European Research Council

Synergy Grant

Universidad de Alcalá de Henares

16 de diciembre de 2024

GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE CIENCIA, INNOVACIÓN Y UNIVERSIDADES
FECYT INNOVACIÓN
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ERC Mission and funding schemes

What is European Research Council mission?

European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

The ERC, set up by the European Union in 2007, is the premier European funding organisation for excellent frontier research.

The ERC is based on a simple idea:
ERC supports the **best researchers** to work in Europe on their **best ideas.**

The sole criterion for selection is **scientific excellence.**

ERC budget in Horizon Europe **(2021-2027) - EUR 16 billion** (17% total Budget HE)

What is European Research Council mission?

- It funds **creative researchers** of **any nationality and age**, to run projects based across **Europe**. *Case studies can be located anywhere in the world.*

- Support **investigator-driven frontier research** across **all fields**, based on scientific excellence.
- **Individual, innovative, ambitious, non-incremental** projects
- Designed and evaluated by scientists of **high international profile**
- Offers research staff **independence**, **recognition** and **visibility**

ERC The Scientific Council

The Scientific Council is composed of 22 eminent scientists and scholars.

The members are appointed by the EC, on the recommendations of an independent Identification Committee.

The term of office of the members of the Scientific Council is limited to 4 years, renewable once.

The role of the ERC Scientific Council is to:

- **Decide on a scientific strategy**
- **Monitor and control quality and performance**
- **Establish a communication strategy**

March 2024

https://erc.europa.eu/about-erc/erc-president-and-scientific-council

ERC main grant Schemes

STARTING GRANTS

Grants up to **1.5€ million** for 5Y.

For excellent researchers at the career stage at which they are starting their own independent research team or programme.

2 to 7 years experience **after PhD**

PI Commitment: >50%

> 50% of PI working time in EU

CONSOLIDATOR GRANTS

Grants up to **2€ million** for 5Y.

For excellent researchers at the career stage at which they may still be consolidating their own independent research team or programme.

7 to 12 years experience **after PhD**

PI Commitment: >40%

> 50% of PI working time in EU

ADVANCED GRANTS

Grants up to **2.5€ million** for 5Y

For already **established research leaders** with a recognised track record of research achievement.

No PhD needed

PI Commitment: >30%

> 50% of PI working time in EU

SYNERGY GRANTS

Grants up to **10€ million** for 6Y

To address ambitious research questions that can only be answered by the coordinated work of a **small group of 2-4 principal Investigators.**

One PI (not the cPI) can apply (and be fully funded) with a Host Institution outside of EU or Associated Countries

Competitive track records as appropriate to their career stage.

PI Commitment: >30%

> 50% of PI working time in EU **except non-EU/AC PI**

ERC main grant Schemes – common features

STARTING GRANTS | CONSOLIDATOR GRANTS | ADVANCED GRANTS | SYNERGY GRANTS

- **Additional funding** up to **1M€** **(4M€ SyG)** when these are necessary to carry out the proposed work:
  - **"start-up" costs** for PIs moving to the EU or an AC from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant and/or
  - the **purchase of major equipment** and/or
  - **access to large facilities** and/or
  - other **major experimental and field work** costs, excluding personnel costs.

- **Extensions eligibility window**: Maternity (18M), Paternity, Long-term illness or national service, Clinical training, Asylum seeker, Disability, Major disasters include large-scale geological (e.g., earthquakes), meteorological (e.g., floods) or human-caused (e.g., armed conflicts) events that cause loss of life or property.

Profile of the ERC Principal Investigator

STARTING GRANTS

Should have **already shown** evidence of the **potential for** research **independence,** for example by having produced at least one important publication as main author or without the participation of their PhD supervisor.

Research achievements provide a list of up to 10 research outputs.

CONSOLIDATOR GRANTS

Should have **already shown** evidence of research **independence**.

To consolidate your independence by establishing a research team

Or to strengthen your recently created independent and excellent research team

Research achievements provide a list of up to 10 research outputs.

ADVANCED GRANTS

Principal Investigators at the career stage at which they are already established research leaders with a **recognised track record** of research achievements

Expected to be an **active researcher** and to have a track record of significant research achievements.

Research achievements provide a list of up to 10 research outputs.

SYNERGY GRANTS

Competitive track records as appropriate to their career stage.

Research achievements provide a list of up to 10 research outputs.

No prescriptive Principal Investigator profiles

Novelties on the research assessment as for 2024

Some changes to assessment implemented in 2024

Objective: Allow applicants to provide a **fuller account** of their research careers and contributions

Changes introduced:

- CV and track record combined as a **single template;**
- For the research achievements, the numer of examples is **limited to ten**;
- Type of research output **left open**: it can be pubications, data sets, code, etc.;
- Each one can be accompanied by a **brief narrative**;
- **Additional information** can also be provided on:
  - career breaks, diverse research career paths and major live events.
  - exceptional contributions to research community

Part B1 - pdf

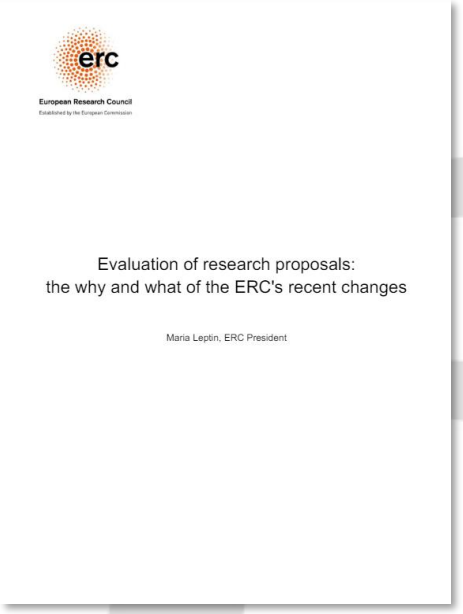
Cover Page and summary (1p)

Extended Synopsis (5p)

Curriculum vitae + Track-record (4p) NEW

Evaluated in Step 1

21 February 2024
ERC President Maria Leptin explains the background and rationale to the recent changes in the evaluation process of ERC grant proposals.



https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-02/Evaluation_of_research_proposals.pdf

In July 2021 , the ERC endorsed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)
In early 2023 signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (CoARA)

Evaluation of ERC grant proposals

The evaluation should give more weight to the project than to the applicant.

Broad assessment of the applicant
CV and track record merged in a 4 pages template

- Include up to 10 research outputs
- Narrative elements

Evaluation primarily **focused on** the **research project.**
Streamlined evaluation questions:

- Ground-breaking
- Ambition
- Feasibility
- ~~high risk-high gain~~
- ~~Development of novel methodology~~

Emphasis on the evaluation of the project proposal

- Only the project is scored on a numerical scale.
- Only this score can be used to rank the list of proposals before the panel discussion.
- The applicant is given an overall qualitative assessment .

