



**Charles
University**

How to write a strong ERC proposal

Quick Guide for StG, CoG, AdG
(3rd Revised Edition)





Basic Information

What is ERC?

- » ERC supports frontier research across scientific disciplines.

- » ERC supports individual researchers, not consortia.

- » Research topics are defined by the applicant.

- » Scientific excellence (the quality of the proposal and the credibility of the applicant) is the sole criterion.

Where to get the information?

- It is a good idea to start with [the ERC National Information Day](#) (NID), where you get more general insight into the ERC and how it works. NID takes place every autumn. In addition the video recording of the event is available also. It will give you an overview of the ERC scheme and evaluation method and ERC project investigators will share their experiences with you.
- Also read carefully the part of the [ERC Work Programme](#) relevant to the given grant scheme, as well as the [Information for Applicants](#) and also [brochure from Technology Centre Prague](#) (only in Czech).
- You can find currently opened calls at the [Funding and Tender portal](#).
- Inform the [ERC university consultant](#) at the Department of Science and Research – European Centre about your intention to submit a proposal.
- For further information, see our website ec.cuni.cz or official ERC [website erc.europa.eu](http://erc.europa.eu).

Choosing the scheme

- **Starting (StG):** 2–7 years from PhD. (the date of successful defence, not the awarding)
- **Consolidator (CoG):** 7–12 years from PhD.
- **Advanced (AdG):** no restriction
- Extensions of these time slots:
 - Maternity leave (18 months per child)
 - Paternity leave
 - Long-term illness or national service
 - Clinical training
 - Natural disaster or seeking asylum.
- Check the **eligibility criteria in the current work programme.**

The Host institution

- The HI must be established in an EU country or associated country.

Myth #1:

- ✗ the quality of the host institution determines the evaluation of the application
- ✓ the evaluation of the application depends only on the scientific quality of the project and of the Principal Investigator (PI)



Preparation of the Proposal

Structure of the proposal

Part A – online (Funding & Tender Portal)

- General information about the project
 - Participants (information about the Host Institution and Principal Investigator)
 - Budget
 - Ethics & security
 - Other questions
-

Part B1 – must be saved into the portal as a PDF

- Abstract (1 p.)
 - Extended synopsis (5 p.)
 - CV and Track Record (4 p.)
-

Part B2 – must be saved into the portal as a PDF (14 p.)

- State-of-the-art and objectives in detail
 - Methodology
-

Annexes – must be saved into the portal as a PDF

- Host Institution Letter of Support
- Copy of PhD. diploma

Choosing the evaluation panel

- **Life Sciences** (9 panels)
- **Physical Sciences and Engineering** (11 panels)
- **Social Sciences and Humanities** (8 panels)

The field covered by the individual panels is characterised by descriptors. The right choice of the panel is of primary importance that can affect the evaluation. Please check carefully the descriptors associated with the individual panels (see Information for Applicants) as well as the previously supported ERC projects (see [Project Database on ERC website](#)).

The descriptors and keywords that you specify in Part A are important. If chosen inappropriately, they can lead to reassignment of your proposal to another panel. They also affect the assignment of the evaluating panel members.

You can also look at the [list of evaluators](#) within the individual panels in the past years. However, never contact members of the active panel! That would create a conflict of interest and the panel would have to exclude your project from the evaluation.

Myth #2:

- ✘ The more descriptors (covering multiple panels) I state, the better because the project will seem multidisciplinary.
- ✔ You should submit your project to the panel where the experts will best understand and appreciate an original, innovative approach to the topic. Therefore, choose the second panel only when it is required by the nature of the project.



The point is, that a potential PI must have a clear understanding of why they want to apply for the grant in the first place. When it comes to considering whether applying for a grant is worth it or not, my answer is always „Do or do not. There is no try.“

Jana Kalbáčová Vejpravová (ERC StG)



CHARLES IV.



Preparation of the Proposal – Part B1

Part B1

Part B1 consists of an abstract, extended synopsis, CV and track record of the PI.

The abstract is essential. It represents the whole proposal, and it is carefully read by each person involved in the evaluation. It should describe the grant proposal in a nutshell, not mainly the state of the art in the field.

