

The European Research Council

European Research Council (ERC): il programma di lavoro 2027 e lo schema ERC Plus

Giuliana Gagliardi, *Scientific Project Adviser*
ERC Executive Agency, Scientific Department

21 Settembre 2026



European Research Council

Established by the European Commission



About the ERC

“

The ERC awards long-term grants to researchers of any nationality and age, from anywhere in the world, who wish to carry out their research projects in a host institution based in Europe.

Scientific excellence is the sole evaluation criterion.

”

About the ERC

Scientific freedom

- **Scientific excellence as the only criterion**
- **Support for frontier research** in all fields of science and humanities
- **No predetermined topics** – bottom-up approach
- **Support to the individual scientist**, not networks or large consortia

ERC offers independence, recognition and visibility to:

- Work on a research topic of own choice
- Gain financial autonomy for five years
- Negotiate the best conditions of work with the host institution
- Move with the grant to any place in Europe if desired (“portability of grants”)
- Attract excellent team members and collaborators from anywhere in the world

ERC Scientific Council

Life Sciences



Emmanuelle
Charpentier
Microbiology



Dirk
Inzé
Plant Biology



Leszek
Kaczmarek
Neurobiology



Luke
O'Neill
Biochemistry and
Immunology



Eleftheria
Zeggini
Human
Genetics



Liselotte
Højgaard
Vice-President
Medicine



Maria Leptin
ERC President
Cell Biology



Torsten
Persson
Vice-President
Economics



Nicola Spaldin
Vice-President
Materials Theory

Social Sciences and Humanities



Harriet
Bulkeley
Geography



Kateřina
Králová
History



Karin
Roelofs
Neuroscience



Susana
Narotzky
Social
Anthropology



Giovanni
Sartor
Law

Physical Sciences and Engineering



Conny
Aerts
Astrophysics



Michel
Campillo
Geophysics



Tom
Henzinger
Computer
Science



Maarit
Karpinen
Chemistry



Sylvie
Lorente
Mechanical
Engineering



Björn
Ottersten
Electrical
Engineering



Tomaž
Prosen
Physics



András
Stipsicz
Mathematics



ERC Executive Agency

The ERC Dedicated Implementation Structure

Implements the ERC strategy as set by the Scientific Council and manages ERC operations



