

Information for Applicants to the Proof of Concept Grant 2023 Call



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Horizon Europe

European Research Council (ERC)
ERC Proof of Concept Grants

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This document is published by the ERC Scientific Council on the [ERC website](#). It can also be downloaded from the [Funding & Tenders Portal \(F&T Portal\)](#).

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

The present document is based on the legal documents setting the rules and conditions for the ERC frontier research grants, in particular:

- the [ERC 2023 Work Programme¹](#),
- the European Research Council rules of submission, and the related methods and procedures for peer review and proposal evaluation relevant to the specific programme implementing Horizon Europe (hereinafter [ERC Rules of submission and evaluation under Horizon Europe](#)), and
- the [HE ERC MGA PoC Lump Sum - Multi & Mono²](#) (Multi-Beneficiary Model Grant Agreement for ERC Proof of Concept Lump Sum).

This document does not supersede the afore-mentioned documents, which are legally binding. Should there be any discrepancies between the aforementioned legal documents and this document, the former will prevail.

The European Commission, the ERC Executive Agency or any person or body acting on their behalf cannot be held responsible for the use made of this document.

Applicants can also consult the ERC-2023-PoC FAQs, available on the [Funding & Tenders Portal \(F&T Portal\)](#).

The [Guide for ERC Reviewers](#) – applicable to Proof of Concept Grants, provides practical information on the evaluation process.

National Contact Points (ERC NCPs) have been set up across Europe³ by the national governments to provide information and personalised support to ERC applicants in their native language. The mission of the ERC NCPs is to raise awareness, inform and advise on ERC funding opportunities as well as to support potential applicants in the preparation, submission and follow-up of ERC grant applications. For details on the ERC NCP in your country please consult the [ERC website](#) or the [Funding & Tenders Portal \(F&T Portal\)](#).

¹ European Commission C(2022)4861 of 11 July 2022.

² Specific rules for ERC actions are detailed in Annex 5 of the [Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement](#).

³ This applies to EU Member States and Associated Countries. Some other countries also provide this service.

**Highlights of important new features related to
proposal submission and evaluation for the
ERC Proof of Concept grant call in 2023**

The Proof of Concept grant is a complementary funding for Starting, Consolidator, Advanced and Synergy grantees.

The Proof of Concept grant is evaluated based on the sole criterion of excellence, which comprises three evaluation elements. The evaluation elements have been slightly modified.

ERC-2023-PoC, opens in calendar year 2022 and has three cut-off dates in 2023.

The Part B template has been modified.

The PoC grant remains a lump sum grant.

Abbreviations

AC – [Associated Country](#)⁴

ADG – [Advanced Grant](#)

COG – [Consolidator Grant](#)

EU MS – EU Member States

ERC WP – [ERC Work Programme 2023](#)

ERC panel – ERC Evaluation panel

ERC NCP – [ERC National Contact Points](#)

ERCEA – European Research Council Executive Agency

FAQs – [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

F & T Portal – [Funding & Tenders Portal](#) (Single Electronic Data Interchange Area (SEDIA))

HE – [European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation](#)⁵

HI – Host Institution

PI – Principal Investigator

PM – Panel Member

PIC – [Participant Identification Code](#)

PoC – [Proof of Concept Grant](#)

SEP – Submission and Evaluation of Proposals

STG – [Starting Grant](#)

SYG – [Synergy Grant](#)

⁴ Please check the Horizon Europe Programme Guide on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal for up-to-date information on the current position for Associated Countries. <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/horizon>

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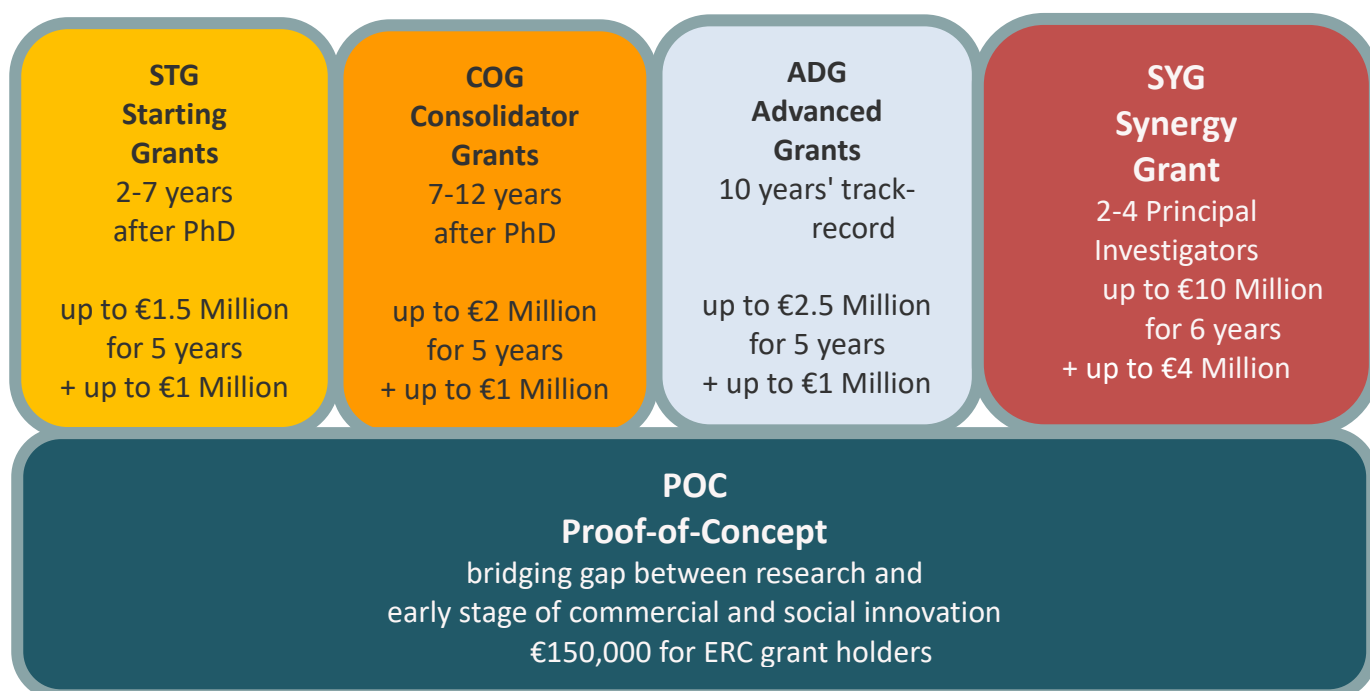
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HISTORY OF CHANGES		
Version	Publication date	Changes
1.1	15.07.2021	Initial version
1.2	22.07.2021	Updated version (call identifier on page 12 has been corrected, clarifications added to 2.2."Submission form", sections 1, 3 and 5)
1.3	16.11.2021	Updated version (2.3 "The PoC Proposal", under section 1a.i. Brief description of the idea to be taken to proof of concept, "The solution" has been corrected)
1.4	20.10.2022	Updated version (The Information for applicants document has been adjusted to the changes in the evaluation elements in accordance with the ERC Work programme 2023 and clarifications added to the sections on Gender Equality Plan, Career stages and the HE General MGA)