- The following questions must in principle be answered: WHAT is the main selling point? WHY is the addressed problem important? HOW will the problem be approached? Originality and novelty must be clear.

The extended synopsis is an invitation to read Part B2, which is not available to the panel in the first round of the evaluation. It must trigger curiosity and interest in reading the whole proposal. This creates support for retaining the proposal to Step 2.

- The following aspects must be addressed: novelty, importance and credibility the PI to achieve substantial results.
- The description of methodology in part B1 must substantiate the positive opinion of the evaluators on the feasibility of the project. The detailed

description of the methodology is the core information in Part B2.

- Overselling and too much hype can severely damage even an otherwise great proposal.
- Use appropriate graphics for an easier understanding of the proposal core points.

Myth #3:

- ✘ The extended synopsis should describe my research in general terms, while the part B2 should describe the project proposal in full detail and specific terms. Because B1 is evaluated by "general" reviewers, in comparison to the "experts" that will evaluate Part B2.
- ✔ Part B1 is evaluated by experts from your scientific field as well as by generalists with a broader research background. The extended synopsis should therefore appeal to both types of evaluators.

The CV and track record should describe the professional path towards submitted ERC proposal and it must provide information that makes the PI credible for carrying out the proposed research.

- For StG it is crucial to provide the proof of independence.
- For CoG it is crucial to demonstrate in addition the existence of the seed of the original scientific school led by the PI (leadership of the group, laboratory, etc.).

Myth #4:

- ✘ Without a publication in Nature or Science, or without very high h-index, there is no point in applying for the ERC grant.
- ✔ Not all grantees have a publication in Nature or Science. In 2021 ERC joined the DORA (Declaration on Research Assessment) and impact factor or h-index is no more relevant bibliometric indicator for evaluators.



*ERCs are the best grants ever:
low administration, high visibility,
scientific freedom; go for it!*

Matyáš Fendrych (ERC StG, CoG)

Questions to be answered

WHAT is the fundamental and timely problem to be investigated? Show that you are an expert in the given field. It should be appealing to experts as well as non-experts in the particular problem.

WHY is this problem important and the proposed work worth funding? Explain what is the state of the art in the field, while highlighting the gaps that you are addressing. Explain the specific and broader impact of your solution. Avoid vagueness and interpretative phraseology.

HOW can the problem be approached so that substantial progress towards the goals can be expected? Admit the challenges and describe the way of addressing them. In ERC, there are no requirements about reaching any quantitative goals such as number of publications etc.

WHO is the PI? Why is he/she in the best position to solve the problem? This question needs to be answered (without self-evaluation wording) primarily in the Extended Synopsis.



**Preparation
of the
Proposal –
Part B2**

Part B2

- Give a thorough and detailed description of the research objectives, methodology and resources, that further develops the information given in B1.
- Elaborate specifically on the project implementation and on possible obstacles that have to be handled.
- The work plan must be clear (well-structured with sub-tasks associated with particular members of the team). The size of the proposed team should be adequate to the research plan.

What are the evaluators looking for?

- Vision, ambitious goals with appropriately described challenges and uncertainties.
- Originality!
- Not all goals need to be achieved. However, it must be clear that at any case the work will lead to a very substantial progress.
- Methodology cannot be based on the application of standard approaches.

Questions that the evaluators must answer

The 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?

Scientific Approach

- To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the ground-breaking nature and ambition of the proposed research?
- To what extent are the proposed research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?
- To what extent are the proposed timescales, resources, and PI commitment adequate and properly justified?

Intellectual capacity and creativity

- 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?

Frequent comments of the evaluators

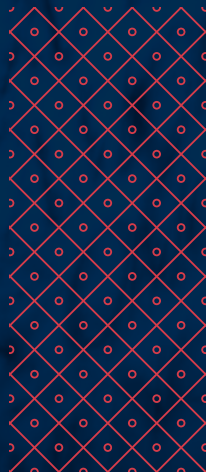
- The project framework is either too narrow or, on the contrary, it is a loose connection of several subprojects without a clear leading idea.
- It is just a continuation of ongoing research.
- It is a collaborative project where the leading role of the PI is not sufficiently explained.
- The work plan is not clear or it is insufficiently described.
- There is an inadequate description of challenges that can arise during the work of the project.
- The PI has an insufficient track record, which doesn't substantiate the credibility for carrying out the project successfully.
- The PI didn't show enough independence on the PhD. supervisor and/or the previous work within the groups led by others.



