

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

**Call identifier:** ERC-2010-StG

**Date of publication:** 30 July 2009

**Electronic proposal submission deadlines<sup>1</sup> (single submission of full proposal):<sup>2</sup>**

**Panels: PE1 - PE10 (Physical Sciences & Engineering),** 28 October 2009, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

**Panels: LS1 – LS9 (Life Sciences),** 18 November 2009, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

**Panels: SH1 – SH6 (Social Sciences & Humanities),** 9 December 2009, 17.00.00 (Brussels local time)

**Indicative budget:** EUR 528 237 600 from 2010 budget<sup>3</sup>

**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 Interdisciplinary<sup>4</sup> 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

---

<sup>1</sup> The Director-General responsible may delay this deadline by up to two months

<sup>2</sup> Please consult Annex 1 of the Ideas Work Programme for the panel description

<sup>3</sup> Under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2010 is adopted without modifications by the budgetary authority

<sup>4</sup> Including cross-panel and/or cross-domain research projects and research with the potential to open new fields

**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

**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](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/calls-grant-agreement_en.html))

**Grant starting date:** due to the ground-breaking nature of frontier research projects, it is expected that all projects start within 6 months from the award of the grant. ERC reserves the right to cancel a grant if the proposed start date goes beyond this limit.

**Eligibility criteria (see also section 3.7 of the Work programme for other possible reapplications and multiple applications restrictions):**

Incomplete proposals (where parts or sections of the proposal and/or the PhD-related support documents and/or supporting documentation justifying the extension of the eligibility period (see below) and/or the host institution's binding statement of support are missing) are considered ineligible and will not be evaluated<sup>5</sup>. 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. In addition, only proposals which satisfy the rules for reapplication and multiple applications (as specified in section 3.7 of this WP) will be considered eligible to be evaluated.

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 research<sup>6</sup>, other than those specifically excluded from the 7<sup>th</sup> framework programme.

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

**Eligible Principal Investigator**

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

---

<sup>5</sup> See also 'eligibility check' in ERC rules for the submission of proposals and the related evaluation, selection and award procedures for indirect actions under the Ideas Specific Programme of the Seventh Framework Programme, (C(2007)2286 of 6 June 2007) and C(2007)4429 of 27 September 2007.

<sup>6</sup> 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

<sup>7</sup> 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.

The ERC Starting Grant Principal Investigator must have been awarded<sup>8</sup> his/her first PhD (or equivalent doctoral degree<sup>9</sup>) at least 2 and up to 10 years prior to the publication date of the call for proposals of the ERC Starting Grant .

Extensions of this period may be allowed only in case of eligible career breaks which must be properly documented: maternity (18 months per child born before or after the PhD award) & paternity leave (accumulation of actual time off for children born before or 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 14.5 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).

Principal Investigators are sub-divided during evaluation in two main streams, with applicants being awarded their PhD at least 2 and no more than 6 years (broadly described as "starters") or over 6 but no more than 10 years (broadly described as "consolidators") prior to the call publication.

#### **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. Starting Grant Principal Investigators must be strongly committed to the project and devote a significant amount of time to it (they will need to devote at least 50% of their working time in the ERC-funded project).

The host institution will host and engage<sup>10</sup> 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 that host other team members, 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, if it confirms the interdisciplinary nature of the proposal, shall request additional reviews by appropriate members of other panel(s) or additional referees who act as reserve evaluators.
- **Step 1:** Following the submission of the proposal, Section 1 of the proposal (see section 3.5) will be assessed and marked.
- Proposals may be evaluated remotely.

---

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> See Scientific Council's strategic note 'PhD and Equivalent Doctoral Degrees' on ERC web site: <http://erc.europa.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&topicID=24>, including specific provisions for holders of medical degrees.

<sup>10</sup> See also footnote 3

- 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.
- Following the same rationale and in order to assure comparable success rate for the broadly called "starters" (award of PhD from 2 up to 6 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication) and the "consolidators" (award of PhD over 6 and up to 10 years prior to the Starting Grant call publication), the indicative budget of each panel will be further divided in proportion to the budgetary demand of the proposals submitted by these two categories ("starters" and "consolidators").
- Each panel will determine its budgetary cut-off level as a multiple of its indicative budget. The budgetary cut-off level should normally be 2.5 times the panel's indicative budget (slight variations of this factor may be allowed but the cut-off level must never exceed 3 times the panel's indicative budget). 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 expenses<sup>11</sup>.
- 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 budgets<sup>12</sup>.

**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).

---

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> 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, (C(2007)2286 of 6 June 2007) and C(2007)4429 of 27 September 2007

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:

<http://erc.europa.eu>, [http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ideas/home\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ideas/home_en.html)