ERC Synergy scheme

ERC – Synergy Grant scheme

Who can apply?

2-3-4 Principal Investigators of any nationality and at any career stage.
corresponding PI (cPI) and corresponding HI (cHI) will be the administrative contacts.

- PIs to engage genuinely in the collaboration.
- PIs can be in the same or different institutions.
- 3 step evaluation: with interviews on-site with all PIs in step 3
- **One PI (not the cPI) can apply (and be fully funded) with a Host Institution outside of EU or Associated Countries**

≥50% of working time in EU or Associated Countries (AC) except for the PI based outside of EU or AC and
≥30% of working time on the ERC project

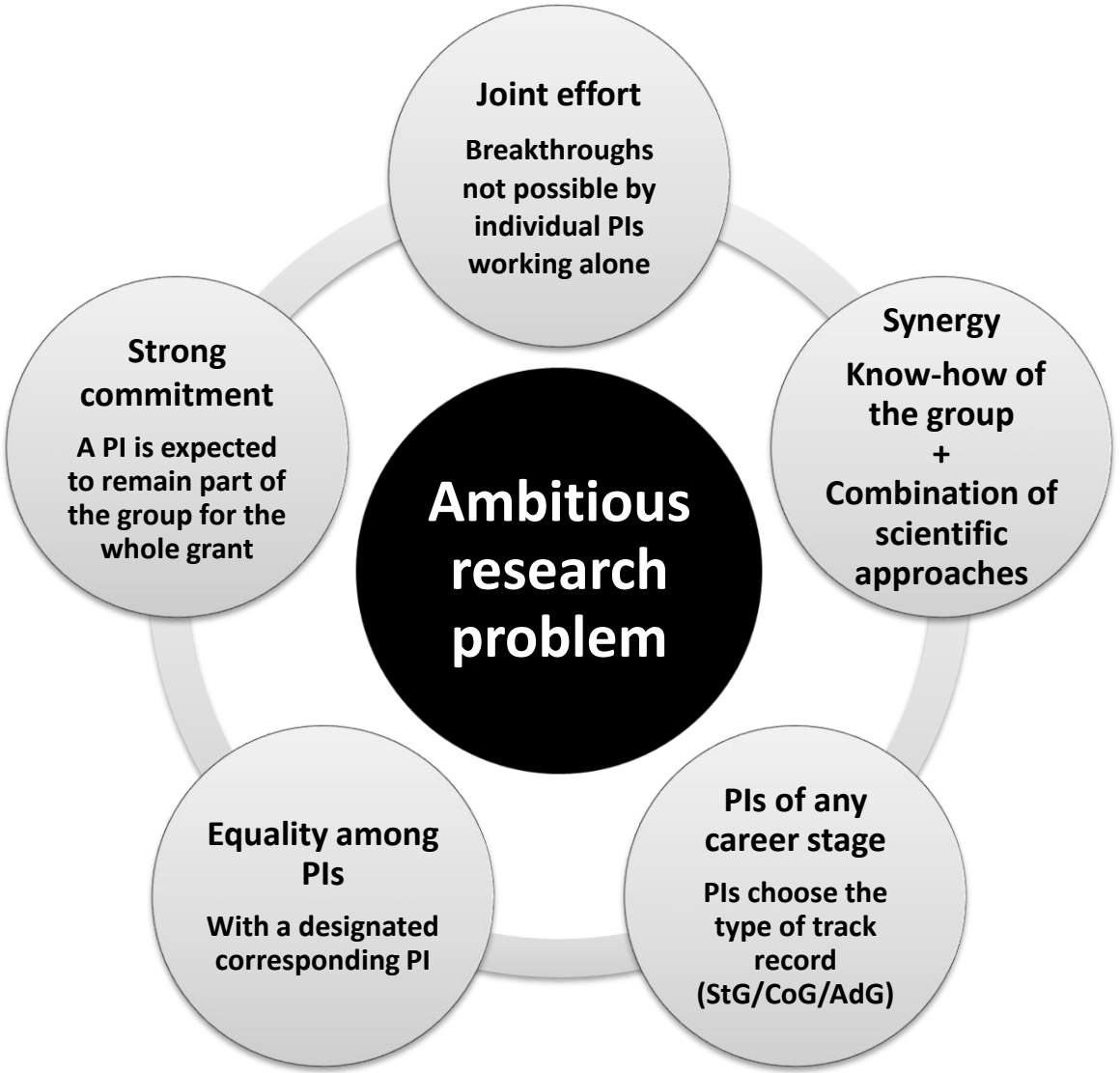
Funding

- Maximum of **10M€** for a maximum of **6 years,**
- **Additional max 4M€** globally for the project

Deadline

- Annual periodicity by call with a similar closing calendar
- ERC-SYG-2026 > november 2025?

ERC Synergy grant features



ERC Synergy – to be, or not to be

SYNERGY

- Involves teams with **exceptional combinations of knowledge and skills** with the PIs holding **a central role**
- A **joint effort** where breakthroughs are not possible by individual PIs working alone.
- Synergy comes from the combination of scientific approaches and the group's know-how, **creating something greater than the sum of its parts**.
- PIs must demonstrate the ability to **bring together the scientific elements** necessary to address a **major, transformative research question**.
- PIs and their teams must be capable of **tackling bold research themes using novel approaches**.

ERC Synergy – to be, or not to be

SYNERGY

- The proposed work does not need to cover more than one **discipline** or field to be considered for the Synergy Grants
- PIs can be at **any career stage** and choose their track record type (StG/CoG/AdG).
- There must be **equality among PIs**, with one serving as the corresponding PI, and all **PIs are essential, irreplaceable, and of equal value** to the project.
- A **strong commitment is required**, with each PI expected to remain part of the group throughout the entire grant duration.
- The project **does not need to span multiple disciplines** or fields to qualify for a Synergy Grant.

ERC Synergy – to be, or not to be

NOT SYNERGY

- Loose cooperation or networking between PIs
- Simple passing of data or information from one team to another without genuine collaboration.
- Using long-established, traditional collaboration approaches without innovative synergies.
- Agreements between organizations where staff participation is not directly led by the PIs, or where the grant can be easily moved elsewhere.

