UKRO Annual Visit
University of Exeter

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UKRO European Advisor

malgorzata.czerwiec@bbsrc.ac.uk

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HAVE YOU SIGNED-UP?

European Research Council

Advanced Grants

ERC in Horizon 2020

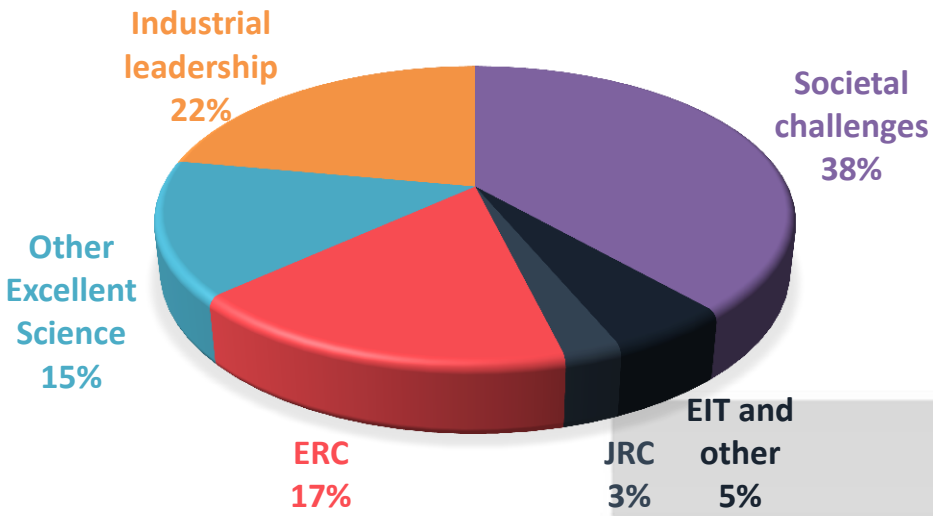
"The fundamental activity of the ERC is to provide attractive, long-term funding to support excellent investigators and their research teams to pursue ground-breaking, high-gain/high-risk research."

"Scientific excellence is the sole criterion on the basis of which ERC frontier research grants are awarded."

"The ERC's frontier research grants operate on a 'bottom-up' basis without predetermined priorities."

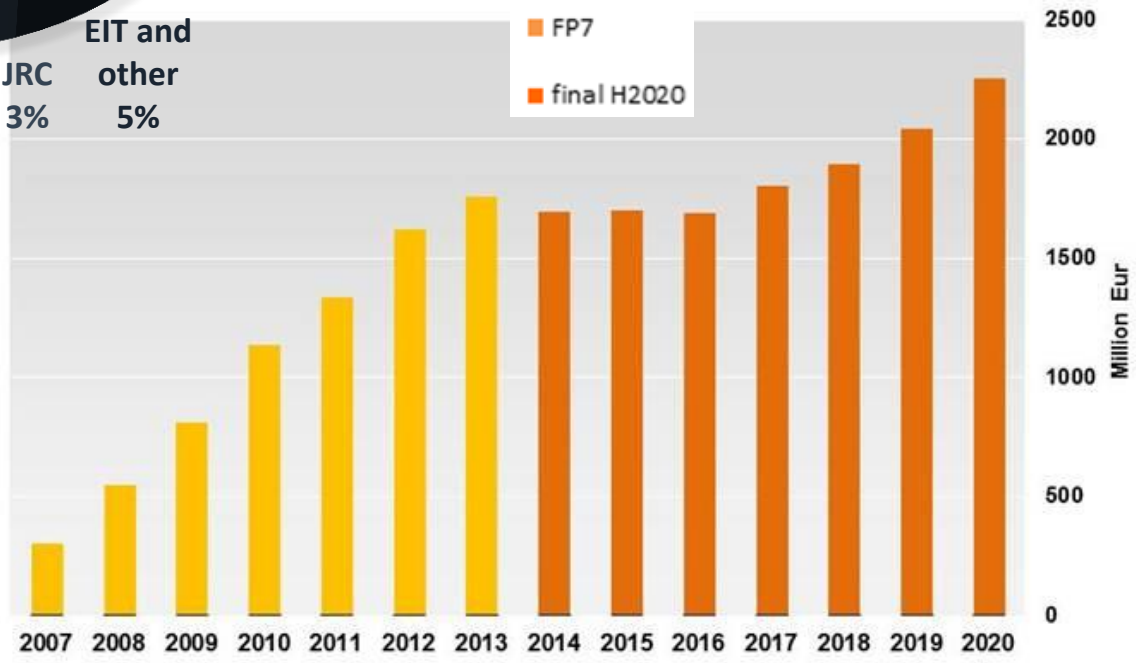
ERC Work Programme 2016

ERC budget in Horizon 2020



ERC allocated around €13.1 billion for Horizon 2020 (~ 60% increase in real terms compared to FP7). Largest amount of funding will go to the Starting Grants and Consolidator Grants schemes.

In the present budget, support to ERC is under its 2013 level for 3 years.



Source: ERC

ERC funding schemes

Starting Grants

- For PIs 2-7 years from PhD, up to €2 million for 5 years

Consolidator Grants

- For PIs 7-12 years from PhD, up to €2.75 million for 5 years

Advanced Grants

- For leading researchers, up to €3.5 million for 5 years.

Synergy Grants

- for 2 to 4 PIs, up to €15 million for 6 years. No call in 2016 or 2017.

