

Funding opportunities European Research Council



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VfS Annual Conference 2020 'Gender Economics'

- ❖ What is the ERC?
- ❖ Brief overview of ERC Grants and the evaluation process
- ❖ Some tips for potential applicants

What is ERC?



The ERC supports excellence in frontier research through a bottom-up, individual-based, pan-European competition

Budget: € 13 billion (2014-2020) - 1.9 billion €/year
€ 7.5 billion (2007-2013) - 1.1 billion €/year

Legislation

- Scientific governance: independent Scientific Council with 22 members including the ERC President; full authority over funding strategy
- Support by the ERC Executive Agency (autonomous)
- Excellence as the only criterion

Strategy

- Support for the individual scientist – no networks!
- Global peer-review
- No predetermined subjects (bottom-up)
- Support of frontier research in all fields of science and humanities

What does ERC offer?

Creative Freedom of the Individual Grantee



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Generous grants, Independence, Recognition & Visibility

- Work on any research topic: completely **bottom-up**, with a team of own choice
- Gain **financial autonomy** for up to 5 years
- Host Institution can be in **any EU Member State / Associated Country**
- **Portability of grants**: negotiate the best work conditions with the Host Institution
- Attract **top team members** and **collaborators** from worldwide
- Attract additional funding and gain **recognition**: ERC is a quality label

Associated Countries

Albania

Armenia

Bosnia and
Herzegovina

Faroe Islands

Georgia

Iceland

Israel

Moldova

Montenegro

Norway

Serbia

Switzerland

North Macedonia

Tunisia

Turkey

Ukraine

Who can apply?



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Researchers

- of any nationality and career stage (>2 years after first PhD)
- on any topic (*no scientific priorities*)
- from any current working place in the world

Requirement:

Letter of support from a Host Institution (HI) based in EU / AC (exc. 1 PI in SyG)



❖ Visiting research scholarships to ERC projects
(<https://erc.europa.eu/funding/additional-opportunities>)

What is the funding structure?

ERC Grant schemes



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Starting (StG)
2-7 years after PhD

*up to € 1.5m (+1m)
for up to 5 years*

Consolidator (CoG)
7-12 years after PhD

*up to € 2m (+1m)
for up to 5 years*

Advanced (AdG)
significant research
achievements (last 10y)