ERC 2025 – Synergy Grant scheme - Structure of the proposal

One deadline | 3 steps evaluation process

The ERC full proposal = part B1 + part B2 + Part A*

Part B1 – pdf

Cover Page and summary (1p)

Extended Synopsis (5p)

Curriculum vitae + Track-record (4p) **x PI**

NEW

Evaluated in Step 1 & Step 2 & Step 3

Part B2 - pdf

Sa: SoA & objectives
Sb: Methodology (15p)

Sc: Resources
justification of resources in B2
separate Budget table annex with the budget breakdown per PI

NEW

NOT evaluated in Step 1 (only in Step 2 & 3)

Part A – online forms

A1 General Information
A2 Participants
A3 Budget*
A4 Ethics and security
A5 Other questions
4-6 ERC keywords are selected, panels are not defined at submission
% Time commitment*
Excluded Reviewers (up to **4**)

Annexes

HI support letter
PhD certificate
Ethics and security issues
Template Eligibility Extension

NEW

ERC SYG Evaluation procedure

ERC Panel Structure 2025

For SYG 4-6 ERC keywords must be selected, panels are not defined at submission

Open to any field of research

3 main domains - 28 panels
10–15 subfields/descriptors per panel

Physical Sciences & Engineering

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

Life Sciences

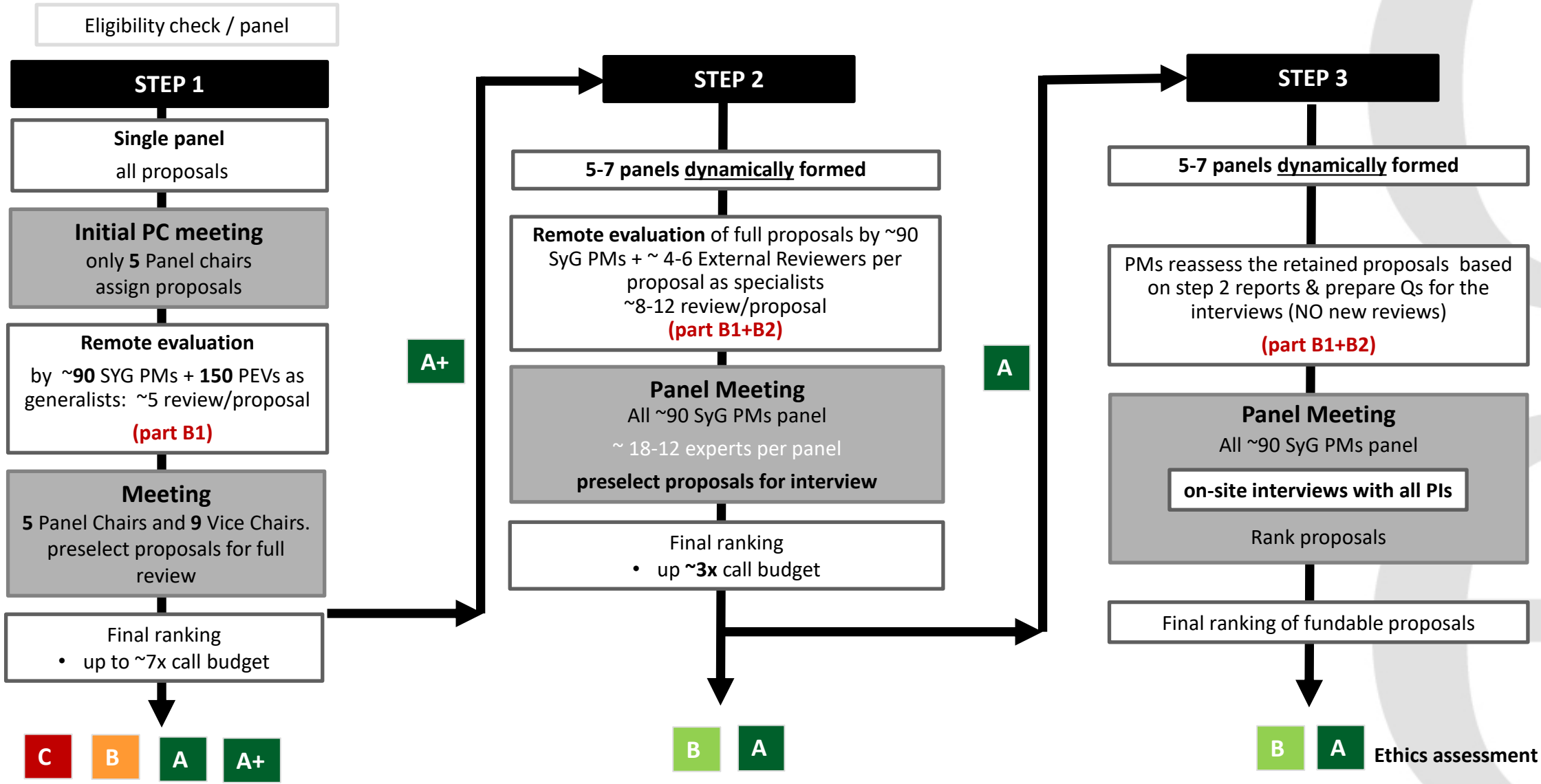
- LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions
- LS2 Integrative Biology: from Genes and Genomes to Systems
- LS3 Cell Biology, Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration
- LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing
- LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System
- LS6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

Social Sciences and Humanities

- SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations
- SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems
- SH3 The Social World and its Interactions
- SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity
- SH5 Text and Concepts
- SH6 The Study of the Human Past
- SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space
- SH8 Studies of Cultures and Arts

ERC Evaluation process ERC SyG Grant 2025

No predefined panels in SyG evaluations!



PEV = panel evaluator (panel member serving in another ERC call)

Evaluation criteria ERC 2025 SYG

Excellence is the sole evaluation criteria applied to the Research Project + PIs

Research Project
- Ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project (B1+B2)

- does the proposed research address important challenges?
- are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art? e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines?

Scientific Approach

- is the outlined scientific approach feasible … ground-breaking nature and ambition of the proposed research? (B1)
- does the proposal go beyond what the individual PIs could achieve alone? (Synergy Grants, B1)
- do the PIs succeed in proposing a combination of scientific approaches that are crucial to address the scope and complexity of the research questions to be tackled? (Synergy Grants, B1)
- are the proposed research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project? (B2)
- are the proposed timescales, resources and PI commitment adequate and justified? (B2)

Principal Investigator
- Intellectual capacity and creativity

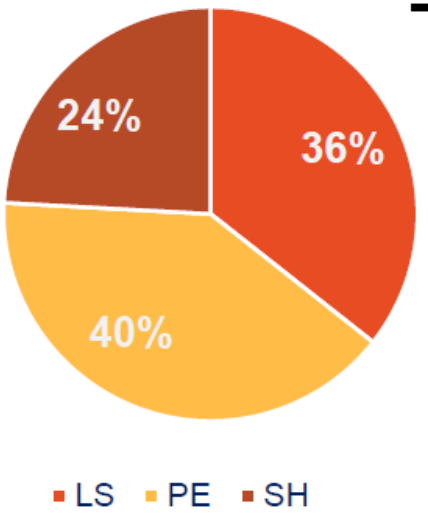
- demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?
- evidence of creative and original thinking?
- required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?
- does the SyG Group successfully demonstrate in the proposal that it brings together the know-how – such as skills, experience, expertise, disciplines, teams – necessary to address the proposed research question? (Synergy Grants, B1)

Who is evaluating Synergy proposals?

