The European Research Council

How to write a successful grant proposal

Info Day Widening European Participation

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Writing a proposal

Preparing your application: long term planning

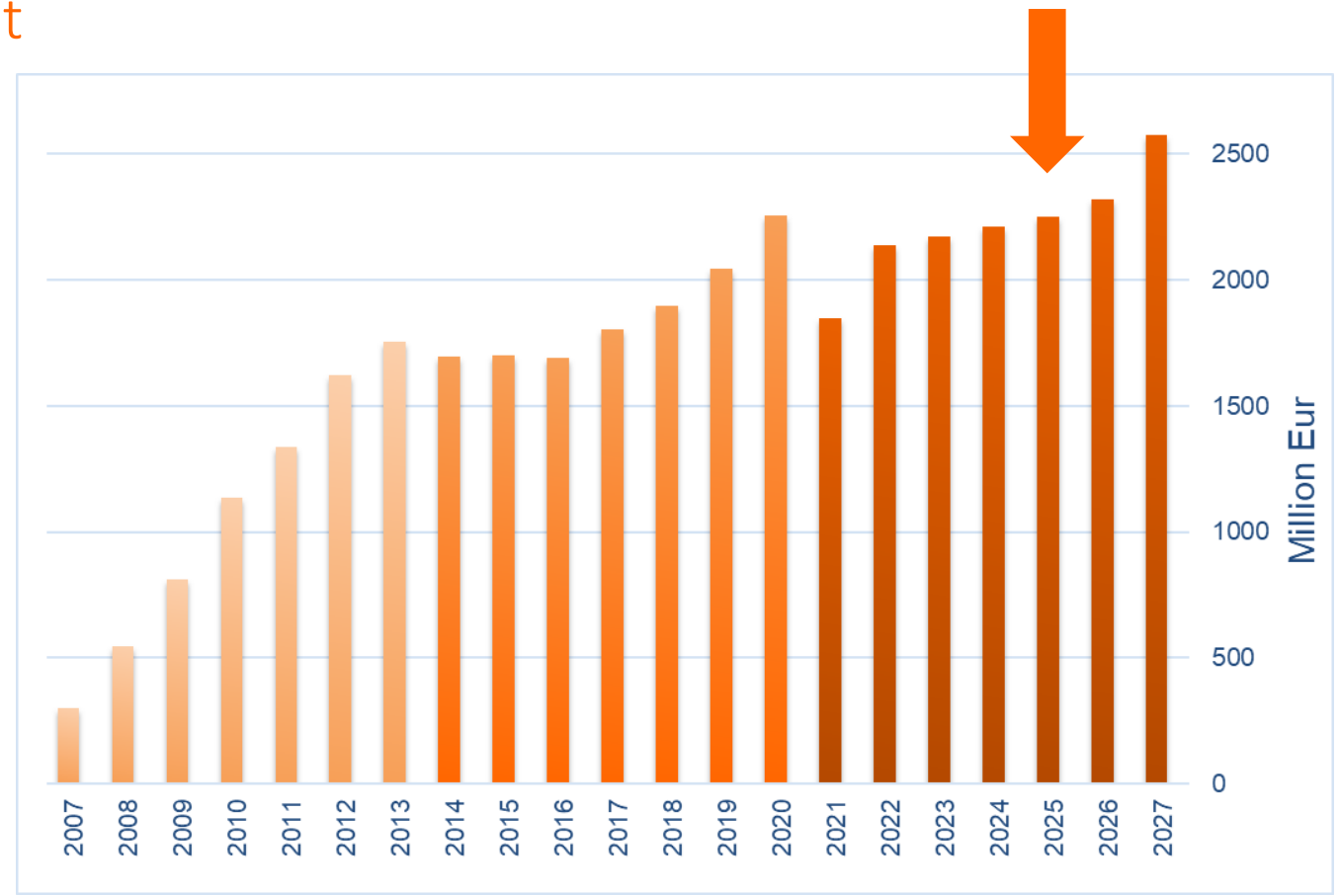
- Don’t leave it for the last month before the deadline
- Do a proper literature study
- Plan beyond the next paper
- Establish collaborations in advance
- Write the proposal and get feedback from outstanding scientists

