

The IDEAS Work Programme

EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME 2010

Established by the ERC Scientific Council
and transmitted for adoption to the Commission on 2nd of April 2009

Activities of this Work programme will be implemented by the Dedicated Implementation Structure of the ERC which the Commission has established in the legal form of an Executive Agency (2008/37/EC, 14.12.07). The implementation will be delegated to the latter, once it becomes operationally autonomous, according to the *Commission Decision delegating powers to the European Research Council Executive Agency with a view to performance of tasks linked to implementation of the specific programme Ideas in the field of research comprising in particular implementation of appropriations entered in the Community budget* (C(2008) 5694, 08.10.2008).

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1. Introduction

In terms of competitiveness and growth, the challenge for Europe is to move from investment in the traditional sectors to the fast moving, R&D intensive developing and emerging sectors. In light of the current global financial crisis it is necessary to step up R&D investments and reaffirm that innovation in science and technology is the best guarantor of Europe's economic future. New waves of innovation that arise from fast moving areas of fundamental research and engineering must be captured and exploited. This requires Europe to be active in research of the very highest quality **at the frontiers of knowledge**.

The European Research Council (ERC) has a unique position in European research funding to support the best science and scholarship. It is operating at the highest level of ambition to generate the maximum benefit to European research from the activities it pursues. The ERC will not be hostage to the conventional wisdom; instead, it will take the best practice wherever it can be found.

The fundamental principle for all ERC activities is that of stimulating investigator-initiated frontier research across all fields of research, on the basis of excellence. Awards will be made and grants operated according to simple procedures that maintain the focus on excellence, encourage initiative and combine flexibility with accountability.

By using competition on the basis of excellence at the European level, the ERC aims to add value to other funding schemes, such as those of Research Funding Agencies operating at the national level. The ERC also complements other research activities under the 7th Framework Programme managed by the European Commission, including the Marie Curie schemes, strategic basic research in support of thematic priorities, and support for European infrastructures.

The ERC aims to create leverage towards structural improvements in the research system of Europe. For example, since many investigators who will be involved in the funded activities are likely to be working within universities, academies, research centres and similar establishments, the ERC can have a strong incentive effect on these institutions by:

- Offering greater independence to early stage (starting) investigators as an investment in the next generation and towards enhancement and sustainability of the institutions' research capacity.
- Setting quality benchmarks, allowing institutions better to judge their research performance.
- Revealing in a bottom up manner the availability of top talent in various fields and emerging areas, and thus assisting the institutions' strategic thinking and priority setting.
- Promoting interaction of European research institutions with similar institutions around the world on the basis of the participation of individual researchers from these institutions in ERC activities.

According to the Ideas Specific Programme, the Scientific Council of the ERC establishes the ERC's strategy. It has full authority over decisions on the type of research to be funded and acts as guarantor of the quality of the activity from the scientific perspective. In particular, among its tasks are the establishment of the annual work programme¹ that shall be adopted by the Commission, the establishment of the peer review structure and process, as well as the monitoring and quality control of the programme's implementation from the scientific perspective, including the development of the ERC's strategy regarding international cooperation.

2. Underlying principles of ERC funding

Two types of ERC grant are available at present. These two funding streams, operating on a 'bottom-up' basis, across all research fields, without predetermined priorities, are expected to be the core of the ERC's operations for the duration of the 7th Framework Programme.

- The ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grants (ERC Starting Grants). The objective is to provide critical and adequate support to the independent careers of excellent researchers, whatever their nationality, located in or moving to the Member States and Associated countries, who are at the stage of starting or consolidating their own independent research team or, depending on the field, their independent research programme.
- The ERC Advanced Investigator Grants (ERC Advanced Grants). The objective is to encourage and support excellent, innovative investigator-initiated research projects by leading advanced investigators across the Member States and Associated countries. This funding stream complements the Starting Grant scheme by targeting the population of researchers who have already established themselves as being independent research leaders in their own right.

The Grants will support projects carried out by individual teams² which are headed by a single **Principal Investigator (PI)** of any nationality and, as necessary, include additional **team-members**. These teams may be of national or trans-national character. With the focus on the Principal Investigator, the concept of individual team is fundamentally different from that of a traditional 'network' or 'research consortium'; **proposals of the latter type will not be accepted.**

An ERC grant is awarded to the institution (Applicant Legal Entity) that engages and hosts the Principal Investigator, with the attached **commitment that this institution offers appropriate conditions for the Principal Investigator independently to direct the**

¹ Article 5, Ideas Specific Programme, Council Decision 2006/972/EC of 19 December, OJ L54, 22.2.2007

² It is recognised that in certain fields (e.g. in the humanities and mathematics), research is often performed individually, aside from guiding research students. The term 'team' is used in the broadest sense, including cases where a single individual works independently or conversely in cases when several investigators are working so closely together as to constitute a single team.

research and manage its funding for the duration of the project³. These conditions, including the '*portability*' of the project, are the subject of an agreement between the principal investigator and the host institution (supplementary to the ERC Grant Agreement) and are described in the ERC Model Grant Agreement (C (2007)1625, 16/04/2007).

It is a condition for all ERC funding that the host institution commits to the following conditions of independence⁴, ensuring that the Principal Investigator may:

- apply for funding independently
- manage the research and the funding for the project and make appropriate resource allocation decisions
- publish independently as senior author and include as co-authors only those who have contributed substantially to the reported work
- supervise team members, including research students, doctoral students or others
- have access to reasonable space and facilities for conducting the research

Any type of legal entity⁵, including universities, research centres and business research units can host the Principal Investigator and his/her team as long as the principles indicated above are respected and the Principal Investigator and his/her activity are not constrained by the research strategy of the enterprise.

In addition, and within the framework provided by the ERC Model Grant Agreement and any other available administrative and legal possibilities, host institutions are expected to make appropriate efforts to attract and retain scientists and scholars of the calibre to be awarded an ERC grant. At the same time host institutions are expected to attribute the resources of the ERC grant towards the achievement of the goals of the specific research project.

The ERC is keen that this effect is not confined only to the wealthier countries and regions of Europe. ERC grants should support research excellence across the whole of the European Union and associated countries, including countries and regions that are less well endowed

³ This does not exclude cases where the Principal Investigator's employer is not the host institution. In these cases, the specific conditions of engagement will also be subject to clarification and approval during the granting procedure.

⁴ Note that the conditions of independence provided to the Principal Investigator and his/her team are consistent with the 'The European Charter for Researchers' and 'The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers', C(2005)576, 11.3.2005

⁵ Prior Information of Candidates, Tenderers and Grant Applicants (Article 8 of Decision on the EWS and Article 13 of Regulation on the Central Exclusion Database): Candidates, tenderers, grant applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations mentioned in:

- the Commission Decision of 16.12.2008 on the Early Warning System (EWS) for the use of authorising officers of the Commission and the executive agencies (OJ, L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 125), or
- the Commission Regulation of 17.12.2008 on the Central Exclusion Database – CED (OJ L 344, 20.12.2008, p. 12),

their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the EWS only or both in the EWS and CED, and communicated to the persons and entities listed in the above-mentioned Decision and Regulation, in relation to the award or the execution of a procurement contract or a grant agreement or decision.

with research facilities and infrastructure. By this means, ERC grants can complement the efforts of host institutions to build or reinforce excellence across Europe.

As experience and the portfolio of funded projects builds up, the Scientific Council will be in a position to evaluate the programme achievements, adjust mechanisms and procedures as needed, and elaborate its scientific strategy as this is seen to be appropriate.

3. ERC Starting Grant

3.1 Background

A widely accepted view is that Europe offers insufficient opportunities for young investigators to develop independent careers and make the transition from working under a supervisor to being independent research leaders in their own right. This structural problem leads to a dramatic waste of research talent in Europe. It limits or delays the emergence of the next-generation of researchers, who bring new ideas and energy, and it encourages highly talented researchers at an early stage of their career to seek advancement elsewhere, either in other professions or as researchers outside Europe.

Up to now, only some relatively small scale efforts have been made in Europe to address these problems. The ERC is well placed to develop a broad, international and consistent scheme on the much larger scale that will be necessary to make a real impact on European science and scholarship.

3.2 Objectives

ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grants are designed to support researchers (Principal Investigators) at the stage at which they are starting or consolidating their own independent research team or, depending on the field, establishing their independent research programme. The scheme will support the creation of independent and excellent new individual research teams and will strengthen others that have been recently created.

Applicants who are applying to consolidate their own independent team/activity (rather than to start their transition to independence) will be required to explain this situation in the proposal. This will enable the evaluation panels to assess those proposals taking into account the more advanced stage of the career of these applicants.

The ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grant (ERC Starting Grant) scheme intends to support research projects to be performed in any Member State or associated country to the Framework Programme. Team members, unlike Principal Investigators, may conduct the funded research outside the European Union or associated countries.

The ERC is particularly keen to encourage excellent proposals which involve the establishment of a new research activity in the EU or the associated countries by a Principal Investigator who is moving from a third country into the EU or the associated countries. To provide additional assistance to cover “start-up” and relocation costs, including purchase of major equipment, proposals with these features may request an additional element of funding (see below), the justification for which will be assessed by the panels.

The peer review evaluation Panels will be empowered to conclude whether the grant and the conditions specified by the host institution will allow the Principal Investigator to make or consolidate the transition to independence.

3.3 Size of ERC Starting Grants

Depending on the specific project and field, the level of ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grants may be up to around EUR 2 000 000 for a period of 5 years⁶ (pro rata for projects of shorter duration). Normally, the level of the grant is expected to be limited to a maximum of around EUR 1 500 000. However, an additional EUR 500 000 (see point 3.2) may be applied for if the application involves the establishment of a new research activity in the EU or the associated countries by a Principal Investigator who is moving there from a third country .

3.3.1 Community Contribution

The Community financial contribution shall be in the form of a grant to the budget corresponding to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and a contribution of 20% of the total eligible direct costs (excluding the direct costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the host institution) towards indirect costs.