SyG 2023 – Overview reviewers - Step 1: Remote Evaluation – all experts in one panel

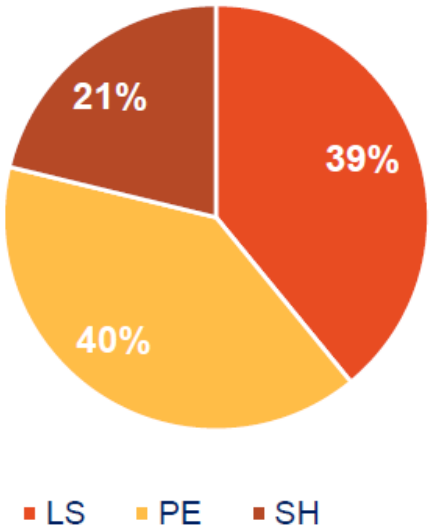
203 Reviewers; 36 Nationalities; 143 Men and 60 Women (30%)

87 Panel Members Including 5 Chairs and Vice Chairs



Scientific background

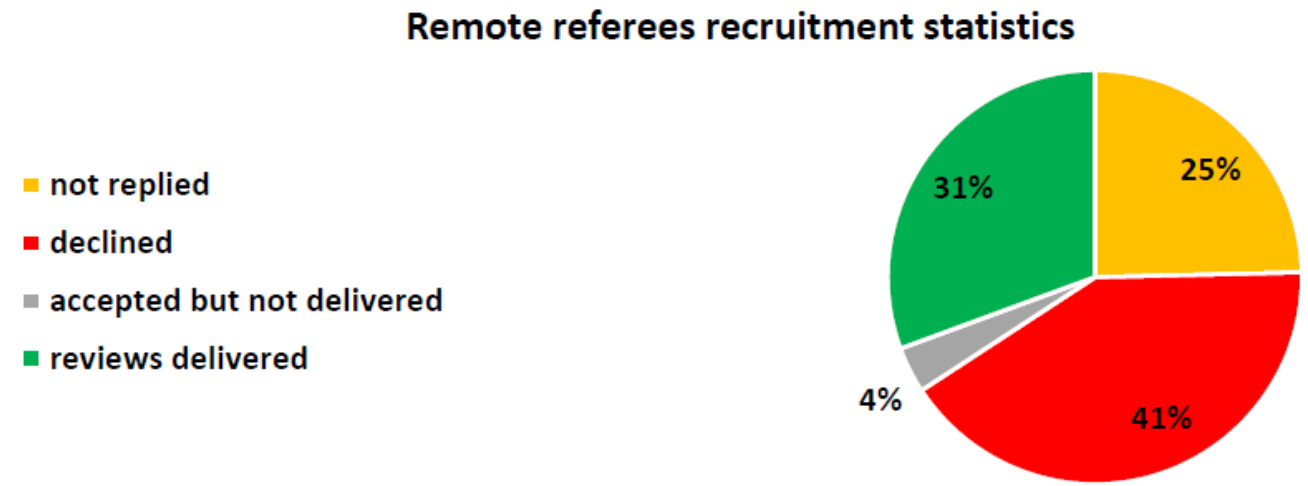
152 Panel Evaluators (PMs of other ERC calls)



ERC SyG2023 Data on step 2 panels

Overview reviewers in step 2 – in all 5 panels

- Panel members in step 2: 87 in 5 panels
- Remote referees: 4646 invited – 1422 reviews submitted
- Each proposal has between 7 and 18 reviews:
  - Panel members between 4 to 7 reviews per proposal
  - Remote referees and panel evaluators: between 3 to 12 reviews



2261 Reviews submitted for 208 proposals

Submission restrictions for the SyG 2025 call

Call to which the Principal Investigator applied under previous ERC Work Programmes and proposal evaluation outcome		2025 ERC calls to which a Principal Investigator is *not* eligible
2023 and 2024 Starting, Consolidator, Advanced Grant, Synergy Grant	Rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity	Starting, Consolidator, Advanced and Synergy Grant
2023 Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant	C at Step 1	Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant
2023 and 2024 Synergy Grant	A, or B at Step 3	No restrictions
	B at Step 1 or 2	No restrictions
	C at Step 1	Synergy Grant
2024 Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant	A, or B at Step 2	No restrictions
	B, or C at Step 1	Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grant

- Applicants to previous StG/CoG/AdG ERC calls can apply to the SyG2025 call regardless of the score received previously.
- A PI can be part of only one application published under the **same Work Programme** regardless of the call. The first application will be considered, the subsequent ones will be declared ineligible.
- When checking for a rule look for the call year (in the title of the call), not calendar year.

Management of the ERC SYG grant

The Host Institution (HI)

Any type of **legal entity**, private or public (universities, research centres, industry,…)

Based in one of the **EU Member States**, or one of the **Associated Countries**.

The PI does not necessarily need to be working (at the Host Institution) at the time when the proposal is submitted.

The HI is not an evaluation criteria, but a **HI commitment letter** is needed with the proposal.

Must **host and engage** the PI for the whole duration of the action

Must **guarantee** the PI **scientific independence**

Must provide research support and administrative assistance (if granted)

Signature of the Grant Agreement
Signature of a Supplementary Agreement with the PIs
Consortium agreement

Gender Equality Plan

The organization must have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) at the time of signing the grant agreement

EU contribution and management of the grant

An ERC grant can cover up to **100% of the total eligible direct costs** of the research **plus 25%** contribution towards **indirect costs**.
Direct costs:

- Personnel costs (Principal Investigator + research team)
- Purchases of equipment, infrastructure,.. (depretiation & capitalised costs)
- Consumables
- Travels, publications,…

2, 3, 4 Principal Investigators
+ their Research Team

- **Host Institution rules apply**.
- **Flexibility**: modifications are accepted by amendments to the GA
- Reports **in HE:** HI submits 2 Financial Reports; CoPI submits 2 interim Scientific Reports (24M, 48M) and final report.
- Grants receive between 25-40% pre-financing
- Management of the funds by the PI
- Grants are **portable**

Hints and tips
The ERC-Synergy idea

We've got an idea,
could it be funded by the ERC?

Hints and tips
The ERC-Synergy idea

- **Does it have the potential to change the way your scientific field works?**
- Pay particular attention to the **ground-breaking nature** of the research project – **no incremental research.** State-of-the-art is not enough. **Think big!**
- **Transformative impact**: you will open up one or more new fields in which you will publish in the future. Other researchers will follow.
- **Ambition**: this does not mean proposing a very complex experiment (battery of tests, fieldwork, etc...), but rather **a big step forward**.
- For SyG: Synergetic aspects important **– know-how of the group** is assessed together with the **combination** of the scientific elements
- Know your **competitors** – what is the state of play and why is your idea and scientific approach outstanding?
- **An unconventional idea:** New concepts that did not exist before or Use of existing concepts in a different context or field or New combinations of related or unrelated scientific principles

Hints and tips
Is it incremental research?