Proof of Concept

- For ERC grant holders only, up to €150,000 for 18 months

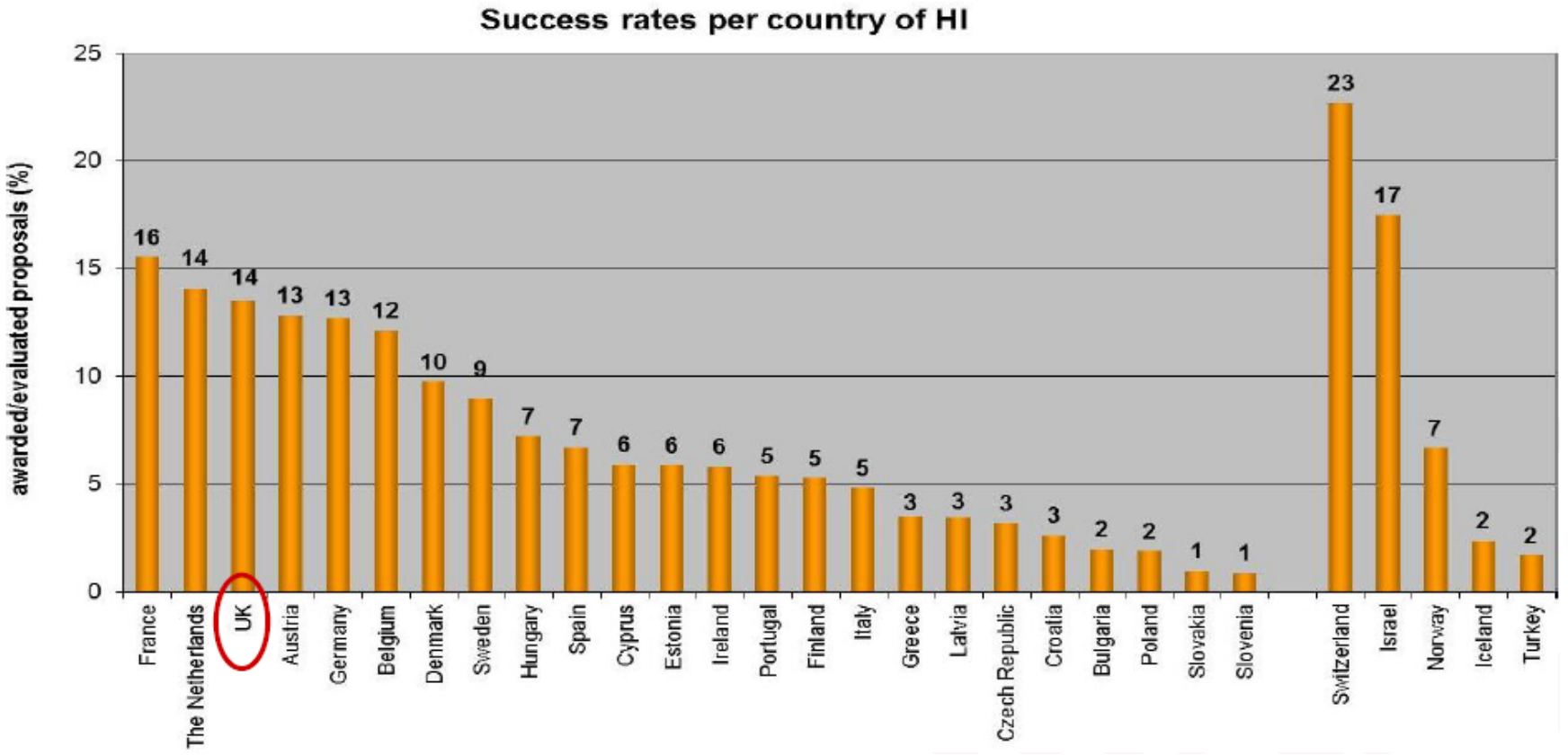
ERC Advanced Grant 2016 call

Call identifier	ERC-2016-AdG
Call opens	24 May 2016
Deadline	1 September 2016
Budget €million (estimated grants)	540 (235)
Planned dates to inform applicants	16 January 2017 16 March 2017
Indicative date for signature of grant agreements	16 July 2017

