

FP7 Ideas – European Research Council grants

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<http://www.ukro.ac.uk>

What is the ERC?

What is the European Research Council (ERC)?

- Pan-European funding organisation in operation since 2007
- Supports the best in Europe - scientists, engineers and scholars
- Funding of €7.51 billion (2007-13)

What are the aims of the ERC?

- Encourage highest quality research in Europe
- Competitive, flexible funding
- Retain, repatriate and recruit (career support)

What are the ERC grant schemes?

- Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants
- Synergy Grants
- Proof of concept

Key Points for ERC Grants

- **Support for a PI and (if necessary) team-members**
- **Investigator driven (bottom-up) substantial advances “Frontier Research”**
- **Excellence is only peer review criterion**

What kind of Research Can be Funded:



- **Excellent, innovative and investigator-initiated research projects**
- **Basic or applied, any field of research**
- **Flexible projects to promote substantial advances in ‘**frontier research**’**

European Research Council

Overview of Opportunities

- **Project types:**
 - Starting Grants (PI normally 2-7yrs from PhD, up to €2m over 5 yrs)
 - Consolidator Grants (PI normally 7-12yrs from PhD, up to €2.75m over 5 yrs)
 - Advanced Grants (For leading investigators, up to €3.5m over 5 yrs)
 - Synergy Grants (new) (2-4 PIs, up to €15m over 6 yrs)
 - Proof of Concept (new, existing ERC grant holders only)
 - Co-ordination and Support Actions

ERC Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants

Starting Grants

- Aim to provide appropriate and adequate support
- to excellent researchers
- at the stage where they are starting their own independent research team or programme.

Work Programme (published on)	ERC Action	Call Open	Call Deadlines	Call Value (€ M)
2013 (10 July 2012)	ERC-2013-StG	10 July 2012	All domains (PE, LS and SH): 17 October 2012	398

Please note that resubmission and multiple application rules apply

Consolidator Grants

- Aim to provide appropriate and **adequate support**
- to excellent researchers
- at the stage where they are **consolidating** their own **independent** research team or programme.

Work Programme (published on)	ERC Action	Call Open	Call Deadlines	Call Value (€ M)
2013 (10 July 2012)	ERC-2013-StG	7 November 2012	All domains (PE, LS and SH): 21 February 2013	523

Please note that resubmission and multiple application rules apply

Advanced Grants

Advanced Grants

- encourage **substantial advances at the frontier of knowledge**, and to encourage new productive lines of enquiry and new methods and techniques, including unconventional approaches and investigations at the interface between disciplines and ground-breaking, high-risk/high gain research
- by supporting excellent, **leading advanced investigators**
- Allows **established, innovative and active** scientists and scholars to pursue **ground-breaking, high-risk research** that opens up new directions in any field of their choice

Work Programme (published on)	ERC Action	Call Open	Call Deadlines	Call Value (€ M)
2013 (10 July 2012)	ERC-2013-AdG	10 July 2012	All domains (PE, LS and SH): 22 November 2012	662

Please note that resubmission and multiple application rules apply

PI Eligibility

- **Starting: 2-7 yrs from date of award of first PhD or equivalent**
 - so those who obtained PhDs between (and including) 10 July 2005 and (including the) 10 July 2010
- **Consolidator: 7-12 yrs from date of award of first PhD or equivalent**
 - so those who obtained PhDs between (and including) 7 November 2000 and (including the) 7 November 2005
 - those who obtained their PhDs between (and including) the 10 July 2005 and (including the) 7 November 2005 are eligible for both schemes.
- **Advanced: no eligibility window**

PI Eligibility

- **Extensions for properly documented eligible career breaks only:**
 - Maternity/paternity leave, national service, long-term illness and clinical qualifications
 - For other 'unavoidable statutory reasons' please contact us for advice
- **No extensions for part time working, non-research careers, travel...**

Should I apply?

Starting/Consolidators are

- **Expected to have:**
 - already shown potential for research independence & evidence of maturity
 - Starters should have produced independently **at least one** and Consolidators **several important publication without the participation of their PhD supervisor**
- **Be able to demonstrate a promising track record of early achievements appropriate to their field and career stage, including:**
 - **significant publications (as main author)** in peer-reviewed major international multidisciplinary journals or leading international journals in their field
- May have monographs, invited presentations, granted patents, awards, prizes
- **Have good leadership potential**

Should I apply?

