

Quick Reference Guide

Funder: European Research Council

Scheme: Horizon 2020 - ERC Consolidator Grants

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Overview: The ERC established by the EU ten years ago, to support excellent researchers in Europe. Since its conception it has supported ground breaking, frontier researchers including some Nobel Prize winners. Throughout the years ERC grants have also created career opportunities for nearly 7,000 grantees and 50,000 research staff in their teams, resulted in numerous scientific breakthroughs and led to over 800 patent applications that lay the foundations for growth and jobs, and the improvement of people's daily lives. ERC is Europe's **most prestigious research grant**, supporting excellent investigators and their research teams in carrying out ground-breaking, high-risk, high-gain, frontier research projects.



ERC proposals are very different from other funding grants, and it is important to adjust the proposal to the unique ERC requirements by thinking big, shifting the writing style, and ensuring that the idea is conveyed properly. The ERC's frontier research grants operate on a 'bottom-up' basis without predetermined priorities. The sole criterion is **Excellence**, which consists of two parts: the Principal Investigator (PI) and their research proposal.

Consolidator Grants: If, as a young scientist, you're interested in **consolidating your independence** by establishing a research team and continuing to develop a success career in Europe, the ERC is here to help. 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.

Call Identifiers: ERC-2018-CoG **Call opens:** 24/10/2017 **Deadline:** 15/02/2018

Eligibility: researchers of any age and nationality with **7-12 years of experience since completion of PhD**, a scientific track record showing great promise and an excellent research proposal.

(The effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD can be reduced in certain, properly documented circumstances: **Maternity Leave:** 18 months extension to the track record per child born before or after the PhD award. **Paternity Leave:** the time elapsed since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by the documented amount of paternity leave actually taken (actual time) for each child born before or after the PhD award. **Long term illness, clinical training or national service:** extension to match actual, documented leave taken after the PhD award.)

Location: research must be conducted in a public or private research organisation (known as a Host Institution/HI). It could be the HI where the applicant already works, or any other HI located in one of the EU [Member States](#) or [Associated Countries](#). The PI 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.

Funding per grant: up to € 2 million.

Eligible costs include: Personnel, Students, Admin/Project Management, Equipment, Publications and Audit Costs, Travel-Subsistence, Consumables.

Additional funding: A further €750.000 can be requested 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 facilities. VAT is an eligible cost, more details in the [H2020- Annotated Model Grant Agreement](#).

Start date: It is expected that Principal Investigators will be able to start their project within six months of receiving an invitation letter from the ERC.

Duration: up to 5 years

Who is ERC material?

The evaluators are looking for PIs that have demonstrated leadership potential, have an outstanding track record and CV and have published in high impact journals in their respective fields. Evaluators take into account the career stage of each researcher and their track record. It is not essential that you have published in Nature or Science to be funded from ERC. However it is vital to demonstrate leadership in your field for example through high impact publications.

A competitive Consolidator Grant Principal Investigator must have already shown research independence and evidence of maturity, for example by having produced **several important publications as main author or without the participation of their PhD supervisor**.

Balancing "High Risk" and Feasibility

ERC are interested in projects that propose a step change and that are "high risk- high gain" projects. It is therefore essential that your project includes a "high risk" element but equally important that what you propose is feasible. Ideally the high risk element can be backed up by preliminary findings or anything else that can demonstrate some feasibility. ERC will fund projects that will go beyond the state of the art and that is why your project needs to be "high risk, high gain" and break new ground in your respective field.

Some common mistakes are: Recycling old proposals/ideas and also putting proposals with no clear hypothesis. ERC expects researchers to challenge current state of the art and propose imaginative and exciting ideas. You need to think how the work you are proposing will have made a difference 5 years down the road. ERC is interested in frontier research and not incremental ideas. Remember to balance risk and reward.

The ERC has introduced restrictions for applicants who have applied to previous ERC schemes. Details can be found on page 18-19 [here](#).

Proposal Submission

Proposals should be submitted through the participant portal submission system (PPSS): <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/home.html>

Annexes:

- **Commitment of the host institution.** This is prepared by Elaine Crosbie from the European team at the RSO. As soon as you have the title and acronym of the project you can email these to Elaine along with your full name as it should appear: elaine.crosbie@ed.ac.uk and she will prepare one for you.
- **Ethical Issues annex:** you should address here any issues raised on the ethics table you completed on part A- Administrative forms on the portal. Briefly the ethics table covers the following areas and if you answer YES to any of those you need to provide an explanation and justification in the Ethics annex:
 1. Human protection
 2. Animal protection/welfare
 3. Data protection/privacy
 4. Environmental protection
 5. Participation of non-EU countries
 6. Malevolent use of research results