The European Research Council

An introduction to the ERC

Dina Vigli-Papadaki

14th October 2026

Κατακτώντας το ERC 2027: καλές πρακτικές & εργαλεία

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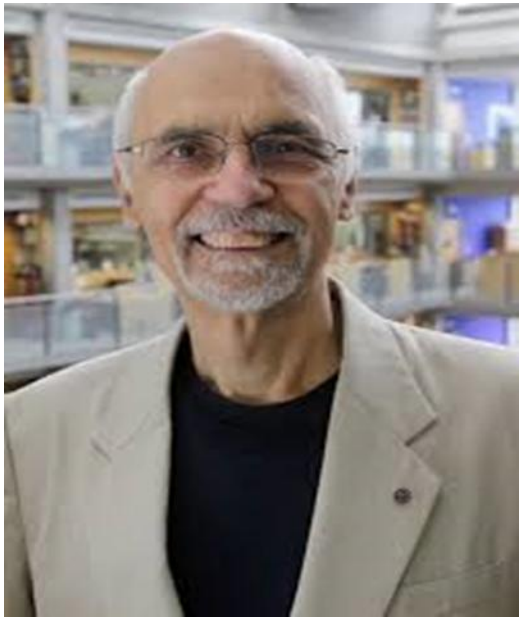
European Commission

The European Research Council

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“The ERC awards long-term grants to researchers of any nationality and age, from anywhere in the world, who wish to carry out their research projects in a host institution based in Europe. Scientific excellence is the sole evaluation criterion.”

Europe Needs Excellent Research



"***What is the comparative advantage of EU in the future?*** *An increasingly old population, our limited natural resources? Investing in Research, which is an integral part of the European cultural tradition, is no longer a choice today, it is a one-way street for the EU.* ***And the only way to make sure that investment pays back is excellence***".

Fotis KAFATOS, *First ERC President*.
Speech at the ERC launch event in 2007 in Berlin in presence of Chancellor Angela MERKEL

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ERC Is Different

Part of Horizon Europe – 17% of total budget (€ 16 billion (2021-2027)



Scientific Governance

- Independent Scientific Council with 22 members including the ERC President; full authority over funding strategy
- Support by a Dedicated Implementation Structure ERCEA

