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Greek ERC Mentoring Initiative: a new tool for high-quality proposals

Supported by ERCEA

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Greek ERC Mentoring Initiative: the problem

- ERC grants are highly competitive and proposal preparation is critical
- Feedback from ERC Grantees is extremely valuable, given their own experience
- As experts in their panel, ERC grantees can highlight strengths/weaknesses and help applicants prepare an excellent proposal
- Experience from both NCPs and ERC grantees should be combined in a systematic, value-driven way, to benefit applicants
- The overall ERC grantee community is open and eager to support researchers
- The Greek ERC grantee community is small and fragmented, not covering all panels/grant types

Greek ERC Mentoring Initiative: the initial idea

In 2022, the Sectorial Scientific Committee of Life Sciences and Medicine proposed the development of a Mentoring Platform to support Greek applicants.

- Proposal to ESETEK (Senior advisory body in Greece for National Strategy in Research, Technology and Development)
- Aim: support to new researchers for funding opportunities
- National Mentor Network (EKT): platform for mentors/mentees matching with detailed requirements and implementation plan
- Impact: Brain-gain and brain-retain

Greek ERC Mentoring Initiative: the solution

While the initial proposal did not materialize, involved stakeholders made this idea a reality

- Project in the context of ERCEA's network of Mentoring Initiative for the National Contact Point offices
- Self-funded and supported by FORTH /PRAXI Network
- Stakeholders (ERC grantees, ex-panelists) are volunteers

Greek ERC Mentoring Initiative: the solution

Competitive advantages for the Greek ERC Mentoring Initiative (Greek ERC MI)

- Online platform (in prep), allowing automatic mentor-mentee matching based on keywords/panel, scheduling of meetings, follow-up etc.
- Extensive list of mentors (vetted by ERCEA)
- Mentoring for all ERC grant types
- Barriers of confidentiality: National Contact Point ERC team

Greek ERC Mentoring Initiative: stakeholders

Greek ERC MI office (PRAXI Network/FORTH)

- Ευρώπη-Σοφία Δαλαμπίρα
- Χριστίνα Χειμωνίδη
- Γιώργος Κυλάφης

Advisory Committee

- (Coordinator) Δρ. Γιώτα Ποϊράζη Ινστιτούτο Μοριακής Βιολογίας και Βιοτεχνολογίας (IMBB) - Ίδρυμα Τεχνολογίας και Έρευνας (ΙΤΕ)
- Όλγα Καραγιώργου, Ακαδημία Αθηνών (Advanced Grant)
- Νεκτάριος Χρυσουλάκης, ΙΤΕ (Synergy Grant)
- Χριστίνα Παπαγεωργοπούλου, Δημοκρίτειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θράκης- Τμήμα Ιστορίας και Εθνολογίας (Consolodator Grant)
- Κωσταντίνος Παλικαράς, ΕΚΠΑ-Ιατρική Σχολή (Starting Grant)
- Θέμιδα Αλισσάφη, ΕΚΠΑ-Ιατρική Σχολή (Starting Grant, Proof of Concept Grant)

ERC grantees (from Europe and beyond)

- 800+ εθελοντές οι οποίοι έχουν εξεταστεί για σύγκρουση συμφερόντων από την ERCEA

Greek ERC Mentoring Initiative: 3-phase platform development

Phase	Indicative period	ERC-MI focus	Main output
A. Manual / low-tech Minimum viable process (MVP)	Sep–Dec 2026	StG 2026 pilot; EOI form, AC criteria, manual matching and mentoring (tools: Forms/Sheets and emails)	EOI form, AC criteria, dataset formation, First complete operational cycle and lessons learned
B. Digital platform	*Oct 2026–Jan 2027	System specifications, development and testing in parallel with the MVP.	Testable platform prototype/pilot
C. Full platform operation	Feb–Aug 2027	SyG 2027, Plus and AdG 2027 cycles; platform-based operation, monitoring and refinement.	Operational platform and completed mentoring cycles

progress stage: system specification and platform design

Greek ERC Mentoring Initiative: Phase A. Manual / low-tech Minimum viable process