ERC is part of Horizon Europe

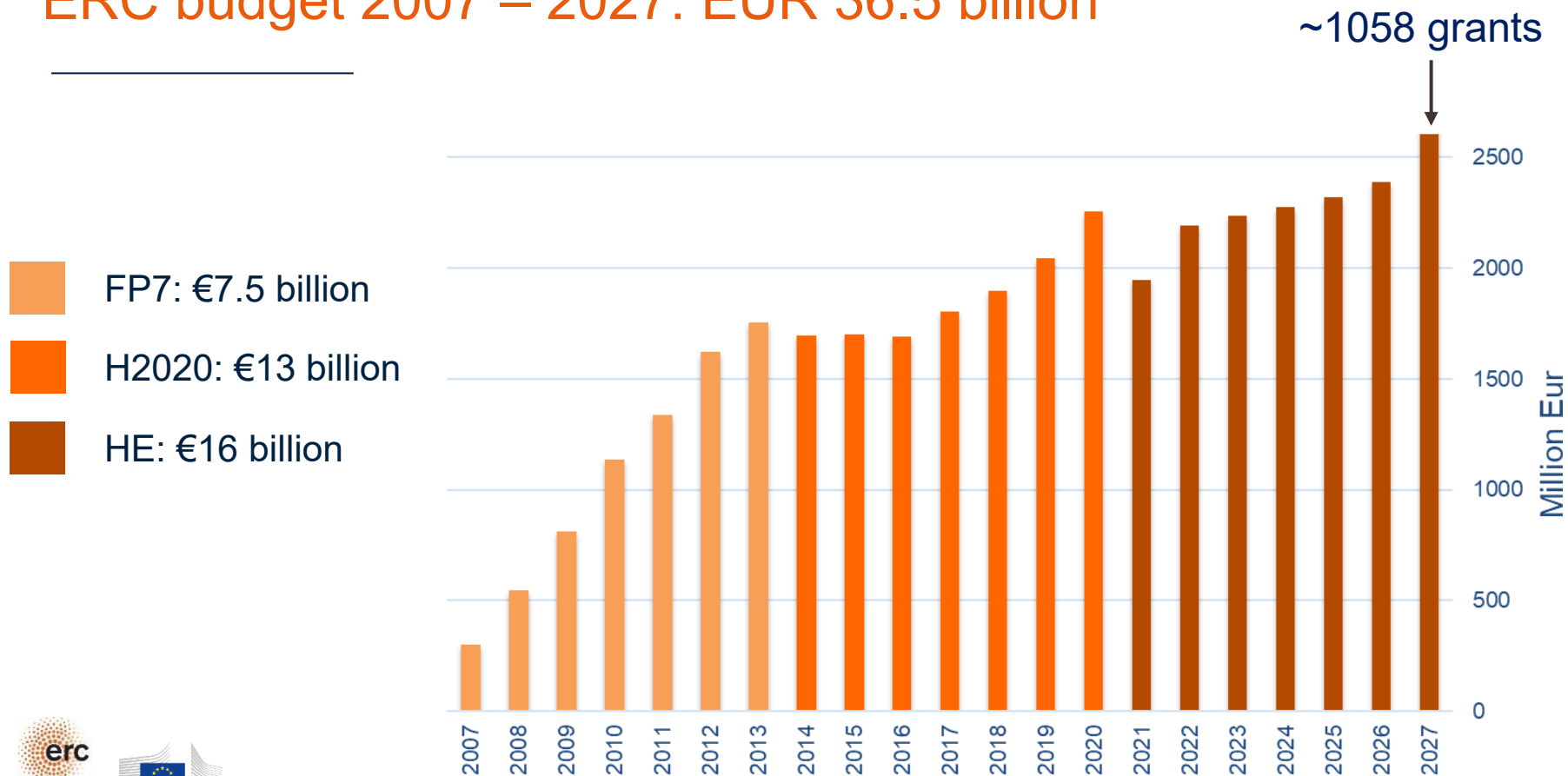


EUR 16 billion
ERC budget in Horizon Europe



17%
of the entire
Horizon Europe budget

ERC budget 2007 – 2027: EUR 36.5 billion



ERC in figures



Over **14,000**
top researchers funded since
the ERC creation in 2007



Over **120,000**
researchers and other professionals
employed in ERC research teams



Over **2,500**
patents and other IPR applications
generated by ERC funding



Over **400**
start-ups identified as founded
or co-founded by ERC grantees



Over **270,000**
articles from ERC projects published
in scientific journals



Over **950** research institutions hosting
ERC grantees – universities, public or
private research centres in the EU or
Associated Countries



95
nationalities of
grant holders



15 Nobel Prizes, **6** Fields Medals, **12** Wolf Prizes
and other prizes awarded to ERC grantees



ERC grants

ERC grant schemes

For individual PIs



Starting Grants

0-10 years after PhD

Up to € 1.5 million for 5 years

Possible additional € 1 million



Consolidator Grants

5-15 years after PhD

Up to € 2 million for 5 years

Possible additional € 1 million



Advanced Grants

Established research leaders

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For individual PIs – New since 2026



