



ERC Proposal Writing Guide

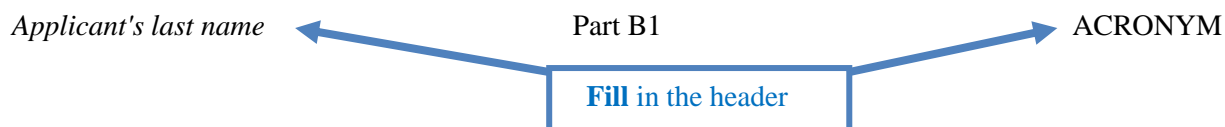
Starting Grant 2015

This is your guide to a convincing ERC Starting Grant Proposal, provided by [Euresearch](#). It is based on the ERC proposal templates, the [Information for Applicants](#) and several years of experience as an ERC National Contact Person.

This guide complements the [Information for Applicants](#) (official ERC document) that you should read first.

If you have questions regarding your proposal, consult the Swiss [ERC FAQ Blog](#), the [ERC Website](#) or contact your [National Contact Person in Switzerland](#) or in your [Host Country](#), respectively.

Good luck with your proposal!



ERC Starting Grant 2015
Research proposal [Part B1]¹
*(Part B1 is evaluated both in Step 1 and Step 2
Part B2 is evaluated in Step 2 only)*

Proposal Full Title

Your title should be short and clear

PROPOSAL ACRONYM

Choose a short and handy acronym
(<http://acronymcreator.net/>)

Cover Page:

- Name of the Principal Investigator (PI)
- Name of the PI's host institution for the project
- Proposal duration in months

Proposal summary (identical to the abstract from the online proposal submission forms, section 1).

The abstract (summary) should, at a glance, provide the reader with a clear understanding of the objectives of the research proposal and how they will be achieved. The abstract will be used as the short description of your research proposal in the evaluation process and in communications to contact in particular the potential remote referees and/or inform the Commission and/or the programme management committees and/or relevant national funding agencies (provided you give permission to do so where requested in the online proposal submission forms, section 1). It must therefore be short and precise and should not contain confidential information.

Please use plain typed text, avoiding formulae and other special characters. The abstract must be written in English. There is a limit of 2000 characters (spaces and line breaks included).

Abstract and title are very important. They decide if the evaluators are interested in reading the whole story.

Write a concise and crystal clear abstract. What is your idea, your objective, your method?

Explain and justify the cross-panel or cross domain nature of your proposal, if a secondary panel is indicated in the online proposal submission forms. There is a limit of 1000 characters, spaces and line breaks included.

Your proposal looks nicer if you get rid of all the instructions provided in the template.



¹ Instructions for completing Part B1 can be found in the Information for Applicants for the Starting Grant 2015 Call.

Before you start, be aware of the following points:

- After the (short) lecture of part B1, the evaluators should know that you are excellent and the right person to get the grant.
- A nice layout is important. The evaluators have to read many proposals, thus it is essential that they can see the important information in your proposal at once. Work with bullet points, numbered sub-titles, breaks etc.
- Respect always the maximal number of pages and the following formatting constraints: Arial or similar, at least font size 11, margins (2.0 side and 1.5 bottom), single line spacing.
- Proposals must be submitted electronically via the web-based [Participant Portal Submission Service \(PPSS\)](#). Access to PPSS is available from the call page (after selecting a topic, click on the 'Submission Service' button, and a type of action of a call) of the Research and Innovation Participant Portal.
- The use of the templates is mandatory. You can only download them once you registered in the PPSS. From there you will have access to the online administrative submission forms including the mandatory filling of the Ethics Table for all proposals.
- In case of technical problems, you can contact the [Participant Portal IT Helpdesk](#).

Section a: Extended Synopsis of the project proposal (max 5 pages)

- It is recommended to first write the project proposal (B2) and then the synopsis.
- References to literature should be included in the 5 pages.
- Note that the evaluators have only access to B1 in the first evaluation stage. I.e. they can't read your full proposal. This means that you should focus to a maximum to the synopsis, that decides (together with the CV part) if you are invited to the interview.
- For more tips, see Section B2, Scientific Proposal.