3.3.2 Grant assessment

The overall level of the grant offered will be determined by the peer review evaluation, on the basis of the needs of the project, judged by the panel (see Annex 1 for panel structure and description) against the requested grant to the budget⁷. In all cases, the evaluation panels will review the requested grant and recommend the total amount to be granted, using rounded figures. The panels may also suggest a modification to the indicative budgetary breakdown in the application but the Principal Investigator has the freedom to re-budget during the course of the project.

3.4 Profile of the ERC Starting Grant Applicant

A competitive Starting Grant Principal Investigator must have already shown the potential for research independence and evidence of maturity. For example, it is normally expected that applicants will have produced at least one important publication without the participation of their PhD supervisor. Applicants should also be able to demonstrate a promising **track-record of early achievements** appropriate to their research field and career stage, including significant publications (as main author) in major international peer-reviewed multidisciplinary scientific journals, or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals of their respective field. They may also demonstrate a record of invited presentations in well-established international conferences, granted patents, awards, prizes etc.

The evaluation panels will assess the applicants taking into account the specific stage of the research career they are at the time of the application, with applicants being awarded their PhD at least 2 and no more than 6 years (broadly described as "starters") or over 6 but no more than 10 years (broadly described as "consolidators") prior to the call publication.

⁶ The level of the grant represents a maximum overall figure – payments must be justified on the basis of the amounts actually disbursed for the project.

⁷ The requested grant should reflect the Principal Investigator's estimation of the real project cost, taking account of the nature of the project and team and whether it is intended to set up a new team or add support to an established team. Evaluation panels will review the requested grant and, as appropriate, suggest adjustments using rounded figures (increments of EUR 10 000).

3.5 **ERC Starting Grant proposal description**

Section 1

1(a) Scientific leadership potential: A description of the applicant's scientific leadership potential should include:

- a presentation of the content of the early scientific or scholarly achievements of the applicant to his or her own research field, demonstrating the applicant's qualifications and potential to go significantly beyond the state of the art;
- the recognition and diffusion that these early contributions have received from others (publications, citations or appropriate equivalents/additional funding/ students/international prizes and awards/ institution-building/other);

1(b) Curriculum Vitae: The CV should include the standard academic and research record as well as a succinct 'funding ID' which must specify any current research grants and their subject⁸, and any ongoing application for work related to the proposal. Any research career gaps and/or unconventional paths should be clearly explained so that can be fairly assessed by the evaluation panels.

1(c) Early achievements track-record: The applicant should list:

1. **Publications, as main author** (indicating those without the presence as co-author of their PhD supervisor) in **major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals** and/or in the **leading international peer-reviewed journals, peer-reviewed conferences proceedings and/or monographs** of their respective research fields, also indicating the number of citations (excluding self-citations) they have attracted.
2. Granted **patent(s)** (if applicable).
3. **Invited presentations to peer-reviewed, internationally established conferences** and/or **international advanced schools** (if applicable)
4. **Prizes and Awards** (if applicable)

The applicant may be asked to introduce a summary of the information of part 1(c) using an electronic template that will be provided.

The Principal Investigators will be assessed by the evaluation panels⁹ as "starters" (award of PhD from 2 up to 6 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication) or "consolidators" (award of PhD over 6 and up to 10 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication) taking into account the specific stage of their research career at the time of the application.

⁸ Principal Investigators who have already obtained significant funding to assist them in the establishment or consolidation of their independent research team/activity and/or, due to other important research engagements, cannot commit significant part of their time (at least 50% of their working time) to run the ERC-funded activity, should not submit a proposal for additional funding from ERC during the same period.

⁹ See annex II for more details on the ERC Starting Grants evaluation process.

1(d) Extended Synopsis: concise presentation of the scientific proposal, with particular attention to the ground-breaking nature of the research project, which will allow evaluation panels to assess, in step-1 of the evaluation, the feasibility of the outlined scientific approach.

Section 2:

Scientific Proposal: description of scientific and technical aspects of the project, demonstrating the ground-breaking nature of the research, its potential impact and research methodology. The fraction of the applicant's research effort that will be devoted to this project should also be indicated.

The proposed research activities shall respect fundamental ethical principles¹⁰.

Section 3:

Research Environment: description of the proposed research environment and its contribution to the research project/activity.

The host institution must confirm its association with and its support to the project and the Principal Investigator. As part of the application the institution must provide a binding statement that the conditions of independence are already fulfilled or will be provided to the Principal Investigator if the application is successful¹¹, according to the template provided¹². Proposals that do not include this institutional statement will not be considered for evaluation.

In fairness to all applicants, [strict] limits will be applied to the length of proposals, as follows:

Section 1

Scientific leadership potential: 2 pages

Curriculum Vitae: 2 pages

Early achievements track-record: 2 pages

Extended Synopsis: 5 pages

Section 2

Scientific Proposal: 15 pages

Section 3

Research Environment: 2 pages

¹⁰ In accordance with article 3 of the Ideas Specific Programme and including those fundamental ethical principles reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The opinions of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies are and will be taken into account. Research activities should also take into account the Protocol on the Protection and Welfare of Animals, and reduce the use of animals in research and testing, with a view to ultimately replacing animal use.

¹¹ The statement must be on an official letter (organisation letterhead), signed by the legal representative of the host institution who can commit the host institution according to the requirements of the ERC Model Grant Agreement (C (2007)1625, 16/04/2007). The letter should be scanned and uploaded to EPSS with the proposal.

¹² see Guide for Applicants

Only the material that is presented within these limits will be evaluated (evaluators will only be asked, and will be under no obligation to read beyond, the material presented within the page limits).

Additional necessary elements of the proposal:

1. Host Institution Binding Statement of Support
2. Ethical Review table (incorporated in section 2 of the proposal)
3. PhD record and supporting documentation for eligibility checking

3.6 ERC Starting Grant proposal submission procedure and peer review evaluation

3.6.1 Proposal Submission

Proposals are submitted by the Principal Investigator (PI), who has scientific responsibility for the project, on behalf of the host institution which is the applicant legal entity¹³.

Proposal submission is made electronically via the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS). Early registration in EPSS is strongly recommended and should be done as early as possible in advance of the call deadline.

3.6.2 Peer review evaluation

A **single submission of the full proposal** will be followed by a **two-step evaluation**. The evaluation will be conducted by means of a structure of high level peer review panels as listed in Annex 1¹⁴. The Panels may be assisted by referees.

Principal Investigators whose proposals will be retained for the second step of the evaluation may be invited for an interview to present their project to the evaluation panel meeting in Brussels. They will be accordingly reimbursed for their travel and subsistence expenses¹⁵.

The applicant must submit the proposal to the primary evaluation panel before the submission deadline of this panel. This will be the basis for allocating proposals to panels. In case that the applicant has indicated a secondary evaluation panel, the primary panel will determine whether the proposal is indeed cross-panel or cross-domain interdisciplinary and, if this is

¹³ Exceptionally, the Principal Investigator may himself/herself act as the applicant legal entity, if he/she is acting in the capacity of the legal entity in his/her own right.

¹⁴ Panel members will be compensated on the evaluation tasks they perform. Additional reimbursement of travel and subsistence will be made for assignments involving travel. Referees who may assist the evaluation panels will not be compensated.

¹⁵ In duly justified and exceptional cases, and with the consent of the Scientific Council, the Commission/ERC DIS may agree, subject to technical feasibility, on other ways of interviewing successful Principal Investigators such as video link, teleconference or similar means, and on the reimbursement of their possible related travel and subsistence expenses. Relevant provisions for the reimbursement of expenses incurred in relation to Principal Investigators' interviews are included in the ERC Rules for submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the 7th Framework Programme.

confirmed, shall request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional referees. If the primary panel decides that the proposal is well within the panel's scope then it will only be evaluated by this panel.

3.6.3 Call budget

The ERC Scientific Council has established the following indicative percentage budgets¹⁶ for each of the 3 main research domains:

Physical Sciences & Engineering: 39%

Life Sciences: 34%

Social Sciences & Humanities: 14%

and an ***Interdisciplinary***¹⁷ domain with an indicative budget of **13%**.

A detailed description of the evaluation process for Starting Grant proposals is set out in Annex 2.

The ERC Scientific Council, acting as the guarantor of the quality of the activity from a scientific perspective, and on the basis of information from the panel Chairs, will ensure that the establishment of the 4 domain lists are in accordance with the Starting Grant scientific strategy and priorities it has established in the work programme.

3.7 Reapplications and multiple applications

Rules apply to reapplications for ERC grants by Principal Investigators whose eligible proposals are not judged to meet the threshold of quality, as well as for multiple eligible applications within the same or different type of ERC grants. The current rules, which may subsequently be modified by the Scientific Council in light of experience, are as follows:

3.7.1 General

- Only one ERC grant managed by a Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator can be active at any time.
- No Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator may be associated with more than one application to the ERC calls with deadlines during the same calendar year.

¹⁶ Indicative budgets may permit a variation of the budget for each domain by a maximum of 10% of the total budget for the call; however the budget proportions allocated to projects in the three main research domains will be no lower than the percentages indicated. In addition, the final budget awarded per ERC call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call if additional appropriations become available.

¹⁷ Including cross-panel and/or cross-domain research projects and research with the potential to open new fields

3.7.2 Specific to 2010 ERC Starting Grant Call (ERC-2010-StG)

- No Principal Investigator who has submitted an eligible proposal to a Starting Grant call (ERC-2010-StG) may apply to the following Starting Grant call (ERC-2011-StG), unless his/her proposal was evaluated above the quality threshold at the end of step 1 of the evaluation.
- As already specified in the work programme 2009, no Principal Investigator who has submitted an eligible proposal to the Starting Grant call ERC-2009-StG may apply to the Starting Grant call ERC-2010-StG, unless his/her proposal was evaluated above the quality threshold during the 2nd step but not funded due to insufficient available budget.
- It will be possible for ERC Starting Grant Principal Investigators to compete within the last two years of the Starting Grant for an Advanced Investigator Grant to allow for uninterrupted funding of their project/activity.

