Webinar on ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants 2021
6/10/2020
Webinar on ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants 2021

The organizers: the ERC National Contact Points (NCPs)

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Margot Beereboom, NCP ERC
www.ncpflanders.be

**Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles:**
Natacha Wittorski, NCP ERC
www.ncp.fnrs.be

**Federal institutions:**
Bram Lefever, NCP ERC
http://eurofed.belspo.be
Webinar on ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants 2021

Programme of the webinar

• Welcome and presentation of speakers
• ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants: I. SUBMISSION & II. EVALUATION
  
  Dr. Wieland Staessens, Scientific Officer unit B4, ERCEA
• Testimony from an ERC panel member
  
  Prof. Pascale Vielle, former panel member, SH2, UCLouvain
• Testimony from an ERC Consolidator grantee
  
  Prof. Koen Vandewal, ERC CoG 2019, PE 4 panel, UHasselt
• Short break
• Testimonies from ERC Starting grantees
  
  Prof. Nele Vandersickel, ERC StG 2020, LS7 panel, UGent
  
  Prof. Paula Gobbi, ERC StG 2020, SH 1 panel, ULB
• ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants: III. OUTCOME
  
  Dr. Wieland Staessens, Scientific Officer unit B4, ERCEA
Technical introduction

- How to ask questions to the speakers? Use the “Questions & Answers” function of Zoom. Please be clear and concise!
- You can upvote questions from other attendees
- For a technical question, send a chat message to the panelists
- Do not send content questions through the chat
- Yes the slides will be made available: on https://www.horizon-europe-info-sessions.be/event/erc-starting-consolidator-calls-2021-webinar-format/
ERC & Horizon Europe: prospects for 2021 calls

Dr. Wieland Staessens
ERC Executive Agency
Scientific Department
Physical Sciences & Engineering

ERC Info Session
Belgium
06-10-2020
What is the ERC?

European Research Council (ERC):

EU funding agency supporting excellence in frontier research through a bottom-up, individual based, pan-European competition

- Support Individual Researchers through Grants
  - Gain scientific recognition (ERC as quality label of excellence)
  - Scientific & Financial Autonomy
  - Bottom-up: investigator-driven, no predetermined topics
  - Ground-breaking, high risk/high gain research in all fields of science
  - Under best working conditions (HI) & with best team
  - Portability: transfer to any place in EU
Scientific Council

- 22 prominent scientists
- overall scientific strategy
- control operation quality

Annual Work Programme & Expert Selection

ERC Executive Agency

- Former researchers (& administr.)
- Execute annual WP
- Support applicants, PIs, experts, ScC

Organise peer review evaluations & Grant Management
ERC part of Horizon Europe 2021 - 2027 (after FP7 & H2020)

ERC budget:
- 7.5 G€
- 13 G€
Part I

SUBMISSION
ERC Grant Schemes in 2021

Starting (StG)
- 2-7 years after PhD
- Up to 1.5 M€ (+1M€)
- Up to 5 years

Consolidator (CoG)
- 7-12 years after PhD
- Up to 2.0 M€ (+1M€)
- Up to 5 years

Advanced (AdG)
- 10-year significant achievements track-record
- Up to 2.5 M€ (+1M€)
- Up to 5 years

Proof-of-Concept (PoC)
- Earliest stage of marketable innovation
- €150,000 for ERC grant holders

Synergy (SyG)
- Jointly for 2-4 PIs
- Up to 10 M€ (+4M€) & 6 years

NO SYNERGY
Budget & Extra grant

Funding requested must be fully justified by estimation of real project cost

Project costs reimbursed at 100% funding rate (for actual incurred costs) + 25% indirect costs (flat-rate)

1 M€ extra grant can be requested

a) Start-up costs for moving to EU/AC from abroad
b) Purchase of large equipment
c) Access to large facilities
d) other major experimental and field work costs (no personnel cost)
ERC Proposal Structure

Only eligibility

**Part A:** Administrative Form
1. General Information
2. Participants & contacts
3. Budget (table + Resources)
4. Ethics
5. Call-specific questions (+ excluded reviewers)

**Annexes (as pdf)**
- HI support letter
- PhD record + supporting doc (only for StG & CoG)

**Evaluation & eligibility**

**Part B1 (as pdf)**
- Extended synopsis 5 pages
- (+cross-domain/panel explanation)
- Curriculum Vitae (& career gap) 2 pages
- + Annex: Funding ID
- Early achievements track record 2 pages

**Part B2 (as pdf)**
- Scientific Proposal 14 pages
  - State-of-art & Objectives
  - Methodology
- Resources & Time Commitment 2 pages
Starting & Consolidator Grant Profiles

**Starting Grant Profile**

- Starting independent research
- 2-7 years after PhD (*)
- 50% time commitment
- 50% time in EU/AC
- Early achievements track record
  - Up to 5 publications
  - Research monographs
  - Patents
  - Invited presentations
  - Prizes, awards, etc.