ERC Plus Grants

All career stages

Up to €7 million over 4-7 years

No additional funding

ERC grant schemes

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For 2-4 PIs



Synergy Grants

2-4 PIs, up to € 10 million for 6 years

Possible additional € 4 million

1 PI can be based outside EU/AC

ERC grant schemes

For individual PIs



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For ERC grant holders



Proof-of-Concept

Bridging gap between research and
earliest stage of marketable innovation

Lump sum €150,000



ERC panels and peer-review evaluation

Excellence

is the sole evaluation criterion

Excellence of the Research Project

- Ground-breaking nature
- Ambition
- Feasibility - scientific approach

Excellence of the Principal Investigator

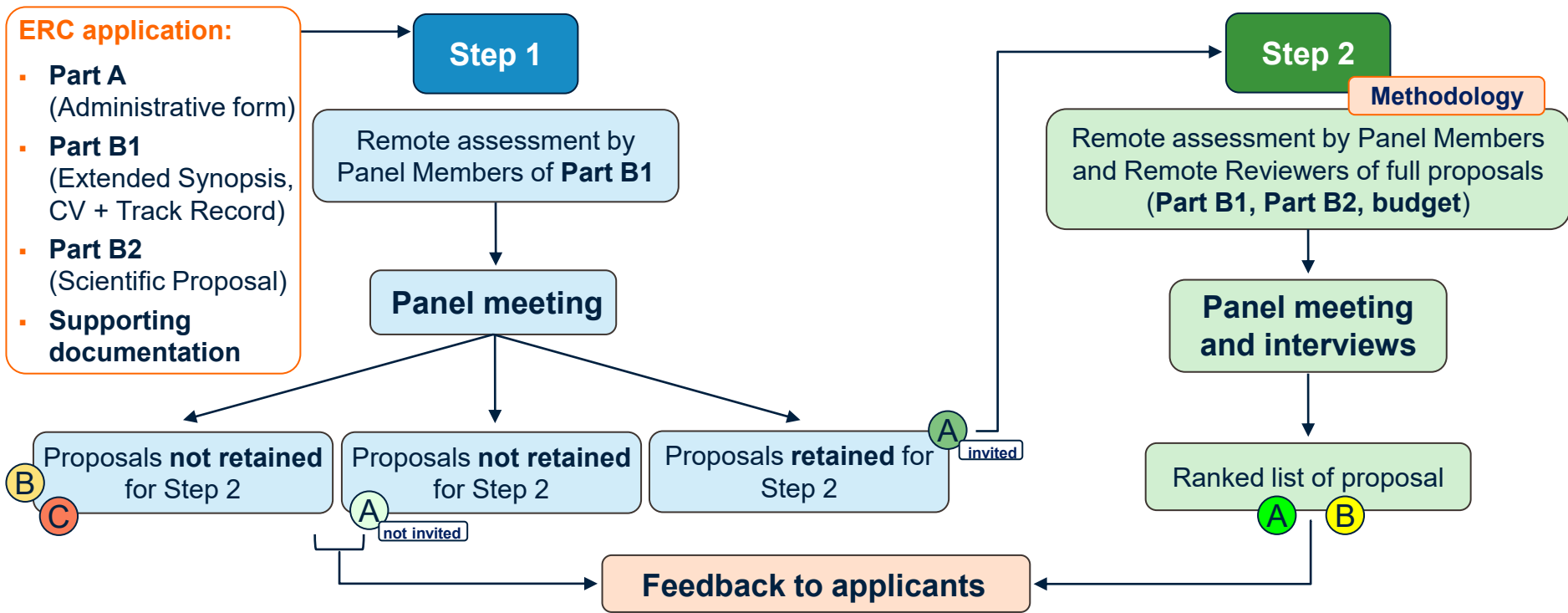
- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity
- Commitment

As from 2024 calls

Panels will primarily evaluate the excellence of the project,
while evaluating the above aspects of the PI