3.8 Eligibility Criteria

Incomplete proposals (where parts or sections of the proposal and/or the PhD-related documents and/or supporting documentation justifying the extension of the eligibility period (see point 3.8.2) and/or the host institution's binding statement of support are missing) are considered ineligible and will not be evaluated¹⁸. The proposal must be submitted to the appropriate primary ERC panel (i.e. the panel which covers the main scientific areas of the research proposed) before the respective deadline. In addition, only proposals which satisfy the rules for reapplication and multiple applications (as specified in section 3.7 of this WP) will be considered eligible to be evaluated.

Where there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision by an eligibility review committee. If it becomes clear before, during or after the peer review evaluation phase, that one or more of the eligibility criteria has not been met, the proposal is declared ineligible and is withdrawn from any further examination.

3.8.1 Eligible Scientific Fields

Applications may be made in any field of research¹⁹.

Funding of human embryonic stem cell research will be possible within the ethical framework defined in the EC 7th Framework Programme²⁰ as well as the Ideas Specific Programme.

¹⁸ See also 'eligibility check' in ERC rules for the submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the Seventh Framework Programme, (C(2007)2286 of 6 June 2007 and C(2007)4429 of 27 September 2007).

¹⁹ Research proposals within the scope of Annex I of the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications, should be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom 7th Framework Programme.

²⁰ In accordance with Commission statement, OJ L 412 of 30.12.2006, p. 42, proposals which will include research activities which destroy human embryos, including for the procurement of stem cells, will not be submitted to the Regulatory Committee. The exclusion of funding of this step of research will not prevent funding of subsequent steps involving human embryonic stem cells.

3.8.2 Eligible Principal Investigator

The ERC actions are open to researchers of any nationality who intend to establish and conduct their research activity in any Member State or Associated Country.

The Principal Investigator may be of any age and nationality and may reside in any country in the world at the time of the application

The Principal Investigator must have been awarded²¹ his/her first PhD (or equivalent doctoral degree²²) **at least 2 and up to 10 years prior to the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Starting Grant.**

Extensions of this period may be allowed only in case of eligible career breaks which must be properly documented: maternity (18 months per child born before or after the PhD award) & paternity leave (accumulation of actual time off for children born before or after the PhD award) and leave taken for long-term illness, national service. Leave taken for unavoidable statutory reasons (e.g. clinical qualifications) may also count as an extension.

The cumulative eligibility period should not in any case surpass 14.5 years following the award of the first PhD. No allowance will be made for part-time working (2 years of half-time working count as 2 full-time years).

3.8.3 Eligible Host Institution (Applicant Legal Entity)

The contribution of Principal Investigators must be substantially carried out in the EU or Associated countries. This does not exclude field work or other research activities in cases where these must necessarily be conducted outside the EU or the associated countries in order to achieve the scientific objectives of the project/activity. Starting Grant Principal Investigators must be strongly committed to the project and devote a significant amount of time to it (they will need to devote at least 50% of their working time to the ERC-funded project).

The host institution will host and engage²³ the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the grant. It must be situated in one of the Member States, or one of the associated countries. It may also be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. Normally, the applicant legal entity will be the only participating legal entity. Other legal entities that host other team members, including those located in third countries, may however be involved and receive funding to support the work of additional team members, if so specified in the grant award or subsequent amendments to the original grant.

²¹ The reference date towards the calculation of the eligibility period should be the date of the actual award according to the national rules in the country that the degree was awarded.

²² See Scientific Council's strategic note 'PhD and Equivalent Doctoral Degrees' on ERC web site: <http://erc.europa.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&topicID=24>, including specific provisions for holders of medical degrees.

²³ See also footnote 3

3.9 Evaluation criteria

Excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation. It will be applied to the evaluation of both the Principal Investigator and the research project. The evaluation will also assess the extent to which the research environment enables the excellence of the project to be achieved.

The detailed elements applying to the 3 sections of the proposal are as follows:

1. Principal Investigator²⁴

Quality of research output/track-record: *How well qualified is the Principal Investigator to conduct the project (reviewers are expected to evaluate the quality of the prior work such as published results in top peer review journals as well as other elements of the Principal Investigator's CV), taking into account the early or more mature phase of his/her transition to independence, as well as prior career breaks and/or unconventional research career paths (especially in the case of women scientists).*

To what extent are the publications and achievements of the Principal Investigator ground-breaking and demonstrative of independent creative thinking and capacity to go significantly beyond the state of the art?

Taking account of the particular circumstances of the Principal Investigator, and the proposed research, including any funding already secured, to what extent will an ERC Starting Grant make a significant contribution to the establishment or consolidation of independence?

2. Research project

Ground-breaking nature of the research: *Does the proposed research address important challenges at the frontiers of the field(s) addressed? Does it have suitably ambitious objectives, which go substantially beyond the current state of the art (e.g. including inter- and trans-disciplinary developments and novel or unconventional concepts and/or approaches)? How well conceived and organised is the proposed activity?*

Potential impact:

- (a) *Does the research open new and important, scientific, technological or scholarly horizons?*
- (b) *Will the project significantly enhance the research environment and capabilities for frontier research in Europe (in particular as regards the immediate host environment)?*

Methodology:

- a) *Is the outlined scientific approach (including the activities to be undertaken by the individual team members) feasible?(step 1)*
- b) *Is the proposed research methodology (including when pertinent the use of instrumentation, other type of infrastructures etc.) comprehensive and appropriate to the project? Will it enable the goals of the project convincingly to be achieved within the proposed timescales and resources (including the costs of the Principal Investigator and the members of the team who will be engaged in the project²⁵) and the level of risk associated with a challenging research project? (step 2)*

²⁴ Evaluation panel members should also take into consideration the benchmarks set in section 3.4 and the proposal's elements such as the 'Scientific leadership potential' in section 3.5

²⁵ see also section 2: Underlying Principles of ERC funding

High-gain/High-risk balance:

a) *does the proposed research involve highly novel and/or unconventional methodologies, whose high risk is justified by the possibility of a major breakthrough with an impact beyond a specific research domain/discipline?*

3. Research Environment (to be assessed only during step 2 of the evaluation)

Contribution of the research environment to the project: *Does the host environment²⁶ provide most of the infrastructure necessary for the research to be carried out? Is it in a position to provide an appropriate intellectual environment and infrastructural support and to assist in achieving the ambitions for the project and the Principal Investigator?*

Participation of other legal entities²⁷: *If it is proposed that other legal entities participate in the project, in addition to the applicant legal entity, is their participation fully justified by the scientific added value they bring to the project?*

3.10 Application of Criteria

Panels and referees will evaluate and mark numerically the proposals under the criteria of Heading 1: *Principal Investigator* and Heading 2: *Research project*. Proposals will be evaluated under Heading 3 on a 'pass/fail' basis and commented but not marked during step 2 of the evaluation. The evaluation panels will review the level of the requested grant and, as appropriate, suggest adjustments.

Each proposal will receive a mark on a scale of 1 to 4 for each of the 2 evaluation criteria (Heading 1 and 2):

- 4: Outstanding**
- 3: Excellent**
- 2: Very Good**
- 1: Non-competitive**

At each step of the evaluation and on the basis of their average mark (at least three independent panel members), proposals will be ranked by the panels (domains) in order of priority. If a proposal, in any step of the evaluation, as set out in Annex 2, is marked below the quality threshold of ≥ 2 on any of the first two headings, it will not be further evaluated.

At the end of each evaluation step, the proposals will be ranked by the panels on the basis of the marks they have received and an overall appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses.

²⁶ The term 'research environment' corresponds to the immediate setting of the research team, such as Department (rather than the sponsoring institution as a whole), and when appropriate, the wider 'milieu' of the team's operation, including collaborating laboratories, groups, departments etc.

²⁷ As the ERC schemes are addressed to individual investigators, usually the participation of more than one legal entity will not improve the chances of success. Participation of investigator(s) from another legal entity would be acceptable if they clearly and substantially enhance the scientific value of the proposal.

4. ERC Advanced Grant

4.1 Background

ERC Advanced Grants provide an opportunity to established scientists and scholars to pursue frontier research of their choice. Being highly competitive and awarded on the sole criterion of excellence without restriction to particular areas of research, these grants will support the very best of research to be conducted in Europe, adding value to research investments at the national level.

Advanced Grants are intended to promote substantial advances in the frontiers of knowledge, and to encourage new productive lines of enquiry and new methods and techniques, including unconventional approaches and investigations at the interface between established disciplines.

The peer review evaluation of proposals will therefore give emphasis to these aspects, in full understanding that such research has a high-gain/high-risk profile, i.e. if successful the payoffs will be very significant, but there is a higher-than-normal risk that the research project does not entirely fulfil its aims.

4.2 Objectives

The aim is to fund individual teams led by established, innovative and active Principal Investigators, regardless of nationality, age or current location. They will include, for example, leading contributors to research advances in Europe, leading scientists of the European 'diaspora' or non-EU nationals who wish to establish themselves in Europe and pursue ground-breaking, high-risk research that opens new directions in their respective research fields or other domains.

Applicants must have a track record of research achievements and recognised as such. Assessment of their scientific leadership profile and track record, therefore, will be a significant component of the evaluation. Research proposals of a multi- and inter-disciplinary nature are strongly encouraged.

To encourage interdisciplinarity, when an interdisciplinary Advanced Grant proposal is grounded in the necessary combination of knowledge and skills from more than one discipline ('Co-Investigator project'), a Principal Investigator (PI) may identify a member or members of his/her individual team, who are active in these disciplines, as Co-Investigators, as an exception to the rule stated in Section 2 that consortia-style applications are not permitted. The contribution of Principal Investigators and Co-Investigators must be carried out in the EU or Associated countries.