UK success in ERC

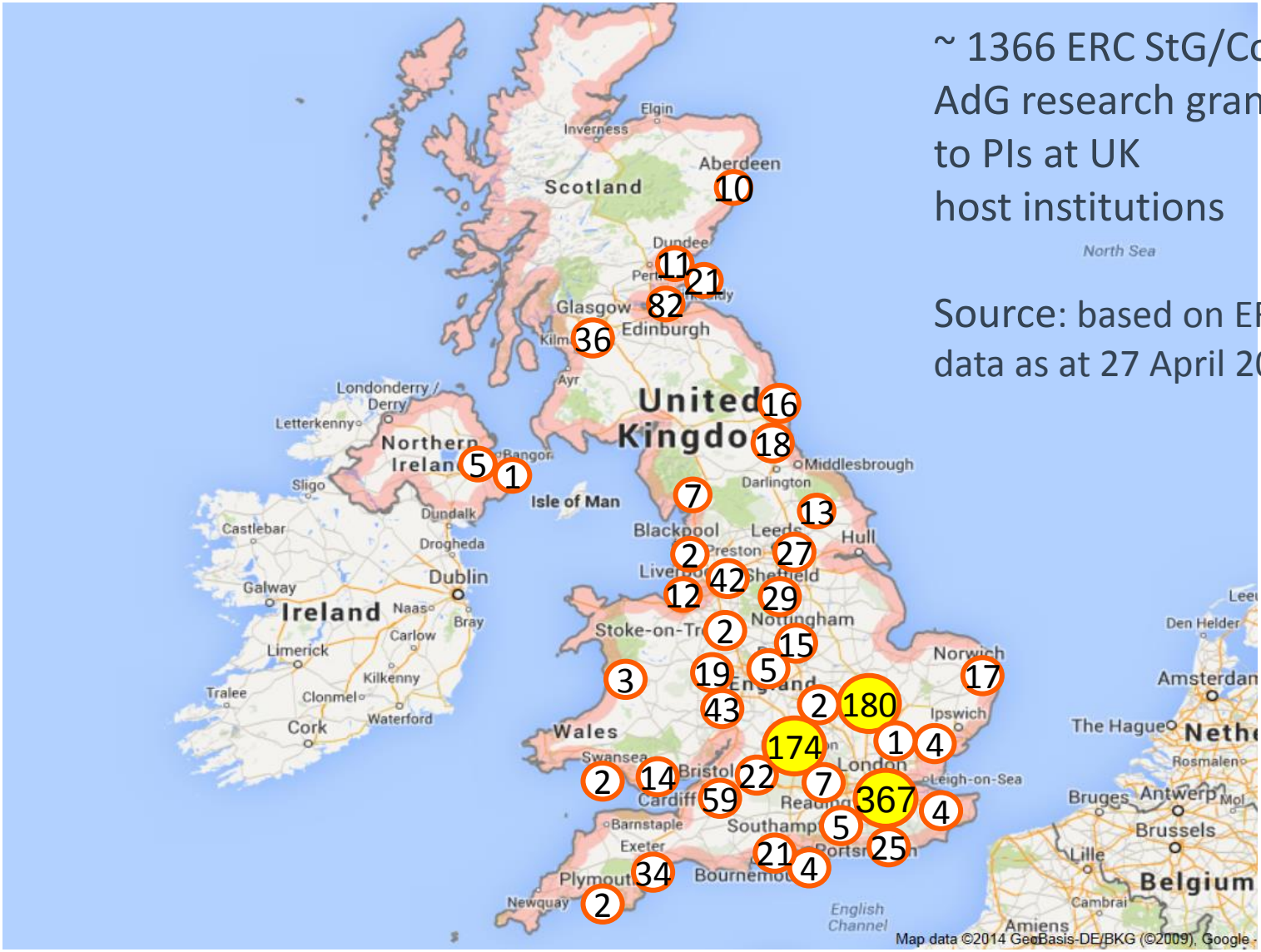
- The UK was the most successful country in applying to the ERC in FP7
- Around 20% of all ERC grants are based in the UK
- PIs at over 80 institutions in the UK have been awarded an ERC grant
- Over 1300 grants have been awarded to UK Host Institutions since 2007.
- See here for the details of funded projects: http://erc.europa.eu/erc-funded-projects
- And here for more statistics: http://erc.europa.eu/projects-and-results/statistics

ERC success rates by Host Institution country (StG, CoG, AdG 2007-2013)