**Consolidator Grant Profile**

- Consolidate independent research
- 7-12 years after PhD (*)
- 40% time commitment
- 50% time in EU/AC
- Early achievements track record
  - Up to 10 publications
  - Research monographs
  - Patents
  - Invited presentations
  - Prizes, awards, etc.

Call window: 12/01 – 09/03
Call window: 21/01 – 20/04
Eligibility window & Resubmission

(*) Counting from 01-01-2021, but extendable beyond 7y (StG) -12y (CoG)

- Maternity leave (18 months) / Paternity leave (documented time)
- Long-term illness (documented time)
- National service (documented time)
- Clinical training (up to 4y)

Resubmission restrictions may apply

Similar restrictions may apply for future calls

C at Step 1 in 2019
B or C at Step 1 in 2020
From H2020 to Horizon Europe

• Continuity and consolidation: “evolution not revolution”
• NEW: Interviews in AdG call
• NEW: 2 new Panels (PE11 & SH7) + changed Panel descriptors
  ➔ Modernize: adapt to reflect scientific reality & evolution within research
  ➔ Enlarge: include research fields more explicitly
  ➔ Coherence: 27 panels to cover & fund “all fields of science” for all calls

Not a complete classification!!
No ERC priorities in funding!!
Inter-disciplinary proposals across panels are encouraged!!
ERC Panel Structure in Horizon Europe

**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
- PE11 Materials Engineering

**Life Sciences**
- LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions
- LS2 Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems
- LS3 Cellular, Developmental and Regenerative Biology
- 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 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

Each panel comes with descriptors
Submitting an ERC proposal

- Excellent Idea
- StG or CoG?
- Domain & Panel?
- Cross-panel/domain?
- Descriptors?
- Write part B1 & B2
- Get acquainted with system
- Prepare Annexes
- Submit on time
Part II

EVALUATION
Evaluation process (2 Steps)  
(StG, CoG, AdG)

**STEP 1**
Remote assessment by **Panel members** and **Cross Panel Reviewers** of **Part B1**

- Panel meeting
- Proposals retained for step 2

**STEP 2**
Remote assessment by **Panel members** and **Remote Reviewers (specialists)** of **full proposal (Part B1+B2)**

- Panel meeting (with interview)
- Ranked list of proposals

Feedback to applicants
ERC Evaluation Criteria
Excellence is sole criterion

1. Research Project
   • Ground-breaking nature & potential impact
     - Important challenges
     - Ambitious & Beyond SoA
     - High risk/High gain
   • Scientific Approach
     - Feasibility

2. Principal Investigator
   - Ability for ground-breaking research
   - Creative independent thinking
   - Scientific expertise & capacity

Only Step 2
Some Hints & Tips

Panel Discussion with previous Panel Member & Grantees

Part B1: Find the right balance
- Innovative? Beyond state-of-art?
- High risk/High gain? Realistic/feasible?
- Outline state of play (incl. competition)
- Be concise & clear
  (also for generalists)
- Think about risk mitigation

Part B2: Fill in the details
- No verbatim repetition of synopsis
- Detailed state-of-art
- Extensive methodology and work plan
- Provide risk mitigation strategies
- Explain involvement of team
- Justify requested resources
Some Hints & Tips

Interviews at Step 2

→ typically 5-10 min. presentation + 20-25 min. Q&A

✓ Practice in advance and thoroughly (Mock interview)
✓ Get Panel interested in YOUR ideas & proposal
✓ Present & defend YOUR ideas
✓ Being nervous is perfectly normal
Avoiding misconceptions

• ERC funds frontier research, also in applied sciences

• Publication record (i.e. h-index) is not an evaluation criterion

• Host Institution is not a evaluation criterion

• Budget distribution over the panels based on demand (bottom-up)

• Projects shorter than 5 years also welcome (with pro ratio adapted budget)

• Each applicant is treated equally (irrespective of age, gender, previous ERC grant, previous submission, etc)
Some Hints & Tips

Panel Discussion with previous Panel Member & Grantees
Testimony from ERC Consolidator grantee

Koen Vandewal
Prof. Hasselt University
Organic Opto-Electronic devices group
About me

- PhD at Hasselt University in Physics – Materials science – new materials for PV

- 2010 - Postdocs at Linkoping University (SE) and Stanford University (US) (never on personal grant)