Writing a successful proposal is simple :) You just clearly and concisely describe the „What, Why, and How“ so that everyone becomes enthusiastic about your project already after reading the abstract. Good luck!

Libor Barto (ERC CoG, SyG)

Part A – Step by Step



Go to [Funding & Tender portal](#). Search for ERC open call.

Find your organisation

PIC Short name

Organisations you have been previously associated with. (Click to select)

PIC: 999923434
CU
O/VOČNY TRH 560/5
PRAHA 1,CZ
VAT: CZ00216208

This is the PIC number, once you fill it in, some of data are automatically written into the form.

Your role

Please indicate your role in this proposal *

Principal Investigator
 Main Host Institution Contact
 Contact person

Specify your role in the project, probably PI-Principal Investigator.

Your proposal

It will appear also in the "General Information" section of the Application Form Part A and can also be updated there.

Acronym *

Short Summary *


ERC Panel *


Provide an acronym, short summary, and choose the panel to which you want to submit your proposal. Then click on „Save and go to next step“. You can return to this information later on and edit it further.

1.

You are now in the „Participants“ section. Click on “Add contact +” button to add additional people to the proposal in different roles.

Number of participants: 1 ⓘ



 **Host Institution**
CU

1  CU

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA
PRAHA 1, CZ
PIC: 999923434

[Change organisation](#) [Contact organisation](#)

Contacts: ⓘ [Add contact +](#)


Principal Investigator
Veronika Syrovatkova  


[Add Partner +](#)

2.

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA

Please enter the contact name and details: ⓘ

Project Role * 

Access Rights * 

First Name *

50
50
100

[Add contact](#)

3.

Depending on the role you choose, the person will have full or limited access to your project proposal.

Please, do not forget to give access to your application to the ERC University Consultant (role „Coordinator Contact“).

You are now in the section „Proposal forms“. By clicking on „Edit forms“ you can edit Part A, which we will introduce you below.

Click here to download part B templates (B1, B2, HI support letter).

The screenshot shows the 'Proposal forms' section of the F&T portal. At the top, a progress bar indicates the current step is 'Proposal forms', with previous steps (Login, Topic selection, Create proposal, Participants) marked as complete. A navigation menu on the left includes 'Download Part B templates', 'Support & Helpdesk', and 'Service Desk'. The main content area shows 'Administrative forms (Part A)' with an 'Edit forms' button highlighted by a blue arrow. Below this is the 'Part B and Annexes' section, which lists upload fields for Part B1, Part B2, HI support letter, and Annexes 1 through 4. A blue arrow points from the 'Download Part B templates' button to the 'Part B and Annexes' section. A large blue box with white text is overlaid on the 'Edit forms' button, stating: 'You can find more information about F&T portal in Online Manul.' Another blue box with white text is overlaid at the bottom, stating: 'Once you click on „Submit“, even if you are not finished with the project proposal, you can always come back and edit the proposal as many times as you wish up until the deadline.' A 'SUBMIT' button is visible at the bottom right of the form area.

Funding: Submission Service Welcome Veronika Syrovatkova

Login Topic selection Create proposal Participants Proposal forms Submit

Proposal forms

Deadline
23 May 2023 17:00:00 Business Local Time

59 days left until closure

Call data
Call: ERC-2023-ADG
Topic: ERC-2023-ADG
Type of action: HORIZON-ERC
Type of MCA: HORIZON-AG

Topic and type of action can only be changed by creating a new proposal.

Proposal data
Acronym: TEST_2
Draft ID: SEP-219943662

Download Part B templates
Download part B templates

Support & Helpdesk
Online Manual
IT How To
IT Helpdesk
FAQ

Service Desk:
EC-FUNDING-TENDER-DESK@ec.europa.eu
+32 2 29 92222

Your proposal contains changes that have not yet been submitted.

