The European Research Council

An Introduction to the ERC

ERC funding opportunities for researchers

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About the ERC

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Scientific governance

- Independent Scientific Council with 22 members including the ERC President, with full authority over strategy
- Supported by a Dedicated Implementation Structure, the ERC Executive Agency

Scientific freedom

- Scientific excellence as the sole criterion
- Support to the individual scientist – *no consortia*
- No predetermined subjects – *'bottom-up'*
- Support for frontier research in all fields of science and humanities
- International peer-review

ERC Scientific Council



Maria LEPTIN
(Biology)
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(Psychology)
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László LOVÁSZ
(Mathematics)



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(High-Energy Astrophysics)



Sylvie LORENTE
(Mechanical Engineering)



Luke O'NEILL
(Biochemistry & Immunology)



Björn OTTERSTEN
(Electrical Engineering)



Giovanni SARTOR
(Law)



Nicola SPALDIN
(Materials Theory)



Alice VALKÁROVÁ
(Physics)



Milena ŽIC FUCHS
(Linguistics)

ERC Executive Agency

The ERC Dedicated Implementation Structure

- Executes annual work programme as established by the Scientific Council
- Implements calls for proposals and provides information and support to applicants
- Organises peer review evaluation
- Establishes and manages grant agreements
- Administers scientific and financial aspects and follow-up of grant agreements
- Carries out communications activities and ensures information dissemination to ERC stakeholders



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Why apply for an ERC grant?

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ERC offers independence, recognition & visibility to:

- work on a research topic of own choice
- gain financial autonomy for five years (‘long-term grants’)
- negotiate the best conditions of work with the host institution
- attract excellent team members and collaborators from anywhere in the world
- move with the grant to any EU Member State or Associated Country (‘portability of grants’)

Anyone **from anywhere in the** world can apply

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Opportunities for researchers outside EU/Associated Countries:

- Additional ‘start-up’ funding for researchers moving to Europe (€1M irrespective of grant scheme)
- Grantees can keep affiliation with home institute outside Europe (‘significant part’ of work time in Europe: at least 50%)
- Team members can be based outside Europe
- Grantees can move with the grant within the EU/Associated Countries