1. ERC PROOF OF CONCEPT GRANTS 2023

1.1 ERC POC FUNDING PRINCIPLES 2023

The [ERC Work Programme 2023](#) sets out the Objectives and Principles of ERC funding. The ERC's Proof of Concept Grant is a complementary funding only on offer to Principal Investigators that already benefit from an ERC main research grant (Starting Grant, Consolidator Grant, Advanced Grant or Synergy Grant). Frontier research often generates radically new ideas that drive innovation and business inventiveness and tackle societal challenges. The ERC PoC Grants aim at facilitating exploration of the commercial and social innovation potential of ERC funded research and are therefore available only to PIs whose proposals draw substantially on their ERC funded research.



The ERC PoC Grants aim at maximising the value of the excellent research that the ERC funds, by funding further work (i.e. activities which were not scheduled to be funded by the original ERC frontier research grant) to verify the innovation potential of ideas arising from ERC funded projects. The objective is to enable ERC-funded ideas to progress on the path from ground-breaking research towards innovation. The path from research to innovation may take different forms: e.g. patenting, creation of spin-outs, through research contracts, research collaborations, consultancy agreements, informal advice, public engagement, policy reports/contributions to policy etc. Innovations can also be commercialised through licenses to a new or existing company or through a venture funded start-up, depending on the nature of the invention/idea, its potential markets, and the inventor's plans for future involvement in the commercialisation. Innovations can also feed into ventures aimed at addressing social and environmental goals, including social entrepreneurs and voluntary and not-for-profit sectors.

This action is open to PIs already benefitting from an ERC main frontier research grant (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced or Synergy) of any nationality who intend to conduct their Proof of Concept activity in any EU Member State⁶ or Associated Country⁷.

The ERC PoC Grant would help among others:

- testing, experimenting, demonstrating, and validating the idea and enable further research covering exploitation aspects as well as research to carry these activities out and to address the weaknesses uncovered by them
- establishing viability, technical issues and overall direction
- clarifying IPR position and knowledge-transfer strategy
- providing feedback for budgeting and other forms of commercial discussion
- providing connections to later stage funding
- providing connections to potential stakeholders and end users
- covering initial expenses for establishing a company, or cost of other type of agreements

The financial contribution will be awarded as a lump sum⁸ of EUR 150 000 for a period of 18 months. The ERC expects that normally proof of concept activities should be completed within 12 months. However, to allow for those projects that require more preparation time, the grant agreements will be signed for 18 months. Extensions of the duration of proof of concept projects may be granted only exceptionally.

The lump sum offered will cover the beneficiaries' eligible (direct and indirect) costs⁹ for the project. If the project is implemented properly, the amounts will be paid regardless of the costs actually incurred.

1.2 ADMISSIBILITY AND ELIGIBILITY

Admissible and eligible proposals

All proposals must be complete, readable and accessible. They must be submitted by eligible PIs before the relevant call deadlines. Please see section 2.1 for an overview of a complete ERC PoC proposal. Proposals which do not meet these criteria may be declared inadmissible.

Eligible proposals must demonstrate the relation between the idea to be taken to proof of concept and the ERC frontier research project (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced or Synergy) in question.

All applications and the related supporting information are reviewed to ensure that all admissibility and eligibility criteria are met. The proposal's content should be related to the objectives of the relevant ERC call and must meet all its admissibility and eligibility requirements. Where there is a doubt about the admissibility or eligibility of a proposal, the peer review evaluation may proceed pending a final decision by the admissibility and eligibility review committee. The fact that a proposal is evaluated in such circumstances does not constitute proof of its admissibility or eligibility. If it becomes clear before, during or after the peer review evaluation phase, that one or more of the

⁶ Please consult the [list of EU Member States](#).

⁷ Please consult the [List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe](#) Please also check section international cooperation and association of the [Programme guide for Horizon Europe](#) for up-to-date information on the current position for Associated Countries.

⁸ In accordance with the [Decision authorising the use of lump sums for the European Research Council Proof of Concept actions](#) under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

⁹ The lump sum has been designed to cover the beneficiaries' personnel costs, subcontracting, purchase costs, other cost categories and indirect costs.

admissibility or eligibility criteria has not been met (for example, due to incorrect or misleading information), the proposal will be declared inadmissible or ineligible and it will be rejected.

Eligible Principal Investigator

This action is open to PIs already benefitting from an ERC main frontier research grant of any nationality who intend to conduct their Proof of Concept activity in any EU Member State or Associated Country. All PIs¹⁰ in an ERC main frontier research project are eligible to apply for an ERC PoC grant. Synergy Grant Principal Investigators are eligible to apply only with the written consent of all Principal Investigators in the same Synergy Grant project.

Principal Investigators in an ongoing ERC main frontier research project or whose grant has ended¹¹ less than 12 months before 1 January 2023 are eligible to apply to the **ERC-2023-PoC call**.

Eligible Host Institutions

The Host Institution (HI) must engage the PI for at least the duration of the project, as defined in the PoC grant agreement. It must either be established in an EU Member State or Associated Country as a legal entity created under national law, or it may be an International European Interest Organisation (such as CERN, EMBL, etc.), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) or any other entity created under EU law. International organisations with headquarters in an EU Member State or AC will be deemed to be established in this Member State or AC. Any type of legal entity, public or private, including universities, research organisations and undertakings can host PIs and their teams. To be eligible, legal entities from an EU MS or AC that are public bodies, research organisations or higher education institutions (including private research organisations and private higher education institutions) must have a gender equality plan (GEP) or an equivalent strategic document in place for the duration of the project. The gender equality plan or equivalent must fulfil the mandatory requirements listed in Annex 5 of the ERC Work Programme 2023. The ERC welcomes applications from PIs hosted by private for-profit research centres, including industrial laboratories. Normally the PI will be employed by the HI, but cases where, for duly justified reasons, the PI's employer cannot become the HI, or where the PI is self-employed, can be accommodated. The specific conditions of engagement will be subject to clarification and approval during the granting procedure or during the amendment procedure for a change of HI. During the granting process, the financial capacity of applicant legal entities will be assessed, if required¹².