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

Life Sciences


Emmanuelle Charpentier
Microbiology


Dirk Inzé
Plant Biology


Leszek Kaczmarek
Neurobiology


Luke O'Neill
Biochemistry and Immunology


Eleftheria Zeggini
Human Genetics


Liselotte Højgaard
Vice-President
Medicine


Maria Leptin
ERC President
Cell Biology


Torsten Persson
Vice-President
Economics


Nicola Spaldin
Vice-President
Materials Theory

Social Sciences and Humanities


Harriet Bulkeley
Geography


Kateřina Králová
History


Karin Roelofs
Neuroscience


Susana Narotzky
Social Anthropology


Giovanni Sartor
Law

Physical Sciences and Engineering


Conny Aerts
Astrophysics


Michel Campillo
Geophysics


Tom Henzinger
Computer Science


Maarit Karppinen
Chemistry


Sylvie Lorente
Mechanical Engineering


Björn Ottersten
Electrical Engineering


Tomaž Prosen
Physics

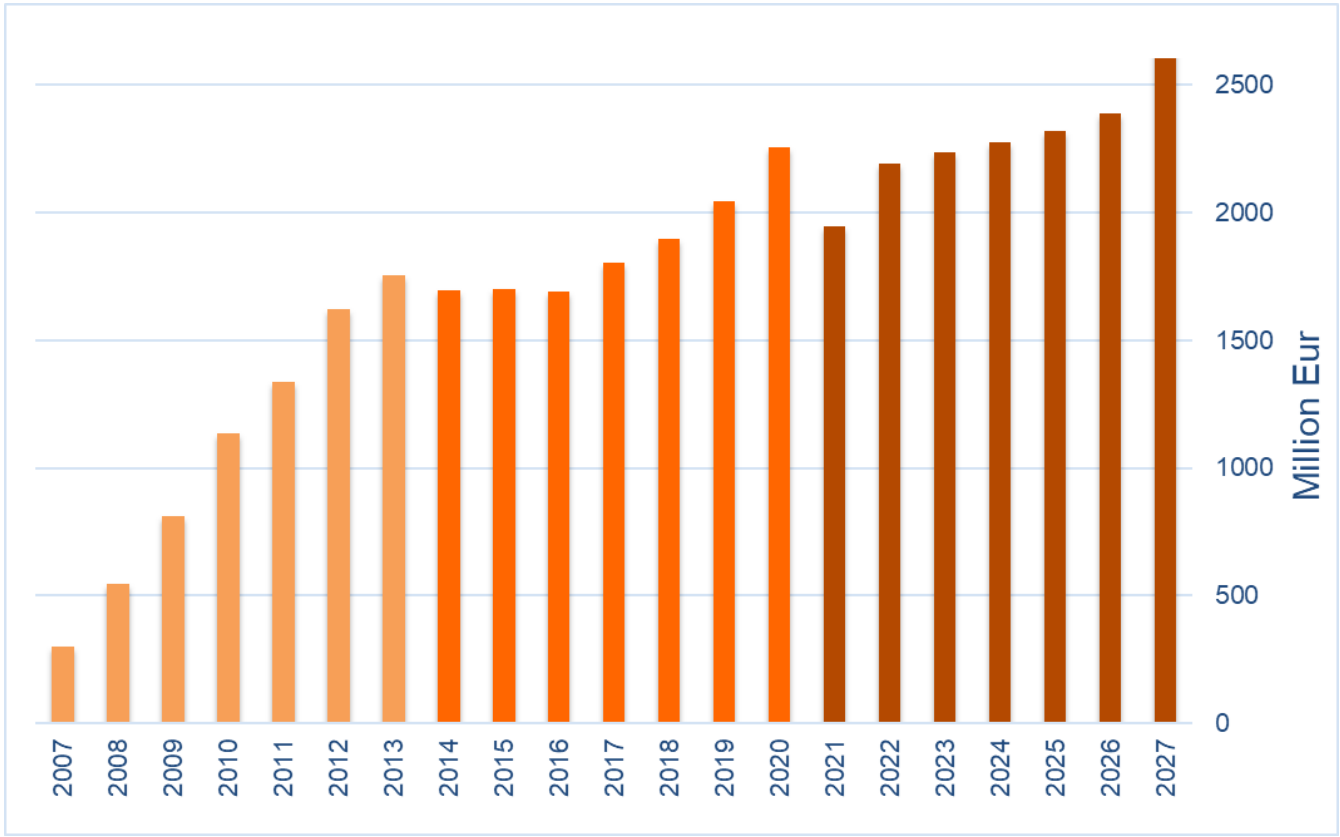

András Stipsicz
Mathematics

ERC budget 2007 – 2027: EUR 36.5 billion

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 **120,000**
researchers and other professionals employed in ERC research teams



Over **2,500**
patents and other IPR applications generated by ERC funding



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



Over **270,000**
articles from ERC projects published in scientific journals



Over **950** research institutions hosting ERC grantees – universities, public or private research centres in the EU or Associated Countries



95
nationalities of grant holders



15 Nobel Prizes, **6** Fields Medals, **12** Wolf Prizes and other prizes awarded to ERC grantees

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Evaluation

Excellence

is the sole evaluation criterion

Excellence of the Research Project

- Ground-breaking nature
- Ambition

Excellence of the Principal Investigator

- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity

Why apply for an ERC grant?

ERC offers independence, recognition & visibility to:

- Work on a research topic of **own choice**
- Gain **financial autonomy for five years**
- 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 place in Europe if desired (“**portability of grants**”)
- Win **additional funding**

Applying for a ERC grant

- **Competitive calls**

  Only outstanding proposals stand a chance to be funded

- **Apply only when your proposal is ready**

  Critically assess your proposal's quality, ambition, and readiness before submitting

- **Equal success rates across panels**

  Submission numbers vary greatly across panels. Fewer granted proposals in a panel simply reflect a lower submission rate.

Strong, competitive proposals

Choose Europe

Increased ERC funding for researchers moving to Europe:
Additional funding of up to €2 million for researchers currently based outside Europe applying for Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grants

Anyone from anywhere in the world can apply

- 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 within Europe with the grant

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 BUT has to be in a EU Member State/Associated Country (You can change it during the project's life)



Evaluation Process – Individual Grants

For main grant schemes (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced grants): **one single submission** but a **two-step** evaluation

STEP 1

Remote **Part I, CV and Track Record** assessment by **panel members**

↓

Panel meeting

↓

Proposal rejected (Scores B&C)

↓

Feedback to applicants

Proposal retained for step 2 (Score A)
- max. 44 per panel
- above 44: 'A non-invited'

STEP 2

Remote assessment by **panel members** and **remote reviewers** of **complete research proposal**

↓

Panel meeting + interview

↓

Proposal not funded (Score B)

Proposal funded (score A)
- **A funded (within available budget)**
- **A non-funded (outside available budget)**

↓

Feedback to applicants

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Evaluation panel structure

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 Processes 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

Scientific Proposal structure

Grant application

- Structure of the scientific proposal:
  - **Scientific Proposal Part I** (up to 5 pages) should describe the overall idea of the proposed research project;
  - **Scientific Proposal Part II** (up to 7 pages or 10 pages for Synergy Grant) should describe the implementation in detail: the research methodology, work plan, risk assessment etc.

