  - Maternity – 18 months per child (before or after PhD)
  - Paternity – actual time taken off
  - Long-term illness (for the Principal Investigator or a close family member (child, spouse, parent or sibling))
  - Military service
  - Clinical training
  - Natural disaster
  - Seeking asylum

To be (slightly) updated in the 2025 Work Programme

- No limit to the total years of extension

I did not get the grant, can I apply next year?

In order to make the evaluation process more effective, in 2014 the Scientific Council introduced re-submission restrictions.

Beware of Open Access: Publications

Deposition	Immediate deposition in OA repository
Version of the publication to be shared in OA	Final accepted manuscript (AAM) or published version (VoR)
Open Access **repository**	'Trusted repository for scientific publications'
Embargo period	No embargo period: immediate open access upon publication

Licence of the deposited version of the publication	Creative Commons (CC BY) or equivalent; for long-text formats CC BY-NC/ND/NC-ND acceptable (book chapters are treated like articles!)
Publication **metadata** (deposited version)	More detailed metadata, for example on licence, research data, outputs/ tools, PIDs, etc.
Publication **fees** (APC, BPC, other fees)	'Only publication fees in full open access venues for peer-reviewed scientific publications are eligible for reimbursement'

Beware of Open Access: Data

Deposition and **sharing** of data	PIs **must deposit** 'digital research data generated in the project' as soon as possible (to be outlined in the DMP)
Data Management Plan (DMP) (due at month 6)	**All** ERC projects
Data **repository**	'**Trusted** repository'
Licence	Creative Commons (**CC BY or CC0**) or equivalent

Evaluation Process Overview

3-STEP EVALUATION

with **interviews** with all PIs in Step 3

Initial PC meeting
only 5 PCs

to assign **all proposals**

Step 1 meeting
only 5 PCs & 6 VPCs

to pass **max 7x call budget**

Step 2 meeting
all 87 Panel Members

to pass **max 4x call budget**

Step 3 meeting
INTERVIEWS
all 87 Panel Members

Step 1 → **Step 2** → **Step 3**

Remote Phase 1

Review **Part B1** by 87 PMs (31 LS) & ca. 120 PEVs* as **generalists**

Remote Phase 2

Review **Part B1 + B2** by 87 PMs as **generalists** & ca. 6 **External Reviewers** per proposal as **specialists**

Remote Phase 3

Preparation of **interview** questions & strategy (**NO** new reviews)

*PEV = panel evaluator
(Panel Member serving in another ERC call)

Scientific units

- 28 “panel teams” within the 3 units (one unit per domain)
- Each team has 3-4 officers, all with a relevant scientific background
- Organise the evaluations:
    - liaise with the panel members to explain and coordinate their work
    - Invite and follow external reviews (step 2)
    - presence during panel meetings to guide and ensure no “unwanted” criteria are considered + ensure outcome documents are delivered
- Project follow-up
    - Verify scientific progress reports
    - Verify scientific aspects of amendments
    - Feed into communication activities

Contractual possibilities

for scientific and ethics officers

- **Temporary Agents** (25%)
  often involves some team coordination
- **Contract Agents** (75%)

} ***Contract duration (after probation) related to the Agency's mandate (e.g. currently until 2027)***

- **Seconded National Experts** – salary paid by national employer + receiving an indemnity (ca. 5000 €/month) - 2-year contracts, renewable up to 3 times (max. 6 years)
- **Interim staff** – recruited locally on the basis of short-term assignments - subject to Belgian employment conditions

Note: the management is essentially seconded from the European Commission

My Two Cents as an ERC applicant/referee (Paolo)

- **Common comments (MSCA or ERC):**
  a. Start planning/writing very well in advance, every detail is important
  b. Panelists/reviewers are physicists, but might have different backgrounds → *strike balance between clarity & rigour*
  c. Read carefully the evaluation grid, reviewers will have to follow those instructions
  d. Ask several feedback from supervisor/peers

- **ERC:**
  a. Quality of Project+Applicant is the only parameter (see slides by Odeta for details)
  b. Panel is crucial
  c. *Bad news*: 2-step evaluation but 1-step submission: B1 must be perfect… and so must B2!
  d. *Good (?) news*: IMHO much is decided before the interview (hard to revert the reports?)
  e. Nevertheless, get prepared for the interview at best (read B2 critically after some time and wonder about those questions you would never want to get)
  f. *Mock interview:* prepare typical answers also to standard and personal questions (might be silly to answer)
  g. *Panelists are scientists*→ interview mostly about science (but be able to justify the budget!)
  h. *If you get it*: ask again for advise on how to spend it, internal HI arrangements, recruiting, management, coordination…