In order to appropriately cover the disciplines, the evaluation panel (see below) shall invite one or more members of a complementary panel to contribute to the evaluation of the proposal. The evaluation panel will carefully assess the scientific added value of any Co-Investigator(s) to the project; in particular the participation of any additional legal entity will only be permitted if it is clearly necessary from the scientific perspective.

The ERC Advanced Researcher Grant (ERC Advanced Grant) scheme intends to support research projects to be performed in any Member State or associated country to the Framework Programme. Team members, unlike Principal Investigators or Co-Investigators, may conduct the funded research outside the European Union or associated countries.

The ERC is particularly keen to encourage excellent proposals which involve the establishment of a new research activity in the EU or the associated countries by a Principal Investigator who is moving there from a third country.

To provide additional assistance to cover “start-up” and relocation costs, including purchase of major equipment, proposals with these features may request an additional element of funding (see below), the justification for which will be assessed by the panels.

4.3 Size of ERC Advanced Grants

Depending on the specific project and field, the level of these grants may be up to around EUR 3 500 000 for a period of 5 years²⁸ (pro rata for projects of shorter duration). Normally, grants will be limited to a maximum of around EUR 2 500 000. However, an additional EUR 1 000 000 may be applied for if the application (a) involves the establishment of a new research activity in the EU or the associated countries by a Principal Investigator who is moving from a third country and/or (b) it is a 'Co-Investigator project' (see section 4.2) and/or (c), requests the purchase of major equipment.

4.3.1 Community Contribution

The Community financial contribution shall be in the form of a grant to the budget corresponding to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and a contribution of 20% of the total eligible direct costs (excluding the direct costs for subcontracting and the costs of resources made available by third parties which are not used on the premises of the host institution) towards indirect costs.

4.3.2 Grant assessment

The overall level of the grant offered will be determined by the peer review evaluation, on the basis of the needs of the project, judged by the panel (see Annex 1 for panel structure and description) against the requested grant to the budget²⁹. In all cases, the evaluation panels will review the requested grant and recommend the total amount to be granted, using rounded figures. The panels may also suggest a modification to the indicative budgetary breakdown in the application but the Principal Investigator has the freedom to re-budget during the course of the project.

²⁸ The level of the grant represents a maximum overall figure – payments must be justified on the basis of the amounts actually disbursed for the project.

²⁹ The requested grant should reflect the Principal Investigator's estimation of the real project cost, taking account of the nature of the project and team and whether it is intended to set up a new team or add support to an established team. Evaluation panels will review the requested grant and, as appropriate, suggest adjustments using rounded figures (increments of EUR 10 000).

4.4 Profile of the ERC Advanced Grant Applicant

Applicants for the prestigious ERC Advanced Grant are expected to be active researchers and to have a track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years which must be presented in the application. There is little prospect of an application succeeding in the absence of such a record, which identifies investigators as exceptional leaders in terms of originality and significance of their research contributions.

Thus, in most fields, Principal Investigators of Advanced Grant proposals will be expected to demonstrate a record of achievements appropriate to the field and at least matching one or more of the following benchmarks:

- Normally 10 publications as senior author (or in those fields where alphabetic order of authorship is the norm, joint author) in major international peer-reviewed multidisciplinary scientific journals, and/or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals and peer-reviewed conferences proceedings of their respective field.
- Normally 3 major research monographs, of which at least one is translated into another language. This benchmark is relevant to research fields where publication of monographs is the norm (e.g. humanities and social sciences).

Other alternative benchmarks that may be considered (individually or in combination) as indicative of an exceptional record and recognition in the last 10 years:

- Normally 5 granted patents
- Normally 10 invited presentations in well-established internationally organised conferences and advanced schools
- Normally 3 research expeditions led by the applicant
- Normally 3 well-established international conferences or congresses where the applicant was involved in their organisation as a member of the steering and/or organising committee
- International recognition through scientific prizes/awards or membership in well-regarded Academies

4.5 ERC Advanced Grant proposal description

Section 1

1(a) Scientific leadership profile: A description of the applicant's scientific leadership profile should include:

- a presentation of the content and impact of the major scientific or scholarly contributions of the applicant to his or her own research field and/or neighbouring research fields, demonstrating the applicant's capacity to go significantly beyond the state of the art, and, if applicable, their wider societal impact;
- the international recognition and diffusion that these major contributions have received from others (publications, citations or appropriate equivalents/additional funding/ students/international prizes and awards/ institution-building/other);
- evidence of efforts and ability to inspire younger researchers towards high quality research (highlights of research mentoring record, information on the careers of supervised graduate and post-doctoral students, etc.);
- where applicable: proven ability to productively change research fields and/or to establish new interdisciplinary approaches;

1(b) Curriculum Vitae: The CV should include the standard academic and research record as well as a succinct 'funding ID' which must specify any current research grants and their subject, and any ongoing application for work related to the proposal Any research career gaps and/or unconventional paths should be clearly explained so that can be fairly assessed by the evaluation panels.

1(c) 10-year track-record: The applicant should list his/her activity over the past 10 years as regards:

1. The **top 10 publications, as senior author** (or in those fields where alphabetic order of authorship is the norm, joint author) in **major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals** and/or in the **leading international peer-reviewed journals and peer-reviewed conferences proceedings** of their respective research fields, also indicating the number of citations (excluding self-citations) they have attracted.
2. **Research monographs and any translations thereof** (if applicable).
3. Granted **patents** (if applicable).
4. **Invited presentations to peer-reviewed, internationally established conferences** and/or **international advanced schools** (if applicable)
5. **Research expeditions** that the applicant has led (if applicable).
6. Organisation of **International conferences** in the field of the applicant (membership in the steering and/or organising committee) (if applicable)
7. **International Prizes/Awards/Academy memberships** (if applicable)

The applicant may be asked to introduce a summary of the data of part 1(c) using an electronic template that will be provided. **Co-Investigator(s):** In exceptional cases ('Co-Investigator projects') the scientific leadership profile, the CV and the 10-year track-record should also be produced for each designated Co-Investigator.

1(d) Extended Synopsis: concise presentation of the scientific proposal, with particular attention to the ground-breaking nature of the research project, which will allow evaluation panels to assess, in step-1 of the evaluation, the feasibility of the outlined scientific approach.

Section 2:

Scientific Proposal: description of scientific and technical aspects of the project, demonstrating the ground-breaking nature of the research, its potential impact and research methodology. The fraction of the applicant's research effort that will be devoted to this project should also be indicated.

The proposed research activities shall respect fundamental ethical principles³⁰.

Section 3:

Research Environment: description of the proposed research environment and its contribution to the research project/activity. The host institution must confirm its association with and its support to the project and the Principal Investigator. As part of the application, the institution must provide a binding statement of support that the conditions of independence are already fulfilled or will be provided to the Principal Investigator if the application is successful³¹, according to the template³² provided. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement will not be considered for evaluation.

In fairness to all applicants, [strict] limits will be applied to the length of proposals, as follows:

Section 1³³

Scientific leadership profile: 2 pages

Curriculum Vitae: 2 pages

10-year track-record: 2 pages

Extended Synopsis: 5 pages

Section 2

Scientific Proposal: 15 pages

Section 3

³⁰ In accordance with article 3 of the Ideas Specific Programme and including those fundamental ethical principles reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The opinions of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies are and will be taken into account. Research activities should also take into account the Protocol on the Protection and Welfare of Animals, and reduce the use of animals in research and testing, with a view to ultimately replacing animal use.

³¹ The statement must be on an official letter (organisation letterhead), signed by the legal representative of the host institution who can commit the host institution according to the requirements of the ERC Model Grant Agreement (C (2007)1625, 16/04/2007). The letter should be scanned and uploaded to EPSS with the proposal.

³² see Guide for Applicants

³³ In the case of the 'Co-Investigator projects', the scientific leadership profile, the CV and the 10-year track-record should also be produced for each designated co-investigator, focusing on research achievements and publications. The maximum is set to 6 pages per co-investigator.

Research Environment: 2 pages

Only the material that is presented within these limits will be evaluated (evaluators will only be asked, and will be under no obligation to read beyond, the material presented within the page limits).

Additional necessary elements:

1. Host Institution binding statement of support
2. Ethical Review table (incorporated in section 2 of the proposal)

4.6 Submission procedure and peer review evaluation

4.6.1 Proposal Submission

Proposals are submitted by the Principal Investigator (PI), who has scientific responsibility for the project, on behalf of the host institution which is the applicant legal entity³⁴.

Proposal submissions will be done electronically via the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS). Early registration in EPSS is strongly recommended and should be done as early as possible in advance of the call deadline.

4.6.2 Peer review evaluation

A **single submission of the full proposal** will be followed by a **two-step evaluation**. The evaluation will be conducted by means of a structure of high level peer review panels as listed in Annex 1³⁵. The Panels may be assisted by referees.

The applicant must submit the proposal to the primary evaluation panel before the submission deadline of this panel. This will be the basis for allocating proposals to panels. In case that the applicant has indicated a secondary evaluation panel, the primary panel will determine whether the proposal is indeed cross-panel or cross-domain interdisciplinary and, if this is confirmed, shall request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional referees. If the primary panel decides that the proposal is well within the panel's scope then it will only be evaluated by this panel.

4.6.3 Call budget

The ERC Scientific Council has established the following indicative percentage budgets³⁶ for each of the 3 main research domains:

³⁴ Exceptionally, the Principal Investigator may himself/herself act as the applicant legal entity, if he/she is acting in the capacity of the legal entity in his/her own right.

³⁵ Panel members will be compensated on the evaluation tasks they perform. Additional reimbursement of travel and subsistence will be made for assignments involving travel. Referees who may assist the evaluation panels will not be compensated.

Physical Sciences & Engineering: 39%

Life Sciences: 34%

Social Sciences & Humanities: 14%

and an *Interdisciplinary*³⁷ domain with an indicative budget of **13%**.

A detailed description of the evaluation process for Advanced Grant proposals is set out in Annex 3.