*up to € 2.5m (+1m)
for up to 5 years*

Proof-of-Concept

to bridge the gap between research
& the earliest stage of
marketable innovation

*Lump sum €150,000 for ERC grant
holders*

Synergy

**ambitious research jointly addressed by a small
group**

*2 – 4 Principal Investigators
up to € 10m (+4m) for up to 6 years*

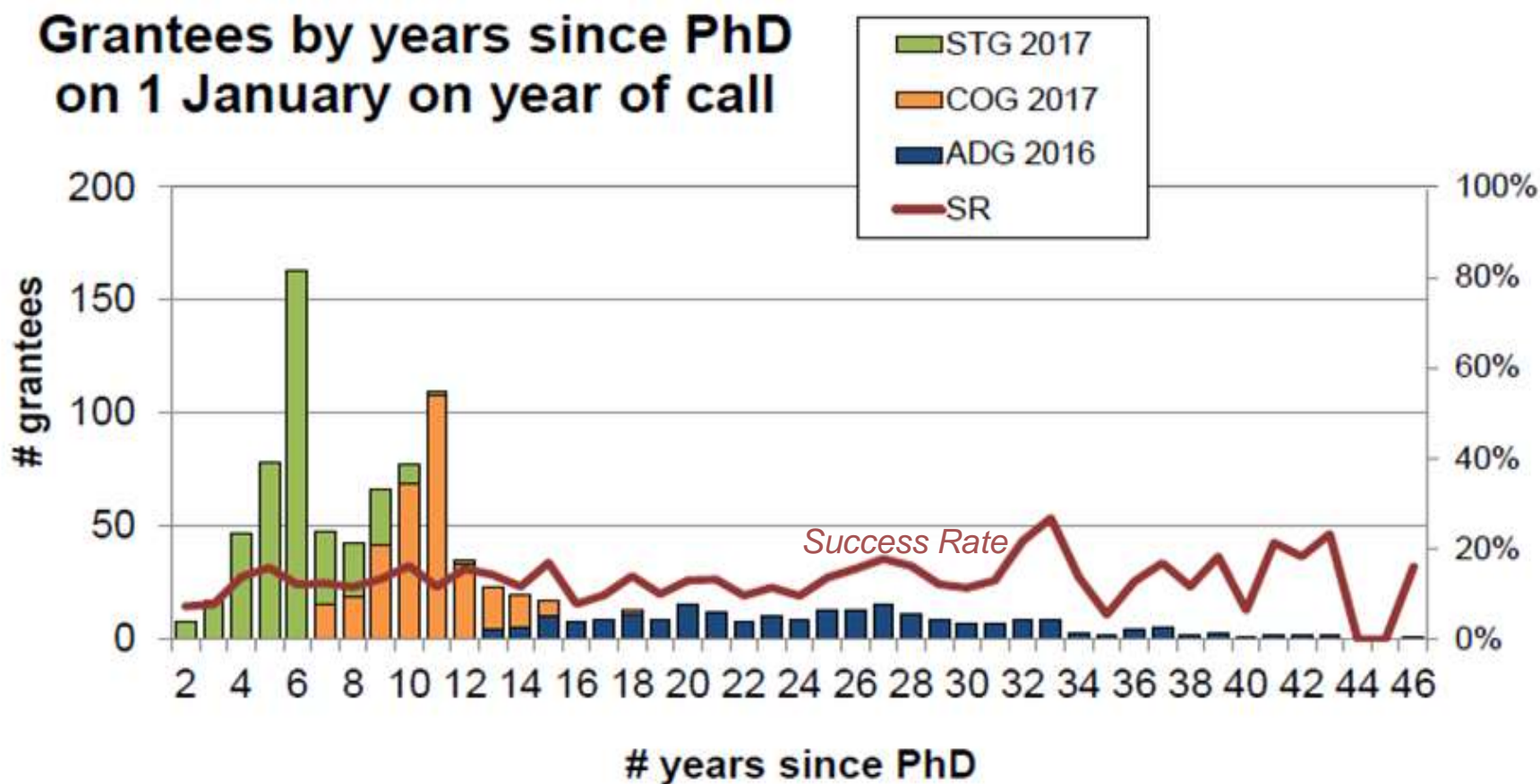
***NEW from 2019** – 1 PI can be based outside EU/AC*

Should you apply now or wait another year?



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Evaluation Panel Structure (2021-2022)



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Life Sciences

- LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions
- LS2 Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems
- LS3 Cellular, Developmental and Regenerative Biology
- LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing
- LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System
- LS6 Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy
- LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases
- LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution
- LS9 Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering

Physical Sciences & Engineering

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

Social Sciences and Humanities

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

How are ERC research proposals evaluated?

Excellence is the sole evaluation criterion



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- **Excellence of the Research Project**
 - ✓ Ground breaking nature
 - ✓ Potential impact
 - ✓ Scientific Approach
- **Excellence of the Principal Investigator**
 - ✓ Intellectual capacity
 - ✓ Creativity
 - ✓ Commitment

Note: Quality of the PI's institution (where they come from / where they go to) is not evaluated.

What is the ERC looking for?