Advanced Grant

- Am I an active researcher?
- Do I have a track record of significant achievements in last 10 years?
 - 10 publications (as senior author) in major international peer-reviewed journals which are multidisciplinary or leading journals in their field.
 - Or 3 major research monographs, of which at least one is translated into another language.
 - **If appropriate to your research field, should have:** granted patents (5), invited presentations (10), lead expeditions (3), organised international conferences (3), international recognition (awards, prizes, academy membership, artefact with documented use), major contributions to launching the careers of outstanding researchers and recognised leadership in industrial innovation or design.
- Am I an exceptional leader in terms of originality and significance of my research contribution, and has this been internationally recognised?

(PI does not need to have a PhD)

Funding Levels and Duration of Grant

Maximum grants:

- **Starting: EUR 1.5 million;**
- **Consolidator: EUR 2 million; and**
- **Advanced: EUR 2.5 million over 5 years ERC contribution (or pro-rata for shorter projects)**

Can have an additional EUR 0.5 million (Starting) , 0.75 million (Consolidator), and EUR 1 million (Advanced) but **only to cover:**

- eligible “start-up” costs for PIs moving from a third country to the EU or an Associated Country as a consequence of receiving the ERC grant;
- the purchase of major equipment; or
- access to large facilities (new).

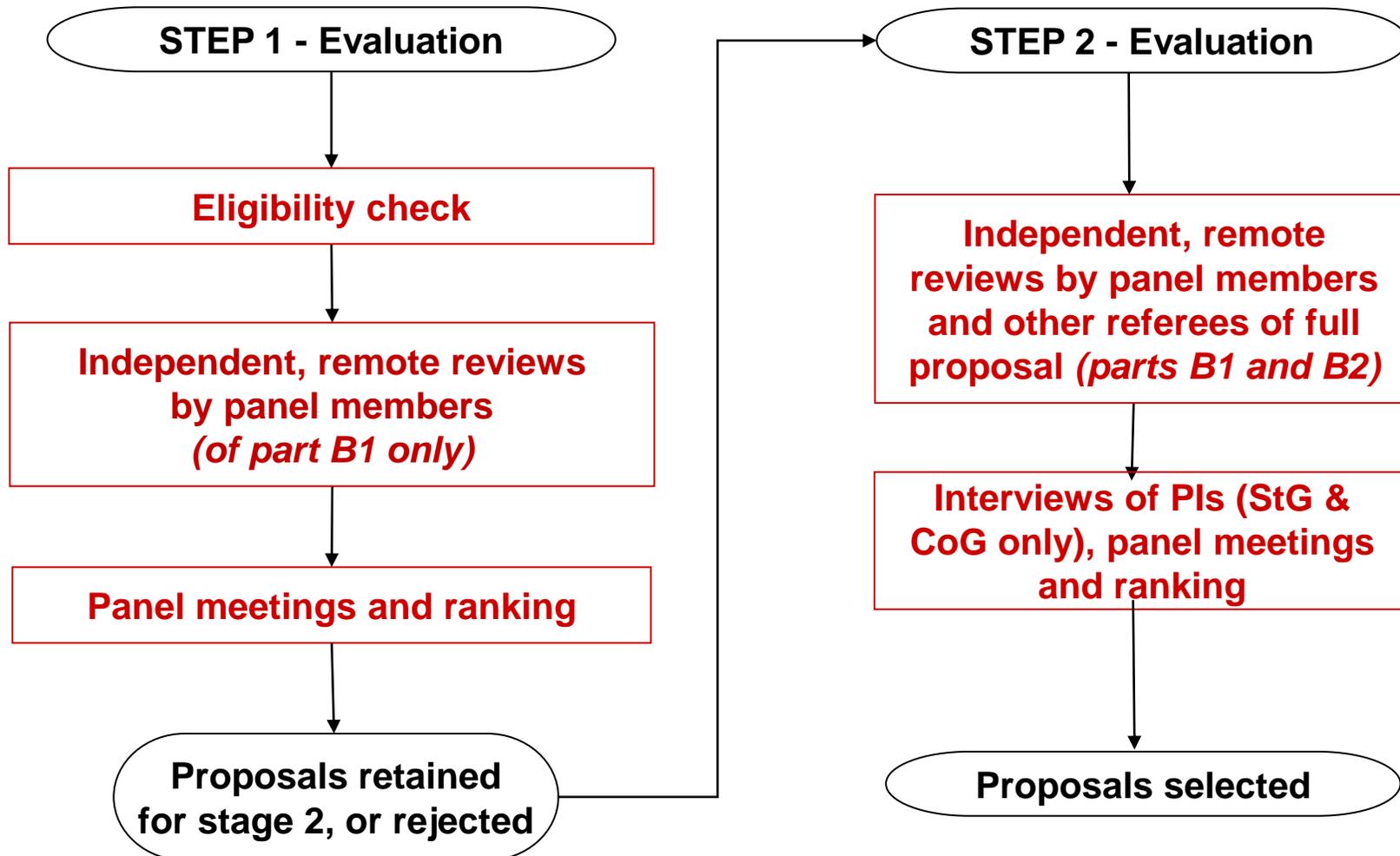
This additional funding requested must be justified in Part B Section 2c.

