

ERC Starting Grant

Scope

The ERC Starting Grant support excellent Principal Investigators at the career stage at which they are still starting their own independent research team or programme. Applicant Principal Investigators must demonstrate the ground-breaking nature, ambition and feasibility of their scientific proposal.

Topic of the Project

- open to all field of research (bottom-up approach)
- the ERC puts particular emphasis on the frontiers of science, scholarship and engineering. In particular, it encourages proposals of an interdisciplinary nature which cross the boundaries between different fields of research, pioneering proposals addressing new and emerging fields of research or proposals introducing unconventional, innovative approaches and scientific inventions.

Eligible Researchers (Principal Investigators)

- shall have been awarded their first PhD at least 2 and up to 7 years prior to 1 January of the year's call. The effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD can be extended in certain properly documented circumstances:
 - for maternity: the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by 18 months for each child born before or after the PhD award;
 - for paternity: the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by the actual amount of paternity leave taken for each child born before or after the PhD award;
 - for long-term illnesses (over 90 days for the PI or a close family member – child, spouse, parent or sibling), clinical training or national service the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD will be considered reduced by the document amount of leave actually taken by the PI for each incident occurred after the PhD award.
- must have already shown the potential for research independence and evidence of maturity
- will have produced independently at least one important publication without the participation of their PhD supervisor
- should also be able to demonstrate a promising track record of early achievements appropriate to their research field and career stage, including significant publications (as main author) in major international peer-reviewed multidisciplinary scientific journals, or in the leading international peer-reviewed journals of their respective field
- may also demonstrate a record of invited presentations in well-established international conferences, granted patents, awards, prizes etc.
- shall spend a minimum of 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country
- shall spend a minimum of 50% of their total working time on the ERC project

Summary of main new features

Sources:

ERC Work Programme 2016,

Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2016 Calls

- restrictions on applications will apply to the calls based on the outcome of the evaluation of previous calls – see ‘Restrictions on submission of proposals’ below. NB Principal Investigators whose proposal was evaluated as category B at step 2 in the ERC Starting, Consolidator or Advanced Grant calls for proposals will not be subject to restrictions in calls for proposals made under the next Work Programme
- new restrictions on applications will also apply to Principal Investigators whose proposals have been rejected on grounds of breach of research integrity
- revision to the panel titles and keywords in the Social Sciences and Humanities Domain – see Annex I to this document
- references in Part B1 and Part B2 do not count towards the page limits

Host Institution

- must be a legal entity (public or private, including universities, research organizations and undertakings) established in a EU Member State or Associated Country or an International European Interest Organization, JRC or any other entity established under EU law
- must engage the Principal Investigator for at least the duration of the project
- must commit to offer appropriate conditions for the PI to independently manage the ERC funded research (subject to a supplementary agreement between the PI and the host institution)

Amount and duration

- up to a maximum of EUR 1 500 000 for a period of 5 years
- up to an additional EUR 500 000 can be requested to cover
 - eligible “start-up” costs for Principal Investigators moving to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant
 - purchase of major equipment
 - access to large facilities
- reimbursement of up to 100% of the eligible and approved direct costs and flat-rate financing of indirect costs on the basis of 25% of the total eligible direct costs

Eligible costs

The European union financial contribution will take the form of the reimbursement of up to 100% of the total eligible and approved direct costs and of flat-rate financing of indirect costs on the basis of 25% of the total eligible costs(excluding the direct costs for subcontracting and the cost of resources made available by third parties, which are not used on the premises of the host institutions).