Administrative forms (Part A)

Edit forms

Part B and Annexes

In this section you may upload the technical annex of the proposal (in PDF format only) and any other requested attachments.

Part B1 Upload

Part B2 Upload

HI support letter Upload

Annex 1 Upload

Annex 2 Upload

Annex 3 Upload

Annex 4 Upload

SUBMIT

4.

You can find more information about F&T portal in Online Manul.

Once you click on „Submit“, even if you are not finished with the project proposal, you can always come back and edit the proposal as many times as you wish up until the deadline.



Application forms

HORIZON

Call: ERC-2023-ADG

(Call for Proposals for ERC Advanced Grant)

Topic: ERC-2023-ADG

Type of Action: HORIZON-ERC

(HORIZON ERC Grants)

Proposal number: SEP-210943652

Proposal acronym: TEST_2

Type of Model Grant Agreement: HORIZON Action Grant Budget-Based

Table of contents

Section	Title	Action
1	General information	Show
2	Participants	Show
3	Budget	Show
4	Ethics and security	Show
5	Other questions	Show

You are now in Part A, you can get here by clicking on „Edit forms“ (previous step).

Whenever you leave the form, make sure to save it.

6.



General Information

[Table of contents](#)[Validate form](#)[Save form](#)[Save & exit form](#)

Application forms

Proposal ID **SEP-210943652**Acronym **TEST_2**

You can edit the acronym here.

1 - General information

?

Fields marked * are mandatory to fill.

Topic	ERC-2023-ADG	Type of Action	HORIZON-ERC
Call	ERC-2023-ADG	Type of Model Grant Agreement	HORIZON-AG

Acronym * **TEST_2**

Proposal title*

The title should be no longer than 200 characters (with spaces) and should be understandable to the non-specialist.

Note that for technical reasons, the following characters are not accepted in the Proposal Title and will be removed: < > * &

Duration in months*

Estimated duration of the project in full months.

Primary ERC Review Panel*

SH4 - The Human Mind and Its Complexity

?

Secondary ERC Review Panel

Not applicable

(if applicable)

ERC Keyword 1*

As first keyword please choose one which is linked to the Primary Review Panel.

?

Please select, if applicable, the ERC keyword(s) that best characterise the subject of your proposal in order of priority.

ERC Keyword 2

Not applicable

ERC Keyword 3

Not applicable

ERC Keyword 4

Not applicable

Free keywords

In addition, please enter free text keywords that you consider best characterise the scope of your proposal. The choice of keywords should take into account any multi-disciplinary aspects of the proposal.

?

You can also edit the primary panel to which your research belongs. If appropriate, you can also fill in the secondary review panel.

Application forms

Proposal ID **SEP-210943652**

Acronym **TEST_2**

2 - Participants

7.

List of participating organisations

#	Participating Organisation Legal Name	Country	Role	Action
1	UNIVERZITA KARLOVA	Czechia	Coordinator	Show Participant's Details

It is up to you whether you want to write a contact for the rectorate or the research support dpt. of your faculty here. You can assign more people to the role of contact persons in a project.

Contact address of the Host Institution and contact person

This will be the person the EU services will contact concerning this proposal (e.g. for additional information, invitation to hearings, sending of evaluation results, convocation to start grant preparation). The data in blue is read-only. Details (name, first name and e-mail) of Main Contact persons should be edited in the step "Participants" of the submission wizard.

Title Gender Male Female Non Binary

First name*

Last name*

E-Mail*

Position in org. Please indicate the position of the person.

Department Same as proposing organisation's address

Same as proposing organisation's address

Street

Town Post code

Country

Website

Phone Phone 2

8.

The budget is in an electronic form that will fill in the required indirect costs of the project based on the direct cost input amounts. It is important to fill in the required EU contribution, which is not automatically filled by the system. Further information on the budget can be found below.