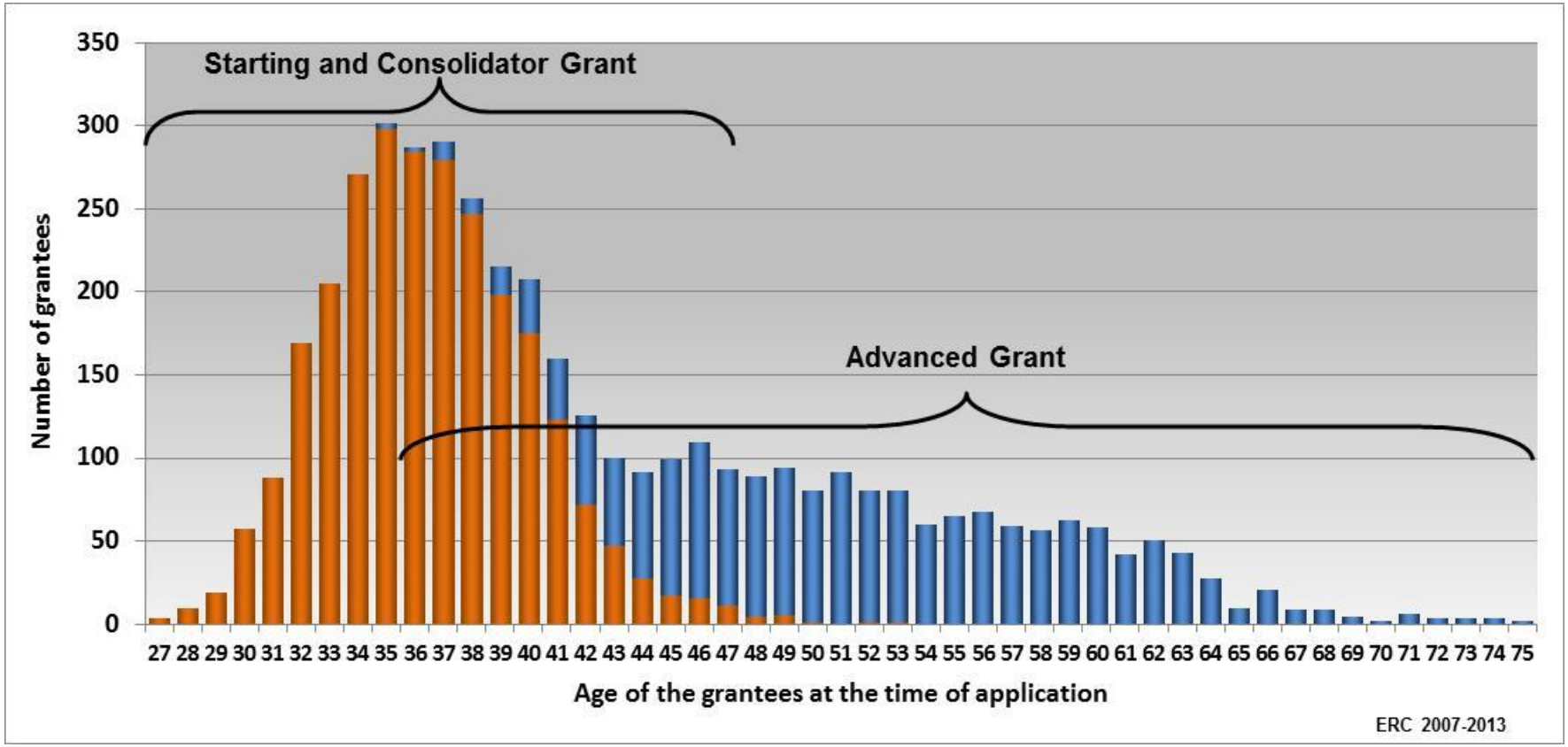


Source: ERC

Distribution of ERC grants in the UK (2007-2015)



Age of PI at time of application



Source: ERC

ERC-2015-AdG results

- 277 proposals selected for funding from a total of 1953 submitted - overall success rate of 14.2%, compared to 8.3% in 2014

- The numbers by research domain are:
  - Physical Sciences and Engineering (PE): 887 submitted, 126 selected
  - Life Sciences (LS): 643 submitted, 92 selected
  - Social Sciences and Humanities (SH): 423 submitted, 59 selected

- 19% of the funding list were female PIs, compared to 10% in 2014.

- PIs at UK host institutions were awarded the highest number of grants per country with 69 grants - 24.1% of all grants awarded in the call – giving a success rate of around 18.6%

ERC-2015-AdG results (cont.)

UKRO UK RESEARCH OFFICE

AdG 2015	Evaluated step 1		Evaluated step 2		Funded		Overall Success Rate	
Panel	All	UK	All	UK	All	UK	All	UK
LS1	66	10	25	5	10	5	15.2%	50.0%
LS2	49	15	17	7	7	2	14.3%	13.3%
LS3	68	18	21	4	10		14.7%	0.0%
LS4	86	12	22	4	13	2	15.1%	16.7%
LS5	91	20	29	6	13	3	14.3%	15.0%
LS6	66	11	25	2	10		15.2%	0.0%
LS7	109	12	36	5	15	2	13.8%	16.7%
LS8	53	18	19	9	8	6	15.1%	33.3%
LS9	44	8	16	4	6	1	13.6%	12.5%
PE1	68	8	26	4	10	1	14.7%	12.5%
PE2	94	17	37	9	15	1	16.0%	5.9%
PE3	80	13	28	3	13	1	16.3%	7.7%
PE4	86	5	30	1	10		11.6%	0.0%
PE5	110	21	37	10	15	2	13.6%	9.5%
PE6	82	10	28	2	12	1	14.6%	10.0%
PE7	92	10	32	4	13	2	14.1%	20.0%
PE8	108	14	36	6	16	3	14.8%	21.4%
PE9	68	18	27	10	10	4	14.7%	22.2%
PE10	86	17	33	7	12	3	14.0%	17.6%
SH1	55	20	22	9	11	5	20.0%	25.0%
SH2	91	27	27	6	10	3	11.0%	11.1%
SH3	35	8	13	5	5	3	14.3%	37.5%
SH4	87	20	24	12	12	7	13.8%	35.0%
SH5	75	19	23	12	10	6	13.3%	31.6%
SH6	78	20	25	11	11	6	14.1%	30.0%
Total	1927	371	658	157	277	69	**14.4%**	**18.6%**

ERC Advanced Grant

Main Features

Aims of Advanced Grant scheme

- Support excellent Principal Investigators at the stage at which they are already established research leaders with recognised track record of research achievements

- Empower individual researchers and provide the best settings to foster their creativity.