The initiative started in September 2026

- Expression of interest was disseminated to applicants by ERC NCPs
- Activities: manual organization of keywords, matching, feedback
- First complete operational cycle of proposal review: Starting Grant 2026
- Lessons learned to be used for the platform development
- Next week: 1st Meeting of the Advisory Committee (Aim: Discuss system specs and participation requirements)

Greek ERC Mentoring Initiative: Results from Phase A. Manual / low-tech Minimum viable process

Results for StG 2027 applicants

- **5** applicants participated in the ERC MI (MVP)
- **13** mentors were invited
- **7** mentors accepted
- **5** finalized reviews (B1) confirmed

Most important Lesson learned:

expression of interest timing: at least 2 months before matching

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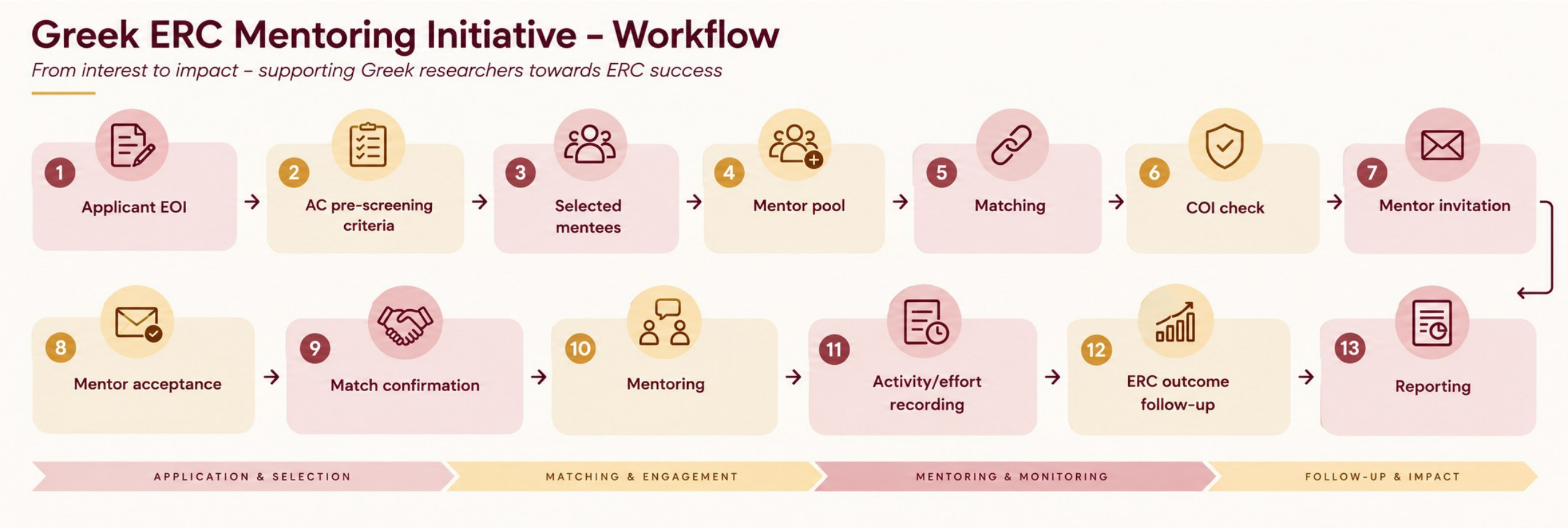
Greek ERC Mentoring Initiative: B. Digital platform development

Services offered:

- User friendly application/matching system for mentors and mentees based on specific criteria
- Extensive and ERCEA-vetted list of international Mentors
- Automatic record generation for all Greek applicants (to be used for interest/capacity mapping, statistics etc.)
- Track record of matching and mentoring progress

The platform will be available in the next cycles of ERC support

Greek ERC Mentoring Initiative: διαδικασία συμμετοχής



**EOI=expression of interest (in google form or in the platform)*
**COI= conflicts of interest by email or as a second step in the platform*

Greek ERC Mentoring Initiative: how can I participate in this stage?

