

Starting Independent Researcher Grants Call Information

Call Title: Call for proposals for *ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grant*

Call identifier: ERC-2009-StG

Date of publication: 24 July 2008

Electronic proposal submission deadlines (single submission of full proposal):¹

Panels: PE1 - PE10 (Physical Sciences & Engineering), 29 October 2008, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Panels: SH1 – SH6 (Social Sciences & Humanities), 19 November 2008, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Panels: LS1 – LS9 (Life Sciences), 10 December 2008, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

Indicative budget: EUR 295 762 000 from 2009 budget²

N.B.: The ERC Scientific Council has established the following indicative percentage budgets for each of the 3 main research domains:

Physical Sciences & Engineering: 39%

Life Sciences: 34%

Social Sciences & Humanities: 14%

and an Interdisciplinary³ domain with an indicative budget of 13%.

The Community financial contribution shall be in the form of a grant to the budget corresponding to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and a contribution of 20% of the total eligible direct costs. Indicative budgets may permit a variation of the budget for each domain by a maximum of 10% of the total budget for the call; however the budget proportions allocated to projects in the three main research domains will be no lower than the percentages indicated. In addition, the final budget awarded per ERC call, following the evaluation of projects, may vary by up to 10% of the total value of the call if additional appropriations become available.

Activity: European Research Council Starting Grant

Minimum number of participants: At least 1 independent legal entity established in one of the Member States, or one of the Associated countries (in the case of the participation of more than one legal entity the participants are not obliged to establish a consortium agreement)

Restrictions on participation: see eligibility criteria in the work programme

¹ please consult Annex 1 of the Ideas Work Programme for the panel description

² Under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2009 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority

³ Including cross-panel and/or cross-domain research projects and research with the potential to open new fields

Grant Portability: applicants should be aware of the portability features of ERC grants as described in the ERC model grant agreement (http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/calls-grant-agreement_en.html)

Eligibility criteria:

Incomplete proposals (missing parts and/or the PhD-related support documents and/or the host institution's commitment statement) are considered ineligible and will not be evaluated⁴. The proposal must be submitted to the appropriate primary ERC panel (i.e. the panel which covers the main scientific areas of the research proposed) before the respective deadline.

Where there is a doubt on the eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a decision by an eligibility review committee. If it becomes clear before, during or after the peer review evaluation phase, that one or more of the eligibility criteria has not been met, the proposal is declared ineligible and is withdrawn from any further examination.

Eligible Scientific Fields

Applications may be made in any field of research⁵, other than those specifically excluded from the 7th framework programme.

Funding of human embryonic stem cell research will be possible within the ethical framework defined in the EC 7th Framework Programme⁶ as well as the Ideas Specific Programme.

Eligible Principal Investigator (see also section 3.7 of the Work programme for other possible restrictions)

The ERC actions are open to researchers of any nationality who would like to establish their research activity in any Member State as well as any Associated Country.

The Principal Investigator can be of any age and nationality and he/she can reside in any country in the world at the time of the application

The ERC Starting Grant Principal Investigator must have been awarded⁷ his/her first PhD (or equivalent doctoral degree⁸) at least 3 and less than 8 years prior to the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Starting Grants.

Extensions of this period may be allowed only in case of eligible career breaks which must be properly documented: maternity (1 year per child born after the PhD award) & paternity leave (accumulation of

⁴ See also 'eligibility check' in ERC rules for the submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures relevant to the Ideas Specific Programme

⁵ Research proposals within the scope of Annex I of the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications should be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom 7th Framework Programme

⁶ In accordance with Commission statement, OJ L 412 of 30.12.2006, p. 42, proposals which will include research activities which destroy human embryos, including for the procurement of stem cells, will not be submitted to the Regulatory Committee. The exclusion of funding of this step of research will not prevent funding of subsequent steps involving human embryonic stem cells.

⁷ The reference date towards the calculation of the eligibility period should be the date of the actual award according to the national rules in the country that the degree was awarded.

⁸ See Scientific Council's strategic note 'PhD and Equivalent Doctoral Degrees: The ERC Policy' on ERC web site (<http://erc.europa.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&topicID=24>), including specific provisions for holders of medical degrees.

actual time off after the PhD award) and leave taken for long-term illness, national service. Leave taken for unavoidable statutory reasons (e.g. clinical qualifications) may also count as an extension.

The cumulative eligibility period should not in any case surpass 11 years following the award of the first PhD. No allowance will be made for part-time working (2 years of half-time working count as 2 full-time years).

As was already announced in the Work Programme 2007, applicants who were unsuccessful in their ERC-2007-StG call application and who are still eligible can exceptionally apply in the ERC-2009-StG call

Eligible Host Institution (Applicant Legal Entity)

The contribution of Principal Investigators must be substantially carried out in the EU or Associated countries. This does not exclude field work or other research activities in cases where these must necessarily be conducted outside the EU or the Associated countries in order to achieve the scientific objectives of the project/activity.