As part of the application, the HI must provide a binding statement according to the template annexed to this document (see Section 4. Annex), proving its engagement to the PI for at least the duration of the PoC project. Proposals that do not include this institutional statement may be declared inadmissible.

¹⁰ Applicants that are subject to the administrative sanction of exclusion or are in one of the exclusion situations set out by the Financial Regulation 2018/1046 are banned from receiving EU grants and can NOT participate. See articles 136 and 141 of the Financial Regulation, as well as important information on possible exclusion and registration of economic operators in the Commission's Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) on the final page of the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#).

¹¹ Where the duration of the project fixed in the ERC grant agreement has ended.

¹² Applicants must have stable and sufficient resources to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects. The financial capacity of applicant legal entities will be verified in accordance with Article 198(5) of the Financial Regulation and Article 27 of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

The PI can submit the PoC proposal with a different HI than the one where the ERC main frontier research grant is currently (or was) implemented, provided that this other HI complies with the eligibility criteria described in this section.

Submission and eligibility restrictions

The restrictions for submission under the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#) are set out below. The Scientific Council may decide in the light of experience that different or comparable restrictions will apply in subsequent years.

The year of an ERC call for proposals refers to the Work Programme under which the call was published and can be established by its call identifier. A 2023 ERC call for proposals is therefore one that was published under the Work Programme 2023 and will have 2023 in the call identifier (for example ERC-2023-PoC). Ineligible or withdrawn proposals do not count against any of the following restrictions (please consult the [ERC Rules of submission and evaluation under Horizon Europe](#), section 2.2).

- A PI may submit only one application to the **ERC-2023-PoC** call. Inadmissible, ineligible or withdrawn applications do not count against this limit.
- If multiple submissions are made at different cut-off dates under **ERC-2023-PoC**, only the first eligible proposal will be evaluated.
- A Principal Investigator whose proposal was rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity in the calls for proposals under Work Programmes 2021 or 2022 may not submit a proposal to the ERC-2023-PoC call.
- A maximum of three Proof of Concept Grants may be awarded per StG, CoG, AdG project and a maximum of six Proof of Concept Grants per Synergy Grant project¹³.

Research Integrity

Cases of scientific misconduct such as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or misrepresentation of data¹⁴ may result in the rejection of the proposals in accordance with section 3.11 of the [ERC Rules of submission and evaluation under Horizon Europe](#). Please also note that plagiarism detection software is used to analyse all submitted proposals to detect similar proposals submitted by different PIs. A procedure has been put in place to assess alleged or suspected cases of scientific misconduct. Scientific misconduct may result in the rejection of the proposal from the current call and in a possible restriction on submission of proposals to future calls, as provided in the relevant ERC Work Programme¹⁵.

¹³ Proof of Concept projects for the same ERC main frontier research project can run in parallel.

¹⁴ For example, if in the list of publications, the order of authors does not appear as indicated in the original publications.

¹⁵ For the restrictions due to breach of research integrity under the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#) please see section Submission restrictions above.

1.3 EVALUATION PROCESS

The ERC's evaluation process has been carefully designed to identify excellence irrespective of gender, age, nationality or institution of the PI and other potential biases. The evaluations are monitored to guarantee transparency, fairness and impartiality in the treatment of proposals.

The ERC-2023-PoC call is a continuous call with three cut-off dates; an applicant may submit only one application for this call.

The PoC call has a single-stage submission and single-step evaluation procedure.

ERC grant applications can be submitted only in response to a '**call for proposals**'. Calls announced in the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#) are published on the [ERC website](#) and the [Funding & Tenders Portal \(F&T Portal\)](#). The provisional timing of evaluation will be updated on a regular basis on the [ERC website](#).

Please note that the foreseen submission deadlines could be modified after the publication of the calls. You are therefore invited to periodically consult the [F & T Portal update](#), where any modifications of the submission cut-off dates are indicated.

The submission and cut-off dates foreseen for ERC-2023-PoC are:

- **1st cut-off: 24th January 2023, 17.00 (Brussels local time)**
- **2nd cut-off: 20th April 2023, 17.00 (Brussels local time)**
- **3rd cut-off: 14th September 2023, 17.00 (Brussels local time)**

The evaluation will be conducted by independent external experts. These experts may work remotely and may if necessary meet as an evaluation panel on the application of excellence as the sole criterion of evaluation for selection of proposals for PoC Grant (as described in the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#)).

Resubmissions are evaluated as new proposals. Each ERC evaluation is independent from previous ones and the competition is different every year. The score and reviews received in a previous ERC call will not affect the outcome of the current submission and will not be shared with the experts. Applicants should refrain from referring to previous evaluations.

The sole evaluation criterion of excellence consists of the following evaluation elements:

Project

1.a Breakthrough innovation potential

1.b Approach and methodology

Principal Investigator

1.c Principal Investigator – strategic lead and project management

Experts will evaluate independently each admissible and eligible proposal and mark it as “very good”, “good” or “fail” for each of the three evaluation elements¹⁶.

In order to be considered for funding, proposals will have to be awarded a pass mark (“very good” or “good”) by a majority of independent experts on each of the three evaluation elements.

A proposal which fails one or more of the elements will not be ranked and will not be funded.

If there is not enough budget to fund all the proposals which pass all three evaluation elements, those proposals which pass all three evaluation elements will be ranked according to the marks (very good, good and fail) which they received from experts sorted by the following order:

- evaluation element 1.a (Breakthrough innovation potential),
- evaluation element 1.b (Approach and methodology), and finally by
- evaluation element 1.c (Principal Investigator - strategic lead and project management).