- 2014 – Prof. at TU Dresden (DE) first time involved in national and H2020 projects

- 2018 – Prof. at Hasselt University (BE)
About me and ERC

- 2016: applied StG, panel condensed matter physics (1.5 MEUR)
- 2017: applied CoG, panel condensed matter physics (2 MEUR)
- 2018: applied CoG, panel Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences (2.4 MEUR)
- 2019: applied CoG, panel Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences (2.4 MEUR)

- CV gets you through first round, content of proposal determines if you get through second round and funded.
- I changed panel because I found more familiar names in the physical chemistry panels of the previous years.
- General impression upon receiving the reviewer comments: overall comments external reviewers were good, often hard to find substantial criticism.
- At interview, 2-3 panel members ask questions raised by external reviewers. The other panel members sit in silence.
- Upon resubmission and rewriting, I tried to mitigate criticism, but also tried to include the positive criticism or positive comments on feasibility and risks.
Tips & answers to written questions

- Topic should be new, but not too far from expertise.
- Ideally: New and exciting (risky) proposal, but applicant is the only one capable or best suited to execute it.
  - Too high risk = no previous expertise or publications on topic
  - Too low risk = all your previous publications are on the topic
- I included preliminary (unpublished) data.
- Structure proposal:
  - B1: innovation and impact, CV and achievements track record most important sections
  - B2: state-of-the-art, methodology (preliminary work, only scientific WPs), resources (budget)
- Most challenging part of interview: keeping nerves under control, little space to move in small room, blank stares from panel during 10 min presentation, unexpected general questions, over before you realize it.
Short break
See you back in 10 minutes!
ERC starting grant
casestudy
Nele Vandersickel

My long-term vision

- Integrate clinical and fundamental research
- Create novel diagnostic tools based on fundamental knowledge
- Form bridge between researchers with complementary expertise

I want to link basic research with clinical research to actually improve the health of patients.

Experience in all three areas!
Combination of two research fields: network theory & cardiac arrhythmia
Created a new diagnostic tool to determine automatically the source and location of cardiac arrhythmia based on network theory.
Research proposal:

- Past the state of art: bring something new
- Yet already demonstrate the proof of principle: however not too much <-> incremental research
- Think about interdisciplinary projects (usually people really like that). Make sure you have expertise for both fields
- Speak to your audience: E.g. clinical audience? make proposal clinical and not too complicated specifically in B1
- Make proposal one unity
- Read the evaluation criteria!
- High/Risk high gain
- Important subject
- Name many plans B in case plan A does not work
Own excellence

- I switched research field: was able to be successful in both of them
- Write small biography to demonstrate what you did so far (e.g. I have a very strange CV)
- Show scientific independence: publish as last author!
- Demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research
- Required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project
General comments

- Start in time: it took me 7 month to write 1st proposal
- 1 month to redo proposal
- Reuse your proposal in case you do not obtain ERC for other applications (e.g. B1 fits in research proposal to become professor)
- I used my proposal to write many papers already.
IDED – Inheritance, Demographics, and Economic Development

Paula E. Gobbi

Université libre de Bruxelles (ECARES) and CEPR
Who am I?

› Born in Buenos Aires (1985), Italian, and Belgian.

› PhD in economics from UCLouvain in 2013 with a visit at Northwestern University.

› 3 years postdoc at UCLouvain (FNRS), 1 year postdoc at the Paris School of Economics (ERC funded)

› Assistant Professor at ECARES, Université libre de Bruxelles since September 2017

› Mother of Elena (4yrs), Nicolas (2yrs), and Clara (4months).
Application experience

March 2019
ERC Info Session

General reading on topic

WP1
WP2
WP3
WP4

May 2019
Durbuy

Writing B2

Sept 2019
Presentation

Writing B1

October 2019
Submission
Tips

1. Start from a (big) gap in the literature.

2. Have your project read:
   - B2: ask to possible co-authors and experts
   - B1: ask to seniors

3. Talk about your project and present it internally some time before submitting.

4. Enjoy doing it. Take 3-4 months focused only on it.
Filling a gap

• Economists study *inheritances* and *demographics* in isolation.
  • ≠/= other social scientists.
  • Examples:
    • partible inheritance ↔ nuclear families
    • impartible inheritance ↔ stem-family types

• General objective of the project:
  • Understand how the interconnections between inheritance schemes and demographics affect economic development.
Part III
OUTCOME
Applicants by age

StG-CoG-AdG 2019 Age of applicants

- STG 2019 (median 35)
- COG 2019 (median 40)
- ADG 2019 (median 53)
Success rate by (academic) age