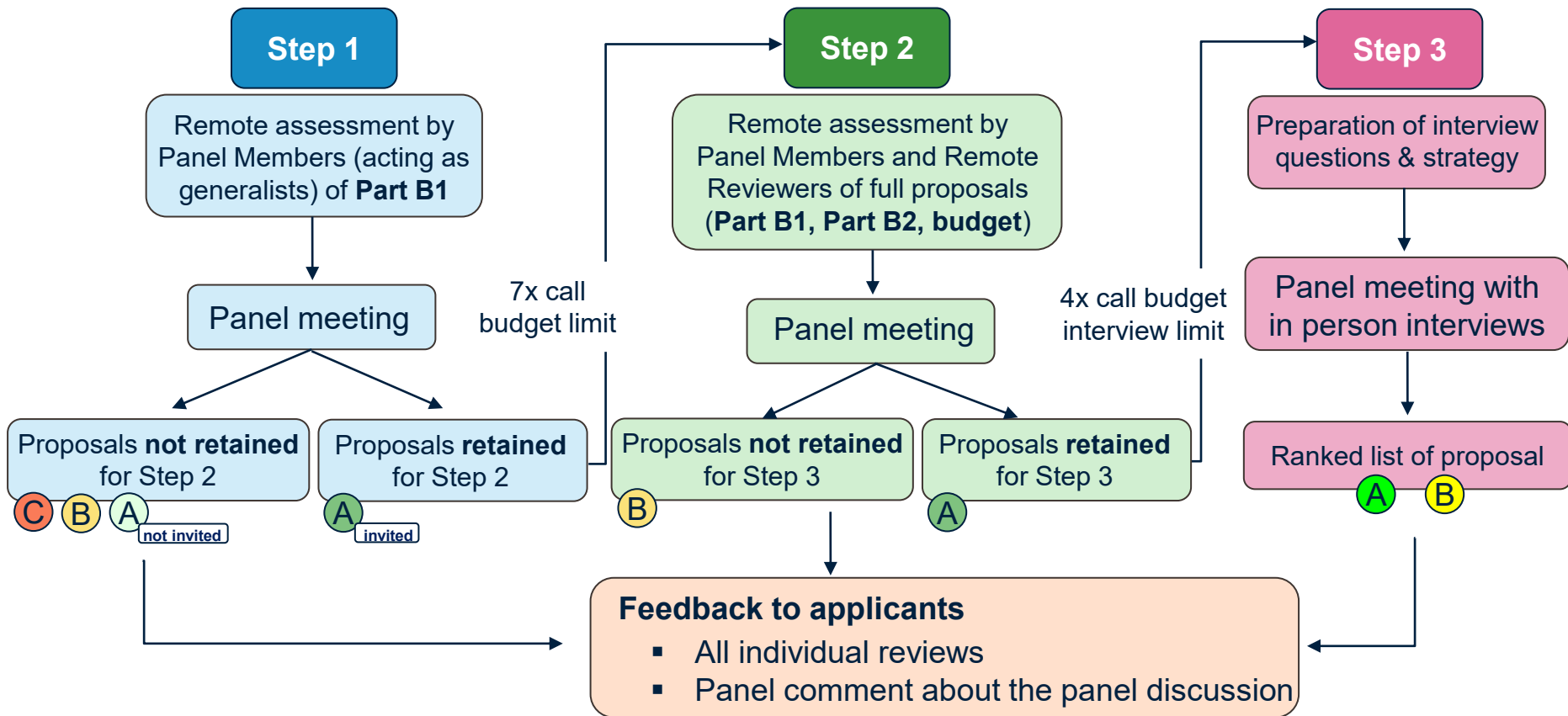
Evaluation process

For StG, CoG and AdG: a single submission but a two-step evaluation



Evaluation process

For **SyG**: a single submission but a three-step evaluation



Evaluation panel structure

(As from 2024)

Life Sciences

- LS1** Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions
- LS2** Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems
- LS3** Cell Biology, Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration
- 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 and 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 Processes 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
- SH8** Studies of Cultures and Arts

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- Proposals are initially assigned based on the applicant's choice
- Transfers of proposals between panels may occur
- Applicants can flag one 'Secondary Review Panel'
- Choose the descriptors/free keywords carefully
- Choose the panel that best fits the proposal

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What changed in 2026?

Grant application - New structure of the scientific proposal:

Scientific Proposal Part I (up to 5 pages) should describe the overall idea of the proposed research project: current state of knowledge; objectives of the project; **overall approach/research strategy to reach the goals of the project**;

*Focus on the **idea***

Scientific Proposal Part II (up to 7 pages, up to 10 pages for SyG) should describe the implementation in detail: the research **methodology**, work plan, risk assessment, etc.

*Focus on the **implementation** of the idea*

The panels will use Part I for evaluation at Step 1 and both parts together for their evaluation at Step 2.