The panels will use Part I for evaluation at Step 1 and **both parts together for their evaluation at Step 2**

Feasibility of the scientific approach is not assessed at Step 1. **The proposed timescales and resources will be assessed at Step 2 of the evaluation.**
The PI time commitment will be verified during the eligibility checks

Typical reasons for rejection – it's all about the **right balance**!

Research Project

- Started too late
- Scope: Too narrow ←→ too broad/unfocussed
- Incremental ←→ unfeasible, too much
- Collaborative project, several PIs
- Work plan not detailed enough/unclear
- Insufficient risk management **– Oh, I can do this** is not enough!
- Part B2 did not give sufficient information on the methodology

Principle Investigator

- Insufficient independence
- Insufficient track-record
- Insufficient project leading experience (CoG, AdG)

Interview

- Vaguely addressed questions
- Panel not convinced it's their own idea/project
- Lack of supporting evidence
- Similar work published in the meantime
- Unaddressed issues

If rejected, **KEEP TRYING!!!**

Reapplications have a higher success rate

Use the feedback from evaluation reports & there is always an element of luck!

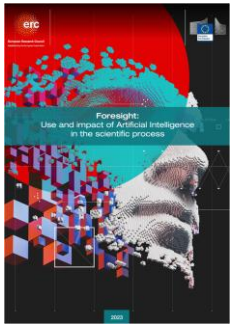
Mapping Frontier Research

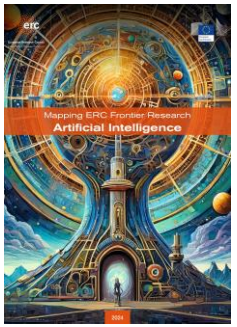
Thematic reports from gene editing to advanced materials and biotech to AI in health









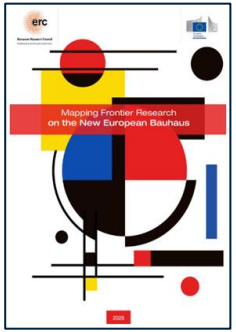


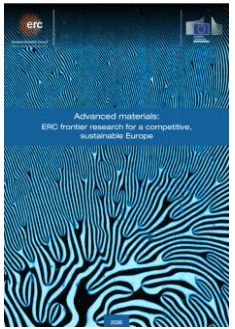


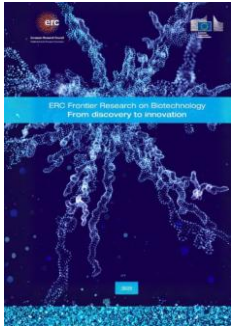












Source: [erc.europa.eu — Mapping ERC Frontier Research overview]

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What changes in 2027?

The eligibility period for both Starting and Consolidator Grant schemes have been widened:

- From 2027 onwards, researchers will be eligible to apply for a Starting Grant **immediately after successfully defending their PhD**, and at any time within the following **ten-year** period
- Consolidator Grant applicants will be eligible to apply between **five and fifteen years** after defending their PhD
- The **cut-off date for determining the PhD defence date is set on 1 January**
- Researchers will be awarded **no more than one** Starting Grant and one Consolidator Grant during their career
- The reasons for the extension of the eligibility periods will remain in place

- Changes to the 2026 and 2027 Work Programmes|ERC

Starting/Consolidator Grant: Extension of the Eligibility Windows

For documented situations occurring before the call deadline

- **Maternity leave**: 18 months for each child born before/after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Paternity/parental leave**: documented time taken for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Long-term illness** (>90 days for the PI or a close family member) or national service: documented amount of leave taken for each occurrence that happened after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Clinical training**: documented amount of clinical training received after the reference date of the 1st eligible degree, up to a maximum of 4 years;
- **Major disaster** (natural or human-caused such as armed conflicts)
- **Seeking asylum**
- **Gender-based violence or any other form of violence**

Impact beyond science – the link to innovation

- 44% of ERC grants 2007-2016 generated research subsequently cited in patent applications worldwide
- predominance in **biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, computer technology, organic fine chemistry, measurement, and semiconductors**
- **13% of ERC grantees filed their own patent applications** based on the work funded with their ERC grant
- **11% of ERC grantees created companies** or transferred results of their research to pre-existing companies
- **over 400 companies** founded by ERC-supported researchers in areas like biotechnology, nanotechnology, semiconductors, and the like

https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-01/Assessing_the_Influence_ERC-funded_Research_Patented_Inventions.pdf

