

The European Research Council (ERC) in a nutshell

Europe Day @ DESY

6 September 2023

EU Project Office (EUP)
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Table of content

1 Introduction to ERC Grants

- ERC Funding Principles
- ERC-Suitable Research Project
- ERC Funding Schemes

2 Eligibility & Application

- Eligibility Periods
- Eligibility Criteria, Extensions and Restrictions
- Call Dates
- ERC Application

3 Evaluation Process

- Evaluation Panels
- Evaluation Process
- Statistics

4 Application process at DESY & Support

Introduction to ERC Grants

Horizon Europe — 9th Research Framework Program

Pillar 1: Excellent Science



ERC Funding Principles

- **'Bottom-up' basis** without predetermined priorities in **any field of research**
- **Scientific excellence** is the sole criterion of evaluation
- Encourages proposals of a **multi- or interdisciplinary nature**, addressing new and emerging fields of research or proposals introducing **unconventional, innovative approaches** and **scientific inventions**
 - If you have an idea that you think will make a **significant change in your field** of research or some other area, consider writing it down, and apply to ERC

Not: expected continuations of ongoing work or existing collaboration

Research program should be **based on previous work of the PI** (required expertise must be evident), but their work should **take a new direction**, involve new techniques or a **novel** combination of techniques, or a completely different approach ...

- **'new ideas on common grounds'**

ERC Buzzwords

opens new windows

pioneering research

ambitious and challenging

unprecedented opportunities

novel methodology

addresses urgent quests in fundamental science

ground-breaking

new discoveries

for the first time anywhere in the world

future-driven

highly innovative

major scientific breakthroughs

competitive worldwide

visionary research

What does an ERC-suitable idea look like?

Research program must be ambitious and challenging, while remaining well within the PI's field of competence

Excellence of the proposed research

- ✓ goes **beyond the current state of the art** (focus and/or methods used)
- ✓ **potential impact** of the project's outcome towards the scientific community should be **significant**, also beyond the specific area of research
- ✓ can lead to **very significant results, even if** the objectives are **not fully achieved**
- ✓ appears to be **feasible** within the duration of the ERC project
- ✓ preliminary **results** support the **feasibility** of the project
- ✓ project is **timely**
- ✓ **methodology** of the project is carefully thought out
- ✓ **potential risks/challenges** are identified and a Plan B is at hand
- ✓ a **failure** in a specific task does not jeopardize the project

Excellence of the PI

- ✓ has the **required expertise and capacity** to carry out the project
- ✓ **past work** provides a very **solid background**

ERC — Funding Schemes

Researchers of any nationality and from all scientific disciplines are eligible to apply to the ERC

StG
Starting Grants
(2–7 years after PhD)
up to €1.5 Million
for 5 years
+ up to €1 Million

CoG
Consolidator Grants
(7–12 years after
PhD) up to €2 Million
for 5 years
+ up to €1 Million

AdG
Advanced Grants
10 years track record
up to €2.5 Million
for 5 years
+ up to €1 Million

Lump Sum
pilot for 2024

SYG
Synergy Grants
2–4 PIs at any
career stage up to
€10 Million for 6
years + up to €4
Million

no PhD related eligibility
requirements

Proof of Concept
Top-up funding for ERC grant holder:
bridging gap between fundamental research & earliest stage of marketable or social innovation
lump sum €150,000

Eligibility & Application

StG & CoG Eligibility Periods — Cut-off dates for 2024 calls

Starting Grant

PhD shall have been awarded
> 2 and ≤ 7 years
prior to 1 January 2024

Cut-off dates: PhD awarded
from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2021

Consolidator Grant

PhD shall have been awarded
> 7 and ≤ 12 years
prior to 1 January 2024

Cut-off dates: PhD awarded
from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2016