ERC is part of Horizon Europe



EUR 16 billion

ERC budget in Horizon Europe

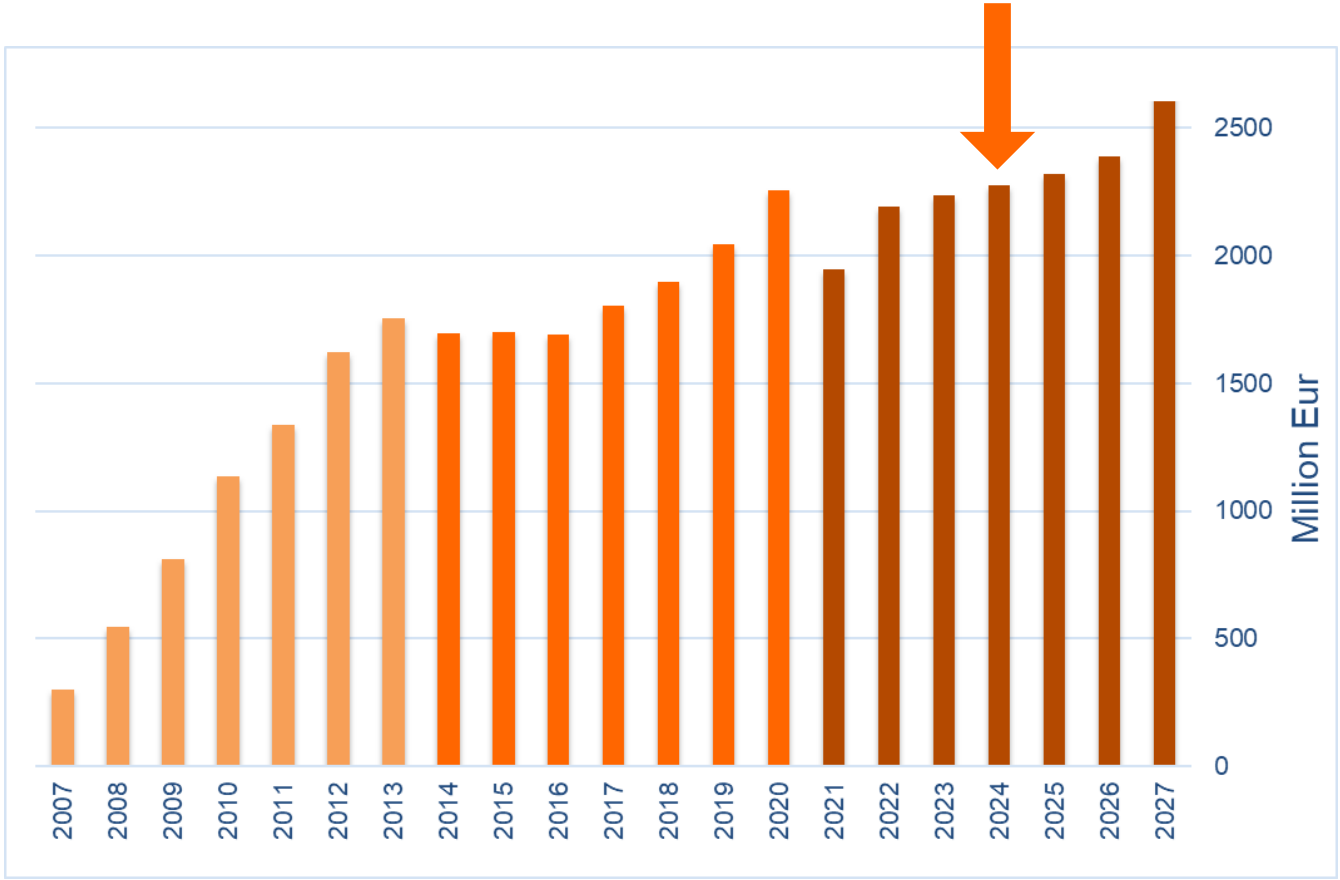
17%

of the entire
Horizon Europe budget

ERC budget 2007 – 2027: EUR 36.5 billion

~950 grants

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



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ERC in figures

Over **14,000**
top researchers funded since the ERC creation in 2007

Over **90,000**
researchers and other professionals employed in ERC research teams

Over **2,400**
patents and other IPR applications generated by ERC funding

Over **400**
start-ups identified as founded or co-founded by ERC grantees

Over **220,000**
articles from ERC projects published in scientific journals

Over **900** research institutions hosting ERC grantees – universities, public or private research centres in the EU or Associated Countries

92
nationalities of grant holders

14 Nobel Prizes, **6** Fields Medals, **11** Wolf Prizes and other prizes awarded to ERC grantees

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ERC Panel structure

Life Sciences (LS)

- 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 Aging
- 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

3 Domains / 28 Panels



>4,000

Panel members in 2014-2020 calls



60

European and non-European countries hosting ERC panel members



>45,000

External reviewers in 2014-2020 calls

Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)

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

Physical Sciences & Engineering (PSE)

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

ERC Grant Schemes



Starting Grants

starters (2-7 years after PhD) up to € 1.5 Mio
for 5 years

Extension of the eligibility window is possible for StG and CoG, e.g. for maternity, paternity, military service, etc.



Consolidator Grants

Consolidators (7-12 years after PhD) up to € 2 Mio
for 5 years



Advanced Grants

track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years up to € 2.5 Mio
for 5 years



Synergy Grants

2 – 4 Principal Investigators up to € 10.0 Mio for 6 years
1 PI can be based outside EU/Associated Countries



Proof-of-Concept

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

Additional top-up budget

Additional funding available to cover:

- **Start-Up costs for scientists moving to EU / Associated Countries**
- **Purchase of major equipment**
- **Access to large facilities**
- **Other major experimental and fieldwork costs, excl. personnel costs**

✓ Up to €1 Million for Starting (↑as of 2020)
Consolidator (↑2020) and Advanced Grants

✓ Up to €4 Million for Synergy Grants



Evaluation

Excellence

is 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

The Host Institution is not an evaluation criterion

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Evaluation: process

For individual main calls: a **single** submission but a **two-step** evaluation

Overall success rate 12.4% in H2020 - rather "flat" across stages of professional seniority and topics

STEP 1

Remote assessment by **Panel members**
see ONLY section 1: Synopsis and CV
(Part B1)

↓

Panel meeting

Potential Resubmission Restrictions!