The ERC Scientific Council, acting as the guarantor of the quality of the activity from a scientific perspective, and on the basis of information from the panel Chairs, will ensure that the establishment of the 4 domain lists are in accordance with the Advanced Grant scientific strategy and priorities it has established in the work programme.

4.7 Reapplications and multiple applications

Rules apply to reapplications by Principal Investigators for ERC grants whose eligible proposals are not judged to meet the threshold of quality, as well as for multiple eligible applications within the same or different type of ERC grants. The current rules, which may subsequently be modified by the Scientific Council in light of experience, are as follows:

4.7.1 General

- Only one ERC grant managed by a Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator can be active at any time.
- No principal or Co-Investigator may be associated with more than one application to the ERC calls with deadlines during the same calendar year.

4.7.2 Specific to the 2010 ERC Advanced Grant Call (ERC-2010-AdG)

- No Principal Investigator who has submitted an eligible proposal to an Advanced Grant call (ERC-2010-AdG) may apply to the following Advanced Grant call (ERC-2011-AdG), unless his/her proposal was evaluated above the quality threshold during the 2nd step but not funded due to insufficient available budget.
- A Principal Investigator or a Co-Investigator associated with an eligible proposal for an ERC-Advanced Grant to either of the first two Advanced Grant calls (ERC-2008-AdG or ERC-2009-AdG) may not apply for the third ERC-Advanced Grant call (ERC-2010-AdG) unless the eligible proposal to the first or second call has met the quality threshold on both evaluation criteria - Principal Investigator, Research Project - at the end of step 1 of the evaluation.

³⁶ Indicative budgets may permit a variation of the budget for each domain by a maximum of 10% of the total budget for the call; however the budget proportions allocated to projects in the three main research domains will be no lower than the percentages indicated. In addition, the final budget awarded per ERC call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call if additional appropriations become available.

³⁷ Including cross-panel and/or cross-domain research projects and research with the potential to open new fields

4.8 Eligibility Criteria

Incomplete proposals (where parts or sections of the proposal and/or the host institution's binding statement of support are missing) are considered ineligible and will not be evaluated³⁸. The proposal must be submitted to the appropriate primary ERC panel (i.e. the panel which covers the main scientific areas of the research proposed) before the respective deadline. In addition, only proposals which satisfy the rules for reapplication and multiple applications (as specified in section 4.7 of this WP) will be considered eligible to be evaluated.

Where there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision by an eligibility review committee. If it becomes clear before, during or after the peer review evaluation phase, that one or more of the eligibility criteria has not been met, the proposal is declared ineligible and is withdrawn from any further examination.

4.8.1 Eligible Scientific Fields

Applications may be made in any field of research³⁹.

Funding of human embryonic stem cell research will be possible within the ethical framework defined in the EC 7th Framework Programme⁴⁰ as well as the Ideas Specific Programme.

4.8.2 Eligible Principal Investigator

The ERC actions are open to researchers of any nationality who intend to establish and conduct their research activity in any Member State or associated Country.

The ERC Advanced Grant Principal Investigator (and Co-Investigator) can be of any age and nationality and he/she can reside in any country in the world at the time of the application

Principal Investigators applying for the ERC Advanced Grant must be established research leaders who have made exceptional contributions to research in terms of originality and significance. No specific eligibility criteria with respect to their academic requirements are consequently foreseen.

³⁸ See also 'eligibility check' in ERC rules for the submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the Seventh Framework Programme, (C(2007)2286 of 6 June 2007) and C(2007)4429 of 27 September 2007.

³⁹ Research proposals within the scope of Annex I of the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications, should be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom 7th Framework Programme.

⁴⁰ In accordance with Commission statement, OJ L 412 of 30.12.2006, p. 42, proposals which will include research activities which destroy human embryos, including for the procurement of stem cells, will not be submitted to the Regulatory Committee. The exclusion of funding of this step of research will not prevent funding of subsequent steps involving human embryonic stem cells.

4.8.3 Eligible Host Institution (Applicant Legal Entity)

The contribution of Principal Investigators and Co-Investigators must be substantially carried out in the EU or Associated countries. This does not exclude field work or other research activities in cases where these must necessarily be conducted outside the EU or the associated countries in order to achieve the scientific objectives of the project/activity. Advanced Grant Principal Investigators must be strongly committed to the project and devote a significant amount of time to it (they will need to devote at least 30% of their working time to the ERC-funded project while spending at least 50% of their total working time in a EU Member State or Associated Country).

The host institution will host and engage⁴¹ the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the grant. It must be situated in one of the Member States, or one of the associated countries. It may also be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. Normally, the applicant legal entity will be the only participating legal entity. Other legal entities that host other team members, including those located in third countries, may however be involved and receive funding to support the work of additional team members, if so specified in the grant award or subsequent amendments to the original grant.

4.9 Evaluation criteria

Excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation. It will be applied to the evaluation of both the Principal Investigator (and Co-Investigator if applicable) and the research project. The evaluation will also assess the extent to which the research environment enables the excellence of the project to be achieved.

The detailed elements applying to the 3 sections of the proposal are as follows:

1. Principal Investigator⁴²

Quality of research output/track-record: How well qualified is the Principal Investigator (and any Co-Investigator if applicable) to conduct the project? Reviewers are expected to evaluate the quality of the prior work such as published results in top peer review journals as well as other elements of the Principal Investigator's CV. Reviewers should also take into account possible breaks in the research career of the applicant and/or unconventional research career paths, especially in the case of women scientists.

To what extent are the publications and achievements of the Principal Investigator groundbreaking and demonstrative of independent creative thinking and capacity to go significantly beyond the state of the art?

To what extent does the quality and quantity of funding the Principal Investigator has attracted during the last ten years demonstrate his/her reputation as a performer of groundbreaking research?

Intellectual capacity and creativity: To what extent does the Principal Investigator's record of research, collaborations, project conception, supervision of students and publications

⁴¹ See also footnote 3

⁴² Evaluation panel members should also take into consideration the benchmarks set in section 4.4 and the proposal's elements such as the 'Scientific leadership profile' in section 4.5

demonstrate that he/she is able to confront major research challenges in the field, and to initiate new productive lines of thinking?

2. Research project

Ground-breaking nature of the research: *Does the proposed research address important challenges at the frontiers of the field(s) addressed? Does it have suitably ambitious objectives, which go substantially beyond the current state of the art (e.g. including inter- and trans-disciplinary developments and novel or unconventional concepts and/or approaches)? How well conceived and organised is the proposed activity?*

Potential impact:

- (a) Does the research open new and important, scientific, technological or scholarly horizons?*
- (b) Will the project significantly enhance the research environment and capabilities for frontier research in Europe (in particular as regards the immediate host environment)?*

Methodology:

- a) is the outlined scientific approach (including the activities to be undertaken by the individual team members) feasible?(step 1)*
- b) is the proposed research methodology (including when pertinent the use of instrumentation, other type of infrastructures etc.) comprehensive and appropriate to the project? Will it enable the goals of the project convincingly to be achieved within the proposed timescales and resources (including the costs of the Principal Investigator and the members of the team who will be engaged in the project⁴³) and the level of risk associated with a challenging research project? (step 2)*

High-gain/High-risk balance:

- a) does the proposed research involve highly novel and/or unconventional methodologies, whose high risk is justified by the possibility of a major breakthrough with an impact beyond a specific research domain/discipline?*

3. Research Environment (to be assessed only during step 2 of the evaluation)

Contribution of the research environment to the project: *Does the host environment⁴⁴ provide most of the infrastructure necessary for the research to be carried out? Is it in a position to provide an appropriate intellectual environment and infrastructural support and to assist in achieving the ambitions for the project and the Principal Investigator?*

⁴³ see also section 2: Underlying Principles of ERC funding

⁴⁴ The term 'research environment' corresponds to the immediate setting of the research team, such as Department (rather than the sponsoring institution as a whole), and when appropriate, the wider 'milieu' of the team's operation, including collaborating laboratories, groups, departments etc.

Participation of other legal entities⁴⁵: *If it is proposed that other legal entities participate in the project, in addition to the applicant legal entity, is their participation fully justified by the scientific added value they bring to the project?*

4.10 Application of Criteria

Panels and referees will evaluate and mark numerically the proposals under the criteria of Heading 1: *Principal Investigator* and Heading 2: *Research project*. Proposals will be evaluated under Heading 3 on a 'pass/fail' basis and commented but not marked during step 2 of the evaluation. The evaluation panels will review the level of the requested grant and, as appropriate, suggest adjustments.

Each proposal will receive a mark on a scale of 1 to 4 for each of the 2 evaluation criteria (Heading 1 and 2):

4: Outstanding

3: Excellent

2: Very Good

1: Non-competitive

At each step of the evaluation and on the basis of their average mark (at least three independent panel members), proposals will be ranked by the panels (domains) in order of priority. If a proposal, in any step of the evaluation, as set out in Annex 3, is marked below the quality threshold of ≥ 2 on any of the first two headings, it will not be further evaluated.

At the end of each evaluation step, the proposals will be ranked by the panels on the basis of the marks they have received and an overall appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses.

⁴⁵ As the ERC schemes are addressed to individual investigators, usually the participation of more than one legal entity will not improve the chances of success. Participation of investigator(s) from another legal entity would be acceptable if they clearly and substantially enhance the scientific value of the proposal.

5. Coordination & Support Actions (CSA)

To develop further and optimize the scientific strategy of the ERC, and according to the Ideas Specific Programme, the Scientific Council will rely on regular monitoring of the quality of ERC operations, periodic analysis of programme implementation and evaluation of the achievements and impact of ERC activities. Its monitoring and evaluation (M&A) strategy will:

- provide a sound evidence base to assess objectively the performance and impact of the ERC and make necessary adjustments;
- enhance the understanding of the dynamics in the research landscape in Europe (and beyond) in order to recalibrate ERC strategies in view of changes in the wider context in which the ERC operates;
- be both robust (in terms of the reliability of data basis and the rigour of its analysis) and flexible (in terms of manageable burden on budget and data providers such as grant recipients);

While aiming at the specific needs of the ERC, the strategy has been developed – and continues to be refined - in liaison with the other programmes of the 7th Framework Programme, to draw experience from the latter and to meet, in a co-ordinated way, the Commission's obligations for programme monitoring and evaluation, as well as the specific evaluation requirements established in the legislation for the ERC.

