OECD Seminar on High Risk / High Reward Funding

The European Research Council (ERC)

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Information on the ERC:
erc.europa.eu

EuropeanResearchCouncil

ERC_Research

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What is the ERC?

The ERC supports excellence in Frontier Research through a bottom-up, individual-based, pan-European competition.

**Strategy**
- Support for the **individual scientists** based in Europe for at least 50%!
- **Global peer-review**
- No predetermined subjects (strict **bottom-up**)
- Support of **frontier research in all fields of science and humanities** privileging a **High Risk/High Reward approach**

**Legislation**
- Scientific governance: **independent Scientific Council** with 22 members including the ERC President with **full authority over the funding strategy** and the **evaluation**
- Support by the **ERC Executive Agency** (autonomous)
- **Scientific quality** as only criterion for selection aiming for excellence
ERC Grant Schemes

Starting Grants
- starters (2-7 years after PhD)
  - up to 1.5 M€ for 5 years

Consolidator Grants
- consolidators (7-12 years after PhD)
  - up to 2 M€ for 5 years

Advanced Grants
- track-record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years
  - up to 2.5 M€ for 5 years

Proof-of-Concept
- bridging gap between research - earliest stage of marketable innovation
  - up to 150 k€ for ERC grant holders

Synergy Grants (re-launched 2018)
- 2 – 4 Principal Investigators
  - up to 10 M€ for 6 years
Priority to Young Scientists

Two-thirds of ERC grants to early-stage Principal Investigators.

+ 50 000 PhD and post-doc researchers working in ERC teams.
Established by the European Commission

After 10 Years, a Success Story

Horizon 2020
European Union funding for Research & Innovation

Key figures
Almost 10 000 top researchers funded
> 60,000 researchers & other professionals hired in ERC teams

Scientific impact
> 6 000 articles among 1% most cited scientific journals

Open to the world
14 international initiatives for non-EU talent to join ERC teams

Prestigious prizes, e.g.
Nobel Prizes 7
Wolf Prizes 5
Fields Medals 4

Breakthroughs
73% of completed projects led to breakthroughs/major advances

ERC as a model
15 EU countries set up ERC-like structures/funding schemes

European Research Council
Executive Agency

Established by the European Commission

Horizon 2020
European Union funding for Research & Innovation
ERC Budget

ERC Budget 2024-2020
€ 13 billion
How to enhance HRHR projects

ERC’s approach:

- **Applicants** know that, in order to have a chance to be successful, they need to come up with a truly ambitious project;
- The **financial** support is substantial and for 5 years;
- **They** are **fully in control** of the way they want to develop their project;
- In case of requests to amend the project, **flexibility** is the rule;
- They can get closer to market thanks to Proof-of-Concept grants;
- **Evaluators**, who are fully responsible to decide which projects should be funded, are **strongly advised to take risks**;
- Repeatedly heard from **grantees** with **projects turned down** by their national agency because too risky were funded by the **ERC**.
Established by the European Commission

Top Funder in the World!

According to the Web of Science, among the 50 funders most frequently acknowledged by authors between 2007 and 2016, the ERC had:

- The highest category normalised citation impact,
- The highest percentage of papers in the world’s top 1%,
- The highest percentage of papers involving international co-authorship.

Output among Horizon 2020 Programmes
Ex-post Evaluations of ERC-funded Projects

Qualitative evaluation of completed ERC projects
Overall results for 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018

- A - Scientific breakthrough
- B - Major scientific advance
- C - Incremental scientific contribution
- D - No appreciable scientific contribution
Q6: Taking into account the state of the field at the time of funding, would you agree that this is a high-risk/high-gain project?

Q7: Do you consider that the risk component influenced the overall project results?