

WRITING A COMPETITIVE ERC CONSOLIDATOR GRANT PROPOSAL



FFG-ACADEMY WEBINAR, 12.12.2016



OUTLINE



- ERC Consolidator Grant in a nutshell
- Presenting the Principal Investigator
- Presenting the research project
- Q+A



1 Principal Investigator (PI)

+

Host Institution (HI)



- Consolidate independent research team/programme
- Min 7- max 12 yrs post PhD until 1.1.2017 (Call 2017)
- max. 2,0 (– 2,75) Mio € for 5 years
- next CoG Deadline: **9.2.2017, 17:00 CET**
- Eligibility time-window can be extended under defined circumstances (e.g. parental leave, illness; national service, clinical training).

- Minimum **time commitment** by PI (min 40% working on CoG; min 50% in Europe)
- ERC-Grants are portable



- **Resubmission rules:** waiting time 1 year (category B) or possibly 2 years (category C) for proposals not successful in step1 of the evaluation
- **Open Access** rules of Horizon 2020 apply (Art. 29.2., ERC Model Grant Agreement)
<https://erc.europa.eu/funding-and-grants/managing-project/open-access>
https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/file/ERC_Guidelines_Implementation_Open_Access.pdf
- New in ERC Work Programme 2017: **Research data sharing** by default, possibility to opt out at any time (Art. 29.3, ERC Model Grant Agreement)

HOW ARE ERC PROPOSALS EVALUATED?

Social Sciences and Humanities
(6 Panels)

Physical Sciences and Engineering
(10 Panels)

Life Sciences (9 Panels)

- LS1 Molecular & Structural Biology and Biochemistry
- LS2 Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics, Systems Biology
- LS3 Cellular and Developmental Biology
- LS4 Physiology, Pathophysiology and Endocrinology
- LS5 Neurosciences and Neural Disorders
- LS6 Immunity and Infection
- LS7 Diagnostic Tools, Therapies and Public Health
- LS8 Evolutionary, Population and Environmental Biology
- LS9 Applied Life Sciences and Non-Medical Biotechnology

Step 1: part 1 (5 pages + CV + track record) is read by panel members only (+ online forms; incl. ethics)

Step 2: part 2 (15 pages) also becomes available to panel members and external referees

StG, CoG: Interview with panel members



EVALUATING THE RESEARCH PROJECT (STG, COG, ADG)



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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 between or 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)?

EVALUATING THE PI (STG, COG)



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?

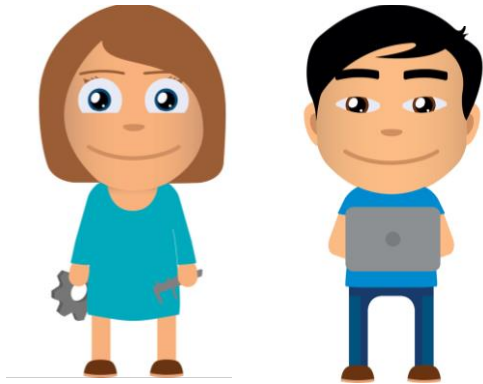
Commitment

- 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 (minimum 50% for Starting and 40% for Consolidator of the total working time on it) (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?

WHAT MAKES A „CONSOLIDATOR“?



- **PhD awarded >7 – max. 12 years** before (including) reference date (January 1st)
- must have already shown **research independence and evidence of maturity**. E.g. **several** important publications as main author or without participation of the PhD supervisor.
- promising **track-record of early achievements** appropriate to the research field and career stage: publications, monographs, invited presentations, prizes/awards, patents,...



CV: ERC TEMPLATE AS EXAMPLE



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Applicant's last name

Part B1

ACRONYM

Section b: Curriculum Vitae (max. 2 pages)

[The template below is provided only for guidance. It may be modified as necessary and appropriate.]