↓

- Proposal Not Retained (Scores B&C)
- Proposal Not Retained (Score A not-invited)
- Proposal Retained (Score A invited)

STEP 2

Remote assessment by **Panel members** and **Remote Reviewers** of **full proposals**
(Parts B1+B2+Resources)

↓

Panel meeting
+ interview StG, CoG and AdG

↓

Ranked list of proposal
(Scores A&B)

Feedback to applicants

New feature from 2024 on: 44 proposal interview limit

Who can apply?

Researchers (PIs)

- of any nationality
- of any age (>2 yrs. from Ph.D.)
- from any current working place in the world
- on any topic (bottom-up)
- requirement - letter of support from a Host Institution (HI), which must be based in the EU or associated countries (exc. 1 co-PI in SyG)



Open to the world

Researchers of any nationality, also if (at the time of application) based outside Europe, can apply to the ERC – but the HI must be in the EU or an Associated Country



- Additional funding is available to cover 'start-up' costs for scientists moving to Europe
- Dual affiliation is possible: ERC grantees are required to spend 50% of their time in Europe/ERA (EU Member State or Associated Country)
- SyG as of 2019: possible for one PI to be based outside the EU or AC
- ~50 non-EU/Associated Country PI nationalities 8% of ERC grants to third country PIs
- ~17% of project team members from third countries - can also be based outside ERA

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Visiting ERC projects

https://erc.europa.eu/funding/additional-opportunities#IA:

- **Visiting Research Fellowship programmes**

- ✓ **Bucharest (Romania), Politehnica University of Bucharest (UPB)**
- ✓ **Croatia, Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ)**
- ✓ **Cyprus, Research and Innovation Foundation of Cyprus (RIF)**
- ✓ **Estonia, Estonia Research Council (ETag)**
- ✓ **Hungary, Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA)**
- ✓ **Italy, National Research Council (CNR)**
- ✓ **Republic of Serbia, Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia (SFRS)**
- ✓ **Slovak Republic, Research and Innovation Authority (VAIA)**
- ✓ **Slovenia, Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS)**

- **International Arrangement Funding**

- ✓ Argentina, with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation
- ✓ Australia, with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Australian Research Council (ARC)
- ✓ Brazil, with the Brazilian National Council of the State funding agencies (CONFAP)
- ✓ Canada, with the Tri-agency Institutional Programs Secretariat
- ✓ China, with the National Natural Science Foundation (NSFC)
- ✓ India, with the Scientific Engineering Research Board (SERB) and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)
- ✓ Japan, with the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), the Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED), and the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST)
- ✓ Korea, with the Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning
- ✓ Mexico, with the Mexican National Council of Science and Technology (Conacyt)
- ✓ Singapore with the National Research Foundation Singapore (NRF)
- ✓ South Africa, with the National Research Foundation (NRF)
- ✓ Thailand, with the Programme Management Unit for Human Resources & Institutional Development, Research and Innovation (PMU-B)
- ✓ United States, with the National Science Foundation (NSF)

Where can you find more information?



Videos - ERC Classes

- What to consider before applying
- How to fill in the application
- The interview
- How the evaluation works
- Applying for a PoC

Click here to watch!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbFbzkVWgCU&list=PLtv6FnsXqnXAYRk6HCErwMxwML0ZKoMcy

Take a chance and apply!

Where can you find more information?

Our website:

erc.europa.eu

Our social media channels:

European Research Council

European-Research-Council

European Research Council

@ERC_Research

National Contact Points (NCP):

https://erc.europa.eu/funding/national-contact-points

Funding & Tender Opportunities:

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

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Call Calendar – Work Programme 2024

	Starting Grant	*Consolidator Grant*	*Advanced Grant*	*Synergy Grant*	*Proof of Concept Grant*
Call opens	11/07/2023	12/09/2023	29/05/2024	12/07/2023	16/11/2023
Call deadline (cut-off date)	24/10/2023 (deadline extended)	12/12/2023	29/08/2024	08/11/2023 (deadline extended)	14/03/2024 17/09/2024
Budget (m EUR)	601	584	578	400	30

Novelties I – Research Assessment

- Evaluation **primarily focused on the proposed research project**:
  - Ground-breaking nature, ambition, and potential impact
  - Feasibility of the scientific approach
- **Intellectual capacity, creativity, and commitment of the PI** also evaluated
- Streamlined **evaluation questions**