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- **No more pre-defined cost categories for additional funding:** On top of its standard grant amount, the ERC has always offered additional funding for major costs not covered by the main grant. Applicants already based in an EU/ AC remain eligible for up to **€1 million** of additional funding.

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- **Increased ERC funding for researchers moving to Europe:** Additional funding of up to **€2 million** above the standard amount for researchers based outside EU/AC at the time of application for Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grants.
- The ERC has launched the '**ERC Plus**' funding scheme to support outstanding PIs to address a major scientific challenge that cannot be solved with a regular ERC grant.



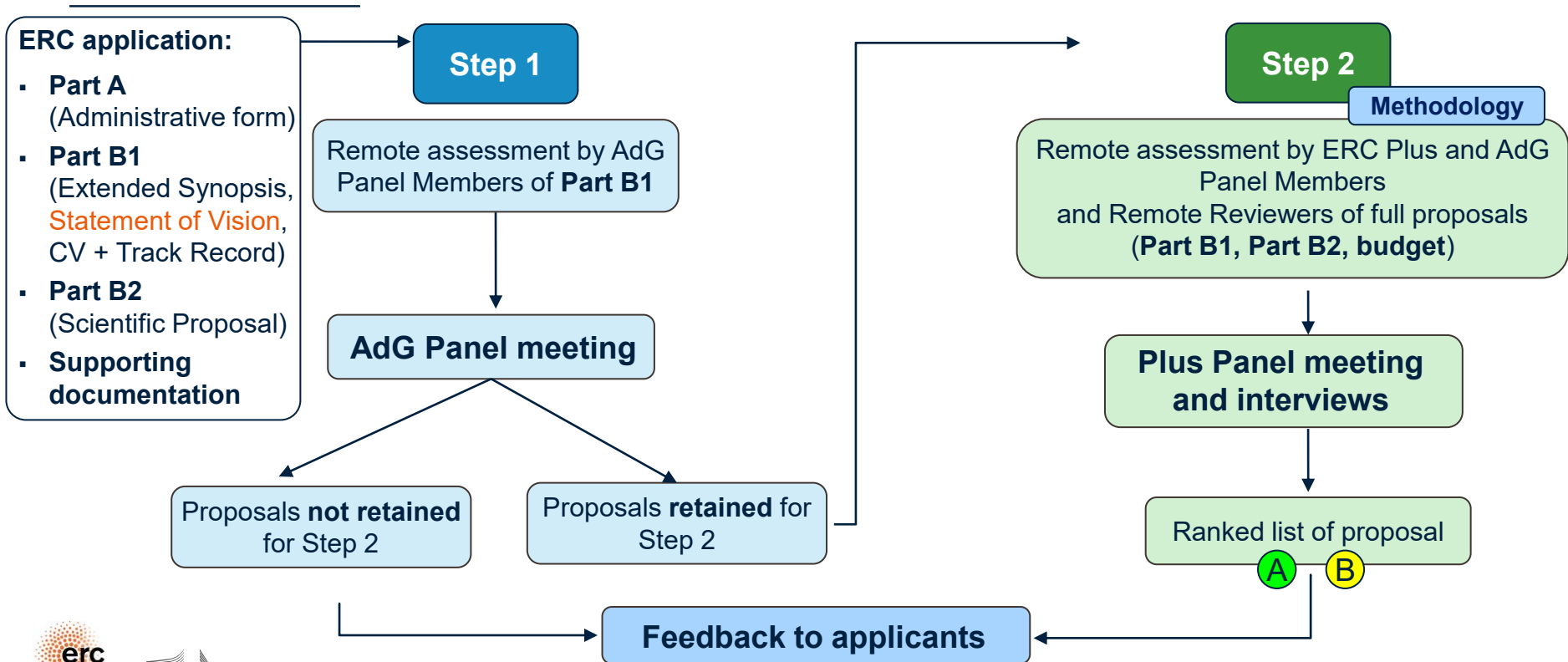


ERC Plus Grants

ERC Plus: A unique funding scheme

- Objective: to support outstanding PIs to address a **major scientific challenge that cannot be solved with a regular ERC grant**
- Only 30 grants for 2026
- Main features:
 - Excellence only
 - Applicants are expected to be **leaders in their field**: the past achievements of the applicants will be given a higher weight than for regular grants
 - Open to researchers of all fields and nationalities at **any career stage**. The evaluation panels will compare each applicant to peers at the same career stage.
 - Duration: **4 to 7 years**
 - Grant **up to EUR 7 million** (no pro-rata reduction)
 - Once in a career grant