Limits includes direct (100%) and indirect costs (20%)!

Proposal submission

Applicant

- Logs into EPSS
- Completes Full Proposal
- Chooses Primary Panel (and Secondary Panel if needed)
- Presses **SUBMIT** before the deadline!



StG, CoG and AdG: Structure of Project

B1: Cover Page including half page summary :

- Clear understanding of the objectives of the proposal and how they will be achieved
- Short description used in evaluation process and communication

B1: Extended Synopsis:

- Concise presentation of the scientific proposal, with particular attention to the
 - ground-breaking nature of the research project and
 - the feasibility of the outlined scientific approach.
- Describe proposed work in the context of state of the art of the field.
- References to literature should be included.
- Panel will only evaluate Extended Synopsis at step 1.

B2: Scientific Proposal: detailed descriptions of the project's aim, planning, execution, and required resources (only assessed at step 2)

- State of the art and objectives
- Methodology
- Resources (inc project costs)
- Ethical and security sensitive issues

Peer Review Structure

Submission

- **Single Stage Submission, but 2-Step Peer Review**
- **Electronic Submission via EPSS**

Peer Review

- **3 research domains**
- **25 panels – you can choose which one to submit to**
- **Step 1:**
 - Only ‘extended synopsis’ and PI sections are assessed
 - Remote review by panel members followed by a panel meeting.
- **Step 2:**
 - Full proposal is reviewed
 - Remote review by panel members and external experts
 - Panel meeting (including interviews for Starting and Consolidator)

Peer Review Panels

Examples:

- **PE10 - Earth System Science**
physical geography, geology, geophysics, atmospheric sciences, oceanography, climatology, ecology, global environmental change, biogeochemical cycles, natural resources management
- **LS8 - Evolutionary, Population & Environmental Biology**
evolution, ecology, animal behaviour, population biology, biodiversity, biogeography, marine biology, ecotoxicology, microbial biology
- **SH3 – Environment, Space and Population**
environmental studies, geography, demography, migration, regional and urban studies

For full list of all 25 panels and keywords see the Guide for Applicants

If resubmitting, please note there many changes to panel descriptions!

StG and CoG Only: Interviews

- **PIs with proposals taken to the second step of the review process will be interviewed by the Peer Review Panel or Sub-Panel**
- **Must attend in person**
 - although in very exceptional cases (pregnancy, immobility due to illness, out in research fieldwork) video or telephone conferencing are offered.
- **Interviews last approximately 30 minutes (depending on panel)**
 - Start with a presentation by the PI on the outline of the research project
 - Followed by a question and answer session
- **Panels will take into account the results of the interviews alongside the individual reviews.**
- **Travel is reimbursed**

Evaluation process and criteria

Evaluation Criteria

Principal Investigator

- Intellectual capacity and creativity
- Commitment

Research Project

- Ground-breaking nature & potential impact of the research
- Methodology

Evaluation Criteria

Principal Investigator

- Quality of research output/track record
- Intellectual capacity and creativity

Research Project

- Ground breaking nature of the research
- Potential impact
- Methodology
- High gain/high risk balance

General Tips on Writing your Application

- **Liaise with your HoD and Research Office**
- **Use clear and concise language**
- **Pay careful attention to each section**
- **Be ambitious, but show awareness of cutting edge**
- **Look at examples of successful applications**
- **Read all the documentation, including the Grant Agreement**
- **Be realistic with the budget, clearly link your budget to activities. Has your institution agreed your budget?**