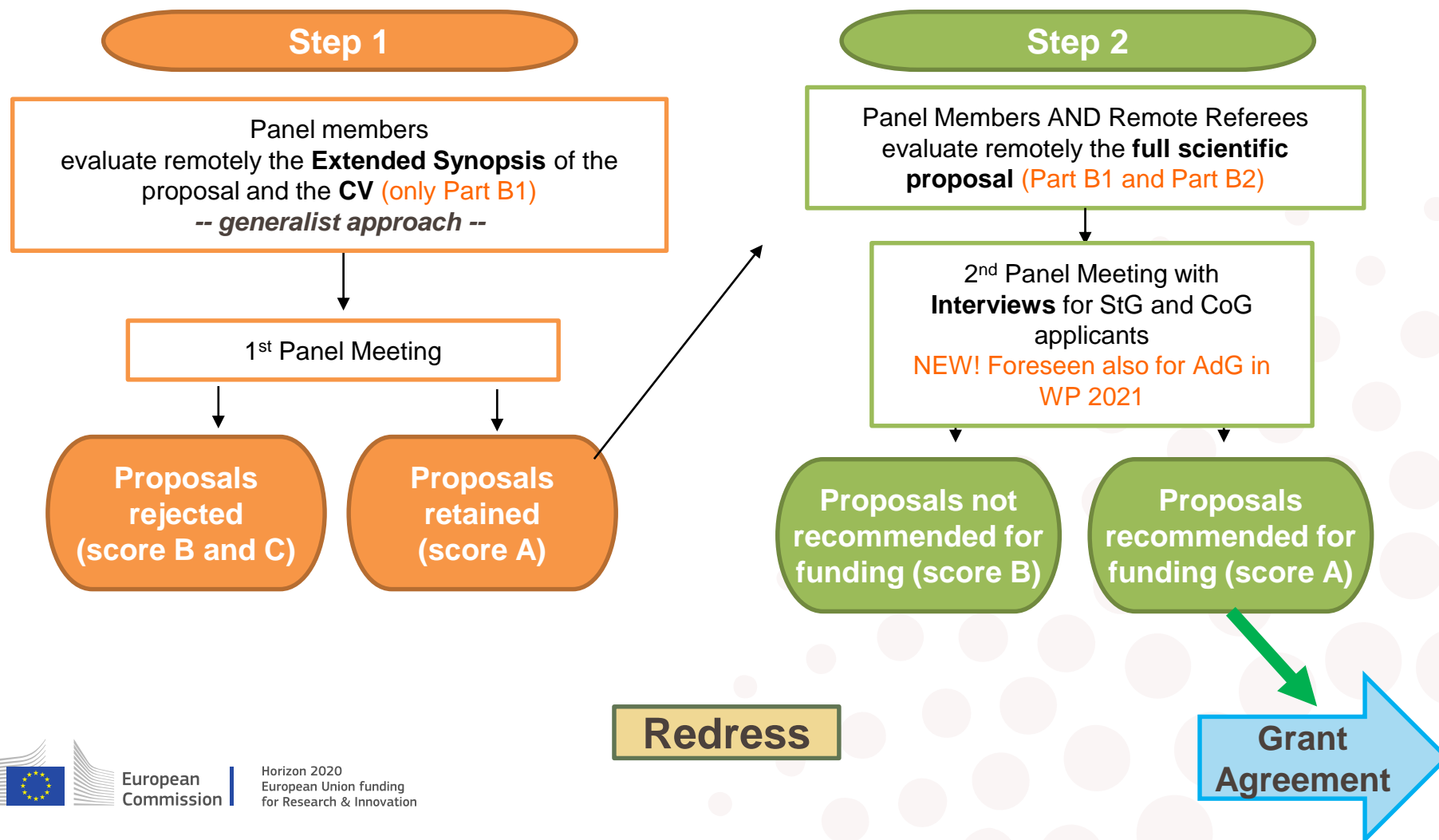
Projects pushing the frontier of science, i.e.:

- ✓ Multi- or inter-disciplinary proposals which cross boundaries between different fields of research,
or
- ✓ Pioneering proposals addressing new and emerging fields of research,
or
- ✓ Proposals introducing unconventional, innovative approaches and scientific inventions.