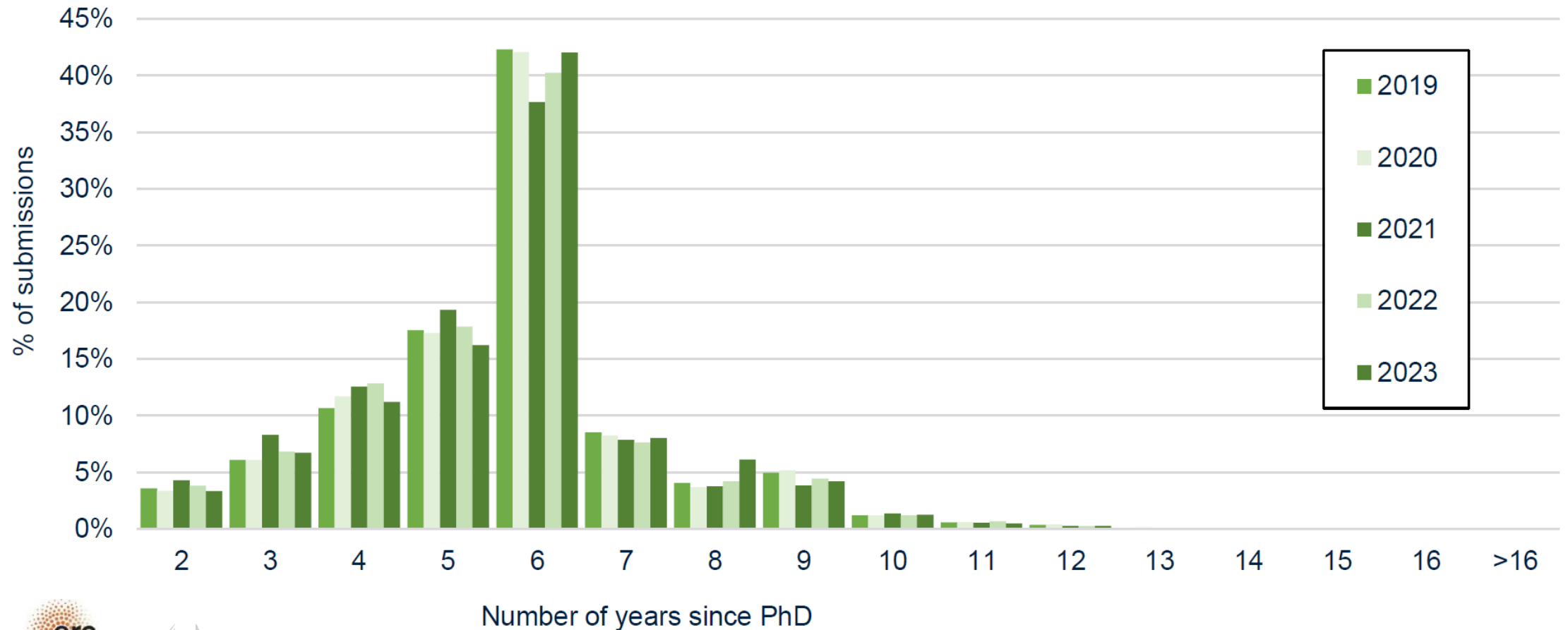
Change since the 2023 Starting and Consolidator Grant Calls:
new PhD reference date:

date of the actual award → date of the successful PhD defence

Whenever the **PhD certificate does not show the PhD defence date**, applicants should provide a **written confirmation** from the awarding institution stating the defence date.

StG 2019–2023: Submissions by years since PhD

ERC encourages researchers to **submit their applications earlier**, as the success rates are higher after resubmission than after the first submission, most researchers submit their application in the 6th year after the PhD.



StG & CoG Eligibility — Make sure you are eligible

Extensions of eligibility window possible for documented situations occurring **before the call deadline**:

- Maternity – 18 months per child (before or after PhD)
- Paternity – actual time taken off (before or after PhD)
- Military service
- Clinical training (up to 4 years)
- Long-term illness of the PI/ Caring for seriously ill family members
- Natural Disaster
- Request Asylum

General submission restrictions:

- A researcher may participate as a PI in **only one ERC main research grant** project at any one time
- A PI may not **submit another proposal**, unless the existing project ends less than two years after the call deadline
- A researcher who is a serving **Panel Member** for the open call
- If a researcher **applies to more than one main ERC** frontier research grant call published under the same Work Programme (i.e. from the same ‘call year’), only the first eligible proposal will be evaluated.