Preparing your application: get info

- Register early, get familiar with the European Commission's Funding and Tender portal and download the templates
- Read the call documents (Information for Applicants, ERC Work Programme, ERC website) that explain how to prepare your proposal
- Talk to your Institution's grant office, ERC National Contact Points
- Talk to ERC grantees (ERC Dashboard)
- Contact the ERCEA to ask all your questions well ahead of the submission deadline– e.g., ERC-2026-STG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu

Decide whether to apply: Available Budget

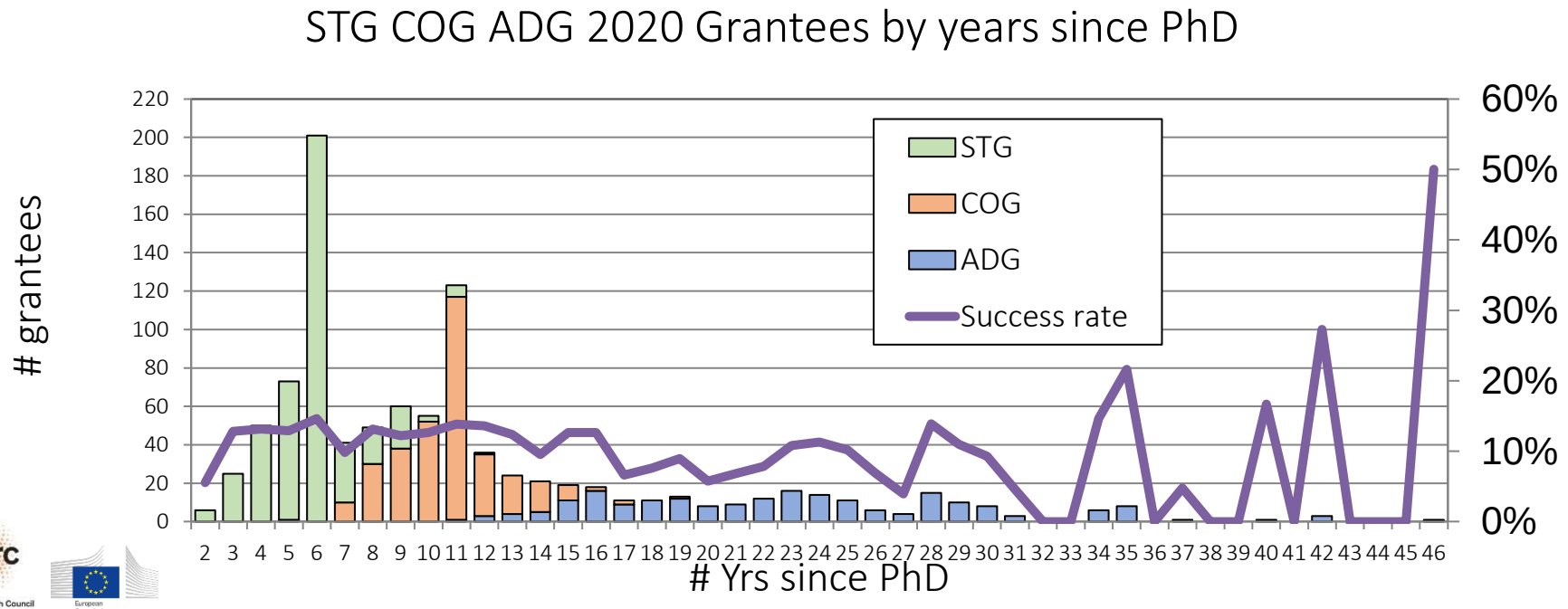
- FP7: €7.5 billion
- H2020: €13 billion
- HE: €16 billion



Decide whether to apply: Success rate

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).



Choose your Panel

Evaluation Panel Structure 2025

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

Choose your Panel

- Proposals are initially assigned to the Panel of the PI's choice.
- 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.