Section b: Curriculum vitae (max 2 pages)

- This section is a classical CV.
- Mention the exact date of your PhD award (the date on your diploma).
- Which sub-headers are best to describe yourself and your achievements? E.g.,
 - Education
 - Professional Experience
 - Awards
 - Teaching and Supervision Activities
 - Key Publications
- Use indexes, summaries...
- The competition is high. The evaluators should see your excellence at once! Sell yourself, without bluffing.
- Report on any significant career breaks. Peer reviewers will take it into consideration during the assessment of the quality of the PI and his/her career progression.
- Mention a distinct funding ID, which shows how much you are able to raise and manage funding. Use Euro. The funding ID will not count towards page limits. It must follow the table format indicated in the Part B1 template:

On-going Grants

Project Title	Funding Source	Amount (€)	Period	Role of the PI	Relation to current ERC proposal

Grant applications

Project Title	Funding Source	Amount (€)	Period	Role of the PI	Relation to current ERC proposal

- Describe clearly any scientific overlap between your ERC application and the current research grant or on-going grant application.

Section c: Early achievements track-record (max 2 pages)

- List your activities as stated in the [Information for Applicants](#) p. 24.
- Don't forget to list 5 representative publications and highlight those without the presence of your PhD supervisor (minimum 1).
- Choose the achievements that are highly valued in YOUR domain. It depends a lot on the domain if it's rather first authorship, last authorship, conference proceedings etc.
- The publications are the part the evaluators seem to be most interested in.
- No repetition from the CV necessary. Don't give the same information twice.
- You can comment on your publications. E.g., if you are from a domain where peer reviewing is not widely used, you can briefly explain this. This can be helpful for cross-disciplinary researchers who will be assessed by evaluators from two completely different scientific domains.

ERC Starting Grant 2015
Research proposal [Part B2)]
(not evaluated in step 1)

Part B2: *The scientific proposal* (max. 15 pages)

Please respect the following formatting constraints: Times New Roman, Arial or similar, at least font size 11, margins (2.0cm side and 1.5cm top and bottom), single line spacing.

The project proposal should provide detailed descriptions on the project's aim, planning, execution, and required resources. See [Information for Applicants](#) p. 24-26.

Note that this part is only evaluated in step 2 of the evaluation.

You have to use the Word-template provided online in the Participant Portal Submission Page for the call.

Before you start, think of the following points:

- Be aware: The ERC funds basic research projects that are novel, creative, go significantly beyond the state of the art, make substantial advances in the frontiers of knowledge, use new methods and techniques, are interdisciplinary, and high-risk-high-gain projects. This means: Focus on these aspects!
- The ERC funds projects that cannot be funded otherwise. Describe why you need the ERC grant! And why now.
- Your project must make a difference.
- Risky projects are welcome. It must be clear, however, that you are aware of the risks and know how to tackle them. The feasibility must clearly be shown. Find a balance between being original and realistic. You may present a „plan B“. Be ambitious, but not „naive“.

When writing, remember the following aspects:

- The proposal must be short, concise, crystal clear. No “noise”.
- Display your information clearly and in a user-friendly manner.
- The proposal has to be understandable for experts as well as for generalists (applies also for abbreviations and non-english terms). Have a look at the panel composition to better judge and match to the level of understanding of subject by panel members.
- Graphs and tables are highly recommended.
- Include a list of references. They have to be within the maximal number of pages.
- Include timetable, milestones etc. (maybe in form of a table or graph). It must be clear who does what when.
- It is recommended to first write the proposal and then the synopsis.

Section a. State-of-the-art and objectives

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

Important:

- Get to the point quickly.
- Write explicitly your objectives. If possible, number them.
- The hierarchy of titles should be clear.
- Use sub headers, bullet points, graphs etc., in order to make your text easily readable and appealing for the reader.