Individual Grants Evaluation Process

One time submission, two steps evaluation



Structure of the application

✓ Part A

- ✓ General information, budget, ethics review

✓ Part B1

- ✓ 5 pages of project synopsis
- ✓ Include brief scientific approach and feasibility
- ✓ CV and track record

✓ Part B2

- ✓ 15 pages
- ✓ Include extensive methodology and work plan
- ✓ Cover: risks mitigation, open access costs, team

✓ Host institution letter

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

PART B.1 (5 pages + CV and track record)



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In Step 1, only the Extended Synopsis is read :

- Concise and clear presentation is crucial (evaluators are not all experts in the field)
- Is my project new, innovative, bringing new solutions/theories?
- Does it promise to go substantially beyond the state of the art? What is the state of play and why is your idea and scientific approach outstanding?
- How can I prove/support my case? Are my goals realistic? Are case studies justified? Explain your scientific approach in sufficient detail to convince the panel about the feasibility of your project.
- What's the risk?

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

PART B.2 (15 pages)



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In Step 2, part A, part B.1 and part B.2 are read by Panel Members and specialists from around the world

- Provide sufficient details on your methodology and work plan.
- Make sure that the quantitative and qualitative differences to the state of the art are clear and referenced.
- Provide alternative strategies to mitigate risks.
- Explain involvement of team members (work plan and needed expertise of team members).
- Justify requested resources, explain your budget properly (Do not inflate the budget).

HOW TO PREPARE AND SUBMIT A SUCCESSFUL ERC RESEARCH PROPOSAL?



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- Have a **bright, original, exciting idea**
- Design a **research project** to implement the idea
- Get a letter of support from a **Host Institution** where the project is to be carried out (EU/AC)
- Make sure you are **eligible** (StG/CoG extensions!)
- **Register early**, get familiar with the system and templates and start filling in the forms
- Consider the balance between addressing **generalists and specialists**, and the difference between part B1 and part B2 of the written proposal
- Seek for **feedback** / Organize **mock interviews**
- If rejected, **keep trying!** (reapplications have a much higher success rate – benefit of using feedback from evaluation reports)



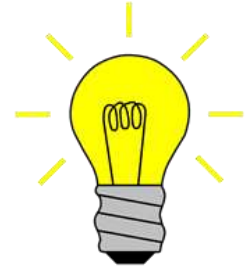
What are the panel members looking for in your proposal?



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Fund frontier research projects:

- Does the project go substantially **beyond the state of the art**?
- **Why** is the proposed project important?
- Is it **timely**? (Why wasn't it done in the past? Is it feasible now?)
- What's the **risk**? Is it justified by a substantial potential **gain**? Is there a **plan** for managing the risk?



Fund the future leaders in the field:

- **Why** is the PI the best person to carry it out?
- Is the PI internationally competitive as a researcher **at his/her career stage** and in his/her discipline?
- Is there **evidence** that the PI is able to work independently, and to manage a 5-year project with a substantial budget?

Typical reasons for rejection / not making to Step 2



It does take a considerable effort to prepare a good application!

Research Project

- Incremental research
- Scope: too narrow \leftrightarrow too broad / unfocussed
- Hypothesis and objectives not sufficiently clear
- Work plan not detailed enough / unclear
- Insufficient risk management
- For interdisciplinary proposals: expertise missing in one area

Principal Investigator

- Insufficient track-record
- Insufficient (potential for) independence
- Insufficient experience in leading projects (only for AdG)

Interview

- Not addressing the questions

Contrary to what rumours may say...



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- ... ALL scientific fields are eligible for ERC funding; no predetermined priorities
- ... societal impact is not an evaluation criterion (which does not mean ERC-funded projects would not have such impact)
- ... the budget is distributed among the scientific panels as a function of demand
- ... the Host Institution is not an evaluation criterion
- ... proposals shorter than five years are equally welcome
- ... the content of the proposed research determines its budget
- ... all researchers are welcome to apply; applicant's career stage matter, publication record is not decisive
- ... having already an ERC grant does not guarantee obtaining/not another one; each proposal is evaluated on its own merit



Key points...