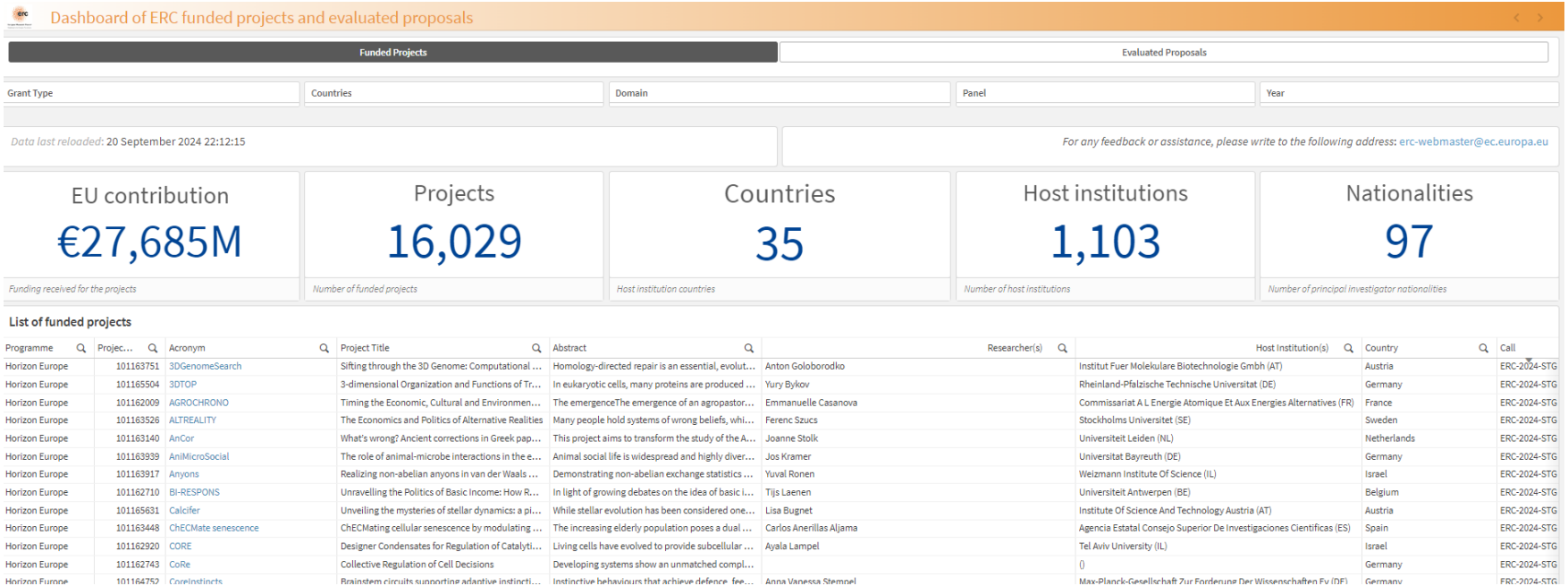
Rumour: Choose the panel "strategically" in order to increase chances of success

✘**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!

Rumour: indicate a lot of diverse descriptors, so your proposal looks more multidisciplinary.

✘**NOT true**: reviewers will not see them in Part B1. This simply makes the assignment process more confusing

Choose your Panel: the ERC website is your friend



Dashboard of ERC funded projects and evaluated proposals

Funded Projects | Evaluated Proposals

Grant Type | Countries | Domain | Panel | Year

Data last reloaded: 20 September 2024 22:12:15

For any feedback or assistance, please write to the following address: erc-webmaster@ec.europa.eu

EU contribution	Projects	Countries	Host institutions	Nationalities
€27,685M	16,029	35	1,103	97
Funding received for the projects	*Number of funded projects*	*Host institution countries*	*Number of host institutions*	*Number of principal investigator nationalities*