Discover the ERC Classes videos for applicants

- Getting started with your ERC proposal
- Writing your proposal
- Understanding the evaluation process
- Preparing for the interview
- Complying with ethics requirements
- Explaining Synergy Grants



Watch the full playlist

Discover the ERC Classes videos for grantees

- Understanding ERC grants: core features, roles and responsibilities of the PI
- Working with third parties in an ERC project
- Time recording requirements
- Reporting personnel costs under Horizon Europe rules
- Handling internally invoiced goods and services
- Managing amendments to the grant agreement



Watch the full playlist

To take home:

- Excellence is broad – any great idea has a chance!
- Please (re)apply in time, only if you play, you can win!
- The project is more important than the CV (except for ERC Plus)
- Be your own critic: grantsmanship, tell your story, independence, scientific maturity
- Have a support network (NCP, GO, peers) and mock interviews
- Use the ERC: webinars, ERC classes, support instruments etc.

Questions?

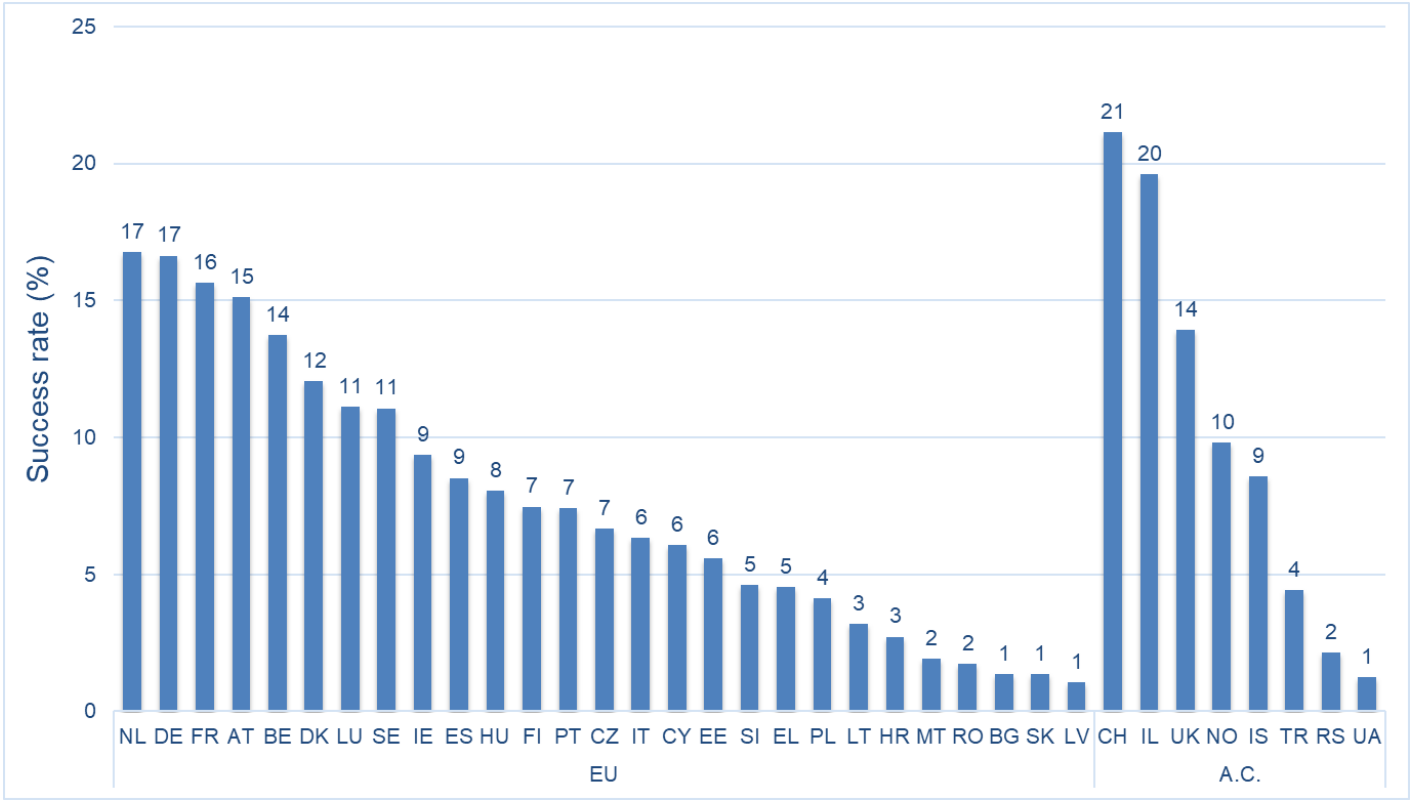
Thank You!