Proposals will be funded in order of this ranking. If necessary, experts will meet as an evaluation panel in order to determine a priority order for proposals which have the same ranking. PIs and applicant legal entities are provided with feedback on the outcome of the evaluation through an information letter and an evaluation report. The evaluation report indicates whether the proposal is retained for funding or not, and provides the “very good”, “good” or “fail” status for each of the three evaluation elements, the ranking range and the assessment of the evaluation elements by each external independent expert. **Comments by the individual external experts may reflect divergent views. Controversy and differences of opinions about the merits of a proposal are legitimate.**

After each evaluation, a report is prepared by the ERCEA services and made available to the Programme Committee. The report provides information on the proposals received, it includes names of Host Institutions and personal data i.e. names of applicant PIs, evaluation scores of all proposals, ranked lists as well as panel comments and individual reviews. A subset of information is also made available to the National Contact Points. The NCP report provides the names of the Host Institution and personal data, i.e. the name of the applicant PIs, evaluation scores of the proposals and ranked lists. Applicants have various rights as regards the processing of their personal data¹⁷.

A Seal of Excellence will be awarded to proposals that have received a pass mark in all three of the evaluation elements set out in this Work Programme, but cannot be funded due to lack of budget available to the call.

No contact with Reviewers

In accordance with section 3.2 of the [ERC Rules of submission and evaluation under Horizon Europe](#), any direct or indirect contact about the peer review evaluation of an ERC call between an applicant legal entity or a PI submitting a proposal on behalf of an applicant legal entity, and any independent expert involved in the peer review evaluation under the same call, in view of attempting to influence the evaluation process, is strictly forbidden. Such contact can constitute an exclusion situation and, may result in the decision of the ERCEA to reject the proposal concerned from the call in question, (Article 141 of the Financial Regulation).

In addition any contact with Peer Reviewers to obtain confidential information on the evaluation process is not allowed.

ERC Peer Reviewers are bound to confidentiality during as well as after the evaluation. Hence, they are not allowed to communicate about the evaluation and/or specific proposal(s) with the principal investigators or potential team members or persons linked to them even after the completion of the evaluation process.

1.4 ETHICS AND SECURITY

Ethics

Please see Annex A to [the ERC Rules of submission and evaluation under Horizon Europe](#) for a detailed description of the ERC Ethics Review procedure.

Every project funded by the ERC under Horizon Europe is subject to an ethics review process. The ethics review process is independent from the evaluation procedure and the evaluation panels do not have access to the ethics documents.

Please see Annex A to the ERC Rules of submission and evaluation under Horizon Europe for a detailed description of the ERC Ethics Review procedure. The process is aimed at ensuring that all relevant research and innovation activities under Horizon Europe comply with ethics principles and relevant national, Union and international legislation, including the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) and the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) and its Supplementary Protocols.

The main areas that are addressed during the ethics review process include:

1. Human embryonic stem cells and human embryos
2. Human participants
3. Human cells/tissues
4. Personal data
5. Animals
6. Non-EU countries
7. Environment, health and safety
8. Artificial Intelligence

When submitting their proposal, applicants must complete the Ethics Issues Table as part of the submission form and provide an ethics self-assessment and supporting documentation where needed as separate annex(es). Please see the [How to Complete your Ethics Self-Assessment document](#) for guidance. It is important to provide a complete overview of all ethics issues during the submission phase in order to speed up the ethics review process. Applicants should be aware that no grant agreement can be signed by ERCEA prior to a satisfactory conclusion of the ethics review procedure.

Security

In Horizon Europe applicants are requested to identify if the proposed activity will use and/or generate information which might raise security concerns. When submitting their proposal, applicants must complete the security issues table (section 4 of the online proposal submission form) and provide, if applicable, available supporting documentation (to be uploaded as separate pdf annexes). For proposals selected for funding, additional information regarding security issues may be requested at a later stage¹⁸.

¹⁸ Further guidance on tackling various security aspects and mitigating associated risks in research has been published by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation: Tackling R&I Foreign Interference: Staff Working Document, 2022 (<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/513746>).

1.5 MEANS OF REDRESS, ENQUIRIES AND COMPLAINT

Please see the section 3.9 of the [ERC Rules of submission and evaluation under Horizon Europe](#) for a detailed description of the admissibility, eligibility and evaluation review procedures and enquiries and complaints.

Means of redress:

Upon reception of the information letter with the evaluation report or with the results of the admissibility or eligibility review, the PI and/or the HI (applicant legal entity) may request for admissibility, eligibility or evaluation review, if there is an indication that the results of the admissibility and eligibility checks were incorrect or that there has been a procedural shortcoming or a manifest error of assessment in the evaluation.

A request can be made if the PIs and/or the HI consider that the applicable evaluation procedure has not been correctly applied to its proposal. The evaluation review procedure is not meant to call into question the judgement made by the review panel. It will look into procedural shortcomings and – in rare cases – into factual errors.

The information letter for unsuccessful and reserve list applicants will provide a link to be used by the PIs and/or the HI to introduce a complaint. The letter will specify a deadline for the receipt of any such complaints, which will be 30 days from the date of receiving the information letter¹⁹. A formal notification is considered to have been accessed by the applicant 10 calendar days after sending, if not accessed before in the system.²⁰

Request must be:

- related to the evaluation process, or admissibility/eligibility checks, for the call and grants in question;
- set out using the online form, including a clear description of the grounds for request;
- received within the time limit specified in the information letter;
- sent by the PI and/or the HI.

Requests that do not meet the above-mentioned conditions, or do not deal with the admissibility, eligibility or evaluation of a specific proposal, will not be admitted.

A redress committee may be convened to examine the request for the review of the admissibility, eligibility or evaluation process. The redress committee will bring together staff of the ERC Executive Agency with the requisite scientific, technical and legal expertise. The committee shall be chaired by and include staff of ERCEA who were not involved in the evaluation of the proposals. The committee's role is to ensure a coherent interpretation of requests, based on all available information related to the proposals and their evaluation, and fair and equal treatment of all applicants.

In the case of evaluation review procedure, the committee itself, however, does not re-evaluate the proposal. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the committee may review the evaluation report, the individual comments and examine the profile and expertise of the experts. The committee may also contact the panel member(s) concerned. The committee will not call into

¹⁹ Applicants of proposals selected for funding will normally not receive information on the means of redress in their information letter but if the applicant considers that there are grounds for such request, they can redress.