- Direct eligible costs are those which support all the research, management, training and dissemination activities necessary for the conduct of the project, such as:
 - Personnel costs
 - Costs for subcontracting
 - Other direct costs such as:
 - Contracting (see page 96-97 of the ERC AMGA)
 - Travel costs and related subsistence allowances

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- The depreciation costs for equipment
 - Costs for other goods and services (consumables and supplies; dissemination/publication costs (including Open Access), IPR costs, costs of the Certificates on the Financial statements)
 - Direct costing for Large Research Infrastructures
- Indirect eligible costs are those which cannot be identified as directly attributable to the project, but which are incurred in direct relationship with the project's direct eligible costs, such as:
 - costs related to the general administration and management
 - costs of office and laboratory space, including renting and depreciation of buildings and equipment, and related expenditure such as water, heating electricity
 - maintenance, insurance and safety costs
 - Communication expenses, network connection charges, postal charges and office supplies
 - Common office equipment such as PCs, laptops, office software
 - Miscellaneous recurring consumables
- Non eligible costs cannot be reimbursed through the ERC grant, in particular:
 - Costs related to return on capital
 - Debt and debt service charges
 - Provisions for possible future losses or debts
 - Interest owed
 - Doubtful debts
 - Currency exchange losses
 - Excessive or reckless expenditure
 - Costs reimbursed under another EU grant
 - Deductible VAT
 -

Use of third party resources and/or third parties involved in the actions

- As an exception, the host institution and the additional participants may use in-kind contributions provided by third parties or call upon subcontractors or linked third parties to carry out work under the action.
- Seconding personnel, contributing equipment, infrastructure or other assets are the most usual forms of in-kind contributions (= resources) provided by third parties.
- Subcontracting is instead the most common form by which a third party is typically asked to carry out directly some action's tasks. In some cases, often related to the organizational structure of the host institution, affiliated entities ('linked third parties') are involved to carry out some tasks too.
- Part B2 of the proposal must indicate the resources obtained from third parties or the task to be subcontracted and an estimation of the costs.
- More detailed information and guidance on the role and involvement of the various types of third parties is provided in the ERC Annotated Model Grant Agreement under articles 8, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

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Subcontracting

- A subcontractor is a third party which has entered into an agreement on business conditions with one or more participants, in order to carry out part of the work of the project without the direct supervision of the participant and without a relationship of subordination.
- Where it is necessary for the participants to subcontract certain elements of the work to be carried out, the following conditions must be fulfilled:
 - subcontracts may only cover the execution of a limited part of the project;
 - recourse to the award of subcontracts must be duly justified in Part B2 of the proposal having regard to the nature of the project and what is necessary for its implementation;
 - recourse to the award of subcontract by a participant may not affect the rights and obligations of the participants regarding background and foreground;
 - Part B2 of the proposal must indicate the task to be subcontracted and an estimation of the costs;
- The beneficiary must award the subcontracts ensuring the best value for money or, if appropriate, the lowest price. In doing so, it must avoid any conflict of interests.
- Framework contracts between a participant and a subcontractor, entered into prior to the beginning of the project.

Submission and restrictions on submission of proposals

One-step electronic submission by a single Principal Investigator in conjunction with and on behalf of the host organization via the [Research&Innovation Participant Portal](#)

- a Principal Investigator may submit proposals to different ERC calls made under the same Work Programme, but only the first eligible proposal will be evaluated
- A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as a category C in the StG, CoG or AdG calls for proposals may not submit a proposal to the the StG, CoG or AdG calls for proposals under the next TWO Work Programmes
- A Principal Investigator whose proposal was evaluated as a category B in the StG, CoG or AdG calls for proposals may not submit a proposal to the the StG, CoG or AdG calls for proposals under the next Work Programme
- A researcher may participate as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator in only one ERC frontier research project at any one time
- A researcher participating as Principal Investigator in an ERC frontier research project may not submit another ERC, unless the existing project ends no more than two years after the call deadline
- A Principal Investigator who is serving Panel Member for the actual ERC call or who served as a Panel Member for a ERC call of the last two years may not apply to the actual ERC call for the same type of grant.

Structure of the proposal

- The administrative forms (Part A):
It is a pdf to fill, save and submit online. It contains:

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- Section 1: General information about the research proposal, including an abstract of the project proposal, the chosen ERC panel for evaluation and declarations related to the proposal and the participation in H2020.