- When it comes to your daily work, it sounds incremental.
- If you can submit it to other calls for proposals of Horizon Europe (e.g. clusters) is not a SYG project
- Natural step vs. original step: product of your experience or idea.

Challenge: Find the right balance between ambition and feasibility

- Have an original and exciting idea that requires **the joint effort of 2 or 3 or 4 PIs**
- Design a research project to implement the idea. It is not about a consortium, but about a tight-knit small group of PIs and their teams. The PIs are equal and indispensable for the project!

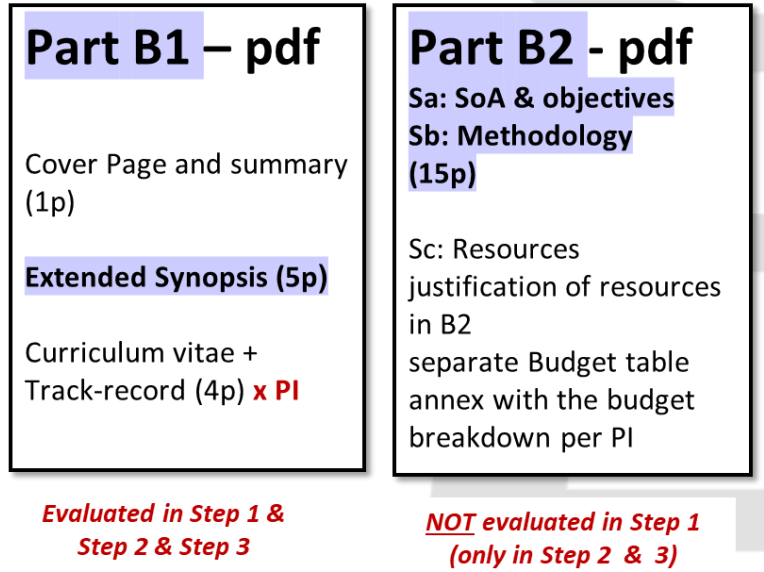
Hints and tips
Preparing an application - Differences in Part B1 and Part B2

In Step 1: Panel members (act as generalists)

- Only the extended Synopsis (**Part B1**) is read at Step 1: **concise and clear presentation** is crucial (Outline only of the methodological approach – **feasibility** is assessed at step 1)

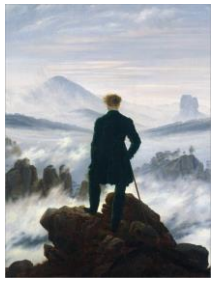
In **Step 2** : Both **Part B1 and B2** are sent to specialists around the world (**specialised external referees**)

- Do not just repeat the synopsis in part B2
- Provide **sufficient detail** on **methodology**, work plan, selection of case studies etc. (15 pages) (references do not count towards page limit)
- Check coherency of figures in part B2 and in the administrative part, **justify requested resources** (outside of 15 pages) – pay attention to the calculations and provide budget for each of the PIs – use the Budget table annex provided
- Explain **involvement of additional team members** (it is possible to have further beneficiaries/partners in the project) – their budget has to be included under a PI's budget in the Budget table annex
- Funding ID to be filled in carefully for each PI



The ERC proposal

Intrigue (part B1)
Convince (part B2)
Inspire (Parts B1+B2+ interview)



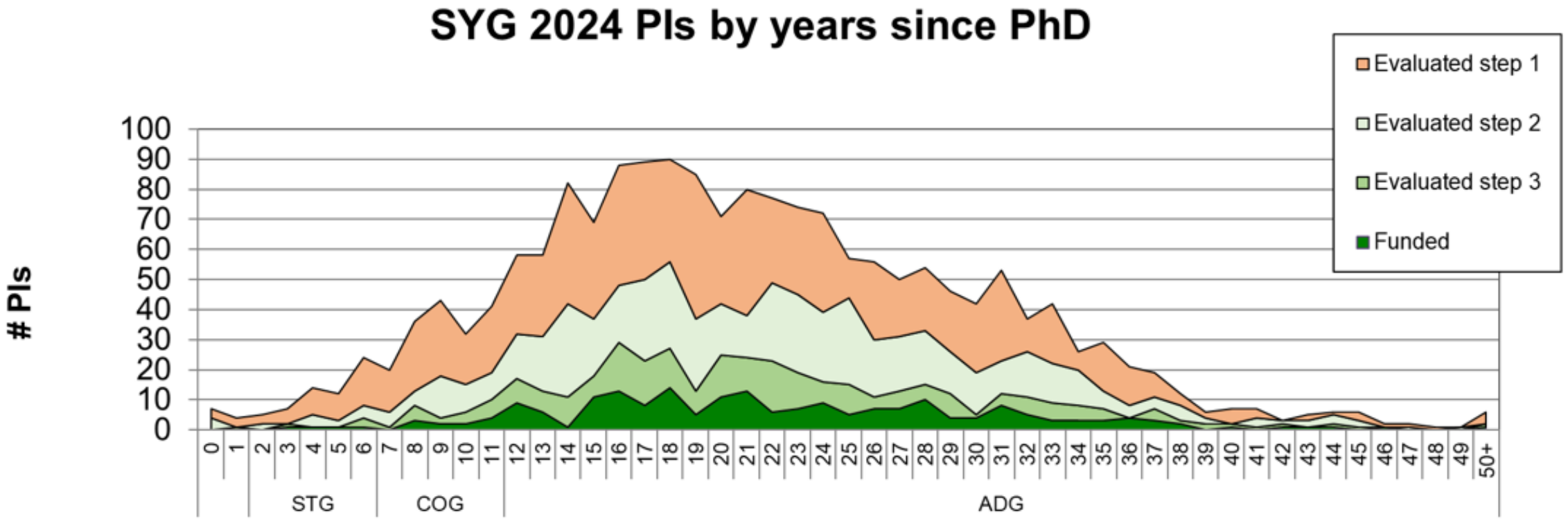
- Important challenges
- Ambitious objectives, beyond SoA (novel concept and approach or development between or across disciplines)
- Feasibility of outlined scientific approach
- Appropriate methodology and working arrangements to achieve the goals
- Timescales,resources and PI commitment

ERC SYG Statistics

ERC SyG2024

Profile of Principal Investigators

2% Funded PI have STG (2-6 yrs PhD) and 6% COG (7-11 yrs PhD) profile



This graph is a proxy, based on PIs CV data; it does not take into account possible extensions as in the individual calls.