Section b. Methodology

Describe the proposed methodology in detail, as requested in the [Information for Applicants](#) p. 25.

Section c. Resources (incl. project costs)

- It is strongly recommended to use the costing table template below.
- In addition to the budget table, explain your budget also in written text. Describe the size and nature of the team, and the equipment needed. See [Information for Applicants](#) p. 25-26.
- If you request the additional funding of € 500,000 for the purchase of major equipment including access to large infrastructure or for start-up costs when moving from a third country, you have to fully justify it.
- Check that the budget provided here corresponds precisely to the information provided in Part A of the proposal. In case of discrepancy, the data in section 3 of Part A will prevail.
- The project cost estimation should be as accurate as possible. There's no advantage in having a low or a high budget, budget what you need for your project.
- There is no minimum contribution per year; the requested contribution should be in proportion to the actual needs to fulfill the objectives of the project.
- Your [Euresearch Regional Office](#) can help you to set up or check your budget.

Cost Category			Total in Euro
Direct Costs ²	Personnel	PI ³	
		Senior Staff	
		Postdocs	
		Students	
		Other	
	i. Total Direct costs for Personnel (in Euro)		
	Travel		
	Equipment		
	Other goods and services	Consumables	
		Publications (including Open Access fees), etc.	
		Other (please specify)	
ii. Total Other Direct Costs (in Euro)			
A – Total Direct Costs (i + ii) (in Euro)			
B – Indirect Costs (overheads) 25% of Direct Costs ⁴ (in Euro)			
C1 – Subcontracting Costs (no overheads) (in Euro)			
C2 – Other Direct Costs with no overheads ⁵ (in Euro)			
Total Estimated Eligible Costs (A + B+ C) (in Euro) ⁶			
Total Requested EU Contribution (in Euro) ⁶			

For the above cost table, please indicate the duration of the project in months: ⁷	
For the above cost table, please indicate the % of working time the PI dedicates to the project over the period of the grant:	%

Please note that you are expected to devote at least 50% of your total working time to the ERC-funded project and spend at least 50% of your total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country.

² An additional cost category 'Direct Costing for Large Research Infrastructures' applicable to H2020 can be added to this table (below 'Other goods and services') for PIs who are hosted by institutions with Large Research Infrastructures of a value of at least EUR 20 million and **only** after having received a positive ex-ante assessment from the Commission's services (see 'Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2015 Calls' for more details).³ When calculating the salary, please take into account the percentage of your dedicated working time to run the ERC-funded project (i.e. minimum 50% of your total working time).⁴ Please note that the overheads are fixed to a flat rate of exactly 25%.⁵ Such as the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the beneficiary (see 'Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2015 Calls' for details).⁶ These figures MUST match those presented in the online proposal submission form, section 3 – Budget.⁷ The maximum award is reduced pro rata temporis for projects of a shorter duration (e.g. for a project of 48 months duration the maximum requested EU contribution allowed is EUR 1.2 million). Additional funding to cover major one-off costs is not subject to pro-rata temporis reduction for projects of shorter duration (e.g. with additional funding it is possible to request a maximum EU contribution of EUR 1.7 million for a project). details).

Supporting Documentation

- Any additional annexes, including the PhD documentation, the host institution support letter (and where relevant the ethics self assessment and/or documents supporting the request for extension of the eligibility time window) should be provided and uploaded as separate pdf documents. These annexes do not count towards the maximum page limit for Part B2 (see [Information for Applicants](#), p. 29)

Ethics self-assessment

- When submitting your proposal, you have to complete the Ethics Issues Table which is section A4 of the online proposal submission forms and submit an ethics self-assessment (separate annex) if you answer 'yes' to one or several questions in the Ethics Issues Table. This procedure is new. There is no ethics table in the proposal B2 anymore.
- You can find more information and guidance to write an ethics self-assessment in Annex 4 to the '[Information for Applicants](#)'.
- You should include any supporting documentation, such as any authorization you may already have. This will allow a more effective ethics clearance and an accelerated granting process. (You can upload any related documents or annexes in PPSS Step 5 'Edit Proposal').
- A dedicated website that aims to provide helpful information including ethics issues is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/ethics_en.htm

Finished? Check your proposal with the check list on the next page!