StG-CoG-AdG 2019 Grantees by years since PhD

- STG
- COG
- ADG
- SR total

Years since PHD

# grantees

Success rate
Success rate by PI nationality

StG-CoG 2019 Funded PIs by nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PI nationality</th>
<th># Funded PIs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>131</td>
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<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>62</td>
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<td>NL</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>US</td>
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<td>CN</td>
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<td>NO</td>
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<td>AU</td>
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Total COG: 131 + 73 + 62 + 59 + 48 + 47 + 39 + 35 + 23 + 18 + 16 + 15 + 14 + 13 + 12 + 11 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 6 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 = 423

Total STG: 131 + 73 + 62 + 59 + 48 + 47 + 39 + 35 + 23 + 18 + 16 + 15 + 14 + 13 + 12 + 11 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 6 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 = 423
Success rate by HI country

StG-CoG 2019 % of grants by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Host Institution country</th>
<th>% of grants by country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<td>FR</td>
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<td>CH</td>
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Success rate by HI country & by Domain

StG-CoG 2019 Funded projects by domain

- Social Sciences and Humanities
- Physical Sciences and Engineering
- Life Sciences
Gender balance & Success rate

H2020 ERC 2014-2019 Success rate by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success rate</th>
<th>ADG</th>
<th>COG call</th>
<th>STG</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Success rate</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>SR F</td>
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<tr>
<td>SR M</td>
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<tr>
<td>SR</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
StG 2019: Success Rate & Gender balance

StG 2019 funded proposals & success rate by years since PhD

- **Funded M (254)**
- **Funded F (154)**
- **SR M**
- **SR F**
- **SR All**

Success rate and number of funded proposals by gender and years since PhD.
CoG 2019: Success Rate & Gender balance

CoG 2019 Funded proposals by years since PhD

# Funded PIs

Year since PhD

Success rate

- M (221)
- F (97)
- SR F
- SR M
- SR All
Some other data

Scientific Council: 60% of annual calls budget to StG & CoG

Average success rate in 2019 for StG & CoG: 13%

15%-20% of applications requests extra funding in LS & PE, 3% for SH

Re-submissions have 1.5 times more success than new applications
Thank you & Good Luck!
Thank you for your participation!

Please give us your feedback through the evaluation form

Good luck with your application

Bram Lefever, NCP ERC, BELSPO (EUROFED)
Margot Beereboom, NCP ERC, NCP Flanders
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Support services for applicants

Contact your ELO: Flemish academia and research centers

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Back-up slides
Signed Project Distribution per panel

ERC 2007-2020 Signed projects by panel

# funded projects

0 100 200 300 400 500 600

Physical Sciences and Engineering

Life Sciences

Social Sciences and Humanities

Panel

STG
COG
ADG
ERC StG-CoG-AdG Signed grants 2007-2020

- Katholieke Universiteit Leuven: 96
- Universiteit Gent: 68
- Vlaams Instituut voor Biotechnologie (VIB): 46
- Université Catholique de Louvain: 40
- Université Libre de Bruxelles: 31
- Universiteit Antwerpen: 25
- Université de Liège: 17
- Vrije Universiteit Brussel: 16
- Interuniversitair Micro-Electronica Centrum: 8
## Overview Data for the 2019 calls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>StG</th>
<th>CoG</th>
<th>AdG</th>
<th>SyG</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong># Evaluated</strong></td>
<td>3060</td>
<td>2425</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>7606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change from 2018</strong></td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>+2%</td>
<td>-9%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># Grants</strong></td>
<td>408</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>949</td>
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<td><strong>Success rate</strong></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amount awarded EU (M€)</strong></td>
<td>620</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>2081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female participation</strong></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avg. size grants (M€)</strong></td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of total spending</strong></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median age Grantee</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Success rate by age

StG-CoG-AdG 2019 Grantees by age with success rate

# grantees

Age on 01/01/2019

STG
COG
ADG
SR by age

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90%
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90

26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 46 48 50 52 54 56 58 60 62 64 66 68 70 72
Evaluation rate as function of PhD years
## Eligible HI countries under H2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU Member States</th>
<th>H2020 Associated Countries</th>
<th>Other Countries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT Austria</td>
<td>AL Albania</td>
<td>CN China</td>
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<tr>
<td>BE Belgium</td>
<td>AM Armenia</td>
<td>RU Russia</td>
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<tr>
<td>BG Bulgaria</td>
<td>BA Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>US United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>CY Cyprus</td>
<td>CH Switzerland</td>
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<td>IL Israel</td>
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<td>MK FYR of Macedonia</td>
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<td>SK Slovakia</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**UK**