ERC SyG2024

548 proposals submitted - 57 funded → 201 PIs funded

Overall call success rate: 10.4%

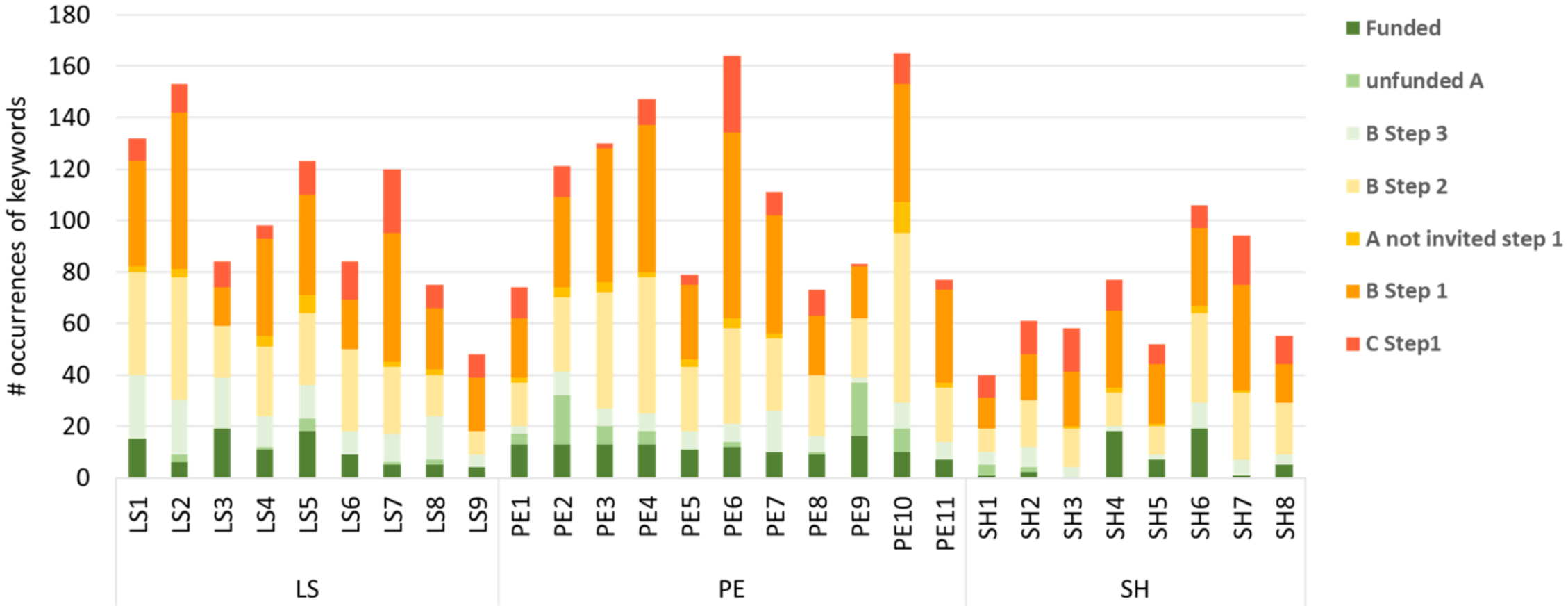
Proposals selected for funding	
Proposals	**57**
Total # Principal Investigators	**201**
Average duration (max 72 months)	**72 months**
Average # Principal Investigators	**3.5**
Female Principal Investigators	**32%**
Average budget awarded	**10 million €**
Average # Host Institutions	**3.2**
Average # Beneficiaries (HIs + partners)	**3.6**
% proposals including partners	**20%**

- 5 more proposals placed on the reserve list

Call budget: 400 Million € + Additional funding 171.5 Million €
Total awarded amount for the 57 proposals: 571.5 Million €