European Research Council



	ERC-2007-StG	ERC-2009-StG	ERC-2010-StG	ERC-2011-StG
Funded ERC grants with UK HIs	58 (20% of all grants)	43* (~18%* of grants)	79* (~19%* of grants)	124* (~26%* of grants)
Success rate overall:	3.3%	9.5%*	14.9%*	11.8%*
- success rate for grants with a UK HI	5.2%	12.4%*	17.3%*	15.6%*
	ERC-2008-AdG	ERC-2009-AdG	ERC-2010-AdG	ERC-2011-AdG
Funded ERC grants with UK HIs	58 (21% of all grants)	60 (25% of all grants)	53 (20% of all grants)	68 (23% of all grants)
Success rate overall:	12.7%	15.3%*	13.2%*	12.9%*
- success rate for grants with a UK HI	19.4%	19.6%*	13.6%*	14.3%*

* provisional figure

Further statistics and access to information on funded projects on the UKRO website

http://www.ukro.ac.uk/erc/stg/Pages/results_stats.aspx

Synergy grants

ERC Synergy Grants

New scheme, pilot call

- Enables a group of between 2 to 4 excellent PIs (with one ‘corresponding PI’) to pursue a large-scale frontier research project of their choice
- Team must: *‘bring together complementary skills, knowledge and resources together in new ways, in order to jointly address research problems’*
- PIs need to show how working together in their specific configuration would achieve more than could be done separately
- It is **expected (but not required)** that in **most cases** groups will be interdisciplinary, often using multidisciplinary approaches
- They will also have to demonstrate novel working arrangements to ensure **face to face contact for significant periods of “core time”** in the same place over the course of the project.

ERC Synergy Grants



- **10% of Annual ERC Call Budget**
- **First pilot call: opened 25 October 2011 & closed on 25 January 2012**
 - 710 proposals received. Likely success rate ~2-3%!
- **2nd pilot call: opens 10 October 2012 & closes on 10 January 2013**
 - Likely to still be very competitive!
- **Grants of up to €15 million over 6 yrs (€150 million call budget)**
- **Further information: <http://www.ukro.ac.uk/erc/syg>**

Synergy Grants

- Objectives

ERC Synergy Grants

- are intended to enable a **small group of 2-4 PIs** and their teams to **bring together complementary skills, knowledge, and resources in new ways, in order to jointly address research problems**
- aim to promote **substantial advances in the frontiers of knowledge**, and to encourage new productive lines of enquiry and new methods and techniques, including unconventional approaches and investigations at the interface between established disciplines

The peer review evaluation will therefore look for proposals that demonstrate the synergies, complementarities and added value that could lead to breakthroughs **that would not be possible by the individual PIs working alone**

So, it is about:

- a **unique configuration of PIs**
- **who jointly identify and tackle exciting research problems aiming at breakthrough discoveries**

Synergy Grants - Group Structure

“With the focus on PIs, ERC Synergy Groups are fundamentally different from that of a network or consortium”

- **New types of joint effort may be needed perhaps**
 - built around specialised infrastructure, or
 - that allow for new combinations of skills and disciplines, or
 - the bringing together of researchers from different institutions, sectors or countries
- **The organisation of such activities will vary widely, depending on the particular needs of the research**
- **It is expected that in most cases ERC Synergy groups will be**
 - interdisciplinary, often using multidisciplinary approaches, and
 - physically located in the same place to ensure face to face contact for significant periods of "core time" over the course of the project
- **However, any group which can demonstrate the synergies, complementarities and added value that make the whole greater than the sum of the parts in order to promote substantial advances in the frontiers of knowledge will be considered**

Synergy Grants

- PI Location, Profile and Commitment

PI Location

- PIs must be based at a Host Institution in an EU Member State or Associated Country during the grant

PIs Profile

- Excellent researchers, with track records of independent creative thinking, regardless of career stage
- ‘Innovative and active’

PI Commitment

- PIs should be committed to the group project and willing to have face to face contact (with other PIs) for significant periods of “core time”
 - they will be expected **to devote at least 30% of their total working time to the ERC-funded project** and
 - spend at least 50% of their total working time in an EU Member State or Associated Country)

Funding Levels and Duration of Grant

Synergy Grants may be

- Up to **€15 million over 6 years** ERC contribution (or pro-rata for shorter projects)

The total requested grant should

- reflect a **realistic estimation of the project needs** and
- **should not be unnecessarily inflated** to reach the maximum grant level

Limits includes direct and indirect costs!

