

The European Research Council

ERC evaluation process – technical aspects

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SH7 Human mobility, environment and space

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National Information Day on ERC Grants



European Research Council

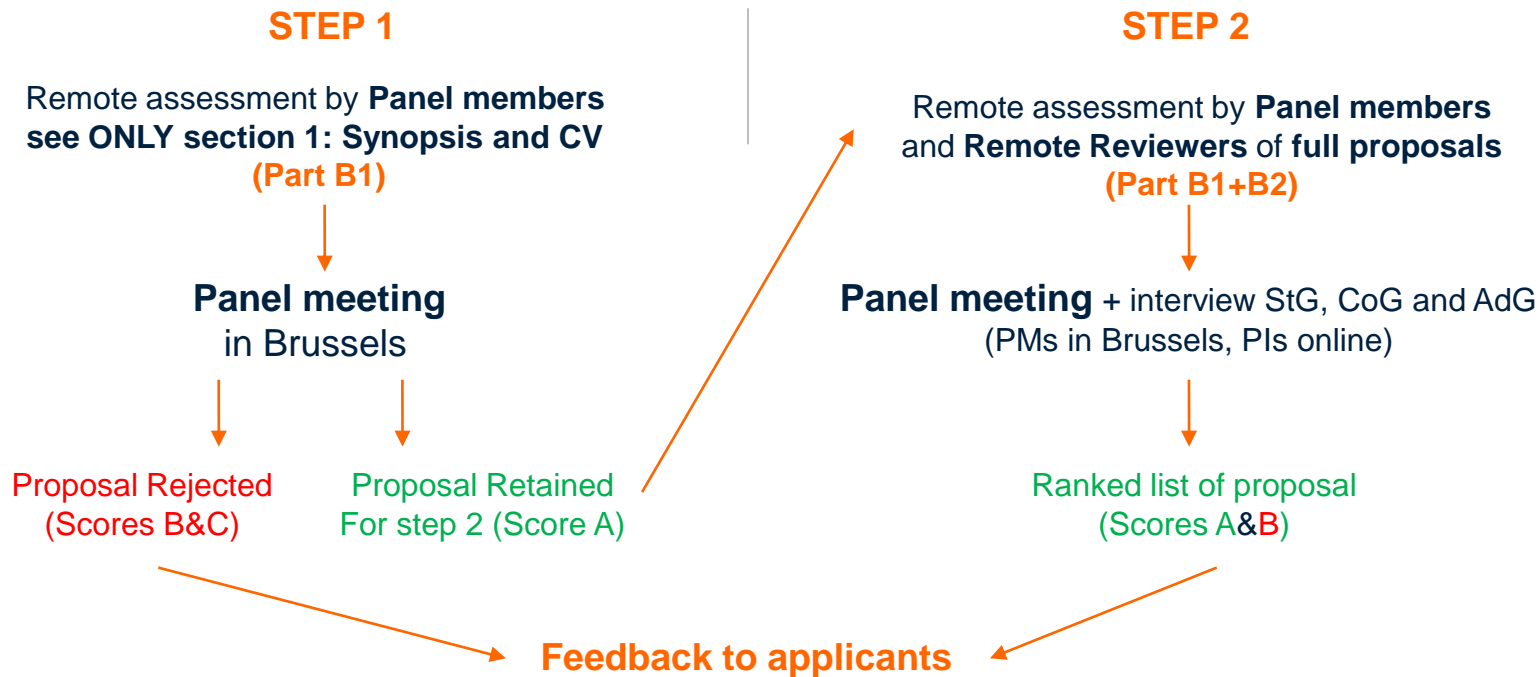
Established by the European Commission

Presentation outline

- Selection of panel members and referees
- Conflict of Interest
- Interviews
- How do panels form their feedback/ESRs
- How is the budget assessed?
- Differences between Step 1 and 2 of evaluation

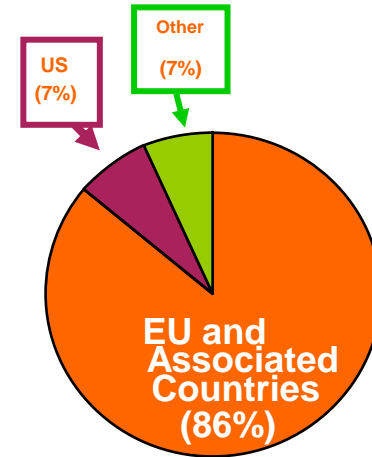
Evaluation: Process

For individuals calls: a single submission but a two-step evaluation



Evaluation - StG/CoG/AdG

- Panel members: **about 400 / call (SyG:~100)**
 - a panel - about 15 -17 members, including one chairperson
 - high-level scientists
 - recruited by the **ERC Scientific Council**
 - from all over the world: ~14% from outside Europe
- Remote reviewers: **about 2000 / call**
 - recommended by the panel members
 - evaluate only a small number of proposals
 - similar to normal practice in peer-reviewed journals