Types of research funded

- No pre-determined priorities – applications can be made in any field of research
- Emphasis on the 'frontiers of science, scholarship and engineering' – research to lead to advances at the frontiers of knowledge
- Could be:
  - interdisciplinary proposals
  - proposals addressing new and emerging fields of research
  - proposals introducing unconventional, innovative approaches and scientific inventions
- Not suitable for 'consortium-type' proposals

Principal Investigator (PI)

- Central to the grant and review criteria
- Expected to lead their team and be fully engaged in the running of the grant
- Can be of any age, nationality or current location
- Expected to spend:
  - A **minimum 30% of total working time on the ERC project** and
  - A **minimum of 50% of total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country** (this does not exclude fieldwork/research outside Europe needed to achieve research objectives)
- Chooses a host institution in EU Member State or Associated Country (or an 'International European Interest Organisation')

Host Institution

- Can be any type of legal entity
- Must be established in an EU Member State or Associated Country
- The PI does not have to be based there at the time of application
- Has relevant infrastructure and capacity - must provide appropriate conditions for the PI to independently direct the research and manage the ERC funding
- Must not constrain the PI in relation to the research strategy of the institution
- Normally employs the PI
- **Not assessed as a separate criterion during peer review** but must sign a letter of commitment as part of application
- If funded:
  - signs up to the Grant Agreement with the ERCEA
  - signs a 'Supplementary Agreement' with the PI

Team members

- PI has freedom to choose appropriate ‘team members’- constitution of individual research team is flexible (senior research staff, post-docs, PhDs, non academic staff, etc…)
- PI's host institution normally the only institution but can have team members from other institutions in the same or different countries (institutions will sign Grant Agreement)
- Team members can be of any age, nationality and may be based anywhere
- **Individual research team headed by a single PI** (including any team members at other institutions) so not a traditional network or research consortium
- **Resubmission restrictions do not apply to team members**

Funding levels and duration of grant

- Normally maximum grant of **€2.5 million over 5 years** ERC contribution (or pro-rata for shorter projects)

- Can request an **additional €1 million** (not pro-rata), but only to cover:
  - eligible "start-up" costs for PIs moving from to the EU/Associated Country from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant;
  - the purchase of major equipment; and/or
  - access to large facilities.

  Any additional funding requested must be justified in Part B Section 2c (see later).

- Limit includes direct and indirect costs (see later)

Proposal

Participant Portal

- **Single-stage submission, but two-step evaluation**
- Go to submission system (ECAS password required)
- Complete administrative forms online
- Download, complete and upload pdf files for Part B (10MB limit) and annexes
- Proposal formats and page numbers are strictly limited
- No additional documents allowed but reviewers can look at websites in order to further assess applicant's previous work
- Checklist provided in Information for Applicants document (automated check on some elements only)

Proposal submission

- Start in plenty of time, and check you can save as pdf!
- Double check all details
- Can revise and resubmit up to deadline
  - Remember to press ‘submit’ button!
- **Deadline strictly enforced**
- Help: **Information for Applicants** document
- IT Problems: Participant Portal IT Helpdesk

Structure of application forms

- **Part A – Administrative and Summary Forms**
  - 1. General information (including abstract)
  - 2. Administrative data of participating organisations (one form per institution, much of this will be pre-filled using information from PIC number)
  - 3. Budget (summary financial information)
  - 4. Ethics

- **Part B1 – Proposal Details**
  - Cover page & proposal summary
  - **Extended Synopsis** (5 pages)
  - **Curriculum Vitae** including Funding ID (2 pages excluding funding ID)
  - **Track Record** (2 pages)

Structure of application forms (cont.)

- **Part B2 – Research Proposal (15 pages)**
  - a) State-of-the-art and objectives
  - b) Methodology
  - c) Resources (including project costs)

- **Annexes**
  - Commitment of the Host Institution (template from PPSS, submitted as .pdf)
  - Ethical Issues Annex (if applicable) (see 'Information for Applicants' for guidance)

ERC evaluation criteria

- Excellence sole evaluation criterion

- Applied to:
  - the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of the **research project**
  - the intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment of the **Principal Investigator**

- Proposals marked on the above, ranging from 1 (non-competitive) to 4 (outstanding)

- Numerical marks not communicated to applicants - outcome of panel meetings expressed as A, B or C (see later).

ERC evaluation criteria: research project

1. Research Project	Advanced Grant
Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project	• To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges? • To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development across disciplines)? • To what extent is the proposed research high risk/high gain?
Scientific Approach	• To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the extent that the proposed research is high risk/high gain (based on the Extended Synopsis)? • To what extent is the proposed research methodology appropriate to achieve the goals of the project (based on the full Scientific Proposal)? • To what extent does the proposal involve the development of novel methodology (based on the full Scientific Proposal)? • To what extent are the proposed timescales and resources necessary and properly justified (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?

Research Project: general tips

- Consider what excites you about the research and convey this in your application
  - Explain how the research will open new horizons or opportunities
- Think about your audience and remember to **explain UK-specific terminology**
- Provide a clear, concise work-plan, giving details of the intermediate goals
- Explain what each team member is doing (and their background/ recruitment profile)
- Clearly explain how you will manage and disseminate your project
- **Justify the resources** you need for your research proposal and ensure the resources are appropriate.
  - Have you included all staff costs?
  - Have you clearly shown the links between the costs and the research/methodology?