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Family name, First name:

Researcher unique identifier(s) (such as ORCID, Research ID, etc. ...):

Date of birth:

Nationality:

URL for web site:

• EDUCATION

199? PhD
 Name of Faculty/ Department, Name of University/ Institution, Country
 Name of PhD Supervisor
199? Master
 Name of Faculty/ Department, Name of University/ Institution, Country]

• CURRENT POSITION(S)

201? – Current Position
 Name of Faculty/ Department, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

200? – Current Position
 Name of Faculty/ Department, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

• PREVIOUS POSITIONS

200? – 200? Position held
 Name of Faculty/ Department, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

200? – 200? Position held
 Name of Faculty/ Department, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

• FELLOWSHIPS

200? – 200? Scholarship, Name of Faculty/ Department/ Centre, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

199? – 199? Scholarship, Name of Faculty/ Department/ Centre, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

• SUPERVISION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS AND POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

200? – 200? Number of Postdocs/ PhD/ Master Students
 Name of Faculty/ Department/ Centre, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

• TEACHING ACTIVITIES (if applicable)

200? – Teaching position – Topic, Name of University/ Institution/ Country
200? – 200? Teaching position – Topic, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

• ORGANISATION OF SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS (if applicable)

201? Please specify your role and the name of event / Country

200? Please specify type of event / number of participants / Country

• INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES (if applicable)

201? – Faculty member, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

201? – 201? Graduate Student Advisor, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

200? – 200? Member of the Faculty Committee, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

200? – 200? Organiser of the Internal Seminar, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

200? – 200? Member of a Committee; role, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

• COMMISSIONS OF TRUST (if applicable)

201? – Scientific Advisory Board, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

201? – Review Board, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

201? – Review panel member, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

201? – Editorial Board, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

200? – Scientific Advisory Board, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

200? – Reviewer, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

200? – Scientific Evaluation, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

200? – Evaluator, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

• MEMBERSHIPS OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES (if applicable)

201? – Member, Research Network “Name of Research Network”

200? – Associated Member, Name of Faculty/ Department/ Centre, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

200? – Funding Member, Name of Faculty/ Department/ Centre, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

• MAJOR COLLABORATIONS (if applicable)

Name of collaborators, Topic, Name of Faculty/ Department/ Centre, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

• CAREER BREAKS (if applicable)

Exact dates Please indicate the reason and the duration in months.

+ journal reviews

- **Publications:**

Major international peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary scientific journals, and/or leading international peer reviewed-journals, peer-reviewed conferences proceedings, monographs,...

→ up to 10 representative publications

- **Invited presentations:** Conferences, international advanced schools

- **Prizes and awards**

- **Patents**

→ summaries + highlights

„ERC PROFILES“ FOR COMPARISON



The screenshot shows the ERC website interface. At the top, there is a banner with the ERC logo and the text 'Supporting top researchers from anywhere in the world'. Below the banner is a navigation menu with options: Home, Funding and Grants, Projects and Results (highlighted), Media and Events, and About ERC. There are also social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and RSS.

The main content area is titled 'ERC Funded Projects'. It shows 'Displaying 1 - 10 of 975 results' and 'Results per page: 10 20 50'. Below this is a pagination control showing '1 Go 98 >' and options to 'Print', 'Save as PDF', 'or CSV', or 'XLSX'.

The project details for '15CBOOKTRADE' are shown in a table-like format:

Project acronym:	15CBOOKTRADE
Project:	The 15th-century Book Trade: An Evidence-based Assessment and Visualization of the Distribution, Sale, and Reception of Books in the Renaissance
Researcher (PI):	Cristina Dondi
Host Institution (HI):	The Chancellor, Masters And Scholars Of The University Of Oxford, United Kingdom
Call details:	Consolidator Grants (CoG), SH6, ERC-2013-CoG Details

<http://erc.europa.eu/projects-and-results/erc-funded-projects>

SCIENTIFIC PROPOSAL: WITHIN FEW MINUTES, REVIEWERS WANT TO KNOW...