List of funded projects

Programme	Projec…	Acronym	Project Title	Abstract	Researcher(s)	Host Institution(s)	Country	Call
Horizon Europe	101163751	3DGenomeSearch	Sifting through the 3D Genome: Computational …	Homology-directed repair is an essential, evolut…	Anton Goloborodko	Institut Fuer Molekulare Biotechnologie Gmbh (AT)	Austria	ERC-2024-STG
Horizon Europe	101165504	3DTOP	3-dimensional Organization and Functions of Tr…	In eukaryotic cells, many proteins are produced …	Yury Bykov	Rheinland-Pfalzische Technische Universitat (DE)	Germany	ERC-2024-STG
Horizon Europe	101162009	AGROCHRONO	Timing the Economic, Cultural and Environmen…	The emergenceThe emergence of an agropastor…	Emmanuelle Casanova	Commissariat A L Energie Atomique Et Aux Energies Alternatives (FR)	France	ERC-2024-STG
Horizon Europe	101163526	ALTREALITY	The Economics and Politics of Alternative Realities	Many people hold systems of wrong beliefs, whi…	Ferenc Szucs	Stockholms Universitet (SE)	Sweden	ERC-2024-STG
Horizon Europe	101163140	AnCor	What's wrong? Ancient corrections in Greek pap…	This project aims to transform the study of the A…	Joanne Stolk	Universiteit Leiden (NL)	Netherlands	ERC-2024-STG
Horizon Europe	101163939	AniMicroSocial	The role of animal-microbe interactions in the e…	Animal social life is widespread and highly diver…	Jos Kramer	Universitat Bayreuth (DE)	Germany	ERC-2024-STG
Horizon Europe	101163917	Anyons	Realizing non-abelian anyons in van der Waals …	Demonstrating non-abelian exchange statistics …	Yuval Ronen	Weizmann Institute Of Science (IL)	Israel	ERC-2024-STG
Horizon Europe	101162710	BI-RESPONS	Unravelling the Politics of Basic Income: How R…	In light of growing debates on the idea of basic i…	Tijs Laenen	Universiteit Antwerpen (BE)	Belgium	ERC-2024-STG
Horizon Europe	101165631	Calcifer	Unveiling the mysteries of stellar dynamics: a pi…	While stellar evolution has been considered one…	Lisa Bugnet	Institute Of Science And Technology Austria (AT)	Austria	ERC-2024-STG
Horizon Europe	101163448	ChECMate senescence	ChECMating cellular senescence by modulating …	The increasing elderly population poses a dual …	Carlos Anerillas Aljama	Agencia Estatal Consejo Superior De Investigaciones Cientificas (ES)	Spain	ERC-2024-STG
Horizon Europe	101162920	CORE	Designer Condensates for Regulation of Catalyti…	Living cells have evolved to provide subcellular …	Ayala Lampel	Tel Aviv University (IL)	Israel	ERC-2024-STG
Horizon Europe	101162743	CoRe	Collective Regulation of Cell Decisions	Developing systems show an unmatched compl…	()	()	Germany	ERC-2024-STG
Horizon Europe	101164752	CoreInstincts	Brainstem circuits supporting adaptive instincti…	Instinctive behaviours that achieve defence, fee…	Anna Vanessa Stempel	Max-Planck-Gesellschaft Zur Foerderung Der Wissenschaften Ev (DE)	Germany	ERC-2024-STG

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Preparing your application- practically

Funding and Tender Portal

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 (template available)
- copy of PhD or equiv. (StG & CoG)
- No reference letters

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.+ref
CV & Track Record	up to 4 p.

PART B2 – submitted as .pdf

Scientific Proposal	14 p.+ref
Funding ID	1 p.

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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?
- 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?
- Is it timely? Why wasn't it done in the past?
- What's the risk? Do I have a plan for managing the risk?
- Why am I the best/only person to carry it out? Know your competitors.
- 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)?*

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.

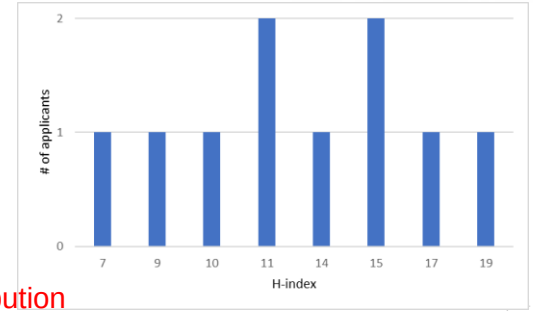
   - career breaks, diverse career paths, life events
   - other noteworthy contributions to research community

Part B1- CV and Track Record

- 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.
- If you know that you have gaps or other issues in your CV, explain them in the Additional Information section.
- Show that they can trust you with 2.5 M€ over 5 years
- Since 2024 more weight on the Research Project than PI

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.



StG2024-PE3
H-index distribution

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Part B1: some advice

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

- avoid jargon/excessive highlighting
- do not oversell it
- make sure there are no typos, legends to the figures/tables are correct
- make it as accessible as possible to a generalist (have it proof-read by many people)
- complete reference list (do your homework)

Part B2: fill 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
- What if the first workpackage fails? Think of alternative strategies to mitigate risks
- You should add/describe some sort of timeline
- Use full space available (14 p.)
- Explain properly your budget

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**: only unjustified requests can be cut, so do not artificially inflate your budget

Typical reasons for rejection

Research Project

- Scope: Too narrow or 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

Thank You!

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