Research Project: feedback from applicants

- Structure your proposal to address, in order, each of the evaluation criteria - use the ERC's terminology explicitly
- **Make the application a pleasure to read**: use data and graphs, visualise your ideas
- Should strike a balance between showing the experts in your field that you know your stuff, and engaging the non-experts
- Convey the message that the project can be delivered, but also "sell the dream" of an exciting piece of research
  - Balance your vision with a strong, confident plan and good project structure
- Projects with a risky/new methodology are welcomed, as long as there is a good reason for trying it out and a potentially high reward

Research Project: feedback from panels

Anonymous feedback taken from panel comments on proposals in PE, LS and SH domains

Successful projects

- "This is clearly a high-risk / high-gain proposal. Moreover, it is well designed and seriously organized. Thus feasibility is also high."
- "The aim of the proposed project is to go well beyond the state of the art"
- "The applicant is proposing a novel approach to a major challenge. The panel considers the project to have the potential to make important and ground-breaking contributions to the field"

Unsuccessful projects

- "Reviewers and panel members found the problems addressed in the proposal very interesting. However, the prevailing opinion is that this is a too high risk proposal and that the most interesting aspects of it will be very hard to achieve"

ERC evaluation criteria: Principal Investigator

2. Principal Investigator	Advanced Grant
Intellectual capacity and creativity	• To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to propose and conduct ground-breaking research? • To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking? • To what extent have the achievements of the PI typically gone beyond the state of the art? • To what extent has the PI demonstrated sound leadership in the training and advancement of young scientists?
Commitment	• To what extent does the PI demonstrate the level of commitment to the project necessary for its execution and the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project (**min 30% of the total working time on it and min 50% in an EU Member State or Associated Country**) (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?

PI: competitive candidates

- In most fields, expected to demonstrate a record of achievements at least matching one or more of the following benchmarks:
  - 10 publications (as senior author) in major international journals
  - 3 major research monographs

- Alternative benchmarks may be considered:
  - 5 granted patents
  - 10 invited presentations
  - 3 led expeditions
  - 3 organised international conferences or congresses
  - international recognition (awards, prizes)
  - contributions to launching the careers of outstanding researchers
  - recognised leadership in industrial innovation

PI: CV (2 pages max.)

- Should include standard academic and research records – **template available** (may be modified)

- Concise ‘funding ID’ (outside page limit) covering:
  - Current research grants and their subject
  - Ongoing applications for work relating to the proposal

- Any research career gaps and/or ‘unconventional career paths’ should be clearly explained so that they can be fairly assessed by the evaluation panels.

PI: ten-year track record (2 pages max.)

Must provide list of achievements in the last 10 years:

- **Up to ten representative publications**, from the last ten years, as main 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;
- **Research monographs** and any translations thereof;
- **Granted patents**;
- **Invited presentations** to peer-reviewed, internationally established conferences and/or international advanced schools;
- **Research expeditions** that the applicant Principal Investigator has led;
- **Organisation of international conferences** in the field of the applicant (membership in the steering and/or organising committee);
- **Prizes/awards/academy memberships**;
- **Major contributions to the early careers of excellent researchers**;
- Examples of **leadership in industrial innovation or design**

PI: general tips

- ‘Sell yourself’
- Remember the Funding ID section in the CV is important
- Make sure you address the full requirements of the track record, and consider what makes you stand out
- Clarify specific points to strengthen your application and give additional relevant details
- **Explain anything that is UK specific**
- The evaluators will review the PI on the basis of their experience and information the PI provides on the application form
- If you refer to journal impact factors, state which one you are using
- Add a link to your website, and then **keep your website up to date**

PI: feedback from applicants

- **Provide specific details** of prizes, citation data for publications, project management experience, papers at conferences, mentoring of students etc.
- **Pack the Track Record with evidence** about your achievements – panels are more likely to give an ambitious project the go-ahead if they 'trust' the PI, and are convinced of your credibility as an excellent researcher/project leader.
- If possible, provide evidence of **international influence** and activities.
- Try to explain how you are exactly the right person to undertake this particular project, at this specific moment in time.
- **Refer explicitly to the criteria** used in the Consolidator Grant call documents.

PI: feedback from evaluators

- Anonymous feedback taken from panel comments on successful proposals in PE, LS and SH domains
  - "The panel concluded that the PI is very well prepared to manage the project successfully"
  - "The panel was impressed by the PI's outstanding track record"
  - "The applicant has already demonstrated her leadership in this field"
  - "The panel agreed that the PI is fully qualified to lead an ERC Consolidator project; she has an outstanding track record and will be able to form and lead an excellent research team to carry out this project."
  - "The panel noted that the applicant has succeeded in establishing a distinctive and well respected profile in the field ... The applicant has built up a highly productive laboratory and has maintained a steady output of well cited papers."

Project Costs and Budget

Costs

- **Direct costs:** up to 100% of eligible costs
- **Indirect costs:** Flat rate of 25% (of eligible direct costs)

- Information on eligible and ineligible costs on next slides and also given in detail in Article 6 of the Annotated Model Grant Agreement for Horizon 2020 http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf

Budget Form in Part A

- Each institution involved (other than subcontractors) will have a line on this form – pre-filled
- Important – The figures must match in the A3 and B2 forms (otherwise the figure from the A3 form will be used)

3 - Budget

Participant Number in this proposal	Organisation Short Name	Organisation Country	Total eligible costs/€ (including 25% indirect costs) ?	Requested grant/€
1	BBSRC	UK		
Total				

Part B2 Section 2c - Resources

Cost Category			Total in Euro
Direct Costs[1]	**Personnel**	PI[2]	
		Senior Staff	
		Postdocs	
		Students	
		Other	
	i. Total Direct Costs for Personnel (in Euro)		
	Travel		
	Equipment		
	Other goods and services	Consumables	
		Publications (including Open Access fees), etc.	
		Other (please specify)	
	ii. Total Other Direct Costs (in Euro)		
A – Total Direct Costs (i + ii) (in Euro)			
B – Indirect Costs (overheads) 25% of Direct Costs[3] (in Euro)			
C1 – Subcontracting Costs (no overheads) (in Euro)			
C2 – Other Direct Costs with no overheads[4] (in Euro)			
Total Estimated Eligible Costs (A + B + C) (in Euro)[5]			
Total Requested EU Contribution (in Euro)[6]			

The project cost estimation should be as accurate as possible. Significant mathematical mistakes may reflect poorly on the credibility of the budget table and the proposal overall. The evaluation panels assess the estimated costs carefully; unjustified budgets will be consequently reduced. The requested contribution should be in proportion to the actual needs to fulfil the objectives of the project.