More information: erc.europa.eu

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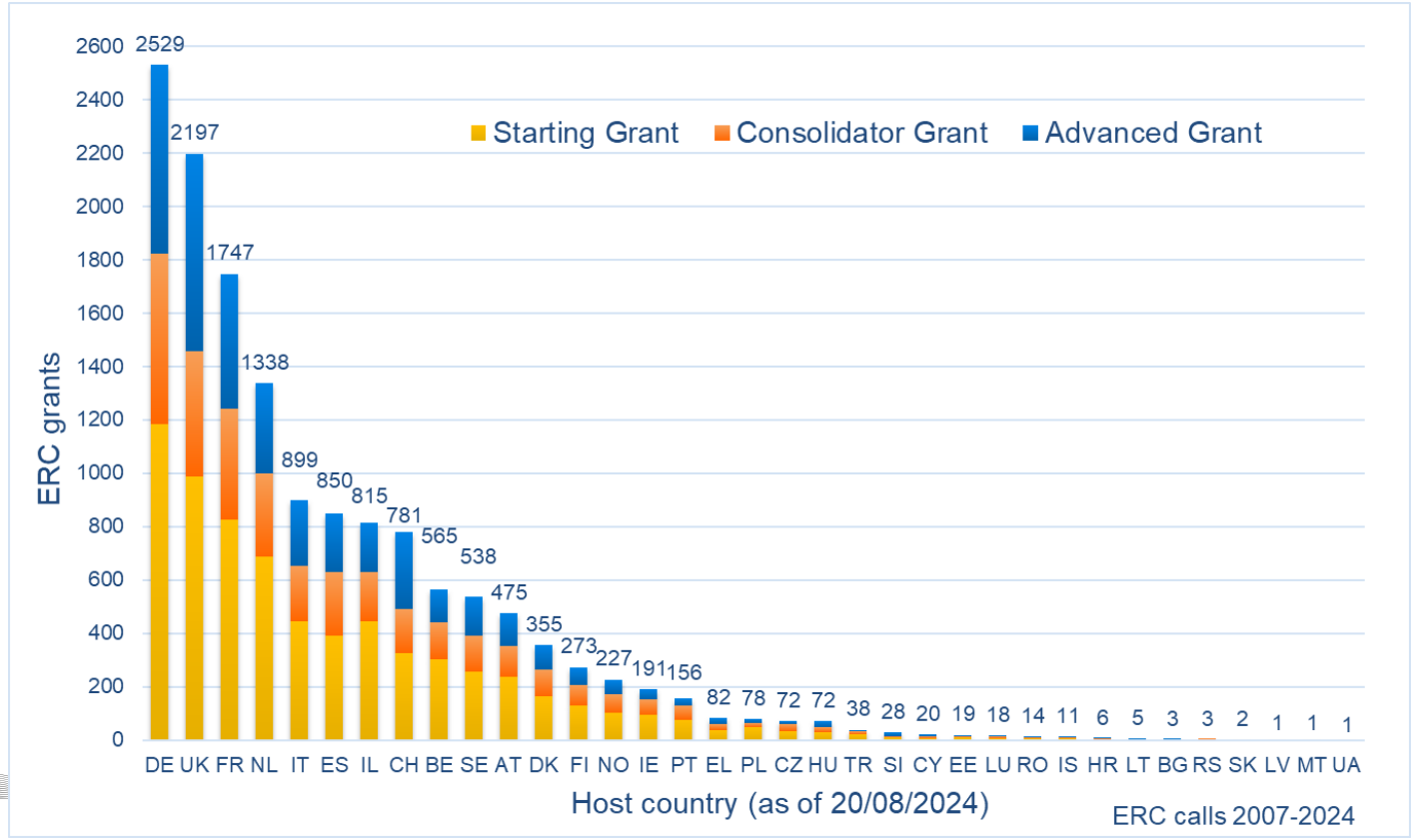
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Success rate by country of Host Institution



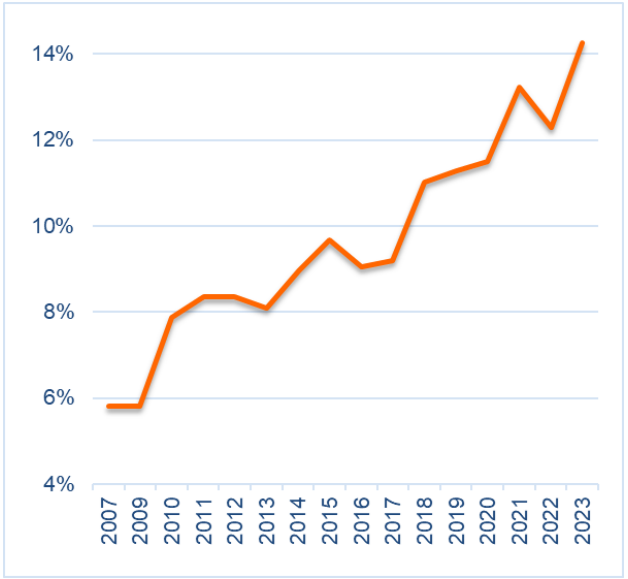
Main individual calls 2007-2023 and StG2024