The Scientific Council intends to initiate and fund a range of projects and studies to support the ongoing monitoring and evaluation work as well as the development of future strategy and funding policies. This will be implemented through Coordination and Support Actions (CSA), which will be used to solicit proposals for relevant studies and analysis, to issue calls tenders for services on specific topics and to draw on external expertise through expert group⁴⁶ contracts.

5.1 ERC Topics for support under work programme 2010

In the ERC Work Programmes 2008 and 2009, Coordination and Support Actions were used to solicit, through open calls, proposals for studies and analysis addressing specific elements of the ERC M&E strategy⁴⁷.

Through those open calls, external studies which – among others – will develop and test adequate evaluation methodologies for selected components of the M&E strategy have been initiated⁴⁸. For 2010, the Scientific Council proposes to shift the focus on activities contributing to enhancing and complementing the ERC's internal capacities in Monitoring and Evaluation, and specifically:

1. developing the required data infrastructure to implement the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy (through call for tenders)

⁴⁶ In accordance with articles 14(c), 17 and 27(5) of Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 of 18 December 2006 laying down the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in actions under the Seventh Framework Programme and for the dissemination of research results (2007-2013), OJ L 391, 30.12.2006, p. 1-18

⁴⁷ Ideas Work programme 2008 and 2009 provides more details on various components of the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy on which proposals were sought.

⁴⁸ There are currently four studies being initiated following the 2008 and 2009 CSA open call. For details see <http://erc.europa.eu/>

2. further development of the ERC M&E strategy, (through expert groups)

5.1.1 ERC CSA Call for Tenders [public procurement]

Developing and deploying an integrated data framework to manage Monitoring and Evaluation data

High quality data are the basis of any successful M&E strategy. In 2010, it is proposed to start building robust processes, systems and tools to capture and manage data which will be necessary to conduct various monitoring and evaluation studies both on the short and long term. Such an integrated data framework of processes, systems and tools should build on and complement existing solutions. It should allow a combination of internal ERC and external data (within the constraints of data protection provisions), minimize the burden of data providers (especially grant holders) and at the same time provide all necessary data – at appropriate standards of quality - to address the questions covered by the various aspects of the M&E strategy.

A call for tenders⁴⁹ – with further details and specifications - will be issued in 2010, to develop, test and deploy such an integrated data framework.

Indicative budget for CSA (public procurement): EUR 500,000 for 2010⁵⁰

5.1.2 Monitoring and Evaluation [expert groups]

To develop and refine the key elements and quality standards of the Monitoring & Evaluation strategy of the Ideas Specific Programme

An expert group convened in July 2007 to assist in the development of the ERC M&A strategy recommended establishing a small number of expert panels to refine the various components of the M&E strategy. It also recommended inviting expert group members to work on time-limited specific monitoring and evaluation topics together with ERC staff members. The focus for topics will be based on the ERC's M&E strategy, but will also aim to draw on good practice and experience from monitoring and evaluation activities of national research systems, especially as regards the ERC's complementarity and added value.

Indicative budget for CSA (experts group): EUR 200,000 for 2010⁵¹

⁴⁹ In accordance with articles 14(b) of Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006 of 18 December 2006 laying down the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in actions under the Seventh Framework Programme and for the dissemination of research results (2007-2013), OJ L 391, 30.12.2006, p. 1-18

⁵⁰ Under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2010 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority

⁵¹ Under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2010 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority

5.2 CSA to Named beneficiaries

5.2.1 Support to the chair and vice-chairs of the ERC Scientific Council (N.B. this activity will be directly implemented by the Commission services (DG RTD)).

It is foreseen that a CSA (Supporting Action) will be awarded to the Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine (London, UK) [up to EUR 300 000] which will provide local support and assistance to the Chair and vice-Chairs of the Scientific Council for their tasks of preparing the plenary and other meetings of the Scientific Council, as well as tasks related to the process of developing and projecting its policies and activities in interaction with the scientific community and other stakeholders⁵².

The principal activities will be:

- to support and assist the Chair in his diverse responsibilities including the preparation of meetings, the efficient and effective functioning of the ScC, its integrated operation together with the ERC's dedicated implementation structure and effective interfacing with the scientific community, other funding agencies and the political institutions of the EU.
- To support and assist the vice-Chairs to ensure their contributing to the efficient operation of the ScC, and the efficient and timely achievement of its objectives in preparing and managing ERC operations under FP7

The named institution hosting the Chair and vice-Chairs would therefore be direct beneficiary of up to EUR 300 000 CSA (Support Action) in compliance with Article 14(a) of the Rules of Participation⁵³.

Indicative overall budget for CSA (supporting action)⁵⁴: EUR 300 000 for 2010⁵⁵.

⁵² Activities funded under this CSA must not overlap with the administrative support provided directly by the Dedicated Implementation Structure to the chair and vice-chairs of the ERC Scientific Council, or with any support that is foreseen in the Commission Decision establishing the ERC (2007/134/EC, 02/02/2007).

⁵³ Regulation 1906/2006/EC of 18 December 2006, concerning the rules for participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in the European Community 7th Framework Programme (2007-2013)

⁵⁴ The budget figures for non-call activities may also vary by up to 10% of the stated budget if additional appropriations become available.

⁵⁵ Under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2010 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority

6. Indicative budget for the *Ideas* Work Programme

Call	in EUR million
ERC-2010-StG	528.2
ERC-2010-AdG	590.1
OTHER ACTIVITIES: CSA: ERC (SUPPORTING ACTION) CALL FOR TENDERS CSA: EXPERT GROUP CSA: TO NAMED BENEFICIARIES (SUPPORTING ACTION) I. SUPPORT TO CHAIR/VICE-CHAIRS	0.5 0.2 0.3
EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW COSTS	6.4 ⁵⁶
<u>BUDGET SOURCE:</u> PRELIMINARY BUDGET 2010*	1 125.7
ESTIMATED TOTAL BUDGET ALLOCATION (rounded)	1 125.7
* Under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2010 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority	

⁵⁶ In the case of the costs of evaluation, monitoring and review costs the budget figures may vary by up to 20% of the stated budget if additional appropriations become available.

Annex 1 Primary panels structure, description and corresponding deadlines

Physical Sciences & Engineering:

ERC-2010-StG: 28 October 2009, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

ERC-2010-AdG: 24 February 2010, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

- PE1 Mathematical foundations:** all areas of mathematics, pure and applied, plus mathematical foundations of computer science, mathematical physics and statistics
- PE2 Fundamental constituents of matter:** particle, nuclear, plasma, atomic, molecular, gas, and optical physics
- PE3 Condensed matter physics:** structure, electronic properties, fluids, nanosciences
- PE4 Physical and analytical chemical sciences:** analytical chemistry, chemical theory, physical chemistry/chemical physics
- PE5 Materials and synthesis:** materials synthesis, structure-properties relations, functional and advanced materials, molecular architecture, organic chemistry
- PE6 Computer science and informatics:** informatics and information systems, computer science, scientific computing, intelligent systems
- PE7 Systems and communication engineering:** electronic, communication, optical and systems engineering
- PE8 Products and processes engineering:** product design, process design and control, construction methods, civil engineering, energy systems, material engineering
- PE9 Universe sciences:** astro-physics/chemistry/biology; solar system; stellar, galactic and extragalactic astronomy, planetary systems, cosmology, space science, instrumentation
- PE10 Earth system science:** physical geography, geology, geophysics, meteorology, oceanography, climatology, ecology, global environmental change, biogeochemical cycles, natural resources management

Social Sciences & Humanities:

ERC-2010-StG: 9 December 2009, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

ERC-2010-AdG: 7 April 2010, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

- SH1 Individuals, institutions and markets:** economics, finance and management
- SH2 Institutions, values, beliefs and behaviour:** sociology, social anthropology, political science, law, communication, social studies of science and technology

- SH3 Environment and society:** environmental studies, demography, social geography, urban and regional studies
- SH4 The Human Mind and its complexity:** cognition, psychology, linguistics, philosophy and education
- SH5 Cultures and cultural production:** literature, visual and performing arts, music, cultural and comparative studies
- SH6 The study of the human past:** archaeology, history and memory

Life Sciences:

ERC-2010-StG: 18 November 2009, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

ERC-2010-AdG: 17 March 2010, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

- LS1 Molecular and Structural Biology and Biochemistry:** molecular biology, biochemistry, biophysics, structural biology, biochemistry of signal transduction
- LS2 Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics and Systems Biology:** genetics, population genetics, molecular genetics, genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics, metabolomics, bioinformatics, computational biology, biostatistics, biological modelling and simulation, systems biology, genetic epidemiology
- LS3 Cellular and Developmental Biology:** cell biology, cell physiology, signal transduction, organogenesis, developmental genetics, pattern formation in plants and animals
- LS4 Physiology, Pathophysiology and Endocrinology:** organ physiology, pathophysiology, endocrinology, metabolism, ageing, regeneration, tumorigenesis, cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome
- LS5 Neurosciences and neural disorders:** neurobiology, neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, neurochemistry, neuropharmacology, neuroimaging, systems neuroscience, neurological disorders, psychiatry
- LS6 Immunity and infection:** immunobiology, aetiology of immune disorders, microbiology, virology, parasitology, global and other infectious diseases, population dynamics of infectious diseases, veterinary medicine
- LS7 Diagnostic tools, therapies and public health:** aetiology, diagnosis and treatment of disease, public health, epidemiology, pharmacology, clinical medicine, regenerative medicine, medical ethics
- LS8 Evolutionary, population and environmental biology:** evolution, ecology, animal behaviour, population biology, biodiversity, biogeography, marine biology, ecotoxicology, prokaryotic biology
- LS9 Applied life sciences and biotechnology:** agricultural, animal, fishery, forestry and food sciences; biotechnology, chemical biology, genetic engineering, synthetic biology, industrial biosciences; environmental biotechnology and remediation;

Annex 2 Starting Independent Researcher Grants Call for Proposals

Call Title: Call for proposals for *ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grant*

Call identifier: ERC-2010-StG

Date of publication⁵⁷: 30 July 2009

Electronic proposal submission deadlines⁵⁸ (single submission of full proposal):⁵⁹

Panels: PE1 - PE10 (Physical Sciences & Engineering), 28 October 2009, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Panels: LS1 – LS9 (Life Sciences), 18 November 2009, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Panels: SH1 – SH6 (Social Sciences & Humanities), 9 December 2009, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 528 237 600 from 2010 budget⁶⁰

N.B.: The ERC Scientific Council has established the following indicative percentage budgets for each of the 3 main research domains:

Physical Sciences & Engineering: 39%

Life Sciences: 34%

Social Sciences & Humanities: 14%

and an Interdisciplinary⁶¹ domain with an indicative budget of 13%.