Scientific Council Members



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(Biology)
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(Psychology)
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Prof. Jesper
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(Biology)



Prof. Alice
VALKÁROVÁ
(Physics)



Prof. Milena
ŽIC FUCHS
(Linguistics)

Conflict of Interest

- I am PI or team member in the proposal (or any other proposal submitted to the same call).
- I was involved in the preparation of the proposal (or any other proposal submitted to the same panel).
- I would benefit directly should the proposal (or any other proposal submitted to the same panel) be accepted or rejected.
- I am employed or contracted by the host or partner institutions of the proposal - or have been so in the past 3 years.
- I am involved in the management of the host or partner institutions of the proposal - or have been so in the past 3 years.
- I am collaborating scientifically - or have done so in the past 5 years - with the PI.
- I have (or have had) a mentor/mentee relationship with the PI.
- I have family ties or close personal relationship with the PI (or any PI submitting a proposal to the same panel).
- I have family ties or close personal relationship with anyone who was involved in the preparation of the proposal (or any other proposal submitted to the same panel).
- I have family ties or close personal relationship with anyone who would benefit directly from the proposal being granted (or from any other proposal submitted to the same panel being granted) or rejected.
- I am (or was) in a relationship of scientific rivalry or hostility with the PI.
- I am a National Contact Point or working for the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN).
- I am a member of a programme committee.
- I am in any other situation that would preclude the impartial review of the proposal or that could appear to do so.



Conflicts of Interest – ‘Out of call’

- Panel Member (PM) has submitted a proposal as a PI to the call.
- PM participates as a team member in a proposal submitted to the call.
- PM was involved in the preparation of any proposal assigned to the same panel in which the PM is serving.
- PM would benefit directly should any proposal assigned to the same panel in which the PM is serving be accepted or rejected.
- PM has close family ties (spouse, domestic or non-domestic partner, child, sibling, parent, etc.) or another form of close personal relationship with the PI or with a person (including a representative of any beneficiary) who, to their knowledge, would benefit if such a proposal were successful or who was involved in the preparation of any proposal assigned to the panel in which the PM is serving.
- PM is a member of Horizon Europe Programme Committee or a National Contact Point or working for the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN).

Conflicts of Interest – ‘Out of room ’

(Panel Members must leave the room or the virtual meeting)

- Employed or contracted by the same ‘applicant legal entity’ (host institution) or any other party involved in the action (or have been so in the last three years), e.g. CNRS, CSIC, MPG, University of Barcelona, etc.).
- Involved in a scientific collaboration with the PI in the last five years.
- Involved in prior mentoring of the PI (ex-PhD student etc.).
- Situation (present or past) of scientific rivalry or professional hostility with the PI.
- Any other situation that would preclude the impartial review of the proposal or that could appear to do so in the eyes of an outside third party.
- Panel members must leave the virtual meeting room during discussion / decision of proposals for which they have a Col.

Conflicts of Interest - Exceptional Cases

- The institutional Conflict of Interest rule can be exceptionally waived under certain conditions for very large legal entities (CSIC, CNRS, etc.):
 - expertise of Panel Member is relevant and required for the proper evaluation of the proposal(s)
 - department/laboratory/institute is physically separated from that of the applicant (different city, different campus)
 - employed at a different department/laboratory/institute to the one where the work is to be carried out, and the constituent bodies of the expert's organisation operate with a high degree of autonomy
- Panel Members must sign a declaration in case of Conflict of Interest relaxation

The Interview

Show **SCIENTIFIC CURIOSITY** and be **PROUD** of that!

YOU have very good chances! (> 30%)

YOUR **unique** opportunity to convince the panel

YOU know very well every part of your proposal

DO Stress the main new concepts early on !

DO Stick to the time !

BE PREPARED for questions (Lead Reviewer, Panel Chair, Panel Members) !

Rehearse & challenge yourself !!!

The Interview

Risk Mitigation:

DEMONSTRATE you know what you propose:

- You know the risks.
- You have a plan to mitigate.
- You have the ability to explore novel routes.
- Need collaborators? How you manage them?
- How you cover missing expertise?

- If not presented in the proposal, prepare **preliminary results**.

- What is it you will be **famous** for after the five years?

What if someone else published similar work in the meantime??? **BE AWARE!!!**

COME PREPARED TO :

- **Justify** how similar/different the works are
- What would you change to make it novel and original again?
- Where do you go from here?

Where Can You Find More Information?