Budgetary Sheet Name	PI	Senior Staff	Postdocs	Students	Other Personnel costs	A. Total personnel costs	B. Indirect costs (On indirect costs)	C.1 Travel and subsistence	C.2 Equipment including major apparatus	Consumables, follow-up and animal costs	Publications, final reports, fees and disbursements	Other additional direct costs	C.3 Total other goods, works and services	Total Personnel cost	D. Indirect indirect costs and overhead (On indirect costs)	E. Indirect cost	Total Budget Cost	Requested EU contribution
EU	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0	0,00	0,00	0,00
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0	0,00	0,00	0,00

9.

(max 8000 characters allowed)

You will be made available to the experts evaluating the proposal at Step 7. Important: your description of resources will be truncated once it exceeds the maximum allowed character. Please make sure that your description is

complete and of budget considered necessary to meet the objectives for the duration of the project. The project cost estimation should be as accurate as possible. The evaluation panel assess the estimated costs carefully: unjustified budget items specify if you will use other parties getting no direct contribution to this action.

Your costs entered by user 'Other personnel cost' category and the cost items entered by user 'Other additional direct cost' category

If applicable: (EU items MUST be included in the overall budget table above) (Cost in EUR)

Once you answer „YES“ to any of these questions, it is necessary to duly justify this in the project proposal. Indicate which page contains the justification, or attach appropriate authorisations or permission to the project proposal.

< Budget

Ethics & Security

Other questions >

Table of contents

Validate form

Save form

Save & out form

Application forms

Proposal ID: **SEP-210943652**

Acronym: **TEST 2**

4 - Ethics & security

Ethics Issues Table

1. Human Embryonic Stem Cells and Human Embryos

Page

Does this activity involve Human Embryonic Stem Cells (hESCs)?

Yes No

Does this activity involve the use of human embryos?

Yes No

Page

10.

Does this activity involve human participants?

Yes No

Does this activity involve interventions (physical also including imaging technology, treatments, etc.) on the study participants?

Yes No

Ethics Self-Assessment

Ethical dimension of the objectives, methodology and likely impact

Explain in detail the identified issues in relation to:

- objectives of the activities (e.g. study of vulnerable populations, etc.)
- methodology (e.g. clinical trials, involvement of children, protection of personal data, etc.)
- the potential impact of the activities (e.g. environmental damage, stigmatisation of particular social groups, political or financial adverse consequences, misuse, etc.)

Remaining characters

5000

Also, you must complete the Ethics Self-Assessment, in which you explain ethics in relation to the objectives of the research activities, the methodology and the potential impacts of these activities, as well as compliance with ethical principles and the corresponding legislation.

Compliance with ethical principles and relevant legislations

Describe how the issue(s) identified in the ethics issues table above will be addressed in order to adhere to the ethical principles and what will be done to ensure that the activities are compliant with the EU/national legal and ethical requirements of the country or countries where the tasks are to be carried out. It is reminded that for activities performed in a non-EU countries, they should also be allowed in at least one EU Member State.

Remaining characters

5000

You are at the end of Part A. If you are not sure whether you have completed everything correctly, click on „Show Error“. Do not forget to save the modified data again.

< Other questions

Validation result

Exit form >

Table of contents

Validate form

Save form

Save & exit form

Application forms

Validation result

Show Error

The red 'Show Error' button indicates an error due to a missing or incorrect value related to the call eligibility criteria. The submission of the proposal **will be blocked** unless that specific field is corrected!

Show Warning

The yellow 'Show Warning' button indicates a warning due to a missing or incorrect value related to the call eligibility criteria. The submission of the proposal **will not be blocked** (proposal will be submitted with the missing or incorrect value).

Section

Description

General Information

This section has not been validated yet

Show Error

CU

This section has not been validated yet

Show Error

Budget

The requested EU contribution should not be zero.

Show Error

Other questions

Working time commitment

Show Error

Other questions

Working time commitment

Show Error

12.

This is a Host Institution Letter of support (HIL), which you downloaded as one of the B Part documents. The HIL should be signed by the rector, please contact the team of the European Center or Research Support Office at your faculty.

After signing the document, we will send it back to you and it has to be uploaded to the system with other annexes.