StG & CoG Eligibility — resubmission restrictions

Additional **resubmission restrictions** related to the outcome of the evaluation in previous call:

Call to which the PI applied under previous ERC WPs and proposal evaluation outcome		2024 Calls to which a PI is <u>NOT</u> eligible
2022 and 2023 Starting, Consolidator, Advanced Grant, or Synergy Grant	Rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity	STG, COG, ADG, SYG
2022 Starting, Consolidator, or Advanced Grant	C at Step 1	STG, COG, ADG
2023 Starting, Consolidator, or Advanced Grant	A or B at Step 2	No restrictions
	B or C at Step 1	STG, COG, ADG
2022 and 2023 Synergy Grant	A or B at Step 3	No restrictions
	B at Step 1 or Step 2	No restrictions
	C at Step 1	SYG

Expected Time Commitment & Working Time in EU/AC

PI's time commitment on the ERC Project, minimum:

StG project:
50%

CoG project:
40%

AdG project:
30%

ERC SyG
project:
30%

recommended:
c. 60%–80%

recommended:
c.60%–80%

recommended:
c.40%–60%

recommended:
c.40%–60%

StG, CoG, AdG: Principal Investigators must spend a **minimum of 50%** of their working time in a **Member State or Associated Country**

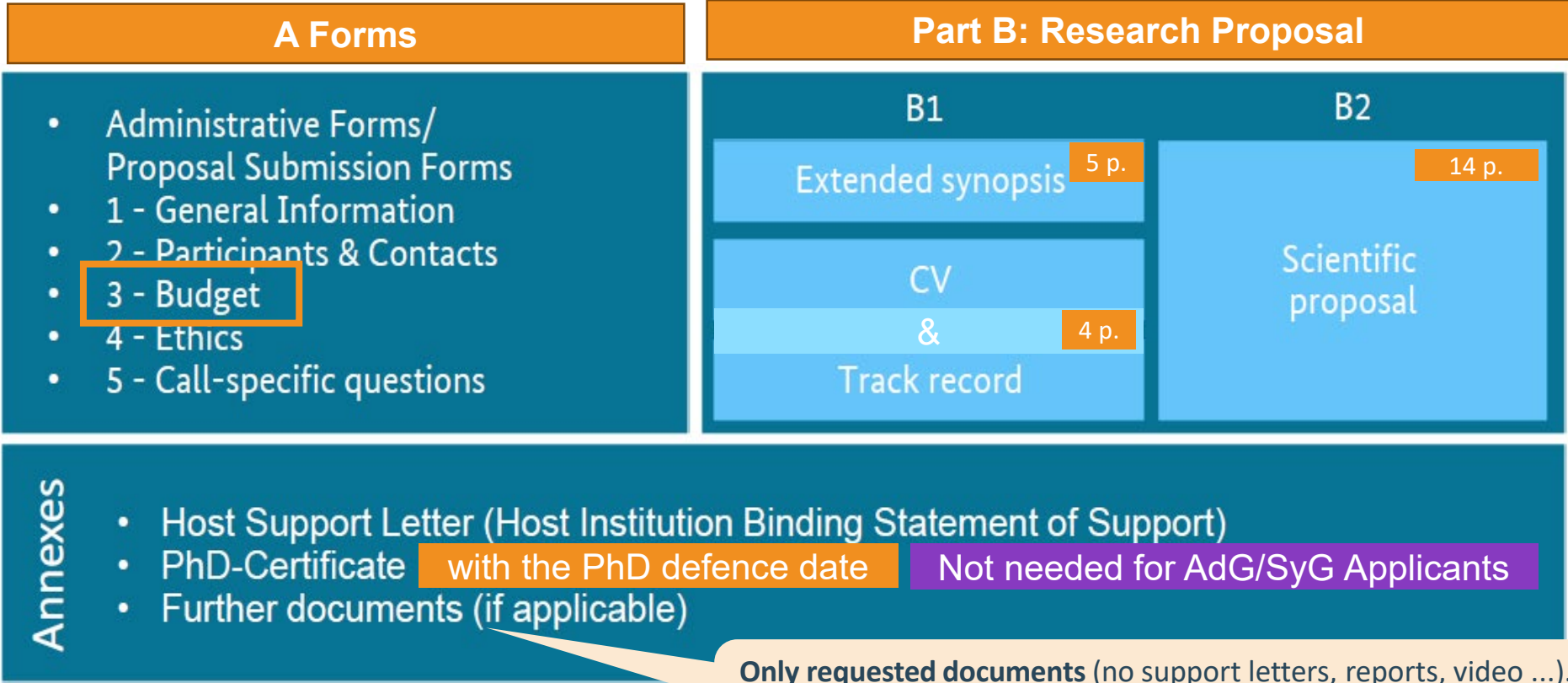
SyG: one PI can apply with a host institution outside of EU/AC)