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- ...what is the problem/research challenge?
- Why is this problem important?
- Why was it not solved until now?
- What is your new idea/approach?
- Is this groundbreaking research?
- What are your concrete research objectives?
- Why can **you** succeed?



What is the best **structure** for your narrative?

- **Key components:**
State-of-the Art, Objectives/Aims, Impact, Methodology, Team/Resources
- Provide the “**big picture**” early
- Guide the reader by **subheaders**, e.g. Research Questions, Work leading up to this proposal,...
- Include high quality **figure(s)**

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- How does the project break new ground? What is its **core novelty**? What makes it unique?
- What are the main overarching **research questions/testable hypotheses**? (→ + validation of results, interpretation)
- What are the central research **objectives**?
- What is your research **vision**?
- **Risk/gain**-balance/feasibility: Convincing preliminary data/results & contingency strategies?
- Which **panel** is best suited?
- Who can give you critical **feedback**?

PROPOSAL STRUCTURE – PART B1 COMMUNICATING THE ESSENCE

Extended synopsis (5 pages)

research challenge; aims, groundbreaking nature vs. state of the art; originality, feasibility, impact, methodology, expertise of PI & team, brief time plan
+ references (not within page limit)

→ convince **generalist and specialist panel members**



Abstract (2000 characters)

PART B2: CONVINCING GENERALIST AND SPECIALIST REVIEWERS



Scientific proposal (15 pages)

- a) **State of the art and objectives:** objectives clearly specified in context of state of the art; importance + impact of proposed research
 - b) **Methodology:** detailed; key intermediate goals; novel/unconventional aspects, key risks and contingency plans, work and time plan
 - c) **Resources:** team members, expertise, explanation for all cost categories, budget table; (time) commitment of PI
- + references (not within page limit)

COMMENTS BY ERC REVIEWERS - EXAMPLES



Frequent areas of concern:

- independence of PI vis-a-vis his/her supervisors not clear
- project not sufficiently focussed/too ambitious;
- project „incremental“, no scientific breakthrough expected;
„continuation of previous research“
- not enough information on methodology → doubts on feasibility
- objectives not clearly defined
- hypothesis not convincing
- proposal too descriptive
- interpretation methods not clear
- definitions not clear
- ...
- open questions could not be fully clarified in the interview



The screenshot shows the FFG website homepage. At the top left is the FFG logo with the tagline 'FORSCHUNG WIRKT'. Below it, the text reads 'Die Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft'. A navigation menu includes 'Das Förderangebot', 'Förderichtlinien', 'Das Serviceangebot', and 'Quicklinks'. A 'Themenbereiche' sidebar lists various research fields. The main content area features a large banner for 'Das Europäische Förderangebot' with a yellow circular badge that says 'Horizon 2020 startet! Die aktuellen Ausschreibungen und Veranstaltungen'. Below the banner are four smaller tiles: 'ERA Der Europäische Forschungsraum', 'Horizon 2020 Das EU-Programm für Forschung und Innovation', 'Das Service-Angebot', and 'Laufzeit 2007 - 2013 SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME'. A 'Volltextsuche' box is visible on the left. At the bottom, there are news snippets with dates and headlines.

- ERC Grant Proposal writing trainings
- Webinars
- Proposal Reading Days
- Individual consultancy
- Proposal checks (CoG 2017: please send draft proposal by January 12th)
- Information packs
- Interview Trainings
- Homepage: <https://www.ffg.at/Europa/Horizon2020>
- ERC: <https://www.ffg.at/erc>
- Contact: ylva.huber@ffg.at

IMPORTANT WEBLINKS



ERC homepage

<http://erc.europa.eu/>

Abstracts, PIs, Panels of granted ERC projects

<http://erc.europa.eu/projects-and-results/erc-funded-projects>

Previous ERC Panel Members:

<http://erc.europa.eu/evaluation-panels>

ERC Newsletter

<http://erc.europa.eu/keep-updated-erc>