The PI must indicate the most relevant ERC panel for evaluation of his/her proposal and choose one or more ERC keywords related to the research fields involved from a dropdown menu (for the complete list of panels see Annex 1 of the Info for Applicants). In case of interdisciplinary proposals the PI has indicated a “secondary evaluation panel”. The primary panel will decide whether the proposal is indeed cross-panel or even cross domain and if its evaluation requires expertise from other panels.

- Section 2: Participants & contacts information about the PI and the Host Institution.

The **PI** of Politecnico di Milano is **999879881**

The **contact person** of the Host Institution is: Stefania E. Grotti
Head of the Research office
tel. +39 2399 2077
ricerca@polimi.it

- Section 3: Budget contains information about the total estimated project costs and the requested EU contribution. The amounts must correspond exactly to the information provided in Part B2c, resources.

- Section 4: Ethics serves to identify any ethical aspects of the proposed work.

This table must be completed even if there are no issues (simply confirming that none of the ethical issues apply to the proposal). In case you answer YES to any of the questions, you are requested to provide an Ethics Self-Assessment and additional ethics documentation (in a separate document, as annex), as detailed in the Ethics Issues Table checklist (annex 4).

- Section 5: Call specific questions contains information on the academic training of the PI, as well as declarations related to eligibility, permission statements on data-related questions.

- The research proposal (Part B1 + Part B2):

The templates for these two sections are provided in PPSS and their use is mandatory.

The Research proposal (Part B1 and B2) and all the supporting documentation should be uploaded and submitted via PPSS as PDF files. Make sure all file names contain the “Proposal Short Name”, such as PartB1_(Proposal-Short-Name).pdf.

- Part B1

- Cover page
- Section a: Extended synopsis of the Scientific Proposal (max 5 pages excluding references)
- Section b: Curriculum Vitae (max 2 pages)
- Appendix: Funding ID (no page limit)
- Section c : Early Achievement Track Record (max. 2 pages)

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- Part B2: the scientific proposal (max. 15 pages excluding Ethics self-assessment, annexes, references)
 - Section a: State of the art and objectives
 - Section b: Methodology
 - Section c: Resources (including project costs table)

The following mandatory parameters for the layout of part B must be respected:

- Page format: A4
 - Font type: Times New Roman, Arial or similar
 - Font Size: at least 11
 - Line Spacing: single
 - Margins: 2 cm side; 1,5 bottom
 - Each proposal page carries a header presenting the PI's last name, the acronym of the proposal and reference to the respective proposal section (part B1 or part B2)
- The supporting documentation:
 - The Letter of commitment of the Host Institution
The mandatory template is available on the PPSS page and needs to be originally signed, stamped and dated by the director of the chosen department.
 - The Phd certificate (or equivalent degree)
The scanned version of the diploma or the official certification must indicate clearly the date of award/defense
 - Any documentation stating the evidence of the right to the extension of the eligibility period beyond 7 years
 - Any documentation related to the ethics issue (if relevant), i.e. ethics self-assessment and supporting documentation for the ethics review procedure

Evaluation criteria

- Two steps evaluation:
 - Step 1: Part B1
 - Step 2: Part B1 + B2 + interview in Brussels
- The sole evaluation criterion is the excellence of researcher and project idea
- The detailed elements applying to the excellence of the research project and the PI(s) are set out below:

1. Research Project – Ground breaking nature, ambition and feasibility

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 across disciplines)?
- To what extent is the proposed research high risk/high gain?

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Scientific Approach

- To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the extent that the proposed research is high risk/high gain (based on the Extended Synopsis)?
- To what extent is the proposed research methodology appropriate to achieve the goals of the project (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?
- To what extent does the proposal involve the development of novel methodology (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?
- To what extent are the proposed timescales and resources necessary and properly justified (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?

2. Principal Investigator

Intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment

- To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to propose and conduct ground-breaking research?
- To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking?
- To what extent have the achievements of the PI typically gone beyond the state of the art?

Commitment

- To what extent does the PI demonstrate the level of commitment to the project necessary for its execution and the willingness to devote a significant amount of time to the project (min 50% of the total working time on it and min 50% in an EU Member State or Associated Country).

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