The Community financial contribution shall be in the form of a grant to the budget corresponding to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and a contribution of 20% of the total eligible direct costs. Indicative budgets may permit a variation of the budget for each domain by a maximum of 10% of the total budget for the call; however the budget proportions allocated to projects in the three main research domains will be no lower than the percentages indicated. In addition, the final budget awarded per ERC call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call if additional appropriations become available.

Activity: European Research Council Starting Grant

⁵⁷ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication

⁵⁸ The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months

⁵⁹ please consult Annex 1 of the Ideas Work Programme for the panel description

⁶⁰ Under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2010 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority

⁶¹ Including cross-panel and/or cross-domain research projects and research with the potential to open new fields

Minimum number of participants: At least 1 independent legal entity established in one of the Member States, or one of the Associated countries (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement)

Restrictions on participation: see eligibility criteria in the work programme

Grant Portability: applicants should be aware of the portability features of ERC grants as described in the ERC model grant agreement (http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/calls-grant-agreement_en.html)

Grant starting date: due to the ground-breaking nature of frontier research projects, it is expected that all projects start within 6 months from the award of the grant. ERC reserves the right to cancel a grant if the proposed start date goes beyond this limit.

Eligibility criteria (see also section 3.7 of the Work programme for other possible reapplications and multiple applications restrictions):

Incomplete proposals (where parts or sections of the proposal and/or the PhD-related support documents and/or supporting documentation justifying the extension of the eligibility period (see below) and/or the host institution's binding statement of support are missing) are considered ineligible and will not be evaluated⁶². The proposal must be submitted to the appropriate primary ERC panel (i.e. the panel which covers the main scientific areas of the research proposed) before the respective deadline. In addition, only proposals which satisfy the rules for reapplication and multiple applications (as specified in section 3.7 of this WP) will be considered eligible to be evaluated.

Where there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision by an eligibility review committee. If it becomes clear before, during or after the peer review evaluation phase, that one or more of the eligibility criteria has not been met, the proposal is declared ineligible and is withdrawn from any further examination.

Eligible Scientific Fields

Applications may be made in any field of research⁶³, other than those specifically excluded from the 7th framework programme.

Funding of human embryonic stem cell research will be possible within the ethical framework defined in the EC 7th Framework Programme⁶⁴ as well as the Ideas Specific Programme.

Eligible Principal Investigator

The ERC actions are open to researchers of any nationality who would like to establish their research activity in any Member State as well as any Associated Country.

The Principal Investigator can be of any age and nationality and he/she can reside in any country in the world at the time of the application

⁶² See also 'eligibility check' in ERC rules for the submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the Seventh Framework Programme, (C(2007)2286 of 6 June 2007) and C(2007)4429 of 27 September 2007.

⁶³ Research proposals within the scope of Annex I of the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications should be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom 7th Framework Programme

⁶⁴ In accordance with Commission statement, OJ L 412 of 30.12.2006, p. 42, proposals which will include research activities which destroy human embryos, including for the procurement of stem cells, will not be submitted to the Regulatory Committee. The exclusion of funding of this step of research will not prevent funding of subsequent steps involving human embryonic stem cells.

The ERC Starting Grant Principal Investigator must have been awarded⁶⁵ his/her first PhD (or equivalent doctoral degree⁶⁶) at least 2 and up to 10 years prior to the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Starting Grant .

Extensions of this period may be allowed only in case of eligible career breaks which must be properly documented: maternity (18 months per child born before or after the PhD award) & paternity leave (accumulation of actual time off for children born before or after the PhD award) and leave taken for long-term illness, national service. Leave taken for unavoidable statutory reasons (e.g. clinical qualifications) may also count as an extension.

The cumulative eligibility period should not in any case surpass 14.5 years following the award of the first PhD. No allowance will be made for part-time working (2 years of half-time working count as 2 full-time years).

Principal Investigators are sub-divided during evaluation in two main streams, with applicants being awarded their PhD at least 2 and no more than 6 years (broadly described as "starters") or over 6 but no more than 10 years (broadly described as "consolidators") prior to the call publication.

Eligible Host Institution (Applicant Legal Entity)

The contribution of Principal Investigators must be substantially carried out in the EU or Associated countries. This does not exclude field work or other research activities in cases where these must necessarily be conducted outside the EU or the associated countries in order to achieve the scientific objectives of the project/activity. Starting Grant Principal Investigators must be strongly committed to the project and devote a significant amount of time to it (they will need to devote at least 50% of their working time in the ERC-funded project).

The host institution will host and engage⁶⁷ the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the grant. It must be situated in one of the Member States, or one of the associated countries. It may also be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. Normally, the applicant legal entity will be the only participating legal entity. Other legal entities that host other team members, including those located in third countries, may however be involved and receive funding to support the work of additional team members, if so specified in the grant award or subsequent amendments to the original grant.

Evaluation procedure (see also section 3.6 of the work programme):

- The evaluation will take place **in two steps** following the **single submission of a full proposal**.
- The evaluation is carried out through evaluation panels that may be assisted by referees.
- The allocation of the proposals to the various panels will be based on the expressed preference of the applicant. In case of interdisciplinary proposals the panel, if it confirms the interdisciplinary nature of the proposal, shall request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional referees who act as reserve evaluators.
- **Step 1:** Following the submission of the proposal, Section 1 of the proposal (see section 3.5) will be assessed and marked.
- Proposals may be evaluated remotely.

⁶⁵ The reference date towards the calculation of the eligibility period should be the date of the actual award according to the national rules in the country that the degree was awarded.

⁶⁶ See Scientific Council's strategic note 'PhD and Equivalent Doctoral Degrees' on ERC web site: <http://erc.europa.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&topicID=24>, including specific provisions for holders of medical degrees.

⁶⁷ See also footnote 3

- At the end of this evaluation of step 1, the panel will rank the proposals according to their marks. An indicative budget will be allocated to each panel, in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals. This indicative budget is calculated as the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the panel divided by the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the domain of the call, multiplied by the total indicative budget of the domain.
- Following the same rationale and in order to assure comparable success rate for the broadly called "starters" (award of PhD from 2 up to 6 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication) and the "consolidators" (award of PhD over 6 and up to 10 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication), the indicative budget of each panel will be further divided in proportion to the budgetary demand of the proposals submitted by these two categories ("starters" and "consolidators").
- Each panel will determine its budgetary cut-off level as a multiple of its indicative budget. The budgetary cut-off level should normally be 2.5 times the panel's indicative budget (slight variations of this factor may be allowed but the cut-off level must never exceed 3 times the panel's indicative budget). Proposals with a mark passing the quality threshold and which lie above the budgetary cut-off level will be retained and pass to step 2 of evaluation (all proposals with identical marks at the cut off level will pass through to the second step of evaluation). Those proposals failing to reach the quality threshold on any of the evaluation criteria or ranked below the budgetary cut-off described above will be rejected.
- The complete version of the retained proposals will be assessed and ranked by the panels during **step 2** of the evaluation. Interdisciplinary proposals within a domain or across domains will be flagged as such, and the panel may request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional referees who act as reserve evaluators.
- Principal Investigators whose proposals will be retained for the second step of the evaluation may be invited for an interview to present their project to the evaluation panel meeting in Brussels. They will be accordingly reimbursed for their travel and subsistence expenses⁶⁸.
- Following the conclusion of the panel evaluations the following additional steps will be taken with the participation of the evaluation peer review evaluation panel chairs:

Step 2a: Acting in concert, the peer review evaluation panel chairs of each research domain or their deputies, representing their panels, will prepare a consolidated ranked list for the domain's proposals which are above the quality threshold and can be funded in order of priority from the respective domain budgets⁶⁹.

Step 2b: Acting in concert across the 3 main research domains, taking account of the forward looking and innovative nature of the programme, all the peer review evaluation panel chairs or their deputies will bring forth and specifically discuss, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the scientific added value of proposals above the quality threshold which are of interdisciplinary nature. In order to establish the ranked list of the *Interdisciplinary Research* domain, all peer review evaluation panel chairs will further assess these proposals on the basis of the second evaluation criterion (Research project).

⁶⁸ In duly justified and exceptional cases, and with the consent of the Scientific Council, the Commission/ERC DIS may agree, subject to technical feasibility, on other ways of interviewing successful Principal Investigators such as video link, teleconference or similar means, and on the reimbursement of their possible related travel and subsistence expenses. Relevant provisions for the reimbursement of expenses incurred in relation to Principal Investigators' interviews are included in the ERC Rules for submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the 7th Framework Programme.

⁶⁹ In accordance with the ERC rules for the Submission of Proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures relevant to the Ideas Specific Programme, (C(2007)2286 of 6 June 2007) and C(2007)4429 of 27 September 2007

Any funds still available in any of the 4 domains, after exhausting the list of proposals over the quality threshold, will be distributed to the other 3 domains according to the initial call budget breakdown.