Please indicate the duration of the project in months:[6]	

Budget - General Hints and Tips

- **Speak to your host institution's research/finance office as early as possible**
- The overall grant amount is determined by the peer review panels
- If your team members are at other institutions, those institutions will need to be involved in costing their part of the proposal
- All costs must be calculated and claimed according to your host organisations own accounting rules.
- You can only budget for costs directly related to carrying out the project
- Link the budgets clearly to the proposed activities

Panel Comments on the Resources Section

- Anonymous feedback taken from panel comments on successful proposals in PE, LS and SH domains
  - "The budget is justified in respect to the aims."
  - "The budget of the project is reasonable. No cuts are suggested."
  - "The panel found the justification for the … equipment insufficient, both in terms of the required performance and in the cost estimate, and reduced the grant budget accordingly."
  - "The panel considered that for the successful execution of the project [x] postdocs … are sufficient. The panel recommends the budget to be reduced accordingly."
  - "The budget for consumables appeared somewhat overestimated, and was therefore reduced accordingly"

Management issues to consider when preparing your application

- Grant Agreement
  - Annex 1 – description of the action (what you wrote in the proposal)
- Flexibility
  - Scientific
  - Portability
- Progress reporting
  - Scientific – submitted by the PI (mid-term and final)
  - Financial – submitted by the beneficiary (18 months)
- Publication and exploitation of results
  - Open Access
  - IPR
- European Charter for Researchers & Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

Ethics in ERC Application

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- Part A4 - Ethics Issues Table

4 - Ethics issues table ?

1. HUMAN EMBRYOS/FOETUSES		Page
Does your research involve Human Embryonic Stem Cells (hESCs)?	○ Yes ◉ No	
Does your research involve the use of human embryos?	○ Yes ◉ No	
Does your research involve the use of human foetal tissues / cells?	○ Yes ◉ No	
2. HUMANS		**Page**
Does your research involve human participants?	○ Yes ◉ No	
Does your research involve physical interventions on the study participants?	○ Yes ◉ No	
Does it involve invasive techniques?	○ Yes ◉ No	
3. HUMAN CELLS / TISSUES		**Page**

- Ethics Self-Assessment Annex (only if answered 'Yes' to any questions on ethical issues table)
  - Brief explanation of the ethical issue(s) involved & how it will be dealt with
  - You may include supporting documentation, such as authorisations already received. (Not counted in page limit)

Evaluation Process

Peer Review

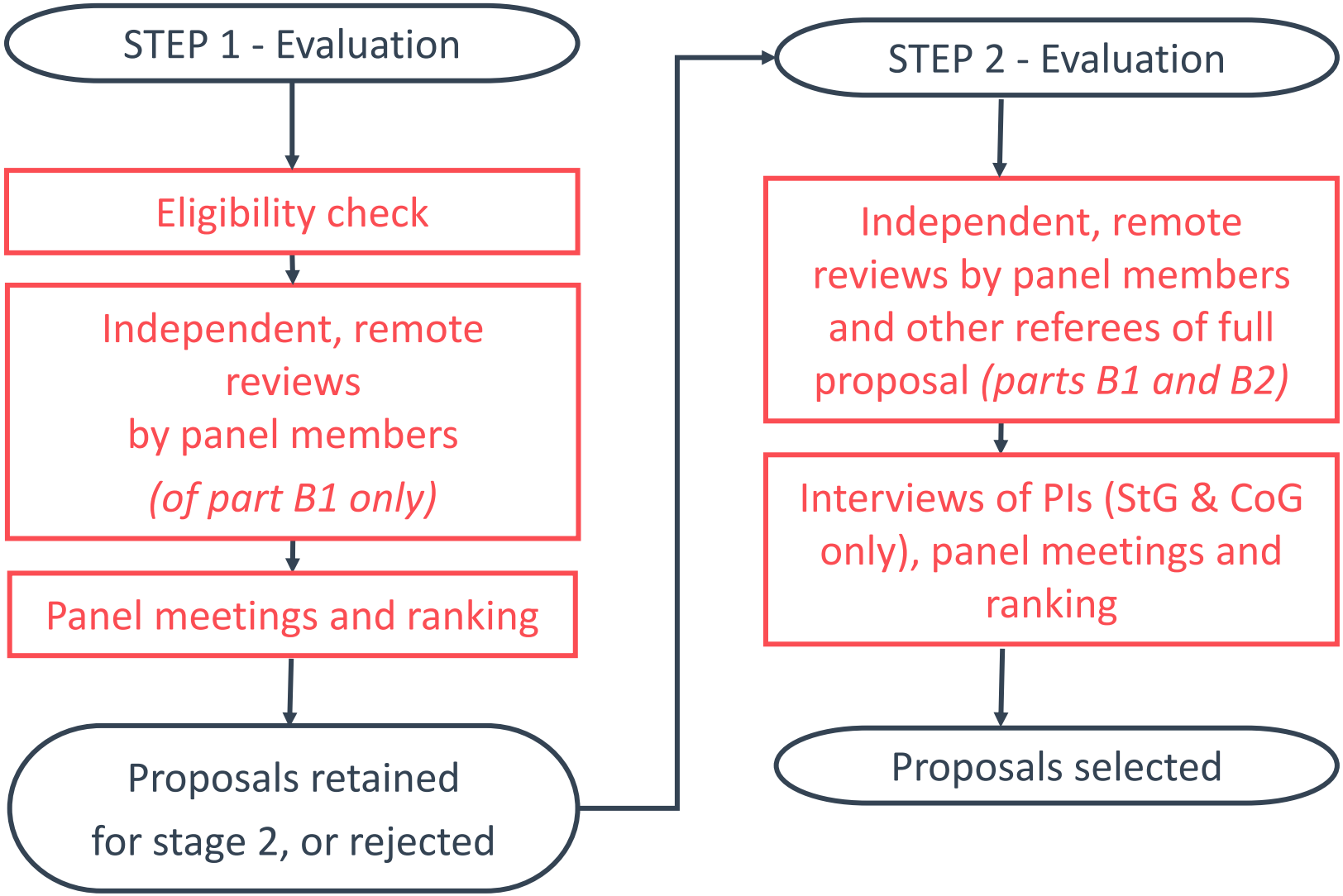
- 3 research domains
- 25 panels - 2 separate sets of panel members
- Budget between the 3 domains will be determined based on the number of applications received to each domain – not pre-allocated.