Novelties II – Research Assessment

- No prescriptive **Principal Investigator profiles**
- New **Curriculum Vitae and Track Record** template (4 pages):
  - Personal details: education, employment
  - Research achievements (<=10):
    - demonstrating advancement in the field
    - emphasis on more recent achievements
    - short narrative on significance of achievements
  - Peer recognition: prizes, fellowships, academy membership, etc.
  - Additional information:
    - career breaks, diverse career paths, life events
    - other contributions to research community

Novelties III – Evaluation

- **Evaluation:**
  - No budget multiplier in StG, CoG, AdG: **up to 44 proposals per panel in Step 2**
  - **New A-score at Step 1** (StG, CoG, AdG, SyG):
    - **'A invited'** – *high quality proposals to pass to Step 2*
    - **'A not invited'** – *high quality proposals exceeding the threshold for Step 2, but not subject to resubmission restrictions*
- New **resubmission restriction**: applicants selected for funding and preparing a grant agreement in a 2023 ERC call, may not apply to StG, CoG, AdG in 2024 ERC calls

Novelties IV – Lump Sum Funding (Advanced Grant)

- **Pilot lump sum model** for the Advanced Grant 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
  - Payment based on completion of activities and not on successful outcome
  - Additional funding and portability available; deviations/amendments - possible

Novelties V – Additional Clarifications

- Time Commitment: any working time spent working for an **international European research organisation** counts as time spent in an EU Member State/Associated Country

- Eligibility for funding **team members in third countries**: same for all ERC calls
  - third countries are eligible when they host additional members (without necessarily having to prove that they are absolutely essential)

- **Equipment as capitalised cost**: must be clearly listed and justified in the proposal
  - separately from the standard equipment, and it must be justified in the proposal why this should be considered as a capitalised cost (e.g. the equipment will not be used for anything else or it is a prototype etc.)

Summary of Novelties – Work Programme 2024

FOCUS ON RESEARCH  • Ground-breaking • Ambitious • Impactful • 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 • Payment based on the work done (not success) • Additional funding and portability	• New Panel – SH8 • Changes in description of LS3/LS5 panels
Assessment	No prescriptive PI profiles	Evaluation Procedure	Lump Sum Pilot	Panels

Preparing your proposal

1. Consult **call documents** (Work Programme, Information for Applicants)
2. **Register** early on the Funding and Tenders Portal
3. Have your **documentation ready** – proof read the proposal
4. Contact the ERCEA and **ask all your questions** well ahead of the submission deadline (dedicated mailboxes for each call) – e.g.,
   ERC-2024-STG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu
   ERC-2024-COG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu
5. Get the **written consent of your collaborators** before the submission deadline (a simple email exchange is OK)

Preparing your proposal
……choosing the right panel

- Proposals are initially assigned based on the applicant's choice
- Transfers of proposals between panels may occur if:
    - There is a clear mistake made by the applicant
    - The necessary expertise is available in a different panel (both panel chairs must agree).
- Applicants can flag one 'Secondary Review Panel': the applicant must explain the interdisciplinary nature of the proposal in Part B1.
- Choose the descriptors/free keywords carefully
- Choose the panel that best fits the proposal – the success rate in each panel is the same as the budget is distributed as a function of demand

Preparing your proposal
……for StG and CoG, make sure you are eligible

- Reference date for the calculation of the eligibility window: 1st January of the year of the call
    - StG 2024: **1 January 2017** to **31 December 2021 (inclusive)**
    - CoG 2024: **1 January 2012** to **31 December 2016 (inclusive)**

➢ *Extensions of the eligibility window possible in certain documented circumstances*

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

Proposal Structure

- Part A: Administrative forms and proposal budget
- Part B1: Extended synopsis: 5 pages & CV and Track Record (up to 4 pages)
- Part B2: Scientific proposal: 14 pages
  - State-of-the-art and objectives
  - Methodology
- Host Institution Support Letter
- PhD certificate (StG and CoG)

Evaluation Questions: Research Project (StG, CoG, AdG)

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)?

Evaluation Questions: Principal Investigator (StG, CoG, AdG)

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?

Contrary to what you may think

- The budget is distributed among the scientific panels as a function of demand
- The panel descriptors do not represent ERC scientific priorities
- The success rate is not linked to academic age
- Publication record is not decisive in selection decisions
- The Host Institution is not an evaluation criterion



Some rumours

Rumour 1: You can only apply for an ERC grant if you are a highly accomplished scientist.