Commitment of the Host Institution for ERC Calls 2023^{1,2,3}

The <<please fill in here the name of the legal entity that is associated to the proposal and may host the principal investigator and the project (action) in case the application is successful>>, which is the applicant legal entity,

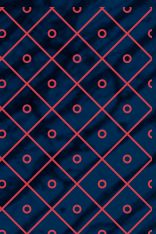
confirms its intention to sign a supplementary agreement with <<please fill in here the name of the principal investigator>>

in which the obligations listed below will be addressed should the proposal be retained.

Performance obligations of the *applicant legal entity* (Host Institution) that will become the coordinator of the HE ERC Grant Agreement (hereafter referred to as the Agreement), should the proposal be retained and the preparation of the Agreement be successfully concluded:

The applicant legal entity (Host Institution) commits itself to ensure that the action tasks described in Annex 1 of the Agreement are performed under the guidance of the principal investigator who is expected to devote:

- in the case of a Starting Grant at least 50% of her/his working time to the ERC-funded project (action) and spend at least 50% of her/his working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country;
- in the case of a Consolidator Grant at least 40% of her/his working time to the ERC-funded project (action) and spend at least 50% of her/his working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country;
- in the case of an Advanced Grant at least 30% of her/his working time to the ERC-funded project (action) and spend at least 50% of her/his working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country.





Finance

Budget breakdown

- A. Direct personnel costs**
- B. Subcontracting costs**
- C. Purchase costs**
- D. Internally invoiced goods and services**
- E. Indirect costs**

Myth #5:

-  The ERC budget affects the result of the evaluation.
-  The budget is not an evaluation criterion. A possible reduction of the budget is discussed only after suggesting the proposal for funding.

A. Direct personnel costs

- For the correct budgeting, you need to know your gross monthly salary, including personal supplement without remuneration from other projects.
- For an idea of the basic salary (without personal supplement) you can apply for, it is possible to

look into the [CU salary regulation](#), which sets the maximum salary threshold for each category.

- You should bear in mind that you are setting a 5–7 years outlook – reflect inflation, career progression and exchange rate movements and plan adequate financial reserves.
- In connection with the lump sum AdG, you will have to provide more detail on certain aspects. For example, personnel costs will have to be specified in person-months per staff category.

B. Subcontracting costs

- Do not specify the subcontractor's name in the budget, because a proper selection process (selection based on the best value for money quality) has to be done first. Describe only what the work will be and why the subcontractor must carry it out and not the host institution.

C. Purchase costs

- Purchase costs are divided into:
 - Travel and subsistence
 - Equipment (including major equipment)

- Consumables (including field work and animal costs)
 - Publications and dissemination (including Open Access fees)
 - Other additional direct costs (including CFS fee)
-
- Estimate the travel costs realistically and do not forget to include per diems in the calculation.
 - In connection with the lump sum AdG, you will have to provide more detail on certain aspects. For example, equipment costs will have to include information on the depreciation rules that have been applied.
 - In case the total amount of your grant exceeds € 430,000, your project must be first-level audited (CFS). The audit fee can be included in other direct costs (up to € 10,000). CFS is not applicable in lump sum AdG.

D. Internally invoiced goods and services

- Typically, chemicals and other self-made consumables or costs for a kennel for experimental animals.

E. Indirect costs

- Indirect costs are fixed as a flat rate: 25% of direct costs (sum of the categories A and C).
- For more information see [Budgeting recommendations](#) from Technology Centre Prague (only in Czech). You can contact the [European Centre team](#) at any time, we will help you with the appropriate budgeting.



It's crucial to remember that ERC proposals aim at two distinct audiences. Your first audience is a virtual someone with limited knowledge about your topic who will read the condensed version of your proposal. Your second audience comprises unknown individuals who, between them, may know your topic better than you; these people will read the detailed version. The interview is the most challenging aspect of the competition, as both audiences come together, you have no time to think about which question is coming from which audience, and every single word matters.

Anežka Kuzmičová (ERC StG)





European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

Contact:

European centre, Ovocný trh 560/5
116 36 Praha 1

More information: ec.cuni.cz

Want to get news about the latest research calls?
Send an email to ec@cuni.cz

Disclaimer: The information contained in this document is for informational purposes only and does not constitute binding legislative interpretation. CU shall not be liable for the consequences of reliance on this information or for any damages that may result from its use.

European Centre, October 2023