Videos - ERC Classes

- What to consider before applying
- How to fill in the application (Part B1 and B2)
- The interview
- How the evaluation works

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbFbzkVWgCU&list=PLtv6FnsXqnXAYRk6HCErwMxwML0ZKoMcy>

Evaluation: Individual reviews



Excellence
is the sole evaluation criterion

Excellence of the Research Project

- Ground breaking nature
- Potential impact
- Scientific Approach

Excellence of the Principal Investigator

- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity
- Commitment

Panel Comments - Content and structure

- Consist of ERC standard introductory paragraph + specific panel comment drafted by the Lead Reviewer (and agreed by the other reviewing PMs) + ERC standard closing sentence.
- Refer to both, the PI and the Project.
- Are a conclusive statement from the panel that explains and justifies the panel decision.
- Are short but substantial, mentioning the main strengths and/or weaknesses of the proposal and the PI that formed the basis of the panel decision.
- Should not sound as another individual review.
- Should not contain extracts copied from the individual reviews (which the PI will also receive).

Proposal Budgets - Review by panels

- Concerns all 'A' proposals within the panel budget & if applicable **additional 'A' proposals outside the panel budget**.
- Budget assessed only in step 2
- Panels should check that the requested resources are reasonable and justified.
- Full Cost Model (ERC funds 100% requested budget).
- 'Normal' maximum **is 1,5/2/2,5 M Euro** over 5 years (subject to pro-rata reduction).

Proposal Budget - Additional funding

- An extra **1M Euro** can be requested (not subject to pro-rata reduction).
- → Confirmed in panel comment that additional requested budget is justified.
- Request for additional funding (up to 1 Mio EUR)
 - "start-up" costs for Principal Investigators moving to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere
 - purchase of major equipment
 - access to large facilities
 - other major experimental and field work costs, excluding personnel costs (new)

Proposal Budgets - PI salary and time commitment

- PI salary is an eligible cost independent of employment scheme.
- Panels cannot make recommendations on salaries (complex & varies from country to country).
- ERC makes payments against actual costs incurred in accordance with the Host Institution's legal requirements and normal practice.
- PI dedication: **min. 50/40/30% commitment to the project** and 50% time in an EU or Associated Country.

Proposal Budgets - Adjustment recommendations

- Budget adjustments should be:
 - Exceptional and always properly justified (no micro management).
 - Resource based (workforce, equipment, etc.).
 - Considered on a case-by-case basis – no cuts across the board
- Open Access costs are an eligible cost (mandatory for all funded projects).
- **One final figure**, based on detailed calculation, **in the panel comment**

**Any concerns or questions about the budget
should be addressed during the interview.**

1. Research Project

Ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility

Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project

To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?

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

To what extent is the proposed research high risk-high gain (i.e. if successful the payoffs will be very significant, but there is a high risk that the research project does not entirely fulfil its aims)?

Scientific Approach

To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the extent that the proposed research is high risk-high gain (based on the Extended Synopsis)?

*To what extent does the proposal go beyond what the individual Principal Investigators could achieve alone (**for Synergy Grants**, based on the Extended Synopsis)?*

*To what extent do the Principal Investigators succeed in proposing a combination of scientific approaches that are crucial to address the scope and complexity of the research questions to be tackled (**for Synergy Grants**, based on the Extended Synopsis)?*

To what extent are the proposed research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project (based on the research proposal)?

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

To what extent are the proposed timescales, resources and PI commitment adequate and properly justified (based on the research proposal)?

2. Principal Investigator(s)

Intellectual capacity and creativity

Starting and Consolidator

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

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

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

Intellectual capacity and creativity

Advanced and Synergy

To what extent has/have the PI(s) demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?

To what extent does/do the PI(s) has/have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

To what extent has the PI demonstrated sound leadership in the training and advancement of young scientists (for Advanced Grant applicants)?

Expert	Home panel	1. Research Project	2. Principal Investigator	Total score
[REDACTED]	SH7	3.0	3.0	6.0
[REDACTED]	SH7	4.0	4.0	8.0
[REDACTED]	SH7	2.5	3.0	5.5
[REDACTED]	SH7	3.5	4.0	7.5

**Step 1 – only
Panel Members**

**Step 2 – Panel Members
and Remote Reviewers**

Expert	Review	1. Research Project	2. Principal Investigator	Total score
[REDACTED]	panel	3.5	5.0	8.5
[REDACTED]	panel	3.5	4.5	8.0
[REDACTED]	panel	3.0	4.5	7.5
[REDACTED]	panel	2.5	3.0	5.5
[REDACTED]	external	Not Recommended		
[REDACTED]	external	Highly Recommended		
[REDACTED]	external	Recommended		



Panel discussion

Thank You!

More information: erc.europa.eu

National Contact Point: erc.europa.eu/national-contact-points

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Funding & Tender Opportunities: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

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