✘ NOT true: Accomplishments are appreciated in relation to your stage/seniority as giving some evidence of your capacity to conduct the research you propose and of creativity within the past 10-12 years of your career.

Rumour 2: To be successful, you need to continue on an established research line, to prove continuity and credibility

✘ NOT true: Generally, the opposite is true.

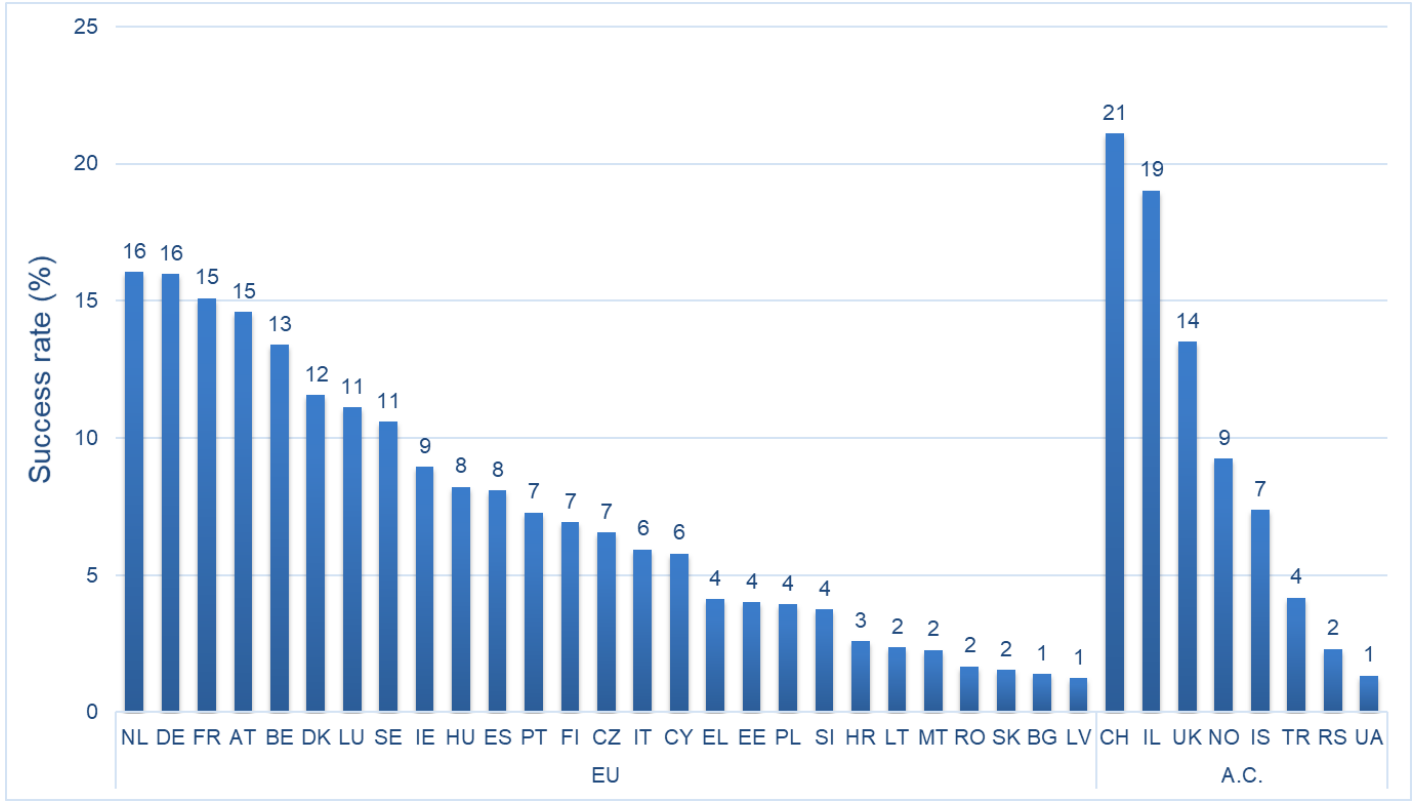
Rumour 3: If you have already obtained an ERC grant you are less/more likely to get another one.

✘ NOT true: Panels look at each proposal on its own merit and in comparison with the other applications, irrespectively of whether you have or have not obtained an ERC grant in the past. (Of course this does not apply for applications to a Proof of Concept grant.)