The host institution will host and engage⁹ the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the grant. It must be situated in one of the Member States, or one of the Associated countries. It may also be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.) or the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. Normally, the applicant legal entity will be the only participating legal entity. Other legal entities, including those located in third countries, may however be involved and receive funding to support the work of additional team members, if so specified in the grant award or subsequent amendments to the original grant.

Evaluation procedure (see also section 3.6 of the work programme):

- The evaluation will take place **in two steps** following the **single submission of a full proposal**.
- The evaluation is carried out through evaluation panels that may be assisted by referees.
- The allocation of the proposals to the various panels will be based on the expressed preference of the applicant. In case of interdisciplinary proposals the panel may request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional referees who act as reserve evaluators.
- Proposals may be evaluated remotely.
- **Step 1:** Following the submission of the proposal, Section 1 of the proposal (see section 3.5) will be assessed and marked.
- If necessary, and in order to assure the quality of the evaluation in the case of heavy over-subscription to the call, the evaluation panels may identify the less competitive applications which do not reach the minimum quality threshold(s) by assessing the proposals on the basis of the **track-record** (requested summary), the summary of the **Scientific Leadership Potential** and the project's **Extended Synopsis**.
- With the agreement of the individual reviewers to whom the proposals have been allocated, these proposals will not be further evaluated, allowing the panel focus on thorough evaluation of the retained proposals.
- At the end of this evaluation of step 1, the panel will rank the proposals according to their marks. An indicative budget will be allocated to each panel, in proportion to the budgetary demand of its assigned proposals. This indicative budget is calculated as the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the panel divided by the cumulative grant request of all proposals to the domain of the call, multiplied by the total indicative budget of the domain.
- Each panel will determine its budgetary cut-off level as a multiple of its indicative budget. The budgetary cut-off level should be approximately 2 times the panel's indicative budget.

⁹ See also footnote 3

Proposals with a mark passing the quality threshold and which lie above the budgetary cut-off level will be retained and pass to step 2 of evaluation (all proposals with identical marks at the cut off level will pass through to the second step of evaluation). Those proposals failing to reach the quality threshold on any of the evaluation criteria or ranked below the budgetary cut-off described above will be rejected.

- The complete version of the retained proposals will be assessed and ranked by the panels during **step 2** of the evaluation. Interdisciplinary proposals within a domain or across domains will be flagged as such, and the panel may request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional referees who act as reserve evaluators.
- Principal Investigators whose proposals will be retained for the second step of the evaluation may be invited for an interview to present their project to the evaluation panel meeting in Brussels. They will be accordingly reimbursed for their travel and subsistence expenses¹⁰.
- Following the conclusion of the panel evaluations the following additional steps will be taken with the participation of the evaluation peer review evaluation panel chairs:

Step 2a: Acting in concert, the peer review evaluation panel chairs of each research domain or their deputies, representing their panels, will prepare a consolidated ranked list for the domain's proposals which are above the quality threshold and can be funded in order of priority from the respective domain budgets¹¹.

Step 2b: Acting in concert across the 3 main research domains, taking account of the forward looking and innovative nature of the programme, all the peer review evaluation panel chairs or their deputies will bring forth and specifically discuss, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the scientific added value of proposals above the quality threshold which are of interdisciplinary nature. In order to establish the ranked list of the *Interdisciplinary Research* domain, all peer review evaluation panel chairs will further assess these proposals on the basis of the second evaluation criterion (Research project).

Any funds still available in any of the 4 domains, after exhausting the list of proposals over the quality threshold, will be distributed to the other 3 domains according to the initial call budget breakdown.

Finally, a number of proposals (over the quality threshold) in the 4 domain lists may also be kept in reserve to allow for eventualities such as the failure of the granting procedure to projects, the withdrawal of proposals, budget savings agreed during the granting procedure, or the availability of additional budget from other sources. Additional funds will also be distributed according to the initial call budget breakdown.

Evaluation criteria: See the work programme for the applicable criteria

Information on the modalities of the call and guidance to applicants on how to submit projects is available on:

¹⁰ In duly justified and exceptional cases, and with the consent of the Scientific Council, the Commission/ERC DIS may agree, subject to technical feasibility, on other ways of interviewing successful Principal Investigators such as video link, teleconference or similar means, and on the reimbursement of their possible related travel and subsistence expenses. Relevant provisions for the reimbursement of expenses incurred in relation to Principal Investigators' interviews are included in the ERC Rules for submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the 7th Framework Programme.

¹¹ In accordance with the ERC rules for the Submission of Proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures relevant to the Ideas Specific Programme

<http://erc.europa.eu>, http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ideas/home_en.html

