Funding Opportunities in the Social Sciences and Humanities

Dr Sebastian Winkler
Panel Coordinator
Unit B5 – Social Sciences and Humanities

EUI – MWP-ACO Conference, 8 February 2017
What is the 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

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

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

The European Commission
- Provides financing through the EU framework programmes
- Guarantees autonomy of the ERC
- Assures the integrity and accountability of the ERC
- Adopts annual work programmes as established by the Scientific Council

The ERC Scientific Council
- 22 prominent researchers proposed by an independent identification committee
- Appointed by the Commission (4 years, renewable once)
- Establishes overall scientific strategy; annual work programmes (incl. calls for proposals, evaluation criteria); peer review methodology; selection and accreditation of experts
- Controls quality of operations and management
- Ensures communication with the scientific community

The ERC Executive Agency
- Executes annual work programme as established by the Scientific Council
- Implements calls for proposals and provides information and support to applicants
- Organises peer review evaluation
- Establishes and manages grant agreements
- Administers scientific and financial aspects and follow-up of grant agreements
- Carries out communications activities and ensures information dissemination to ERC stakeholders
Scientific Governance by the Scientific Council
Established by the European Commission

**Key figures**
- 6,500 projects funded
- 40,000 researchers and experts employed in ERC teams

**Scientific breakthroughs**
- 21% of completed projects led to scientific breakthroughs
- 71% Major advances

**Scientific impact**
- >3,900 articles among 1% most cited scientific journals

**Funding top talent from anywhere in the world**

**Supporting young talent**
- 64% of grants for early-career researchers

**Prestigious prizes including**
- 6 Nobel Prizes
- 5 Wolf Prizes
- 2 Fields Medals

**ERC as a model in Member States**
- 15 EU countries set up ERC-like structures/funding schemes
ERC Budget
Within the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme

ERC Budget
€ 13 billion
ERC – structure of calls

Starting Grants

starters
(2-7 years after PhD)
up to €1.5 Mio
for 5 years

Consolidator Grants

consolidators
(7-12 years after PhD)
up to €2 Mio
for 5 years

Advanced Grants
track-record of
significant research
achievements in the
last 10 years
up to €2.5 Mio
for 5 years

Proof-of-Concept
bridging gap between research - earliest
stage of marketable innovation
up to €150,000 for ERC grant holders
ERC offers independence, recognition & visibility

- to work on a research topic of **own choice**, with a team of **own choice**
- to gain true **financial autonomy** for 5 years
- to negotiate with the host institution the **best conditions** of work
- to attract **top team members** (EU and non-EU) and **collaborators**
- to move with the grant to any place in EU / associated countries if necessary (**portability of grants**)
- **to attract additional funding** and gain **recognition**; ERC funding is a quality label
- **Open** to applicant PIs of any nationality
How are ERC research proposals evaluated?

*Excellence* is the sole evaluation criterion

**Excellence of the Research Project**
- Ground breaking nature
- Potential scientific impact
- Scientific Approach

**Excellence of the Principal Investigator**
- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity
- Commitment

Note: The excellence of the Host Institution (where PIs come from/where they go to) is not an evaluation criterion.
Established by the European Commission

**Scientific Domains (ERC WP2017)**

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

**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

**Social Sciences and Humanities**
- SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations
- SH2 Institutions, Values, Environment and Space
- SH3 The Social World, Diversity, Population
- SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity
- SH5 Cultures and Cultural Production
- SH6 The Study of the Human Past
How are the proposals evaluated?
Single submission, but a two-step evaluation

**STEP 1**
Remote assessment by Panel members of section 1, part B1: synopsis and PI

- Panel meeting
  - Proposals rejected (score B & C)
  - Proposals retained for step 2 (score A)

**STEP 2**
Remote assessment by Panel members and reviewers of full proposals: part B1+ B2

- Panel meeting + interview (StG+ CoG)
  - Ranked list of proposals (scores A & B)

Feedback to applicants
Redress
Priority to Young Scientists

Two-thirds of ERC grants to early-stage Principal Investigators.

+ 30 000 PhD and post-doc researchers working in ERC teams.
Established by the European Commission

- Over 800 projects funded in the SH domain 2007 - 2013
- Over 1.2 Billion Euro allocated to these projects

Funding Social Sciences and Humanities

- 236 M€ in 2014
- 359 M€ in 2015

Bar chart showing funding allocations for different domains:

1. **Individuals, institutions and markets**
   - AdG: 50 MEur
   - StG/CoG: 120 MEur
   - Total: 170 MEur

2. **Institutions, values, beliefs and behaviour**
   - AdG: 50 MEur
   - StG/CoG: 236 MEur
   - Total: 286 MEur

3. **Environment, space and population**
   - AdG: 10 MEur
   - StG/CoG: 101 MEur
   - Total: 111 MEur

4. **The human mind and its complexity**
   - AdG: 50 MEur
   - StG/CoG: 269 MEur
   - Total: 319 MEur

5. **Cultures and cultural production**
   - AdG: 50 MEur
   - StG/CoG: 134 MEur
   - Total: 134 MEur

6. **The study of the human past**
   - AdG: 50 MEur
   - StG/CoG: 169 MEur
   - Total: 219 MEur
### Research topics by project first keyword