Rumour 4: The more socially or medically relevant a grant proposal is, the higher the chances of it getting funded.

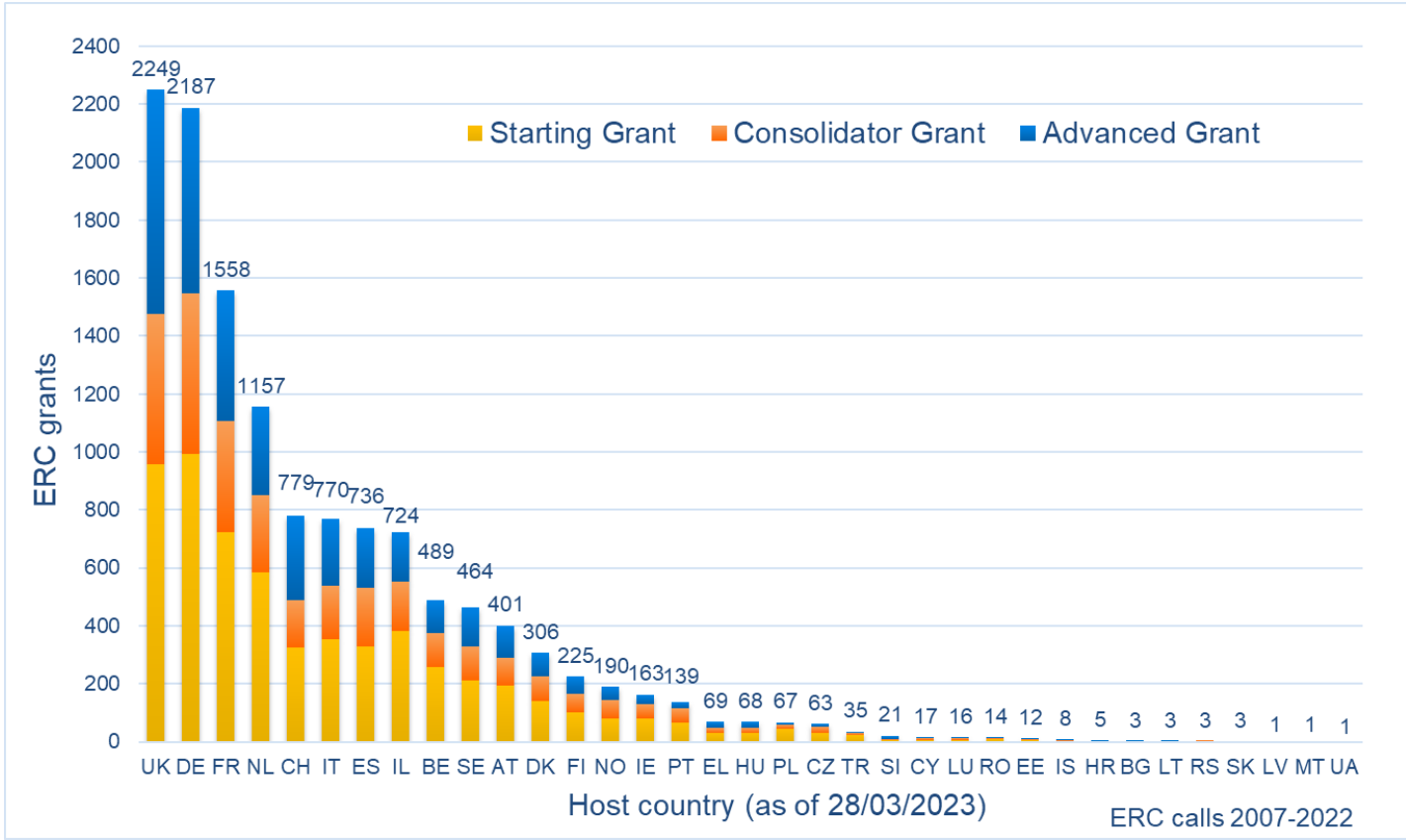
✘ NOT true: ERC funds frontier research, not research that promises to be only an incremental advancement of knowledge. This is irrespective of the field and whether it has societal, medical or clinical applications.

Success rate by country of Host Institution



Success rate (2007-2022)

ERC-funded projects by country of Host Institution



Thank you!!