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- Proposals shorter than five years/below max. budget are equally welcome. The project needs determine the budget
- Quality/potential of applicant is evaluated in view of concrete career stage and local conditions (access to facilities etc.)
- Resubmissions have a significantly higher success rate. Feedback from panels is valuable to advance own research
- Look at funded projects in your area (search tool on ERC website), testimonials, tutorials, previous panel composition

2021 Call Calendar (expected dates)

ERC calls	Expected Call Opening	Expected Submission Deadline(s)
Starting Grants ERC-2021-StG	12/01/2021	09/03/2021
Consolidator Grants ERC-2021-CoG	21/01/2021	20/04/2021
Advanced Grants ERC-2021-AdG	20/05/2021	31/08/2021
Proof of Concept ERC-2021-PoC (cut off dates)	14/01/2021	16/03/2021 17/06/2021 20/10/2021
Synergy Grants	No Synergy Grant call in 2021 (but foreseen again in 2022)	

Visiting Research Fellowships

guidance to preparing an ERC application



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Placements available **via national or regional funding agencies**. Funding covers all costs of the research visit including salary, travel and reasonable subsistence costs. However, you must apply for an ERC grant after the visit within a time specified in your funding agreement.



Currently in place:

- **Belgium (Flanders)**, with the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO)
- **Czech Republic**, with the Czech Science Foundation (GA CR)
- **Estonia**, with the Estonia Research Council (ETag)
- **Hungary**, with the National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH)
- **Poland**, with the National Science Centre (NCN)
- **Slovenia**, with the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS)
- **Croatia**, with the Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ)
- **Georgia**, with the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation (SRNSFG)
- **Slovak Republic**, with the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS)

Get inspired by browsing through the ERC-funded projects on our website

<https://erc.europa.eu>



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A screenshot of the ERC website's 'ERC FUNDED PROJECTS' page. The page has a dark header with the ERC logo, the text 'European Research Council', and navigation links: 'ABOUT ERC', 'FUNDING', 'PROJECTS & FIGURES' (highlighted), 'NEWS & EVENTS', and 'MANAGING YOUR PROJECT'. A European Union flag is also in the header. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: 'Home » Projects & figures » ERC Funded Projects'. Below this is the section title 'ERC FUNDED PROJECTS' with a search icon. A text block explains the ERC's 'curiosity-driven' approach. To the right is a 'SEARCH' box with a text input field and an 'Apply' button. Below the search box is a 'FUNDING SCHEME' section with a minus icon and a list of funding schemes and their counts: Starting Grant (StG) (3840), Consolidator Grant (CoG) (1562), Advanced Grant (AdG) (2413), and Proof of Concept (PoC) (735).

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ABOUT ERC | FUNDING | **PROJECTS & FIGURES** | NEWS & EVENTS | MANAGING YOUR PROJECT

Home » Projects & figures » ERC Funded Projects

ERC FUNDED PROJECTS

The ERC operates according to a "curiosity-driven", or "bottom-up", approach, allowing researchers to identify new opportunities in any field of research. Accordingly the portfolio ERC funded projects spans a wide range of topics and research questions.

Since 2007, more than 9,000 projects have been selected to receive ERC funding throughout the EU Member States and the associated countries.

Use the search facility to quickly and easily find examples of ERC funded projects.

HOW CAN YOU SEARCH?

Projects can be filtered according to funding scheme, call year, panel and/or country of host institution.

SEARCH

Apply

FUNDING SCHEME

- Starting Grant (StG) (3840)
- Consolidator Grant (CoG) (1562)
- Advanced Grant (AdG) (2413)
- Proof of Concept (PoC) (735)

SOME USEFUL TOOLS AND LINKS



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- Read Information for Applicants and Work Programme
- View the step-by-step video Introduction to application process, including tips & tricks for the interview
<https://vimeo.com/94179654>
- Consult ERC website for latest funding opportunities, view ERC funded projects



Useful links



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- Participant portal (see funding opportunities)
<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal>
- National Contact Points <http://erc.europa.eu/national-contact-points>
- ERC website <http://erc.europa.eu/>
- Subscribe to the ERC newsletter <http://erc.europa.eu/keep-updated-erc>



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Thank you!

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<https://erc.europa.eu>