ERC — Call Dates for 2024

	Starting Grant	Consolidator Grant	Advanced Grant	Synergy Grant	Proof of Concept Grant
Call opens	11/07/2023	12/09/2023	29/05/2024	12/07/2023	16/11/2023
Deadline to submit applications	24/10/2023	12/12/2023	29/08/2024	08/11/2023	14/03/2024
					17/09/2024
Budget	€601m	€584m	€578m	€400m	€30m

Completing an ERC Application: single submission

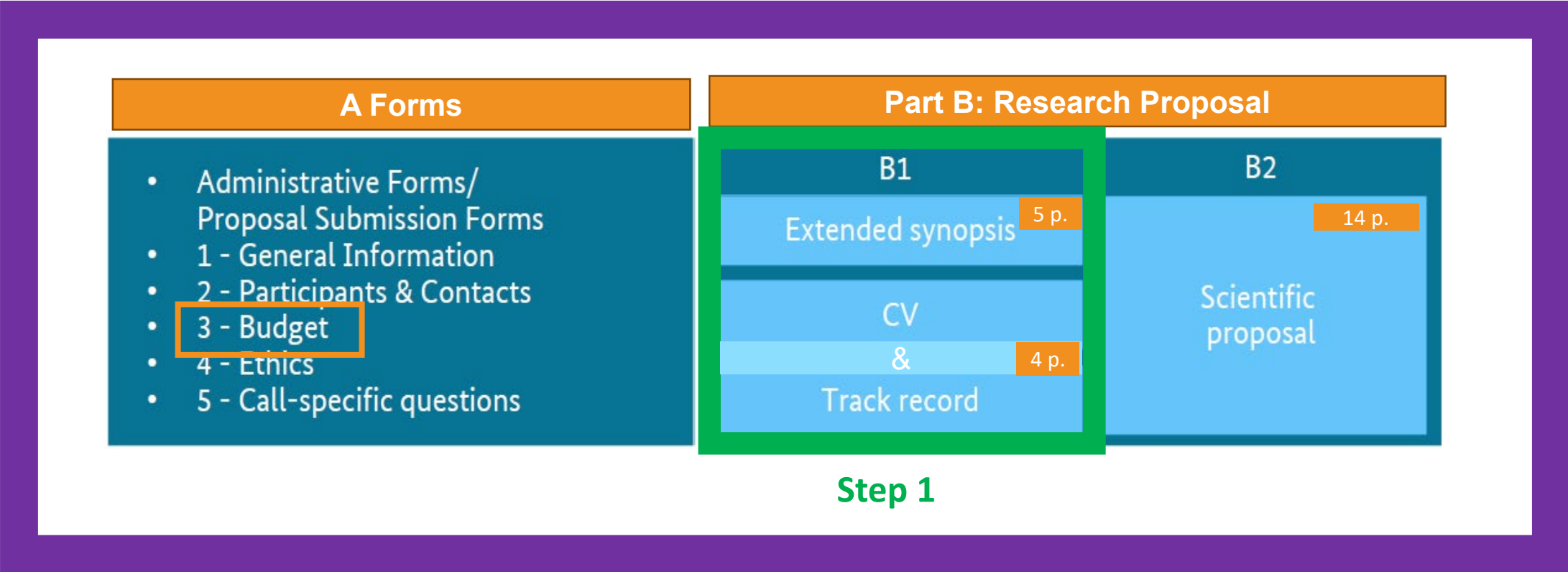
- Proposals must be submitted online via the Funding & Tenders Portal



Only requested documents (no support letters, reports, video ...). For **collaborators**: get the written consent before the submission deadline (a simple email exchange is OK, keep it with you)

Evaluation Process

Evaluation: 2-step (StG, CoG AdG) peer review procedure



Step 2 including interview

SyG: 3-step evaluation including interview

Evaluation Panels: StG, CoG, AdG

- **Review Panels:** panel chair & c.15 members
- assisted by **external experts** (step 2)
- **Panel members** change on an **annual basis**
i.e. members of the 2022 panels could potentially review 2024 applications
- **Database** of ERC panel members
- **Study your panel:** who will evaluate you and your research idea?