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SH1</th>
<th>SH2</th>
<th>SH3</th>
<th>SH6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Microeconomics; management; marketing</td>
<td>Social structure, mobility, exclusion, integration</td>
<td>Population dynamics; health, ageing and society</td>
<td>Social and economic history. Cultural and political history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macroeconomics; monetary economics; business cycles</td>
<td>Kinship; diversity and identities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Modern and contemporary history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political systems and institutions, governance</td>
<td>International relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal studies, constitutions, human rights, comparative law</td>
<td>Globalization, migration, interethnic relations</td>
<td>Conflict and conflict resolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 ERC grants
Top Host Institutions in Italy

16 projects  European University Institute

Bocconi University Milan 12 3 10
National Research Council (CNR) 14 5 1 2
University of Roma - La Sapienza 9 2 9 1
University of Trento 9 3 5 3
Polytechnic University of Milan 4 8 6 1
University of Padua 11 4 3 1
International School for Advanced Studies 6 3 8 1
European University Institute 6 1 9
University of Milan 4 4 6 1
Italian Institute of Technology 8 5 1 1
University of Rome - Tor Vergata 4 1 8 2
National Institute for Nuclear Physics 5 2 4

Current Host Institutions (data as of 14/12/2016)
Questions to ask yourself as an applicant PI

- Why is my proposed project important?
- Does it promise to go substantially beyond the state of the art?
- 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? Do I have a plan for managing the risk?
- Why am I the best/only person to carry it out?
- Am I able to work independently, and to manage a 5-year project with a substantial budget?
- Am I internationally competitive/visible as a researcher at my career stage and in my discipline?
Preparing an application
Hints and tips (Generalities I)

- **Register early**, get familiar with the system and templates and start filling in the forms

- A submitted proposal can be **revised until the call deadline** by submitting a new version and overwriting the previous one

- Follow the formatting rules and page limits

- Download and proof-read the proposal before submitting

- Make use of the **help tools and call documents** (Work Programme, Information for Applicants, Frequently asked questions) to prepare your proposal
Preparing an application
Hints and tips (Generalities II)

- Chose the right panel
- Talk with ERC PIs at your Host Institution
- Involve your Host Institution's grant office
- Talk to the National Contact Points
Submission of Proposals
Differences in Part B1 and Part B2

In Step 1: **Panel members** (generalists, multidisciplinary approaches) see only **Part B1** of your proposal: Prepare it accordingly!

- Pay attention to the **ground-breaking nature** of the research project – no incremental research. State-of-the-art is not enough – be specific how your proposal will make the difference.
- Know your field – what is the **state of play** and why are your idea and scientific approach **outstanding**?
- **Only** the extended Synopsis is read at Step 1: **concise and clear presentation** is crucial (evaluators are not all experts in the field)
- Outline of the **scientific approach** (feasibility)
- Show your **scientific independence** in your CV
Submission of Proposals
Differences in Part B1 and Part B2

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

- Fully elaborate your proposal
- Provide **sufficient detail** on methodology, work plan, selection of case studies etc. (15 pages)
- Check coherency of figures, justify requested resources
- Explain involvement of team members
- Provide alternative strategies to mitigate risk
- Avoid unnessecary repetitions of Part B1 in Part B2
Some useful tools and links

- 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
Preparing an application
Check the already Funded Projects

Menu allows searching by Funding Scheme, Research Area, Country of Host Institution.

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

Since 2007, more than 4,500 projects have been selected to receive ERC funding throughout the EU Member States and the associated countries. The ERC has received over 43,000 project proposals for its calls.

You can use the menu on the left to search quickly and easy ERC funded projects.

Projects can be filtered according to: Funding scheme, Research area (Panels/Domains), Country of Host Institution (and/or free keyword(s)).

Information displayed is automatically updated through the information available on the CORDIS platform.

Please note that only funded projects, whose grant agreements have been signed, appear in this database. For this reason, the total number of projects in this database may differ from the figures provided in the statistics section which include also projects selected for funding whose grant agreements have not been signed yet.

For specific queries, please use this contact form and select the category "Web".
Preparing an application
Check past panel members for the call

Evaluation Panels

The selection of scientific and scholarly proposals for ERC funding is based on international peer review with excellence as the sole criterion. The ERC uses a typical panel-based system, in which panels of high-level scientists and/or scholars make recommendations for funding.

Domain and panel structure

The ERC panel structure consists of 25 panels.

The panels of each grant are grouped into three disciplinary domains that cover the entire spectrum of science, engineering and scholarship:

1. Social sciences and Humanities (SH)
2. Life sciences (LS)
3. Physical and Engineering Sciences (PE)

Research proposals of a multi and inter disciplinary nature are strongly encouraged throughout the ERC’s schemes. Proposals of this type are evaluated by the ERC’s regular panels with the appropriate external expertise.
### Submission of Proposals

**ERC Work Programme 2017 calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ERC calls</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Call Opening</th>
<th>Submission Deadline(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Starting Grants</strong>&lt;br&gt;ERC-2017-StG</td>
<td>605 M€</td>
<td>26 July 2016</td>
<td>18 October 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consolidator Grants</strong>&lt;br&gt;ERC-2017-CoG</td>
<td>575 M€</td>
<td>20 October 2016</td>
<td>9 February 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced Grants</strong>&lt;br&gt;ERC-2017-AdG</td>
<td>567 M€</td>
<td>16 May 2017</td>
<td>31 August 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The European Research Council

- More information: erc.europa.eu
- National Contact Point: erc.europa.eu/national-contact-points
- Sign up for news alerts: erc.europa.eu/keep-updated-erc
- Follow us on
  - www.facebook.com/EuropeanResearchCouncil
  - twitter.com/ERC_Research
  - www.linkedin.com/company/european-research-council
Thank you!