Checklist: Is your ERC Starting Grant proposal complete?

Important Documents

- [Work Programme 2015](#)
- [Information for Applicants](#)

Preparation

- Did you check your eligibility and (if applicable) the re-submission rules? → Check the Work Programme and the Information for Applicants.
- Did you check with your Host Institution (HI) from whom you need the signature for the Host Institution Letter? Is your candidature consistent with the HI internal rules? → Contact your Euresearch [Regional Office](#).
- Did you register in PPSS and download the templates?
- Did you fill in the A forms in PPSS?
- Do you have the Participant Identification Code (PIC) of your institution? → Contact your Euresearch [Regional Office](#).

Part B1

- Does the synopsis contain all the necessary information to properly evaluate your project idea, without having access to B2?
- Is your CV logical, consistent and complete?
- Did you list all your achievements?
- Is it clear that and why you are tomorrow's research leader? Where your excellence is?
- Is a funding ID present?
- Did you mention the exact date of your PhD award (same date as on your certificate)?
- For re-submitters: Are you aware that there is no Leadership Potential any more, and that the template changed since last year?

Part B2

- Is it clear why you need the ERC grant for this project, why your project is novel and beyond the state of the art?
- Is it clear what you are going to do when and how? Did you mention a work plan / intermediate goals / work packages or similar?
- When setting up your work plan, remember that you have to spend at least 50% of your work load for the ERC project.
- Is the bibliography within the maximal number of pages? (annex is not allowed)
- Did you complete the Ethics self-assessment?
- Did you explain how you handle potential risks in the project? Did you present a "plan B" if something doesn't work out?
- Is it clear which team member will do what when?
- Did you fill in the budget table?
- Did you check your budget with your Euresearch Regional Office?
- Is your budget in Euro and in full numbers (not kEuro)?
- Is the budget in part B2 consistent with the figures you entered in Section 3 of the Administrative Form?
- Did you add 25% overhead?
- Do not forget to include the costs for the Certificate on Financial Statements in your budget.

Final check

- Are you within the maximal number of pages?
- Is your layout clear, nice, user friendly?
- Is the setup of the proposal logical?
- Is the hierarchy of the titles clear?
- Is your proposal crystal clear? No copy paste? No "unnecessary noise"?

- Does your proposal answer these questions: What, why, how, when, why now, why you?
- Did you show why you need the ERC for your project, and how it supports you in becoming an independent research leader?
- Is your proposal understandable for experts as well as for generalists?
- Are the figures in your proposal understandable on a printed black-and-white copy?
- Is your English (almost) perfect?
- Did you put yourself in the role of an evaluator and evaluate your own proposal with the evaluation criteria in front of you?
- Is part B complete, printable and readable?

Upload of documents through the Participant Portal Submission Service (PPSS)

- Did you upload the following documents?
 - Proposal part B1, as pdf
 - Proposal part B2, as pdf
 - Scanned copy of your PhD certificate
 - If necessary: Documentation of prolongation of time of eligibility
 - Scanned copy of signed Host Institution Letter
 - If necessary: Supporting documentation regarding Ethics self-assessment
- You are not allowed to upload other documents.
- Did you upload your proposal at least two days before the deadline?
- Did you press the SUBMIT button after uploading the documents?
- Did you print out and check the uploaded documents?

Technical issues

- Is part B within the 10 Mbytes size limit?
- Is your computer virus-checked (if not, PPSS can be blocked)?
- In case of problems, you can contact the Participant Portal IT Helpdesk:
<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/api/contact/index.html> .

Questions?

Contact the ERC National Contact Person for Switzerland, Dr. Katja Wirth, 031 380 60 18, katja.wirth@euresearch.ch or Dr. Judith Zbinden, 031 380 60 16, judith.zbinden@euresearch.ch, www.euresearch.ch.