[2022 list of StG panel member](#)
[2022 list of CoG panel member](#)
[2022 list of AdG panel member](#)

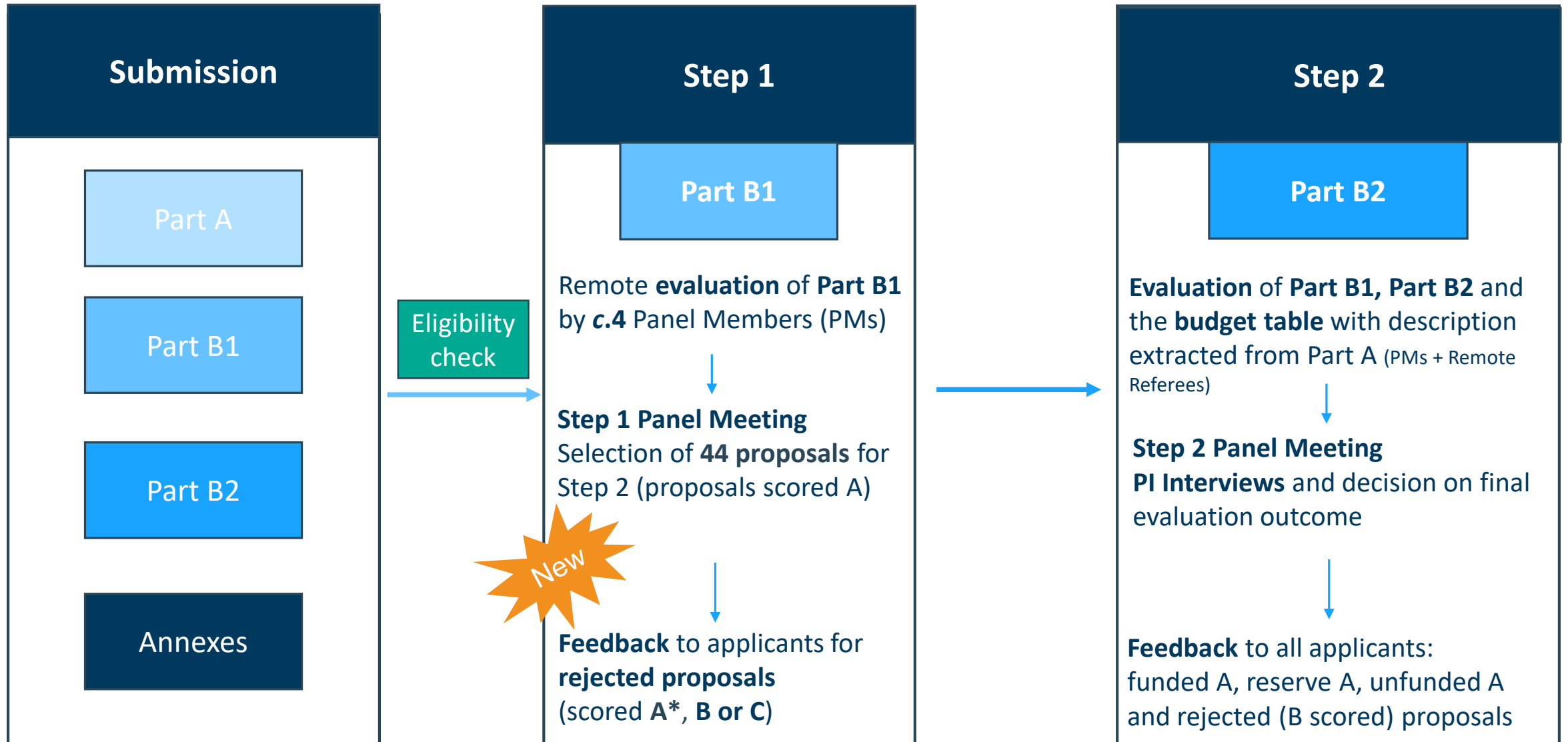
11 Panels for Physical Sciences and Engineering

- > 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 Process Engineering
- > **PE9 Universe Sciences**
- > PE10 Earth System Science
- > PE11 Materials Engineering

https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-03/ERC_panel_structure_2024_calls.pdf