ERC-funded projects by country of Host Institution

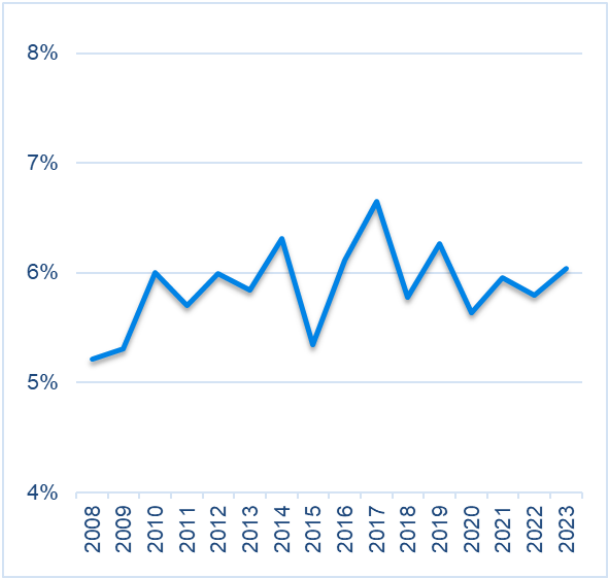


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Increased international participation in Starting and Consolidator calls



Starting and Consolidator



Advanced

Proportion of evaluated proposals from non-EU/Associated Country nationals by call year

ERC grant schemes



Starting Grants
Researchers (0-10 years after PhD)
up to €1.5 million for 5 years



Consolidator Grants
Researchers (5-15 years after PhD)
up to €2 million for 5 years



Advanced Grants
Researchers with track-record of significant research achievements. Lump Sum up to €2.5 million for 5 years



Synergy Grants
2-4 Principal investigators
up to €10 million for 6 years
1 PI can be based outside EU/Associated Countries



ERC Plus Grants
Principal investigators at all career stages with a vision for transformative research. Lump Sum up to €7 million over 4-7 years



Proof of Concept
For ERC grantees
bridging gap between research and earliest stage of marketable/social innovation.
Fixed Lump Sum of € 150 000 for 18 months

Call Calendar 2027

ERC Call	Call Opens	Submission Deadline
Starting Grants ERC-2027-StG	22 July 2026	14 October 2026
Consolidator Grants ERC-2027-CoG	24 September 2026	12 January 2027
Synergy Grants ERC-2027-SyG	17 February 2027	11 May 2027
Advanced Grants ERC-2027-AdG	27 May 2027	26 August 2027
ERC Plus Grants ERC-2027-PLUS	1 June 2027	1 September 2027

ERC structure

The ERC Dedicated Implementation Structure - ERC Executive Agency

- 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



By courtesy of Art & Build Architect / Monlois Partners / credits: S. Brison

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ERC Plus: A unique funding scheme

- Objective: to support outstanding PIs to address a major scientific challenge that can't be solved with a regular ERC grant

- Only 30 grants for 2026

- Main features:
  - Excellence only
  - Open to researchers of all fields and nationalities at any career stage
  - Duration: 4 to 7 years
  - Grant up to EUR 7 million (no pro-rata reduction)
  - Once in a career grant