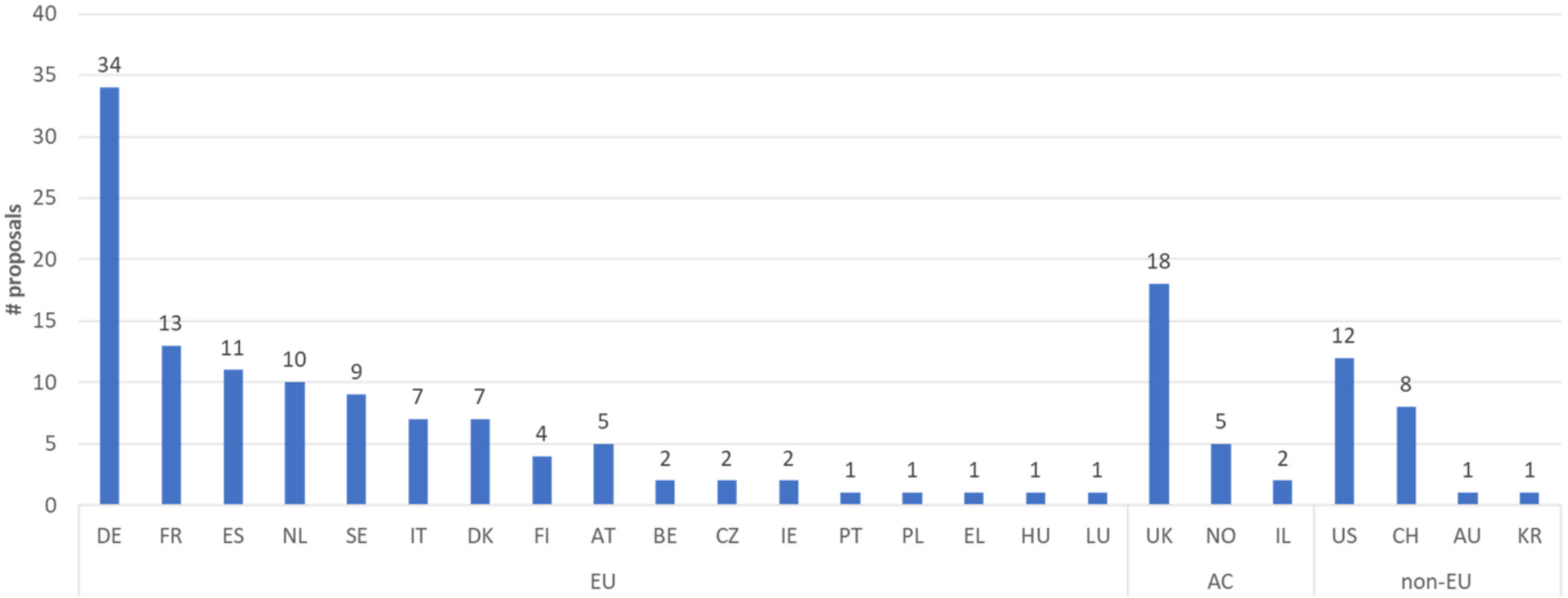
ERC SyG2024

Science in the funded proposals – Relation to regular panels' keywords



ERC SyG2024

Number of proposals funded per country

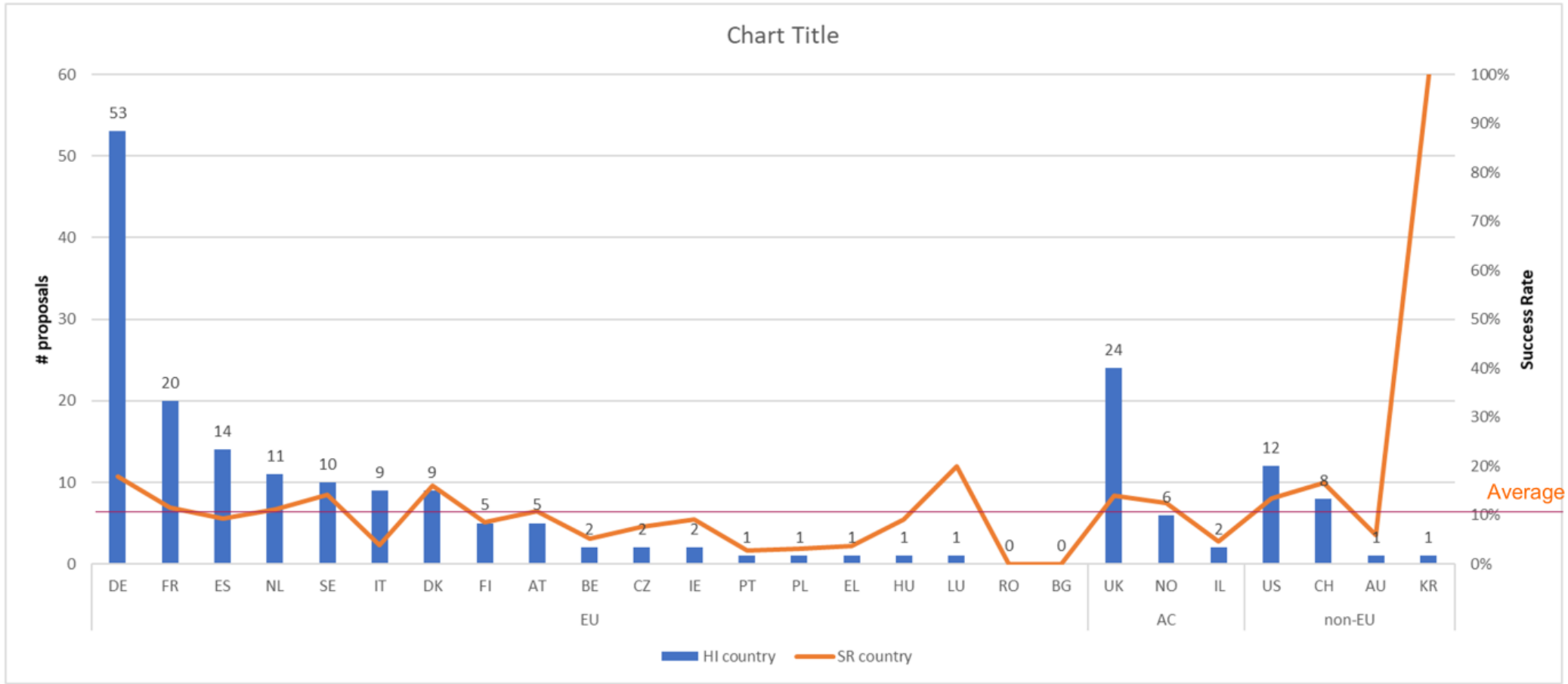


- 22/57 funded proposals have Host institutions outside EU or Associated Countries
- 6 proposals funded in widening countries: 2 CZ, 1PT, 1PL, 1EL, 1HU

ERC SyG2024

Success rate of PIs per host country

201 Principal Investigators funded in the 57 proposals



32 other countries that submitted proposals had no successful Principal Investigators

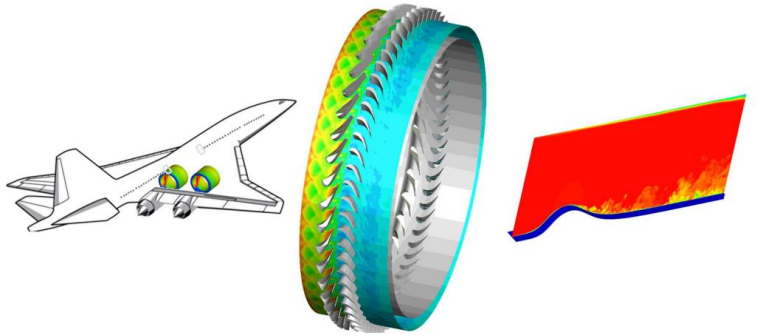
Examples of projects selected for funding SyG 2024

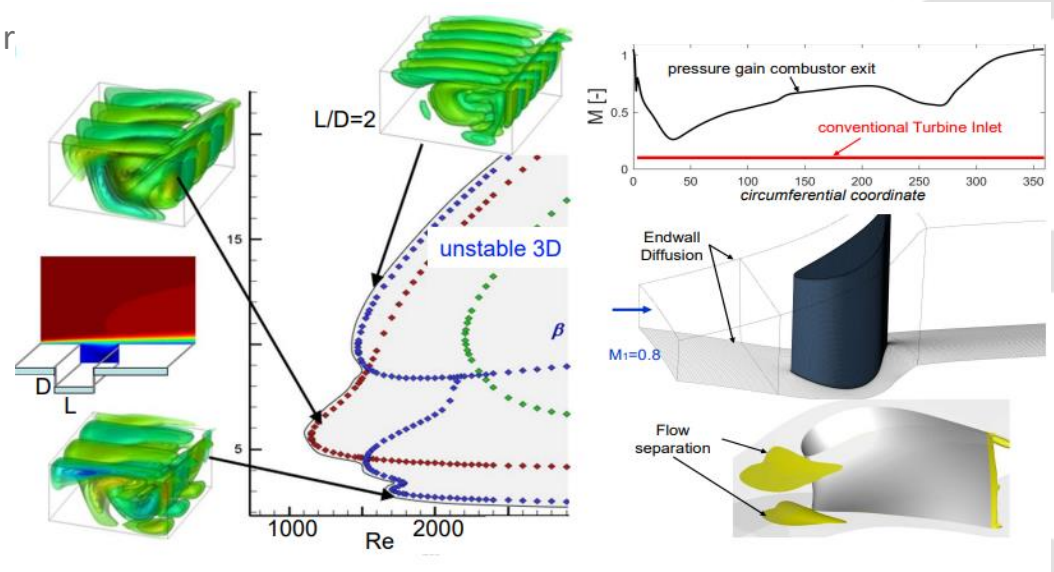
ERC SYG 2024: Proposals selected for funding (PE)

TRANSDIFFUSE: Discovering flow control in transonic diffusing passages

Eusebio Valero	Universidad Politécnica de Madrid	ES
Oriol Lehmkuhl	Barcelona Supercomputing Center	ES
Guillermo Paniagua	Purdue University	US

The project aims a creating an artificial intelligence –base FluidGPT tool that will be taught with simulation and experimental data. FluidGPT can then be used to model Navier-Stokes equations to characterise complex, unsteady, 3D flows in various applications, such as aeronautics and power generation, including hydrogen pressur gain combustion (PGC) engines, etc.