Evaluation Process for StG, CoG, AdG:

single submission → two-step evaluation



Novelties for ERC WP 2024

Research assessment: focus on the project

- 
- ERC has decided to explicitly **weigh the project proposal more than the past achievements** of the applicant during the evaluation
 - **Proposals** will continue to be judged on their **originality, creativity and ground-breaking ideas**
 - **Researcher:** their **capacity, creativity, and commitment**, applicant's **excellence** and **required scientific expertise** to successfully execute the proposed project
 - **Career stage and personal context** are taken into account

Excellence

is the sole evaluation criterion

Research Project

- Ground breaking nature
- Scientific impact
- Scientific Approach

Principal Investigator

- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity
- Commitment

Evaluation Criteria

1. Research Project

Ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility

Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grants

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)?*

Scientific Approach

*To what extent is the outlined scientific approach **feasible** bearing in mind the **ground-breaking nature and ambition** of the proposed research (based on the Extended Synopsis)?*

*To what extent does the proposal go beyond what the individual Principal Investigators could achieve alone (**for Synergy Grants**, based on the Extended Synopsis)?*

*To what extent do the Principal Investigators succeed in proposing a combination of scientific approaches that are crucial to address the scope and complexity of the research questions to be tackled (**for Synergy Grants**, based on the Extended Synopsis)?*

*To what extent are the proposed research **methodology and working arrangements** appropriate to achieve the goals of the project (based on the research proposal)?*

*To what extent are the proposed **timescales, resources, and PI commitment** adequate and properly justified (based on the research proposal)?*

Work Programme 2024

Evaluation Criteria — PI

2. Principal Investigator(s)

Intellectual capacity and creativity

Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grants

To what extent has/have the PI(s) demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?

*To what extent does/do the PI(s) provide evidence of **creative** and original thinking?*

*To what extent does/do the PI(s) have the required **scientific expertise and capacity** to successfully execute the project?*

[Work Programme 2024](#)

ERC Statistics

success rates	Horizon Europe			H2020		
	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
StG	14,84%	13,73%	9,76%	13,30%	13,10%	12,70%
CoG		14,18%	11,73%	13,00%	12,30%	12,20%
AdG		13,22%	14,44%	8,31%	9,80%	10,80%
SyG		8,06%	no call	7,70%	13,00%	8,80%
PoC	1. cut-off 54,10% 2. cut-off 3. cut-off	1. cut-off 47,70% 2a. cut-off 45,83% 2b. cut-off 57,29% 3. cut-off 38,46%	no call	1. cut-off 37.2% 2. cut-off 36.4% 3. cut-off 28.2%	1. cut-off 39.4% 2. cut-off 46.2% 3. cut-off 31.9%	

Should you fail, try again!

Gain experience from evaluation. Panel feedback is useful and resubmissions have higher success rate (c.1.5 times higher).

Support and Useful Resources

ERC application with DESY & Support

ERC application with DESY as Host Institution

- Needs to be approved by the director
- DESY's internal application procedure: Expression of Interest form to be submitted to EUP

EU Project Office (EUP)

- DESY-internal ERC Summer Workshop for potential applicants
- **Abstract, B1 and Budget table:**
- Assistance in filling in the **Administrative Forms**
- **HI Support Letter**

- **Step 2: Interview Training**

Your DESY Group/Contact & Expert Colleagues

- Get a **successful proposal**

- **Discuss your project** with your group leader and experts from your field, and semi-experts
- Have your proposal **proofread by different persons** (not all necessarily from you field)

- **Step 2: Critical Questions** during Interview Training

Other Support

- **Proposal reading service by the NCP**
send your proposal at least three weeks before the deadline

Helpful Resources

Important documents

- ❖ [Work Programme 2024](#)
- ❖ [Information for Applicants StG & CoG](#)
- ❖ [Guide for Peer Reviewers](#)

ERC Classes

- What to consider before applying
- How to fill in the application
- The interview
- How the evaluation works

[Click here to watch](#)



Useful Links

- ❖ [ERC Website](#)
- ❖ [ERC-FAQs](#)
- ❖ [Datahub of ERC funded projects](#)
- ❖ [ERIS \(analysis tool to search ERC-funded projects, includes dashboards\)](#)
- ❖ [ERC podcast](#)
- ❖ [List of ERC Proposals published online](#)
- ❖ [ERC eligibility calculator](#)
- ❖ [Parental leave and eligibility](#)
- ❖ [11 questions you must answer about your project](#)

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