Domain	Panels	Deadline
Physical Sciences and Engineering (PE)	10	Single deadline for all research domains : 2 February 2016, 17.00 Brussels time
Life Sciences (LS)	9	
Social Sciences and Humanities (SH)	6	

Example of Peer Review Panels

- Examples:
  - PE4 – Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences – Analytical chemistry, chemical theory, physical chemistry/chemical physics.
  - LS7 – Diagnostic Tools, Therapies and Public Health – Aetiology, diagnosis and treatment of disease, public health, epidemiology, pharmacology, clinical medicine, regenerative medicine, medical ethics.
  - SH2 – Institutions, Values, Environment and Space – Political science, law, sustainability science, geography, regional studies and planning.
- For full list of all 25 panels and keywords see the Information for Applicants document
- Who will be evaluating my proposal? The lists of panel members for previous ERC calls can be found on the ERC website: http://erc.europa.eu/evaluation-panels

Proposal Evaluation Process



Scoring System

Step 1 (Part B1 of proposal)

- **A** is of sufficient quality to pass to Step 2 of the evaluation;
- **B** is of high quality but not sufficient to pass to Step 2 of the evaluation; and
- **C** is not of sufficient quality to pass to Step 2 of the evaluation.

- Applicants scoring B or C told the ranking range of their proposal out of those evaluated by the panel

Step 2 (full proposal and interview)

- **A** fully meets the ERC's excellence criterion and is recommended for funding if sufficient funds are available; and
- **B** meets some but not all elements of the ERC's excellence criterion and will not be funded.

- Applicants told the ranking range of their proposal out of the proposals evaluated by the panel

Restrictions on Submissions

- A PI may submit proposals to different ERC frontier research grant calls made under the same Work Programme, but **only the first eligible proposal will be evaluated**.
- A PI whose proposal was evaluated as category A in the frontier research calls under Work Programme 2015 may submit a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2016.
- A PI whose proposal was evaluated as **category B at step 2** in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programme 2015 **may submit a proposal** to the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2016.
- A PI whose proposal was evaluated as **category B at step 1** in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programme 2015 **may not submit** a proposal to the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2016.

Restrictions on Submissions

- A PI whose proposal was evaluated as **category C** in the Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals under Work Programmes 2014 or 2015 **may not submit a proposal** to frontier research calls made under Work Programme 2016.
- A PI whose proposal was rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity in the calls for proposals under Work Programmes 2014 or 2015 may not submit a proposal to the calls for proposals made under Work Programme 2016.
- A researcher may participate as PI (or Co-I) in only one ERC frontier research project at any one time.
- A researcher participating as PI in an ERC frontier research project may not submit a proposal for another ERC frontier research grant, unless the existing project ends no more than two years after the call deadline.
- A PI who is a serving Panel Member for a 2016 ERC call or who served as a Panel Member for a 2014 ERC call may not apply to a 2016 ERC call for the same type of grant.

Final General Tips on Writing Your Application

1. Liaise with your HoD and Research Office
2. Use clear and concise language
3. Pay careful attention to each section
4. Be ambitious, but show awareness of cutting edge
5. Look at examples of successful applications
6. Read all the documentation, including the Grant Agreement
7. Be realistic with the budget, clearly link your budget to activities. Has your institution agreed your budget?
8. Proofread your application
9. Get application reviewed by colleagues
10. Stick to page, font size, budget limits and format
11. Check submission checklist from Guide for Applicants
12. It is possible to submit your proposal on the Participant Portal as many times as you like before the deadline

Useful Links

- Participant Portal
- ERC website
- ERC statistics on funded projects
- ERC panel members
- ERC funded projects
- 2016 ERC Work Programme
- NCP – erc-uk@bbsrc.ac.uk
- ERC Annual Report
- ERC report on activities in FP7 (2007-2013)