ERC Plus: Evaluation

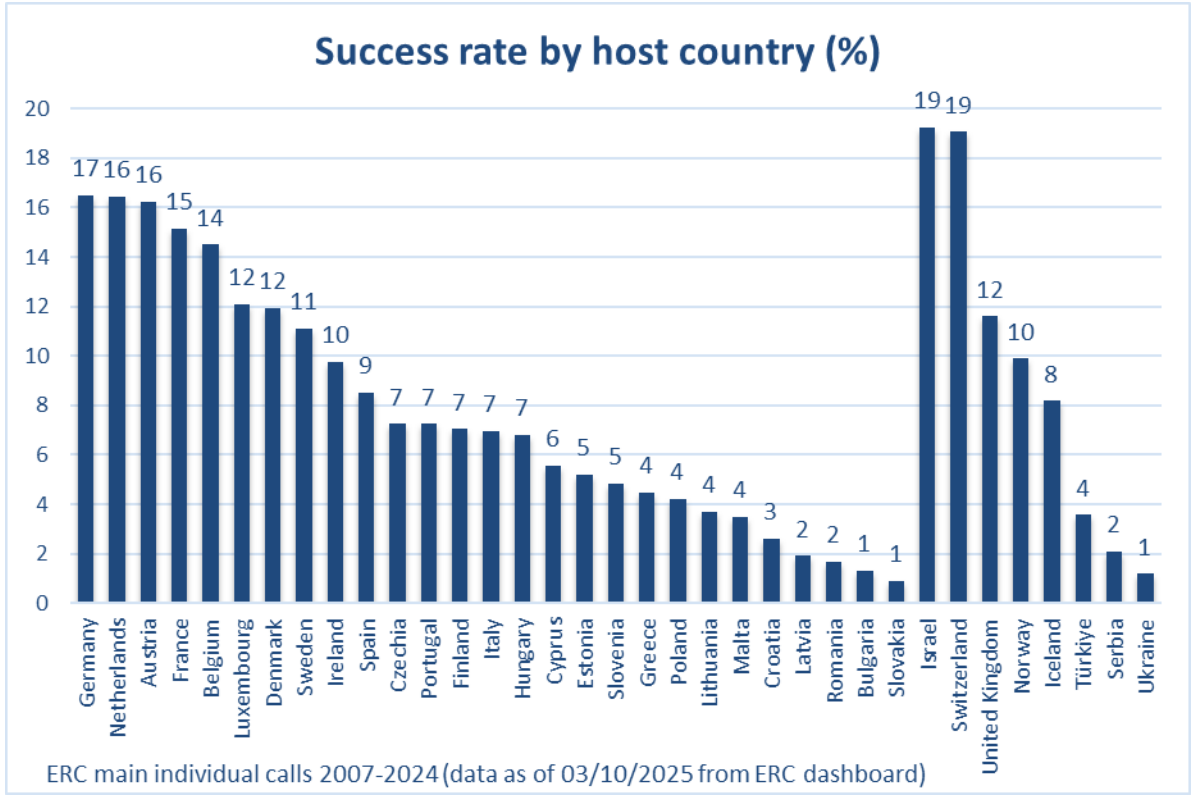
Step 1 – Advanced Grant panels

- Applicants select one of the 28 panels.
- Scores for ERC Plus Grants: ‘Retained/ Not retained’.
- All applications considered outstanding can advance to step 2 – no cap on numbers.