²⁰ Evaluation result letters are formal notifications. This means that deadlines triggered by these letters (evaluation review request, etc.) must be counted accordingly (i.e. access date + 1 day (event) + 30 days (deadline) OR sending date + 1 day (event) + 10 days (embargo period) + 30 days (deadline), if the letter was not accessed in the system).

question the scientific judgement of appropriately qualified panels of experts. In the light of its review, the committee will recommend a course of action to the Responsible Authorizing Officer (RAO) for the call. If there is clear evidence of a shortcoming that could affect the eventual funding decision, it is possible that all or part of the proposal will be re-evaluated.

Please note that:

- a partial or a total re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the quality assessment of a proposal;
- the committee may uphold the initial outcome if it concludes that the errors identified would not substantially affect the outcome of the evaluation nor the ranking of the project;
- the evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score;
- only one request at a time for evaluation review per proposal will be considered by the committee;
- all requests for evaluation review will be treated in confidence.

Other means of redress:

The above procedures do not prevent the applicants from using other means of redress, such as:

- requesting a legal review of the Agency decision under Article 22 of Council Regulation 58/2003²¹ ('Article 22 request'), within 1 month of receiving the ERCEA's letter ; or
- bringing an action for annulment under Article 263 of the TFEU²² ('Article 263 action') against the Agency, within 2 months of receiving the ERCEA's letter.

Applicants may choose which means of redress they wish to pursue²³. Applicants are asked not to take more than one formal action at a time.

Once the Agency/Commission communicates the final decision on an action, applicants can take a further action against that decision. Deadlines for further action will start to run from when applicants receive the final decision²⁴.

Other types of complaints on decisions affecting the involvement of applicants in the programme:

Any other complaint against a decision affecting the involvement of applicants in Horizon Europe shall be addressed to the Agency Director within 30 calendar days from the receipt of the communication of the Agency decision²⁵.

²¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 58/2003 of 19 December 2002 laying down the statute for executive agencies to be entrusted with certain tasks in the management of Community programmes, O J L 11, 16.01.2003, p.1.

²² Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (OJ C 326, 26.10.2012, p. 47–390).

²³ Even though applicants may freely choose which means of redress to pursue, first submitting a request for evaluation review will ensure that the applicants' case can be heard on all the above-mentioned possible instances.

²⁴ Please be aware that, as per Article 22 of Regulation 58/2003, reaching a final decision on an Article 22 request may generally take more than 30 days. Therefore, if you first file an Article 22 request you may not be able afterwards to submit an evaluation review request within the 30 days deadline. Please note as well that applicants of proposals included on the reserve list may not file an Article 22 request because their information letter does NOT constitute a final position concerning funding.

²⁵ A formal notification that has not been accessed within 10 calendar days after sending is considered to have been accessed by the applicant.

1.6 QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE CALL

You can find useful information on the ERC website and more specifically on the pages dedicated to the [Proof of Concept](#) Grant Call.

An extended set of [Frequently Asked Questions for the ERC calls](#) is available at the ERC website and on the [European Commission Funding & tender opportunities Portal Support Frequently Asked Questions](#). Questions can be filtered by category and programme, and they consist of answers to the most common questions on how to prepare and submit an ERC application.

You can also find on the funding page of the ERC website an [explanatory video](#) that will give you concrete information about the ERC application process for the Proof of Concept Grant Call, including frequently made mistakes and tips.

For additional questions related to the call, please contact the Proof of Concept Call coordination team: ERC-PoC-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu

For questions related to the compilation of the Ethics issues of the proposal, please contact the Ethics Support team: ERC-ETHICS-REVIEW@ec.europa.eu

For questions on Open Access to scientific publications and research data management, please see the section on Open Science in the Horizon Europe of the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions: [HE ERC MGA PoC Lump Sum - Multi & Mono](#) or contact ERC-OPEN-ACCESS@ec.europa.eu.

2. COMPLETING AN APPLICATION

2.1 OVERVIEW OF AN ERC PoC APPLICATION

An ERC PoC application is composed of:

- the administrative submission form (Part A);
- the proposal (Part B);
- the mandatory supporting documentation (HI support letter)
- if applicable, additional supporting documentation (letters of support or intent and any documentation related to ethics or security issues).

2.2 THE SUBMISSION FORM

The submission form is accessed via the call submission link in the [F & T](#) Portal. The electronic form has 5 sections (approximately 15 pages in total), which need to be completed before a submission can take place. Many fields are mandatory and specific to the ERC calls and we therefore advise you to create your draft proposal well in advance of the submission deadline. **All mandatory fields are marked in red if left empty. Failure to fill in any mandatory field will block submission.**

Section 1 – General Information contains information about the PoC proposal, including the acronym, title, and project duration. Furthermore, in this section you will provide an abstract that should give clear understanding of the objectives of the PoC proposal and how they will be achieved. The abstract will be used as a short description of your PoC proposal in the evaluation process. Please note that, in case your proposal is funded, this abstract will be published. It must therefore be short and precise and should not contain confidential information. You need to answer to the question whether this proposal (or a very similar one) has been submitted in the past 2 years in response to a call for proposals under any EU programme, including the current call. A 'similar' proposal or contract is one that differs from the current one in minor ways, and in which some of the present consortium members are involved. If so, you should provide the proposal reference or contract number (6 or 9 digits).

This section also contains general declarations related to the proposal and participation in Horizon Europe²⁶. NB: You do not need to tick the last declaration (10), as it refers only to the type of Lump Sum Grants with a detailed budget table, which is not applicable to the ERC Proof of Concept Lump Sum grant calls. When validating the form, validation check may show a warning, but you can just ignore it. This will not prevent you from submitting your application.

The Principal Investigator fills out this section on behalf of the Host Institution and "We" is understood as both "the Principal Investigator" and "the Host Institution".

Section 2 – Participants & contacts contains information about the PI and the HI, one section appearing for each. The name and e-mail of contact persons including the PI and HI contact are **read-only**. Further details such as ORCID number, researcher ID, other ID, last name at birth, gender, nationality etc., should be filled for the PI as well as the address and telephone number of each contact person.

²⁶ Please note that the ERCEA may at any time during the evaluation process request the applicants to provide the written consent mentioned in the declarations. These consents should not be submitted with the application, but the applicant must obtain the written consent from all participants prior to the call submission deadline.