Direct Costs

- **100% of eligible and approved direct costs funded**

Indirect Costs:

- **20% flat rate**
(of the total direct costs excluding subcontracting and third party resources not used on premises)
- **Is allocated and charged** (for all institutions no proof needed of how spent)

Proof of Concept scheme

ERC Grant Schemes

- Proof of Concept

- Supports **an existing ERC grant-holder** in preparing a "package" to be presented to venture capitalists or companies that might invest in the results of new knowledge developed during an ERC-funded project, in order to take it through the early commercialisation phase
- Funds activities for establishing the innovation potential of an idea: i.e. technical validation, market research, clarifying an IPR strategy, investigating business opportunities
- Evaluation criteria: Innovation Potential, Quality of the Proof of Concept Plan, Budget
- Deadlines: 3 October 2012, 24 April 2013, 3 October 2013
- Maximum grant: €150,000 (call budget: €10 million)

Further information at: <http://www.ukro.ac.uk/erc/poc.htm>

How to best prepare

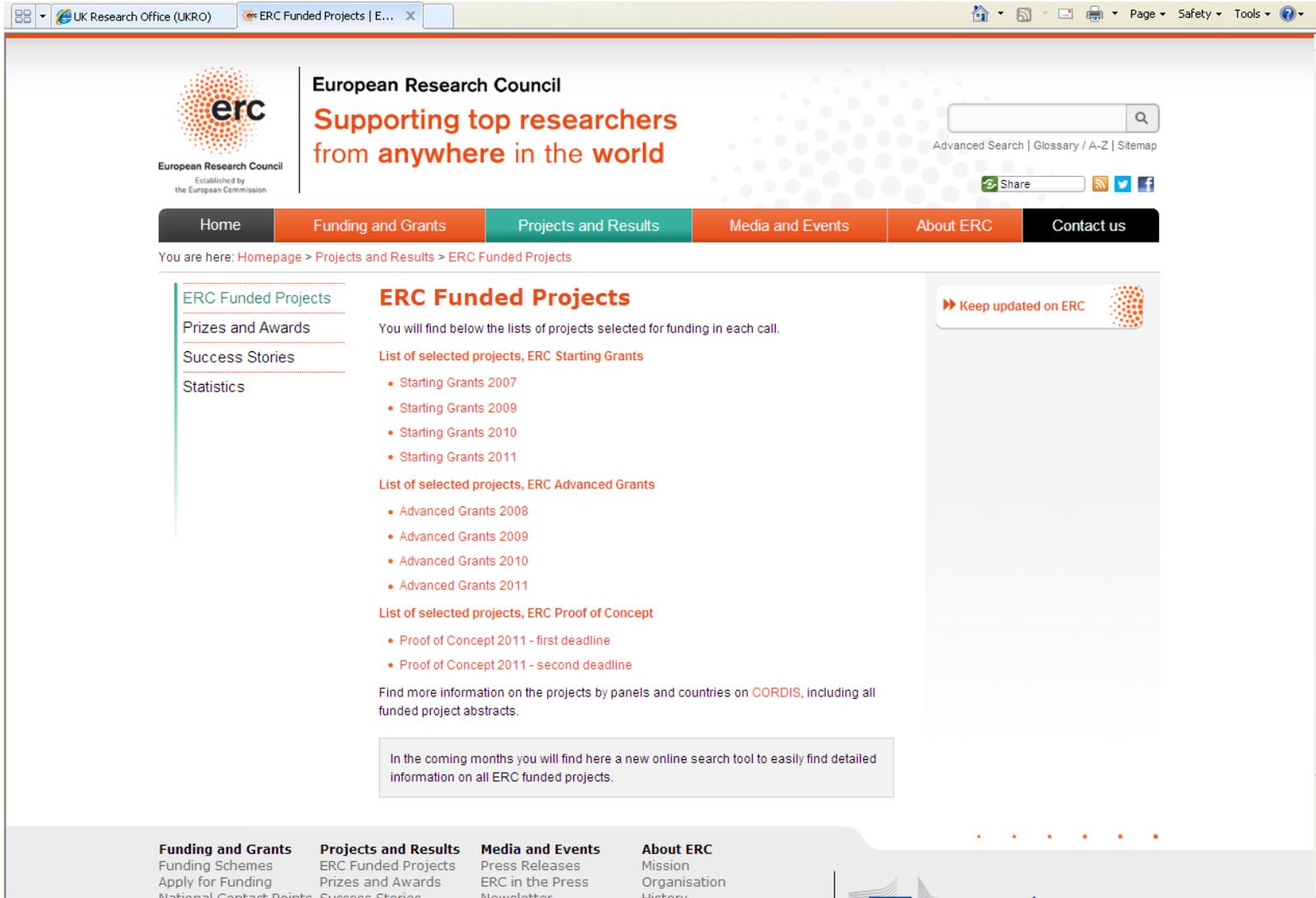
ERC UKRO NCP events



Consolidator and Synergy grants

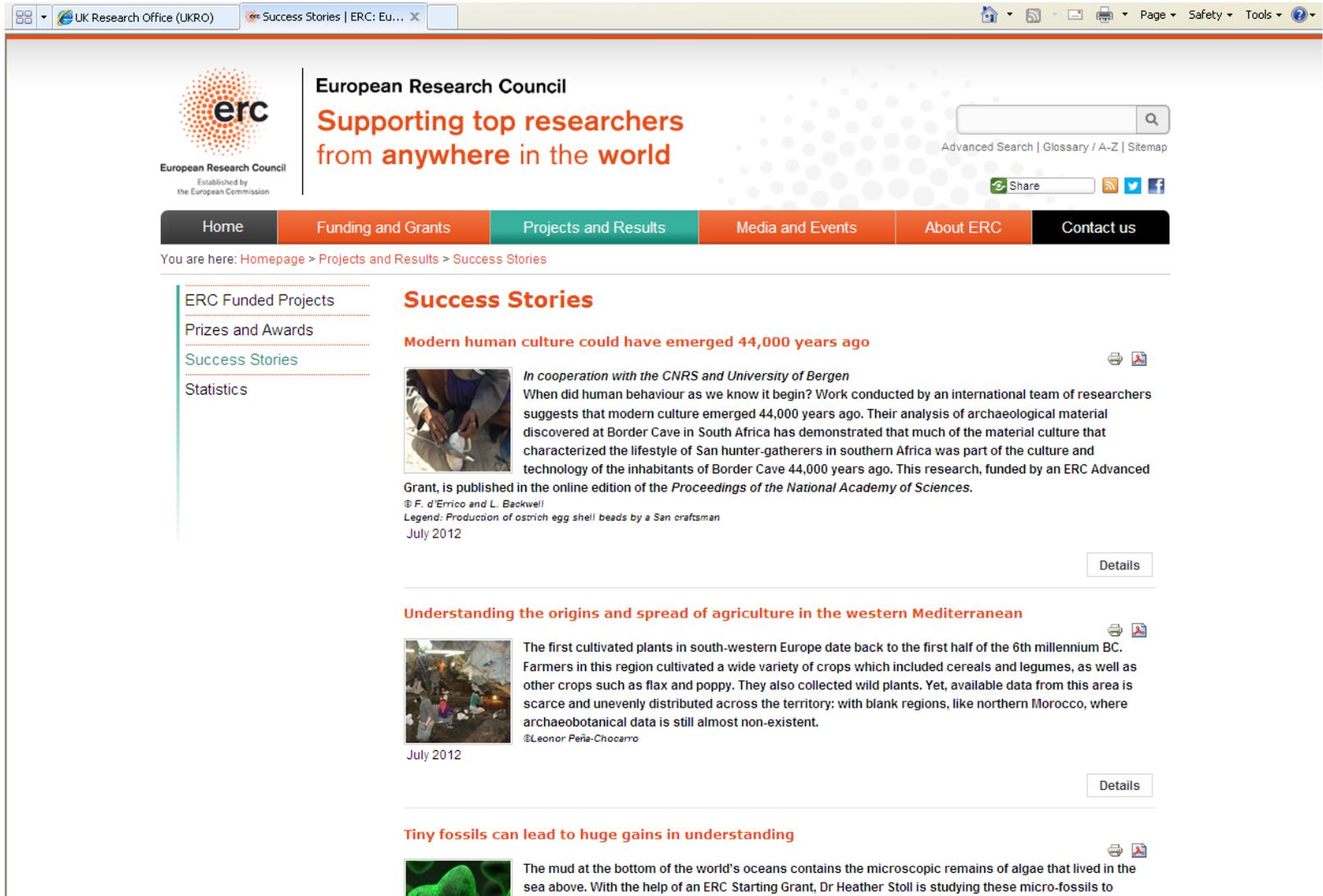
- 21 November in Glasgow
- 29 November in Manchester
- 30 November in London
- Register via:
<http://www.ukro.ac.uk/subscriber/fp7/erc/events/Pages/index.aspx>

Funded projects



The screenshot shows the ERC Funded Projects website. The header includes the ERC logo, the text "European Research Council Supporting top researchers from anywhere in the world", a search bar, and social media links. A navigation menu contains: Home, Funding and Grants, Projects and Results, Media and Events, About ERC, and Contact us. The breadcrumb trail reads: You are here: [Homepage](#) > [Projects and Results](#) > [ERC Funded Projects](#). The main content area features a sidebar with links to "ERC Funded Projects", "Prizes and Awards", "Success Stories", and "Statistics". The main heading is "ERC Funded Projects" with the subtext "You will find below the lists of projects selected for funding in each call." Below this are three sections: "List of selected projects, ERC Starting Grants" (with links for 2007, 2009, 2010, and 2011), "List of selected projects, ERC Advanced Grants" (with links for 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011), and "List of selected projects, ERC Proof of Concept" (with links for "Proof of Concept 2011 - first deadline" and "Proof of Concept 2011 - second deadline"). A text box at the bottom states: "In the coming months you will find here a new online search tool to easily find detailed information on all ERC funded projects." The footer contains four columns: "Funding and Grants" (with links to Funding Schemes, Apply for Funding, National Contact Points), "Projects and Results" (with links to ERC Funded Projects, Prizes and Awards, Success Stories), "Media and Events" (with links to Press Releases, ERC in the Press, Newsletter), and "About ERC" (with links to Mission, Organisation, History).

Funded projects



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Success Stories

Modern human culture could have emerged 44,000 years ago



In cooperation with the CNRS and University of Bergen
When did human behaviour as we know it begin? Work conducted by an international team of researchers suggests that modern culture emerged 44,000 years ago. Their analysis of archaeological material discovered at Border Cave in South Africa has demonstrated that much of the material culture that characterized the lifestyle of San hunter-gatherers in southern Africa was part of the culture and technology of the inhabitants of Border Cave 44,000 years ago. This research, funded by an ERC Advanced Grant, is published in the online edition of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.
© F. d'Errico and L. Backwell!
Legend: Production of ostrich egg shell beads by a San craftsman
July 2012

Details

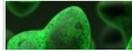
Understanding the origins and spread of agriculture in the western Mediterranean



The first cultivated plants in south-western Europe date back to the first half of the 6th millennium BC. Farmers in this region cultivated a wide variety of crops which included cereals and legumes, as well as other crops such as flax and poppy. They also collected wild plants. Yet, available data from this area is scarce and unevenly distributed across the territory; with blank regions, like northern Morocco, where archaeobotanical data is still almost non-existent.
©Leonor Peña-Chocarro
July 2012

Details

Tiny fossils can lead to huge gains in understanding



The mud at the bottom of the world's oceans contains the microscopic remains of algae that lived in the sea above. With the help of an ERC Starting Grant, Dr Heather Stoll is studying these micro-fossils to

Advice from previous applicants



The screenshot shows the UKRO website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for Home, UKRO Subscriber Services, European RTD Insight, UK Marie Curie NCP Helpdesk, and UK ERC NCP Helpdesk. The breadcrumb trail indicates the user is on the UKRO Subscriber Services page.

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- ▶ Non-Framework Funding
- ▶ EU Policy
- ▶ Brussels and EU Information
- ▶ UKRO Information and Events

About UKRO

European RTD Insight

UK Marie Curie NCP Helpdesk

UK ERC NCP Helpdesk

FP News
 20 Oct 2010
FP7 ERC - Starting Grants: Proposal Writing Case Study

Summary
 At a recent UKRO information and training event for applicants to the current ERC-2011-StG European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grants call, a researcher who was awarded a Starting Grant in the ERC-2010-StG call, Professor Rein Ulijn of the University of Strathclyde, delivered a brief presentation on his experiences of the application and evaluation process. This included some hints and tips which are summarised in the article below.

Article
 Professor Ulijn firstly described his explanation within the application of why he wanted the ERC grant. He particularly emphasised the chance it provided to establish his own research group, to open new doors for his particular discipline and to enable a new line of research to be undertaken. He presented the ERC grant as a major stepping stone towards achieving these aims, particularly in terms of the degree of flexibility afforded to the Principal Investigator (PI) and given the currently uncertain economic climate.

Professor Ulijn had previously made one unsuccessful application for a Starting Grant, and he focused on the points which he considered made his application successful the second time around. This included focusing on how the proposed research project was not only an exciting piece of fundamental research, but that there were tangible societal benefits to the research in the longer term.

Also, he made clear that the proposed research would have an impact on other areas outside his direct research field, and detailed his plans for effective exploitation of the technology developed during the project. He also emphasised how the project represented a step change in his research area, involving bringing both new insights and new methodologies to the discipline, and how exactly the proposal built on previous research and took this to a new level. He explained that he and his team were in a unique position to do this.

Professor Ulijn stated that the aim of the proposal was to create a world leading team in his field. He underlined that the ERC grant would have a lasting legacy in enabling the consolidation of his team members into world-class researchers in their own right, and that it provided them with a unique training opportunity to carry out parts of the research under his supervision.

In addition Professor Ulijn made clear that, for two PhD students recruited for the project, the ERC grant represented a timely follow-up to a fellowship which had recently ended. More generally, he also advocated the importance of working closely with his institution's research support office during the application.

Interview preparation



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European RTD Insight

UK Marie Curie NCP Helpdesk

UK ERC NCP Helpdesk

FP News

23 Mar 2012

FP7 ERC – Starting Grants: Updated UKRO Interview Hints and Tips

Summary

The interviews for Principal Investigators (PIs) whose proposals have been retained for Step 2 of the evaluation process for the ERC-2012-StG European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grants call are scheduled to take place in April, May and June 2012. As a result, UKRO is reissuing an updated version of a short document which provides some general hints and tips on the interview. This is based on feedback received from previous applicants.

Article

The interviews, which are part of Step 2 of the evaluation process for ERC Starting Grants, will take place in Brussels in spring 2012. Please see the UKRO ERC Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) webpage, indicated below, for the basic schedule of the interviews according to domain and panel.

There are some quite significant differences from panel to panel in terms of the format of the interview, and in terms of what the PI is asked to prepare for it. Hence this document provides a selection of general hints and tips, which are intended to be of use to PIs across all panels who are attending an interview.

Additional Information

- [Updated UKRO ERC Starting Grant Interview Hints and Tips](#) (.pdf)(dated 23/03/12)
- This document, as well as further information on step 1 results letters and step 2 interview dates, is available on the [UKRO subscriber webpage on ERC Starting Grant FAQs](#).

Related UKRO Articles

- [20/10/2010 - FP7 ERC - Starting Grants: Proposal Writing Case Study \(FP News\)](#)

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ERC Grants Further Information

Further Information (1)

- **UK ERC NCP Website**
 - <http://www.ukro.ac.uk/erc>
 - UK ERC NCP Newsletter
 - http://www.ukro.ac.uk/erc/Pages/erc_newsletter_registration.aspx
- **ERC Website**
 - <http://erc.europa.eu>
 - ERC Newsletter
 - <http://erc.europa.eu/newsletters-0>
 - ERC Europa Helpdesk
 - <http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?lg=en&pg=enquiries>
- **UKRO Portal including email updates and info on other EU funding (For UKRO subscribers)**
 - <http://www.ukro.ac.uk/Pages/UKRO.aspx>
(can log on, or create profile, near top left of screen)

Further Information (2)

- **EPSS Helpdesk**
 - E-mail: support@epss-fp7.org
 - Tel: +32 2 233 3760
- **IPR helpdesk Website**
 - <http://www.ipr-helpdesk.org>
- **European Commission FP7 Ethics Website**
 - http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ethics_en.html
- **European Commission page on ERC redress process**
 - http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ideas/redress_en.html
- **Cordis FP7 pages**
 - http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html

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