ERC Plus: Evaluation process



ERC Plus: Evaluation

1. Research Project Ground-breaking nature and ambition

At step 1

- To what extent does the research address important scientific questions?
- To what extent are the project's objectives ambitious and will it advance the frontier of knowledge?
- To what extent does the project address aims that could not be reached with a regular ERC grant?

At step 2

- To what extent does the research address important scientific questions?
- To what extent are the project's objectives ambitious and will it advance the frontier of knowledge?
- To what extent does the project address aims that could not be reached with a regular ERC grant?
- To what extent are the research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?
- To what extent are the timescales and resources adequate and properly justified?

2. Principal Investigator - Intellectual capacity and creativity

At step 1 and step 2

- To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?
- To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative and original thinking?
- To what extent does the PI have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?
- To what extent is the applicant an undisputed leader in the field (compared to peers at the same career stage)?



Work Programme 2027 Changes

What changes in 2027?

The **eligibility** period for both Starting and Consolidator Grant schemes have been **widened**:

- From 2027 onwards, researchers will be eligible to apply for a **Starting Grant** immediately after successfully defending their PhD, and at **any time within the following 10-year period**
- **Consolidator Grant** applicants will be eligible to apply between **5 and 15 years** after defending their PhD
- The cut-off date for determining the PhD defence date is set on 1 January
- Researchers will be awarded no more than one Starting Grant and one Consolidator Grant during their career
- The situations for the extension of the eligibility periods will remain in place

Starting/Consolidator Grant: Extension of the Eligibility Windows

For documented situations occurring before the call deadline

- Maternity leave: 18 months for each child born before/after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- Paternity/parental leave: documented time taken for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- Long-term illness (>90 days for the PI or a close family member) or national service: documented amount of leave taken for each occurrence that happened after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- Clinical training: documented amount of clinical training received after the reference date of the 1st eligible degree, up to a maximum of 4 years;
- Major disaster (natural or human-caused such as armed conflicts)
- Seeking asylum
- Gender-based violence or any other form of violence

Calls Calendar 2027

ERC Call	Call Opens	Submission Deadline
Starting Grants ERC-2027-StG	22 July 2026	14 October 2026
Consolidator Grants ERC-2027-CoG	24 September 2026	12 January 2027
Synergy Grants ERC-2027-SyG	17 February 2027	11 May 2027
Advanced Grants ERC-2027-AdG	27 May 2027	26 August 2027
ERC Plus Grants ERC-2027-PLUS	1 June 2027	1 September 2027



Useful information

Contrary to what you may think

- The budget is distributed among the scientific panels as a function of demand
- The panel descriptors do not represent ERC scientific priorities
- The success rate is not linked to academic age
- Publication record is not decisive in selection decisions
- The Host Institution is not an evaluation criterion



Preparing your proposal

- Consult the **call documents** (Work Programme, Information for Applicants)
- **Register early** on the Funding and Tenders Portal
- Have your **documentation ready** – proofread the proposal
- Get the **written consent of your collaborators** before the submission deadline (a simple email exchange is ok)
- Contact ERCEA and **ask all your questions** well ahead of the submission deadline (dedicated mailboxes for each call) – e.g. ERC-2027-STG-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu
- Look at **funded projects in your field** (search tool on ERC website), testimonials, tutorials
- Talk to your **grant office** and **National Contact Point**
- Watch the **ERC Classes videos** (YouTube)



Thank You!

More information: erc.europa.eu



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