- Gender equality plan (GEP): ‘yes/no’ tick box question to be filled in by the HI contact person. Only Public bodies, Higher education institutions and Research organisations must answer this question. This answer will not affect the evaluation of the project. The requirement of having a gender equality plan (with minimum prerequisites²⁷) applies for the ERC 2023 calls (see Annex 5 of the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#)). Please note, that the absence of the gender equality plan will prevent the signature of the grant agreement for the ERC 2023 Calls. Person in charge of the proposal (Principal Investigator): on this page there is a new field on the ‘career stage’ of the PI. This information will not be provided to the evaluators and it will not be evaluated. The field on the career stages refers to the ones defined in Frascati 2015 manual (see below). Please choose the appropriate option:
 - Category A – Top grade researcher: the single highest grade/post at which research is normally conducted. Example: ‘Full professor’ or ‘Director of research’.
 - Category B – Senior researcher: Researchers working in positions not as senior as top position but more senior than newly qualified doctoral graduates (ISCED level 8). Examples: ‘associate professor’ or ‘senior researcher’ or ‘principal investigator’.
 - Category C – Recognised researcher: the first grade/post into which a newly qualified doctoral graduate would normally be recruited. Examples: ‘assistant professor’, ‘investigator’ or ‘post-doctoral fellow’.
 - Category D – First stage researcher: Either doctoral students at the ISCED level 8 who are engaged as researchers, or researchers working in posts that do not normally require a doctorate degree. Examples: ‘PhD students’ or ‘junior researchers’ (without a PhD).

Section 3 – Budget contains information about the requested EU contribution standard lump sum pre-fixed by a [European Commission decision](#)²⁸ at EUR 150 000. Do not include other financial information here. In case of several beneficiaries, the applicant must provide a breakdown of the lump sum showing the share per beneficiary (and any linked third party). This estimated lump sum breakdown by beneficiary will become part of the grant agreement²⁹. Before submitting your proposal, please double check that the Total requested grant amount is EXACTLY EQUAL to EUR 150 000. A separate warning comes up at the time of submission, which is just a reminder to all applicants to check their budget entries.

Section 4 – Ethics and security consists of the ethics issues table, and the security issues table. **The ethics issues table** serves to identify any ethical aspects of the proposed work. This table must be completed even if there are no issues (simply confirm that none of the ethical issues apply to the proposal). Please note that, in case you answer YES to any of the questions, you are requested to provide an Ethics Self-Assessment and additional ethics documentation – if applicable, as detailed in the [Ethics Self-assessment step by step](#). Please refer to section [1.4](#) of this document for further details.

²⁷ Public GEP: formal document published on the institution’s website and signed by the top management, addressing the following issues:

- Dedicated resources: commitment of human resources and gender expertise to implement it.
- Data collection and monitoring: sex/gender disaggregated data on personnel and students and annual reporting based on indicators.
- Training: Awareness raising/trainings on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers.
- Minimum areas to be covered and addressed via concrete measures and targets:
 - work-life balance and organisational culture;
 - gender balance in leadership and decision-making;
 - gender equality in recruitment and career progression;
 - integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content;
 - measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.

²⁸ C(2018)5960 of 18.9.2018

²⁹ [HE Model Grant Agreement: HE ERC MGA PoC Lump Sum - Multi & Mono](#)

The **security issues table** serves to identify if the proposed activity will use and/or generate information which might raise security concerns. The table provided must be completed by answering YES or NO to all questions. Where necessary and applicable, you are requested to provide available documentation as annexes. For proposals selected for funding, additional information regarding security issues may be requested at a later stage.

Section 5 – Other questions contains declarations related to eligibility and permission statements on sharing evaluation data. The data-related consents are entirely voluntary. In addition, this section contains a specific declaration as regards the consent obtained from participants and researchers³⁰.

This section also contains the explanation of the relation between the funded ERC main research grant and the proposed PoC. Answers to these 3 questions (end date, number and panel of the related ERC main frontier research grant) are compulsory and will be used for eligibility review. NB: End date of the related ERC project: please double check the eligibility window for this call in the [ERC 2023 Work Programme](#). The number of the ERC Grant is a 6 or 9 digits number. For the Panel under which the original ERC grant was evaluated, you can indicate the Panel acronym (eg: PE6, LS9, SH2, etc) or its name and/or keywords (e.g.; PE1 Mathematics; SH3 -The Social World and its Diversity). See also: List of Primary Panel Structure - Annex 1 of the ERC Work Programme 2023.

2.3 THE POC PROPOSAL

The PoC proposal has to be presented in the form of the so-called "Part B" following the template provided in the submission system and its use **is strongly recommended**. Each proposal page shall carry a header presenting the **PI's last name** and the **acronym** of the proposal.

Important Notice: Please be aware that there is only one evaluation step. The "Part B" must contain all the information required to evaluate your proposal.

In fairness to all applicants, **the page limits of 10 pages will be strictly applied**. Only the material that is presented within these limits will be evaluated. External experts will be asked to read only the material presented within the page limits, and will be under no obligation to read beyond them.

The following parameters **must** be respected for the layout:

Page Format	Font Type	Font Size	Line Spacing	Margins
A4	Times New Roman Arial or similar	At least 11	Single	2 cm side 1.5 cm top and bottom

The activities to be funded should draw substantially on the ERC-funded research project (whose ID number has to be indicated in the submission form 'Part 1. General Information'), but they should not aim at extending the original research or predominantly concerned with overcoming technical obstacles.

The funding will cover activities aimed at exploring the pathway from ground-breaking research towards innovation, including social innovation or socially valuable proposition. This includes work

³⁰ The applicant PI will have to declare that they have the written consent of all participants on their involvement and the content of their proposal, as well as of any researcher mentioned in the proposal on their participation in the project (either as team member, collaborator, other PI or member of the advisory board). **Synergy Grant Principal Investigators are eligible to apply only with the written consent of all Principal Investigators in the same Synergy Grant project.** Please note that the ERCEA may request the applicant PI at any time during the evaluation, to provide proof of the written consent obtained prior to the call submission deadline.

required to prepare the translation of the idea into application, as well as research required to test, validate and develop the idea further towards exploitation.

The evaluation of admissible and eligible proposals will look into ideas stemming from ERC-funded projects and will select among them the most competitive for further development towards an innovation.

Part B - Sections 1.a, 1.b, and 1.c:

Please, use the online Word template provided in the F&T Portal submission page for the call. The overall page limit is 10 pages, excluding references.