Finally, a number of proposals (over the quality threshold) in the 4 domain lists may also be kept in reserve to allow for eventualities such as the failure of the granting procedure to projects, the withdrawal of proposals, budget savings agreed during the granting procedure, or the availability of additional budget from other sources. Additional funds will also be distributed according to the initial call budget breakdown.

Evaluation criteria: See the work programme for the applicable criteria

Information on the modalities of the call and guidance to applicants on how to submit projects is available on:

<http://erc.europa.eu>, http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ideas/home_en.html

Annex 3 Advanced Investigator Grant Call for Proposals

Call Title: Call for proposals for *ERC Advanced Investigators Grant*

Call identifier: ERC-2010-AdG

Date of publication⁷⁰: 29 October 2009

Electronic proposal submission deadlines⁷¹ (single submission of full proposal):⁷²

Panels: PE1 - PE10 (Physical Sciences & Engineering), 24 February 2010, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Panels: LS1 – LS9 (Life Sciences), 17 March 2010, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Panels: SH1 – SH6 (Social Sciences & Humanities), 7 April 2010, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 590 052 000 from 2010 budget⁷³

N.B.: The ERC Scientific Council has established the following indicative percentage budgets for each of the 3 main research domains:

Physical Sciences & Engineering: 39%

Life Sciences: 34%

Social Sciences & Humanities: 14%

and an Interdisciplinary⁷⁴ domain with an indicative budget of 13%.

The Community financial contribution shall be in the form of a grant to the budget corresponding to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and a contribution of 20% of the total eligible direct costs. Indicative budgets may permit a variation of the budget for each domain by a maximum of 10% of the total budget for the call; however the budget proportions allocated to projects in the three main research domains will be no lower than the percentages indicated. In addition, the final budget awarded per ERC call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call if additional appropriations become available.

Activity: European Research Council Advanced Grant

Minimum number of participants: At least 1 independent legal entity established in one of the Member States, or one of the Associated countries (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement)

Restrictions on participation: see eligibility criteria in the work programme

⁷⁰ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication

⁷¹ The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months

⁷² please consult Annex 1 of the Ideas Work Programme for the panel description

⁷³ Under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2010 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority

⁷⁴ Including cross-panel and/or cross-domain research projects and research with the potential to open new fields

Grant Portability: applicants should be aware of the portability features of ERC grants as described in the ERC model grant agreement (http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/calls-grant-agreement_en.html)

Grant starting date: due to the ground-breaking nature of frontier research projects, it is expected that all projects start within 6 months from the award of the grant. ERC reserves the right to cancel a grant if the proposed start date goes beyond this limit.

Eligibility criteria (see also section 4.7 of the Work programme for other possible reapplications and multiple applications restrictions):

Incomplete proposals (where parts of the proposal and/or the host institution's binding statement of support are missing) are considered ineligible and will not be evaluated⁷⁵. The proposal must be submitted to the appropriate primary ERC panel (i.e. the panel which covers the main scientific areas of the research proposed) before the respective deadline. In addition, only proposals which satisfy the rules for reapplication and multiple applications (as specified in section 4.7 of this WP) will be considered eligible to be evaluated.

Where there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision by an eligibility review committee. If it becomes clear before, during or after the peer review evaluation phase, that one or more of the eligibility criteria has not been met, the proposal is declared ineligible and is withdrawn from any further examination.

Eligible Scientific Fields

Applications may be made in any field of research⁷⁶, other than those specifically excluded from the 7th framework programme.

Funding of human embryonic stem cell research will be possible within the ethical framework defined in the EC 7th Framework Programme⁷⁷ as well as the Ideas Specific Programme.

Eligible Principal Investigator

The ERC actions are open to researchers of any nationality who would like to establish their research activity up in any Member State as well as any Associated country.

The Principal Investigator can be of any age and nationality and he/she can reside in any country in the world at the time of the application.

Eligible Host Institution (Applicant Legal Entity)

The contribution of Principal Investigators and Co-Investigators must be substantially carried out in the EU or Associated countries. This does not exclude field work or other research activities in cases where these must necessarily be conducted outside the EU or the associated countries in order to achieve the scientific objectives of the project/activity.

⁷⁵ See also 'eligibility check' in ERC rules for the submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the Seventh Framework Programme, (C(2007)2286 of 6 June 2007) and C(2007)4429 of 27 September 2007.

⁷⁶ Research proposals within the scope of Annex I of the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications should be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom 7th Framework Programme

⁷⁷ In accordance with Commission statement, OJ L 412 of 30.12.2006, p. 42, proposals which will include research activities which destroy human embryos, including for the procurement of stem cells, will not be submitted to the Regulatory Committee. The exclusion of funding of this step of research will not prevent funding of subsequent steps involving human embryonic stem cells.

Advanced Grant Principal Investigators must be strongly committed to the project and devote a significant amount of time to it (they will need to devote at least 30% of their working time to the ERC-funded project while spending at least 50% of their total working time in a EU Member State or Associated Country).

The host institution will host and engage⁷⁸ the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the grant. It must be situated in one of the Member States, or one of the associated countries. It may also be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. Normally, the applicant legal entity will be the only participating legal entity. Other legal entities that host other team members, including those located in third countries, may however be involved and receive funding to support the work of additional team members, if so specified in the grant award or subsequent amendments to the original grant.

Evaluation procedure (see also section 4.6 of the work programme):

- The evaluation will take place **in two steps** following the **single submission of a full proposal**.
- The evaluation is carried out through evaluation panels that may be assisted by referees.
- The allocation of the proposals to the various panels will be based on the expressed preference of the applicant. In case of interdisciplinary proposals the panel, if it confirms the interdisciplinary nature of the proposal, shall request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional referees who act as reserve evaluators.
- **Step 1:** Following the submission of the proposal, Section 1 of the proposal (see section 4.5) will be assessed and marked.
- Proposals may be evaluated remotely.
- At the end of this evaluation of step 1, the panel will rank the proposals according to their marks. An indicative budget will be allocated to each panel, in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals. This indicative budget is calculated as the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the panel divided by the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the domain of the call, multiplied by the total indicative budget of the domain.
- Each panel will determine its budgetary cut-off level as a multiple of its indicative budget. The budgetary cut-off level should be approximately 3 times the panel's indicative budget. Proposals with a mark passing the quality threshold and which lie above the budgetary cut-off level will be retained and pass to step 2 of evaluation (all proposals with identical marks at the cut off level will pass through to the second step of evaluation). Those proposals failing to reach the quality threshold on any of the evaluation criteria or ranked below the budgetary cut-off described above will be rejected.
- The complete version of the retained proposals will be assessed and ranked by the panels during **step 2** of the evaluation. Interdisciplinary proposals within a domain or across domains will be flagged as such, and the panel may request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional referees who act as reserve evaluators.
- Following the conclusion of the panel evaluations the following additional steps will be taken with the participation of the evaluation peer review evaluation panel chairs:

Step 2a: Acting in concert, the peer review evaluation panel chairs of each research domain or their deputies, representing their panels, will prepare a consolidated ranked list for the domain's proposals which are above the quality threshold and can be funded in order of priority from the respective domain budgets⁷⁹.

Step 2b: Acting in concert across the 3 main research domains, taking account of the forward looking and innovative nature of the programme, all the peer review evaluation panel chairs or their deputies will bring forth and specifically discuss,

⁷⁸ See also footnote 3

⁷⁹ In accordance with the ERC rules for the Submission of Proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures relevant to the Ideas Specific Programme, (C(2007)2286 of 6 June 2007) and C(2007)4429 of 27 September 2007.

from an interdisciplinary perspective, the scientific added value of proposals above the quality threshold which are of interdisciplinary nature. In order to establish the ranked list of the ***Interdisciplinary Research*** domain, all peer review evaluation panel chairs will further assess these proposals on the basis of the second evaluation criterion (Research project).

Any funds still available in any of the 4 domains, after exhausting the list of proposals over the quality threshold, will be distributed to the other 3 domains according to the initial call budget breakdown.

Finally, a number of proposals (over the quality threshold) in the 4 domain lists may also be kept in reserve to allow for eventualities such as the failure of the granting procedure to projects, the withdrawal of proposals, budget savings agreed during the granting procedure, or the availability of additional budget from other sources. Additional funds will also be distributed according to the initial call budget breakdown.

Evaluation criteria: See the work programme for the applicable criteria

Information on the modalities of the call and guidance to applicants on how to submit projects is available on:

<http://erc.europa.eu>, http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ideas/home_en.html

Annex 4 CSA Call for tenders Information

Call Title: Call for tenders for *ERC CSA (Supporting action)*

Call identifier: ERC-2010 data framework

Date of publication⁸⁰ and call deadline⁸¹: A call for tenders – with further details and specifications - will be issued at the end of 2009, to acquire services to develop, test and deploy such an integrated data framework. It is expected that this call may result up to 4 contracts.

Indicative budget: EUR 500 000⁸² from 2010 budget

The upper limit for the Community financial contribution is 100%. The final budget awarded per ERC call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call if additional appropriations become available.

Activity: European Research Council Co-ordination and Support Actions

Topics: Applications must address topics specified in the work programme (**section 5.1.1**)

Minimum number of participants: At least 1 independent legal entity (CSA Support).

Eligibility criteria

Proposals for co-ordination and support actions must be focused on requirements specified in the work programme and/or call for tenders.

Co-ordination and support actions (Support) are open to legal entities situated in Member States, or Associated countries. Applications from International European Interest Organisations (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre are also eligible (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement).

Information on the modalities of the call and guidance to applicants on how to submit projects will be available on:

<http://erc.europa.eu> http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ideas/home_en.html

⁸⁰ The Director-General responsible for the call may publish it up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date of publication

⁸¹ The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months

⁸² Under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2010 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority