



CHARLES
UNIVERSITY



How to write a good ERC proposal

Quick Guide
(2nd Revised Edition)



What is ERC?

- ERC supports frontier research across scientific disciplines.
- ERC supports individual researchers, not consortia.
- Research topics are defined by the applicant.
- Research excellence (quality of the proposal and credibility of the applicant) are the only criteria.
- For more information on the individual grant schemes, see the [brochure](#) on the web.

Where to get the information?

- Inform the contact person for ERC at European Centre (ec@cuni.cz) about your intention to submit a proposal.
- You can find currently opened calls at <https://erc.europa.eu>.
- Read carefully the part of ERC Work Programme [relevant for the given grant scheme](#), as well as the [Information for Applicants](#).
- For further information see www.ec.cuni.cz.

Choosing the scheme

- Check the **eligibility criteria in the current workprogramme.**
- **ERC StG** 2–7 years from PhD. (from the date of the award of PhD. until the 1st January of the current year, always check the eligibility in the work programme)
- **ERC CoG** 7–12 years from PhD.
- **Extensions** of these time slots:
 - Maternity leave (18 months per child)
 - Parental leave
 - Military service
 - Serious illness, care for a seriously ill family member

The host institution

- You can change the host institution during the project.
- **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 PI

Preparation of the proposal

Structure of the proposal

Part A – online

- A1 Information about PI and the proposal
- Information about the host institution
- Budget

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

- Abstract (1 p.)
- Extended synopsis (5 p.)
- CV (2 p.)
- Track Record (2 p.)

Annexes – must be saved into the system as a PDF

- Letter of Commitment
- Copy of PhD. diploma
- Other information

Part B2 – must be saved into the system as a PDF

- extended scientific part of the proposal (15 p.)

Preparation of the proposal

Choosing the evaluation panel from

- Life Sciences (9 panels)
- Physical Sciences and Engineering (11 panels)
- Social Sciences and Humanities (7 panels)

(The field covered by the individual panels is characterized by descriptors.)

The right choice of the panel is of primary importance that can affect the quality of evaluation. Please check carefully the descriptors associated with the individual panels as well as the previously supported ERC projects: <https://erc.europa.eu/projects-and-results/erc-funded-projects>

ERC FUNDED PROJECTS

Search in ERC Funded Projects



FILTER

FUNDING SCHEME



CALL YEAR



RESEARCH DOMAIN



COUNTRY OF HOST INSTITUTION



Reset

The ERC operates according to a "curiosity-driven", or "bottom-up", approach, allowing researchers to identify new opportunities in any field of research. Accordingly the portfolio ERC funded projects spans a wide range of topics and research questions.

Since 2007, more than 9,500 projects have been selected to receive ERC funding throughout the EU Member States and the associated countries.

Use the search facility to quickly and easily find examples of ERC funded projects.

HOW CAN YOU SEARCH?

Projects can be filtered according to funding scheme, call year, panel and/or country of host institution.

You can also use the search box and enter free text words, for instance names of universities or principal investigators.

WHERE DOES THE DATA COME FROM?

Information displayed is automatically updated through the information available on the [CORDIS](#) platform.

Only funded projects, whose grant agreements have been signed, appear in this section.

Preparation of the proposal

You can also look at the list of evaluators within the individual panels in the past years. Do not contact them in the context of submission of your grant proposal!

- 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.
- **Myth #2:**
✗ The more descriptors (covering multiple panels) I state, the better because the project will seem multi-disciplinary.

Abstract is essential. It represents the whole proposal and it is carefully read by each person involved in the evaluation. It must clearly formulate the main selling point.

Part B1

- Part B1 consists of an extended synopsis, CV and track record of the PI.
- The 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, which means for the evaluator an intention to pass the proposal to Step 2.
- The CV and track record must give information that make the PI credible for carrying out the proposal.
- **Myth #3:**
✗ If I don't have a publication in Nature or Science, or if I don't have very high h-index, there is no point in applying for the ERC grant.

Questions to be answered

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

WHY is the proposed work worth funding? Explain the specific and broader impact of your solution. Be always specific and never vague.

HOW the problem can be approached so that a substantial progress towards the goals can be expected? Admit the risks and describe the possible contingency plan. In ERC there are no requirements about reaching any quantitative goals such as number of publications etc.

- The work plan must be clear (well structured with sub-tasks associated with particular members of the team).
- Description of methodology in part B1 must substantiate a positive opinion of the evaluators on the feasibility of the project. The detailed description of the methodology is the core information in Part B2.
- WHO are the PI and his team? Do the previous results of the PI substantiate the credibility of the PI to achieve the breakthrough results?

Preparation of the proposal – Part B1

Applicant's last name

Part B1

ACRONYM

**ERC Starting Grant 2020
Research proposal [Part B1]¹
(Part B1 is evaluated both in Step 1 and Step 2,
Part B2 is evaluated in Step 2 only)**

Proposal Full Title

PROPOSAL ACRONYM

Cover Page:

- Name of the Principal Investigator (PI)
- Name of the PI's host institution for the project
- Proposal duration in months

Text highlighted in grey should be deleted.

Proposal summary (identical to the abstract from the online proposal submission forms, section 1).

The abstract (summary) should, at a glance, provide the reader with a clear understanding of the objectives of the research proposal and how they will be achieved. The abstract will be used as the short description of your research proposal in the evaluation process and in communications to contact in particular the potential remote referees and/or inform the Commission and/or the programme management committees and/or relevant national funding agencies (provided you give permission to do so where requested in the online proposal submission forms, section 1). It must therefore be short and precise and should not contain confidential information.

Please use plain typed text, avoiding formulae and other special characters. The abstract must be written in English. There is a limit of 2000 characters (spaces and line breaks included).

Preparation of the proposal – Part B2

Part B2

- Thorough description of the research objectives, methodology and resources, that further develops the information given in B1.
- Elaborate specifically on the project implementation and the risk management.
- The size of the proposed team should be adequate to the research plan.

Applicant's last name

Part B2

ACRONYM

ERC Starting Grant 2020 Part B2¹ (not evaluated in Step 1)

Sections (a) and (b) of Part B2 together with section (c) Resources present in the online submission form should not exceed 15 pages. Budget table and References do not count towards the page limits.

Text highlighted in grey should be deleted.

Please respect the following formatting constraints: Times New Roman, Arial or similar, at least font size 11, margins (2.0 cm side and 1.5 cm top and bottom), single line spacing.

Section a. State-of-the-art and objectives

Section b. Methodology

Do NOT include any description of resources or budget table here (Part B2). The Resources section and the detailed budget table are now part of the online submission form (Part A, Section 3 - Budget). This section 3 will be extracted and provided to the peer reviewers.

What are the evaluators looking for?

- Originality!
- Vision, ambitious goals with appropriately justified risk.
- 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 can not be based on standard approaches.

Keep in mind the questions that the evaluators must answer:

About the project

- 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?
- To what extent has the PI demonstrated sound leadership in the training and advancement of young scientists (for Advanced Grant applicants)?
- 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 (based on the full Scientific Proposal)?

Frequent comments of the evaluators

- The project framework is either too narrow or, on the contrary, it is a loose connection of several ideas without a clear leading idea.
- It is just a continuation of the ongoing research.
- It is a collaborative project where the role of PI is not sufficiently explained.
- The work plan is not clear or it is insufficiently described.
- Inadequate description of risks and the way they are handled in the contingency plan.
- PI has insufficient track record, which doesn't substantiate the credibility for carrying out the project successfully.
- PI didn't show enough independence on its PhD. supervisor and/or the previous work within the group led by others.

Part A – Step by step

Please confirm your choice of the **topic** and **type of action** for the call, as these cannot be changed subsequently in the submission system.

Topic: ERC Proof of Concept Grant - ERC-2018-PoC

Type of Action: Proof of Concept Grant [ERC-POC]

Call: Call for proposals for ERC Proof of Concept Grant

CANCEL CONFIRM

Select the ERC scheme and confirm your choice.

Your organisation

PIC* ?

Short name* ?

Organisations you have been previously associated with. Click to select

PIC: 999923434
CHARLES UNIVERSITY
OVOCNY TRH 5/3
PRAHA 1, CZ
VAT: CZ00216208

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

Search for your organisation PIC

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.

Provide an acronym, short summary, and choose the panel to which you want to submit your proposal. You can return to this information later on and edit it further. Then click on "Next".

Your Proposal

Please choose an acronym for your proposal section of the submission form Part A and can also be updated there.

Acronym*

Please restrict acronym to latin characters only

Short Summary (max. 2000 characters)*
Character count:

Part A – Step by step

Submission and Evaluation of Proposals Assent Disclaimer

Please read and accept this disclaimer to proceed with the creation of your draft proposal:

Proposal pre-registration data

1. In order to plan the evaluations, the Commission services need access to a limited amount of information about your draft proposal (the so called pre-registration data) prior to call deadline. The pre-registration data is limited to: call, topic, type of action, Participant Identification (PIC) code of the participating organisation(s), project acronym, short summary and - where applicable - panel and keywords. **Neither the Part B nor any annex(es) form part of the pre-registration data that can be accessed by the European Commission services before the call deadline.**
2. You do not have to list sensitive/confidential information in the 'Short Summary' (entered on Step 3). Where relevant, sensitive/confidential information can be added to the 'Abstract' field in the Part A administrative form at a later stage in the submission process; this Abstract is not included in the pre-registration data. Therefore, please provide as the 'short summary' the relevant information (keywords, non-confidential information) for the planning of the evaluation.

- ☒ I agree that the pre-registration data becomes available to the European Commission services prior to call closure.
- ☐ I wish that the pre-registration data does not become available to the European Commission services prior to call closure. (Applicants are advised to use this option only in well justified cases, as it hinders the planning of the evaluation process and the timely processing of proposals).

Part B

3. **File format:** For the Technical Annex (part B) you must use exclusively PDF ("portable document format", compatible with Adobe Acrobat version 5 or higher, with embedded fonts). Annexes might have an obligatory page limit. Please check for the number and type of mandatory or optional annexes for the call in the relevant call documentation. Annexes with excess pages where page limit applies, will receive a watermark upon upload to the system. Users will receive a warning when trying to submit an annex with excess pages.
4. **Time constraints:** Preparation and uploading of the PDF formatted technical annex may take some time. You should ensure that this has been completed in time, well before the call closure deadline.

Submission

5. Proposals must be submitted prior to the call closure deadline. Likewise, modifications to proposals or uploaded attachments are also required to be submitted prior to the call closure deadline or they will not be taken into account. Proposals may be submitted or withdrawn at any time prior to the call closure deadline. There is only ever one version of a submitted proposal, as submission over-writes the previous version.

Personal Data

6. We will process personal data in accordance with Regulation No 45/2001 and according to the "notifications of the processing operations" to the Data Protection Officer (DPO) of the Commission/Agency (publicly accessible in the DPO register). Read more on the [Legal notice of the Participant Portal](#).

accept

decline

If possible, check this option and click on "accept" below.


Part A – Step by step

Draft proposal xy created

Dear ADELA JIROUDKOVA,
You have successfully created a draft proposal xy for the call **ERC-2018-PoC**.

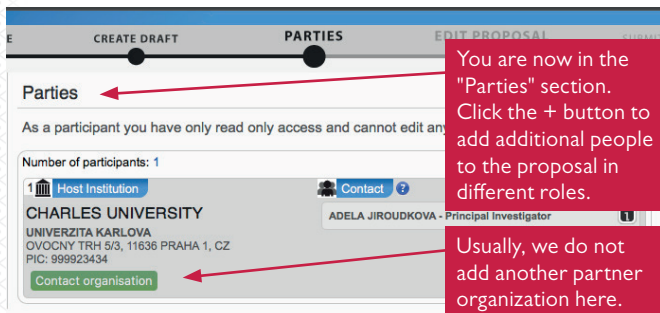
You can continue editing your draft proposal now or access it at a later time (before the deadline **2018-04-18 17:00:00** Brussels Local Time) from the [Participant Portal](#) by accessing the [My Proposals](#) tab.

An email containing this information has been sent to this email address: *adela.jiroudkova@ruk.cuni.cz* (which is associated with your ECAS account *njiroade*).

Go to My Proposals 

Continue with this proposal


As a next step this window will appear (with the date and time of the deadline). Click on "continue with this proposal".



Parties

As a participant you have only read only access and cannot edit any

Number of participants: 1

1  Host Institution

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
UNIVERZITA KARLOVA
OVOČNÝ TRH 5/3, 11636 PRAHA 1, CZ
PIC: 999923434

Contact

ADELA JIROUDKOVA - Principal Investigator

Contact organisation

You are now in the "Parties" section. Click the + button to add additional people to the proposal in different roles.

Usually, we do not add another partner organization here.

Part A – Step by step

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

Add contact



CHARLES UNIVERSITY

Please enter the contact name and details: ?

Project Role

Main Host Institution Contact

Access rights

Coordinator contact (full access)

First Name *

Last Name *

Email Address *

* required field

OK

Cancel

Part A – Step by step

You are now in the section "Edit proposal".

By clicking on "edit forms" you can edit Part A, which we will introduce you below.

The screenshot shows the 'Edit Proposal' interface. At the top is a navigation bar with steps: LOGIN, FUNDING SCHEME, CREATE DRAFT, PARTIES, EDIT PROPOSAL (active), and SUBMIT. Below the navigation bar, the title 'Step 5 Edit Proposal' is displayed. On the left is a sidebar for 'ERC-2018-PoC' containing user information (USER NAME: ADELA JIROUDKOVA, TOPIC: ERC-2018-PoC, TYPE OF ACTION: ERC-POC, A.C.R.: xy, DRAFT ID: SEP-210508567, DEADLINE: April 2018 17:00:00, 37 days left until closure), a 'Configuration OK' status, and a 'Download Part B Templates' button with links to user guides. The main content area is titled 'Edit Proposals' Forms and includes a warning: 'WARNING: This proposal contains changes that have not yet been submitted...'. Below this is the 'Administrative Forms' section with an 'edit forms' button. The 'Part B and Annexes' section contains a list of items for upload: Part B, Host Support Letter, Extra Annex 3 through Extra Annex 10. Each item has an 'upload' button. At the bottom right, there are buttons for '<< Step 4 - Parties', 'validate', and 'submit'. Red callout boxes point to the 'edit forms' button, the 'Part B' upload button, the 'Download Part B Templates' button, and the '<< Step 4 - Parties' button.

LOGIN FUNDING SCHEME CREATE DRAFT PARTIES EDIT PROPOSAL SUBMIT

Step 5

Edit Proposal

ERC-2018-PoC

USER NAME
ADELA JIROUDKOVA

TOPIC
ERC-2018-PoC

TYPE OF ACTION
ERC-POC

A.C.R.
xy

DRAFT ID | SEP-210508567

DEADLINE (Brussels Local Time)
April 2018 17:00:00

37 days left until closure

Configuration OK

Download Part B Templates

Visit our "How to" user guide

Visit our "H2020 Online Manual"

Edit Proposals' Forms

In this step you can edit the administrative forms and upload the proposal itself. ?

WARNING: This proposal contains changes that have not yet been submitted...

Administrative Forms

Edit will open the forms. ?

[edit forms](#) [view history](#) [print preview](#)

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 B	upload	✕ ?
Host Support Letter	upload	✕ ?
Extra Annex 3	upload	?
Extra Annex 4	upload	?
Extra Annex 5	upload	?
Extra Annex 6	upload	?
Extra Annex 7	upload	?
Extra Annex 8	upload	?
Extra Annex 9	upload	?
Extra Annex 10	upload	?

<< Step 4 - Parties [validate](#) [submit](#)

Click here to download the attachments below (Part B1 and B2, Letter of Commitment of the Host Institution), then upload them back here.

Whenever you can also go step back. Once you click on submit, even if you are not finished with the project proposal, you can always come back and edit the proposal again till the deadline.

Part A – Step by step

Proposal Submission Forms
European Research Council Executive Agency

Horizon 2020

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

Whenever you leave the form, save it.

Topic:

Type of action:

()

Proposal number:

Proposal acronym:

Deadline Id:

Table of contents

Proposal ID Acronym

1 - General information

You can edit the acronym here.

Topic

Call Identifier

Type of Action

Deadline Id

Acronym

Proposal title*

The title should be no longer than 200 characters to the non-specialist in your field.

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

Duration in months*

Duration must be between 1 - 60 months

Primary ERC Review Panel*

Secondary ERC Review Panel

(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

Part A – Step by step

European Commission - Research & Innovation - Participant Portal
Proposal Submission Forms
European Research Council Executive Agency

Go to

Proposal ID	Acronym	Short name
-------------	---------	------------

Contact address of the Host Institution and contact person

Organisation Legal Name

First name*	Last name*
E-Mail*	

Position in org.

Department ☐ Same as organisation

☐ Same as organisation address



Street

Town Postcode

Country



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

Part A – Step by step

  European Commission - Research & Innovation - Participant Portal Proposal Submission Forms European Research Council Executive Agency		Go to <input type="text"/>
Proposal ID <input type="text"/> Acronym <input type="text"/>		
4 - Ethics		
1. HUMAN EMBRYOS/FOETUSES		Page
Does your research involve Human Embryonic Stem Cells (hESCs) ?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
Does your research involve the use of human embryos?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
Does your research involve the use of human foetal tissues / cells?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
2. HUMANS		Page
Does your research involve human participants?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
Does your research involve physical interventions on the study participants?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
3. HUMAN CELLS / TISSUES		Page
Does your research involve human cells or tissues (other than from Human Embryos/ Foetuses, i.e. section 1)?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
4. PERSONAL DATA		Page
Does your research involve personal data collection and/or processing?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	

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 authorizations or permission to the project proposal.

Part A – Step by step

European Commission -
Research & Innovation - Participant Portal
Proposal Submission Forms
European Research Council Executive Agency

Go to

Proposal ID Acronym

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
	The form has not yet been validated, click "Validate Form" to do so!

You are at the end of Part A. If you are not sure whether you have completed everything correctly, click on "show error" or "validate form". Do not forget to save the modified data again.

Part A – Step by step

Print on paper bearing the official letterhead of the host institution

Commitment of the host institution for ERC Calls 2018^{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 entitled
<<acronym>> : <<title of the proposal>>

be retained.

Performance obligations of the *applicant legal entity* that will become the beneficiary of the H2020 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* commits itself to hosting [and engaging] the *principal investigator* for the duration of the grant to:

- a) ensure that the work will be performed under the scientific guidance of the *principal investigator* who is expected to devote:
 - in the case of a *Starting Grant* at least 50% of his/her total working time to the ERC-funded project (action) and spend
 - in the case of a *Consolidator Grant* at least 50% of his/her total working time in an EU Member State or Associated State
 - in the case of a *Advanced Grant* at least 50% of his/her total working time in an EU Member State or Associated State

We will need to know the acronym and name of the project. After signing the document, we will send you a scan which has to be uploaded to the system with other annexes.

This is a Letter of Commitment (LoC), which you downloaded as one of the B Part documents in the "edit proposal" section.

LoC should be signed by the rector, please contact the team of the European Centre or Research Support Office at your faculty.

Budget breakdown

- The budget consists of several categories:
 - A: direct costs
 - B: indirect costs
 - C: subcontracting
- Direct costs are divided into personal (several categories according to classification: PI, senior staff, administration, PhD. students ...), travel, equipment and other goods and services.
- Indirect costs are fixed as a flat rate: 25% of all direct costs.
- Subcontracting: you fill it in just in case you are hiring a third party for work related to the research.

Budget breakdown – direct costs

- All salaries should be estimated in so-called “super-gross salary”.
- by adding 9% (health insurance) and 25% (social insurance) to the gross salary you will get the “super-gross-salary”.
- 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 [CUNI salary regulation](#), which sets the maximum salary threshold for each category.
- Estimate the travel costs realistically and do not forget to include per diems in the calculation.
- You can include consumables, such as chemicals etc., into other direct costs, similarly open access costs.
- In case the amount of your grant exceeds € 325,000, your project must be audited. The audit fee can also be included into other direct costs (up to € 6,000).
- Please contact European Centre as soon as possible, we will guide you through the whole process.



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

More information:
www.ec.cuni.cz

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

European Centre



ec@cuni.cz



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