Section 1.a: The idea – Breakthrough Innovation potential (max. 3 pages excluding the proposal title, reference to the PoC call and name of the Part B present on the first page, above the section)

This section shall describe the idea to be taken to proof of conception a few words (abstract) and the breakthrough innovation potential and high risk/high gain aspect of the proposed idea. The structure helps the PI to outline the problem addressed in the proposal and to present a solution to solve it. It will be used to assess the evaluation elements 1.a: Breakthrough innovation potential.

1a.i. Brief description of the idea to be taken to proof of concept:

The problem: Describe the problem or the need that the idea is aiming to solve or alleviate

The solution: Explain how the idea will solve or alleviate the problem or the need and the meaning that this will make. A clear value proposition should be included, explaining how the idea solves users' problems or improves their situation.

The origin: Briefly describe the ERC-funded project from which the idea is substantially drawn and briefly demonstrate the relation between the idea and the ERC-funded project in question.

Give an "abstract-like" description of your PoC project, explaining the idea and the expected outcomes of the project. This description should be understandable for a non-specialist in your field.

1a.ii. Demonstration of Breakthrough Innovation Potential:

Describe how the idea has the potential to drive innovation and business inventiveness and/or tackle societal challenges.

Describe in detail how the project outcomes will be innovative or distinctive. This section should include a clear explanation of why the solution proposed is new compared to what already exists. A clear value proposition should be included, explaining why potential users or sponsors should choose this solution and no other existing. Describe any competing products or solutions.

1a.iii. Demonstration of the high-risk/high-gain idea:

Explain how the idea, if successful, will result in breakthrough innovation.

Describe which are the aspects that may be difficult to overcome or what are the features that may require development of new approaches.

Section 1b: Approach and Methodology (max. 6 pages)

This section shall describe the approach and proposed methodology of the Proof of Concept project. Describe how the project will make progress on the path from ground-breaking research towards innovation. Demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of the project. Describe the planning of the proposed activities, timescale and resources, especially the team that will conduct the activities. You should demonstrate the relevance of the approach chosen for establishing the technical and commercial/societal feasibility of the project. Describe the proposed methodology including any key intermediate goals. Overall, explain and justify the approach and methodology in relation to the innovation. It will be used to assess the evaluation element 1.b: Approach and Methodology.

1b.i. Outline the approach and methodology to explore the innovation potential of your ERC-funded research

Describe the chosen pathway from research to innovation (e.g. patenting, creation of spinouts, licensing agreements, research contracts, research collaborations, consultancy agreements, informal advice, public engagement, policy reports/contributions to policy, and more) and explain your choice of pathway.

1b.ii Describe the activities exploring the pathway from ground-breaking research towards innovation: *(plans for validation activities and related research, knowledge transfer, involving partners and potential end users).*

This may include (where applicable³¹) proposed plans to:

- **Test, experiment, demonstrate and validate the effectiveness of the project's outcomes (or of the idea)** *(e.g. testing, experimenting, technical reports or any other form of validation to confirm that the solution is effective, efficient, sustainable, or appropriate).*
- **Undertake research** required to carry out the above activities and to address the weaknesses uncovered by them.
- **Clarify the IPR position and strategy³² or knowledge transfer strategy** *(e.g. patenting, creation of spin-outs, licensing agreements, research contracts, research collaborations, consultancy agreements, informal advice, public engagement, policy reports/contributions to policy, and more).*
- **Involving industrial partners, societal or cultural organisations, policy makers or any other potential stakeholders supporting the translation of research results into innovation. Describe the level of relationship with entities mentioned in your proposal. If you have an established working relationship with any of them, describe its nature. If such contacts already exist, include supporting documentation like letters of support or intent from the**

³¹ "where applicable" does not mean you should skip these points if not applicable. In this case, explain why it does not apply to the project (is it out of scope or has it already been achieved?) in order for the evaluators to understand why this issue is not addressed in the frame of the Proof of Concept project.

³² Any application for funding of IPR activities under the ERC Proof of Concept will not discharge beneficiaries from their prior obligations under their pre-existing ERC Grant Agreement in respect of protecting IPR capable of industrial or commercial application. If any foreground was potentially protectable in the pre-existing ERC project, beneficiaries had the legal obligation to seek for adequate and effective protection according to the [Horizon Europe Regulation](#) and to the [Multi & Mono Model Grant Agreement for Lump Sum Grants](#).

relevant stakeholders. These letters of support or intent can be uploaded in .pdf as annexes to the proposal, which will be provided to the evaluation panel reviewers and will be part of their assessment of the feasibility and effectiveness of the project.

- **Assess the potential “end users” of the expected innovation.** Who would be using the output? What would be the expected size of the group or market?

1b.iii. Plan of the proof of concept - Description of the Action:

Grants to be awarded under this action (Proof of Concept), shall exclusively take the form of a standard lump sum pre-fixed **at EUR 150 000** by a European Commission decision³³.

The Action description shall present a detailed project plan including clearly identified objectives, and a description of work. The description of work must demonstrate that the timescale and resources are appropriate for the implementation and feasibility of the project. It should include a description of the resources and a description of the team.

- Provide a narrative description of the resources planned for each activity. Examples of resources: the type of project staff working on a task and the estimated effort (person-months), type of equipment and consumables required for the project implementation, staff travel requirements, etc.
- Do NOT present any breakdown of the lump sum with cost figures per category. This means that no cost figures should appear. Applicants should be able to justify the good use of the lump sum for the resources described. The overall value of the PoC action may be higher than the lump sum if covered by additional contributions. If so, please specify these so that the reviewers understand that part of the project activities will be financed through additional funding.
- The description of work must demonstrate that the resources are appropriate and necessary for the implementation and feasibility of the project and are properly justified. The evaluation panel experts assess the described resources carefully.

Description of the Action and timescale:

- Demonstrate the feasibility of the planned activities within the timescale planned for the implementation of the proposed project:
- Justify the project plan (where applicable, broken down into activities e.g. validating results, testing in real world contexts, clarifying IPR or knowledge transfer position and strategy, competitive/market analysis, plans for contacts with commercial and/or societal partners etc.) with clear objectives, task description and milestones representing the completion of each task
- Present a GANTT chart and/or milestones table, allowing effective monitoring over the project period.