- Fill in the Expression of interest form->
- Send an email at: erc@praxinetwork.gr



Express your interest 3 months before the deadline of your call!

Give us time for appropriate matching and reviewing!!!

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Thank you…

One takeaway. One next step. Your ERC journey starts here

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ERC Mentoring Initiative: B. Digital platform development

From a validated workflow to a sustainable digital platform

What the platform will support

- Recording mentees and mentors
- Capturing scientific fields and research interests
- Organised matching based on predefined criteria
- Tracking match status and mentoring progress

Three-phase implementation

A Manual / low-tech MVP
Sep – Dec 2026

- StG 2026 pilot
- EOI form, AC criteria, manual matching & mentoring
- Tools: Forms / Sheets & emails

Output: EOI form, AC criteria, dataset, first cycle & lessons learned

B Digital platform
Oct 2026 – Jan 2027

- Requirements, prototype, development & testing (in parallel with MVP)

Output: Testable platform prototype / pilot

C Full platform operation
Feb – Aug 2027

- SyG 2027, Plus & AdG 2027 cycles
- Platform-based operation, monitoring & refinement

Output: Operational platform and completed mentoring cycles

Platform available for future ERC proposal support cycles

Operational workflow (Phase A – MVP)

Same core workflow for manual and platform (led by NCP team with AC ERC guidance).

1 Applicant EOI → 2 AC pre-screening criteria → 3 Selected mentees → 4 Mentor pool → 5 Matching → 6 COI check → 7 Mentor invitation → 8 Mentor acceptance → 9 Match confirmation → 10 Mentoring → 11 Activity/effort recording → 12 ERC outcome follow-up → 13 Reporting

Matching approach (MVP)

NCP-controlled matching with AC ERC guidance and a simple scoring matrix (scientific judgement remains).

Criterion	Indicative score
Same ERC panel	30
Same / very close scientific field	25
Strong keyword match	20
Relevant ERC grant experience	10
Relevant methodology	5
Availability / total mentoring workload	10
Total	**100**

Weights are implementation parameters for the MVP and will be reviewed after the first cycle.

Key platform features

- **Mentee registration** (profile + ERC proposal info)
- **Mentor database** (experience, domain/panel, availability, capacity)
- **Matching** (search/filter/ranking + COI gate)
- **Communication** (controlled invitation and response)
- **Mentoring management** (status, activity, modality, duration, completion)
- **Monitoring** (dashboard + pending actions)
- **Reporting** (export of supported applicants, mentors, effort, outcomes)

Timeline & call-based planning

Period	Main activity
Sept.–Oct. 2026	Project start; AC ERC confirmation; MVP set-up; mentor pool; StG 2027 pilot (deadline 14 Oct.)
Nov.–Dec. 2026	Manual EOI, matching & mentoring; platform requirements & prototype (CoG 2027 deadline 13 Jan.)
Oct. 2026–Jan. 2027	Development & testing (parallel)
Dec. 2026–Jan. 2027	Data migration/validation
Feb.–Aug. 2027	Platform-enabled operation (SyG 2027: 11 May | Plus: 15 Sept. | AdG 2027: 26 Aug.)
Sept.–Oct. 2027	Outcome collection / reconciliation
Oct.–Nov. 2027	Final consolidation & ERCEA reporting

Monitoring & project records

Simple master record (detailed Excel specification).

Record	Purpose
Mentee register	Participant, ERC call/domain/panel, proposal readiness
Mentor register	Availability and expertise
Matching record	Match method, COI status, mentor response & confirmation
Outcome record	Submission and evaluation/award (when available)
Lessons-learned record	Process, matching, data & platform improvements

— Efficient • Validated • Scalable —