Budget: 9,823,000 €

ERC SYG 2024: Proposals selected for funding (LS-B)

Panel B : BEMOSAIC: Decoding endothelial cell BEhavioral MOSAICism within single vessels

Budget: €10,624,448

Mariona Graupera	Fundació Institut de Recerca contra la Leucèmia Josep Carreras	ES
Karina Yaniv	Weizmann Institute of Science	IL
Valentina Greco	Yale University	US

Endothelial cells (ECs) form a dynamic monolayer lining the lumen of vessels.

Differently from the current prevailing notion, the team has discovered that vessels are composed of ECs displaying different behavioral properties, defined as “intravessel behavioral mosaicism”.

BEMOSAIC will investigate how EC mosaicism is established during embryonic development, maintained during homeostasis, challenged upon oncogenic mutations, and synchronized to enable proper vessel function.

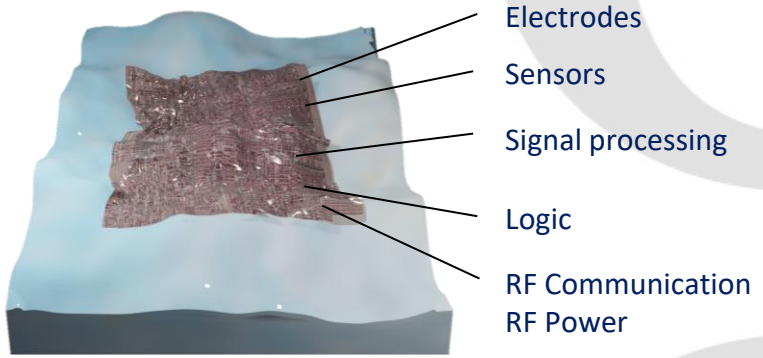
“Vascular-related therapies can be improved by revisiting the paradigm of vessel mosaicisms through a better understanding of the individual cells that compose them.”

ERC SYG 2024: Proposals selected for funding (PE)

SKIN2DTRONICS: Skin-like two-dimensional materials-based electronics conformable to rough surfaces

Gianluca Fiori	University of Pisa	IT
Andres Castellanos-Gomez	CSIC	ES
Andras Kis	EPFL	CH
Kostas Kostarelos	ICN2	ES

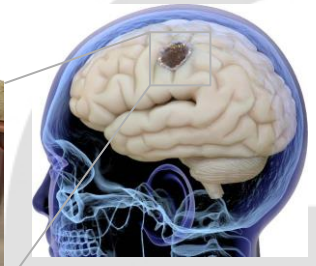
Conformable Electronic Circuits



The project aims at demonstrating the large-scale integration of soft and thin electronic devices on ultra-flexible substrates capable of conformally adapting to any rough and curved surface. Demonstration on real-time monitoring of post-surgery brain tumour growth and recurrence.

Electronics of the future

Multi-signal sensing



Conformable implantable device of 100s of sensors

Budget: 9,896,897 €

"The development of this new platform should give the team a leadership position in printed and conformable electronics worldwide."

Final message

DO NOT EXCLUDE

Yourself from participating in ERC calls

- Take risks, explain your project's high scientific impact if you reach your aims, and provide evidence that you can do it.

- If you fail, try again! Gain experience from evaluation. Panel feedback is useful and resubmissions have higher success rate.

Support

Delegación española del programa ERC

Representante Comité de Programa ERC

Jose Luis García
CIB-CSIC

National Contact Points ERC

erc@fecyt.es

Estefanía Muñoz
FECYT, MICIU

Leticia Riaza
FECYT, MCIU,ISCIII

Ana Martínez
Univ. Alicante

Técnico Ciencia Excelente (ERC)

Julio Marchamalo
FECYT, MCIU,ISCIII

Técnica soporte a servicios ERC

Carmen Estévez
FECYT, MICIU

How we can help you

Con colaboraciones expertas, fundamentalmente **ERC Grantees**

Step 1

Jornadas informativas

Talleres de preparación propuestas

Reading Days

Revisión propuestas

Análisis perfiles bibliométricos de ERC Grantees (2018-2020)

Step 2

Simulacros de entrevistas

Soporte al tramitar la portabilidad a una institución española

Europa Excelencia (AEI) para las ERC individuales con A sin financiar

Asesoramiento a demanda ciclo de vida: propuesta y contrato

[redacted]

GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA | MINISTERIO DE CIENCIA, INNOVACIÓN Y UNIVERSIDADES | FECYT INNOVACIÓN

[redacted]

oficina europea

https://www.horizonteeuropa.es/arbol-de-servicios-de-apoyo-al-programa-european-research-council-erc

Árbol de servicios de apoyo al programa

Database of all **funded projects** by year and threshold/call (and much more)

Panel Members | ERC - European Union

Subscribe to our newsletter

Series of videos – ERC Classes – for potential applicants:

ERC Guides – 3 essential documents

ERC Work Programme

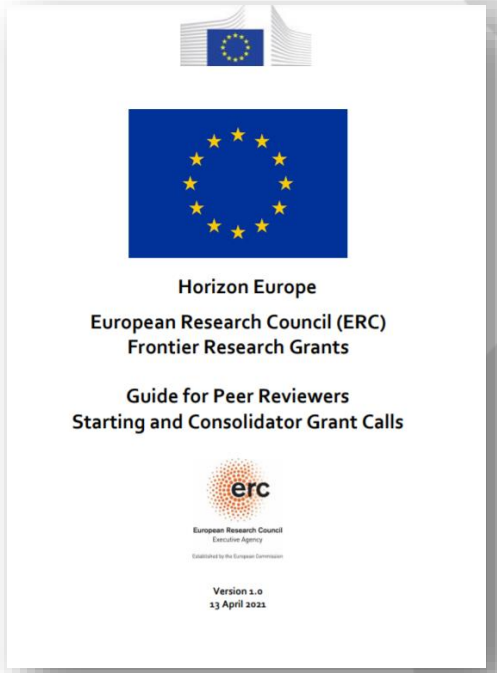
1 / calls calendar

Information for Applicants

- IfA to StG & CoG calls
- IfA to AdG call
- IfA to SyG call

Guide for Peer Reviewers

- GfPR StG & CoG calls
- GfPR AdG call
- GfPR SyG call



¡MUCHAS GRACIAS!

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