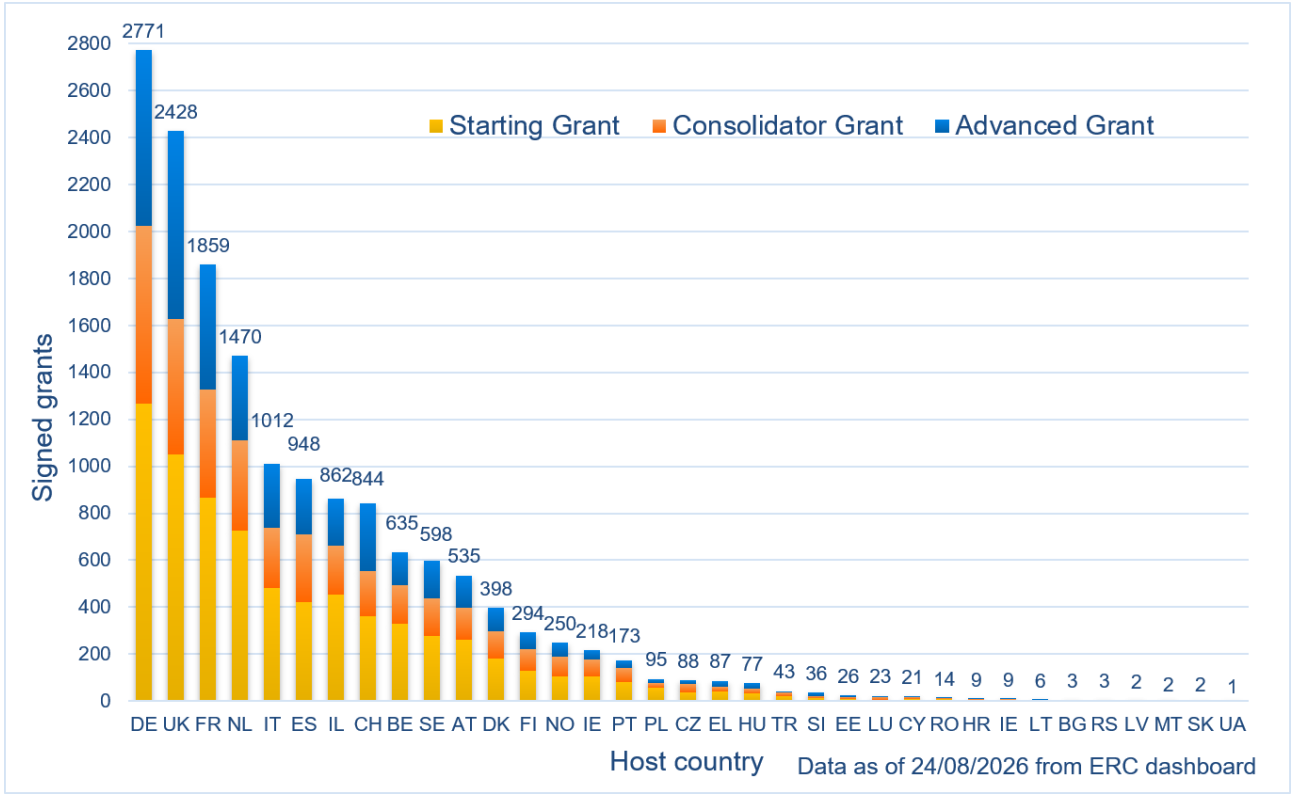
Step 2 – New ERCPlus Grants panels

- Step 2 remote phase: reviews of each advancing ERC Plus Grants proposals by the AdG panel members, remote reviewers and Plus Grant panel members.
- Step 2 panel meeting: ERC Plus Grants panel members only. All panels will have a broad scientific overview (mixed LS/PE/SH panels).

Success rate by country of Host Institution



ERC-funded projects by country of Host Institution

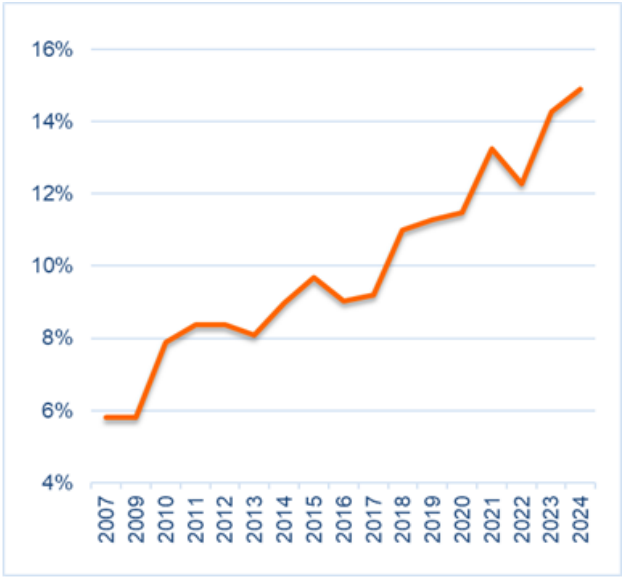


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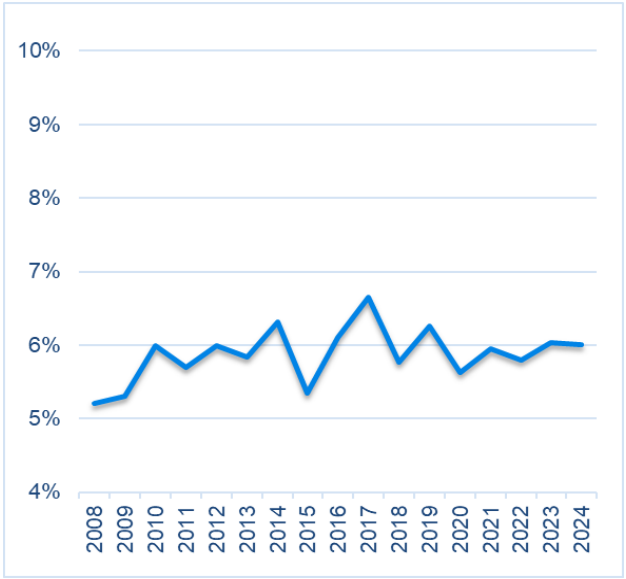
50 non-EU/Associated Country grantee nationalities - 8% of all ERC grants

Non-EU/AC Principal Investigator	Starting and Consolidator grants	Advanced grants	Total Main grants
USA	313	154	467
Canada	117	22	139
China	103	2	105
India	87	5	92
Rusia	70	13	83
Australia	63	17	80
Japan	36	10	46
Argentina	25	2	27
New Zealand	20	6	26
Brazil	25	1	26
Other	154	14	168
Total	**1013**	**243**	**1259**

Increased international participation in Starting and Consolidator Grant calls



Starting and Consolidator Grants



Advanced Grants

Proportion of evaluated proposals from non-EU/Associated Country nationals by call year