Description of the resources:

- Give a narrative description of the resources allocated for each activity. *Examples of resources: e.g. the type of project staff working on a task and the estimated effort (person-*

³³ [Decision authorising the use of lump sums for the European Research Council Proof of Concept actions](#) under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

months), type of equipment and consumables required for the project implementation, staff travel requirements, etc.

- Justify that the resources are appropriate for the planned work.

The resources should NOT be described financially. Do NOT present any breakdown of the lump sum with cost figures per category. No cost figures should appear. Applicants should be able to justify the good use of the lump sum for the resources described.

Description of the team (including the PI):

Describe the size and nature of the team, indicating, where appropriate, the key team members and their roles. The participation of team members engaged by another host institution³⁴ should be justified in relation to the additional resources this may impose to the project.

- Describe the team and their achievements and experience in relation to the approach you will be taking.
- Describe the roles of all team members within your project. What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the team?

For all types of third-party involvement (purchases, in kind contributions, subcontracts and linked third parties), the **costs** are **ALL covered** by the lump sum. NO other costs will be reimbursed.

The rules on subcontracting for ERC POC Lump Sum actions are in principle the same as for the General HE MGA (see Article 9.3 [Option 2]).

The estimated costs for subcontracting should NOT be included in Annex 1. Annex 2 is the lump sum for mono-beneficiary action or the lump sum breakdown (in percentage for each beneficiary) for multi-beneficiary actions).

The principles of best value for money and no conflict of interest are not explicitly mentioned in Article 9.3. Nonetheless, they must still be complied with and confirmed by the beneficiaries at granting stage.

The ERC supports the principle of open access to the published output of research, including research data and data related products. The terms and conditions laid down in the Model Grant Agreement used for ERC actions address how scientific publications must be made available through Open Access. Applicants should be aware that it will be mandatory to provide Open Access (free of charge, online access for any user) to all peer-reviewed scientific publications relating to results from ERC projects funded through this call. This includes peer-reviewed book chapters and long-text publications such as monographs, edited collections, critical editions, scholarly exhibition catalogues, or PhD theses. Please see Article 16.3 of the ERC MGA PoC Lump Sum - Multi & Mono for more details, or contact ERC-OPEN-ACCESS@ec.europa.eu.

The ERC PoC lump sum should include the provision of immediate Open Access to publications (article processing /book processing) that occur during the lifetime of the project. When drafting the Plan of activities, it is highly advisable to consider describing this. In addition, the ERC recommends that all funded researchers follow best practice by retaining files of research data produced and used, and are prepared to share these data with other researchers when not bound by copyright restrictions, confidentiality requirements, or contractual clauses.

³⁴ The participation of entities established in non-associated third countries is limited to entities whose participation is deemed essential (see Article 23.2.(b) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/695 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination).

Section 1.c: The Principal Investigator: strategic lead and project management

(max 1 page excluding the risk mitigation table)

This sections describes the PI's strategic lead and project management in the project: how the PI will take the strategic lead of the project, what are their past experience(s) (if any) and how much time they are willing to devote to it. Please note that for PoC Grants, there is no minimum commitment percentage of the working time required to the PI. However, in the grant agreement, PIs must enter a minimum of their working time, as the ERC PoC project shall be performed under their guidance. It is essential that the cumulative percentage commitment that the PI spends on the ERC PoC action (at the time of granting) and on the main ERC StG/CoG/AdG/SyG Grant (if still ongoing) does not exceed 100%.

This section describes also the organisational structure and decision-making process and their justification in relation to the complexity and scale of the project.

This section will be used to assess the evaluation element 2: Strategic lead and project management of the Principal Investigator.

The Strategic Lead:

- Describe how you will take the strategic lead of the project.

The Project Management:

- Describe the organisational structure and the decision-making process.
- Explain why these are appropriate to the complexity and scale of the project.
- Describe what can go wrong in the project and present a plan for the identification and acceptance or off-setting of possible risks linked to the project idea (e.g. scientific events such as if a test or an experiment fails).
- Present a plan for unforeseen events of non-scientific/technical nature, including back-up procedures, emergency response and ex-post recovery (e.g. if a key person of the team leaves or you cannot access a facility).
-

Use this risk mitigation table to summarise the information in this section

Description of the risk	Proposed risk-mitigation measures

–

2.4 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

A scanned copy of the following supporting documentation needs to be submitted with the proposal by uploading them electronically in PDF format:

- The HI (applicant legal entity) must confirm its association with and its support to the project and the PI. As part of the application the HI must provide a binding statement that the conditions of independence are already fulfilled or will be provided to the PI if the application is successful. The HI support letter is part of the zip-file available in the submission system, or can be found in the Annex to this document. The provided letter template needs to be used and should be printed on the paper with the official letterhead of the HI, signed (blue ink or digital), stamped (in case of blue ink signature only) and dated by the HI's legal representative (name, function and email address). **Proposals that do not include this institutional statement may be declared inadmissible.**
- Where applicable, letters of support or intent from the relevant stakeholders.
- Where necessary and applicable, the applicant(s) shall provide available documentation such as: approvals from relevant ethics committee(s), regulatory approval(s) or authorisation(s) from the competent national or local authority(ies) in the country(ies) in which the project is to be carried out, templates of information sheets and informed consent forms, etc. If such documentation is available and provided with the application at submission stage, it may help speed up the ethics review process following evaluation. Please note that the ethics self-assessment is now included in section 4 of the online proposal submission form (and not any more as an annex).
- Where necessary and applicable, the applicant shall provide documents related to the security issues at submission stage. For proposals selected for funding, additional information regarding security issues may be requested at a later stage.

All annexes, including the HI support letter, and where relevant any letter of intent or support, or documents in case of ethical or security issues, should be provided and uploaded as separate pdf documents. They do not count towards the maximum page limit for Part B.

Copies of official documents can be submitted in any of the EU official languages. **Document(s) in any other language must be provided together with a certified translation into English or into any other official EU language.**

Please, provide only the documents requested above. Unless specified in the call, any hyperlinks to other documents, embedded material, and any other documents (company brochures, CVs of team members, reports, audio, video, multimedia etc.) will be disregarded.

3. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

3.1 IMPORTANT INFORMATION BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Regularly consult the [F & T](#) Portal call page for updated information on the calls.
- Make sure that the personal information added in the Submission Form is accurate as this information is used to personalise the communications to applicants and the Evaluation Reports.
- In case of technical problems with the submission system please contact EC-FUNDING-TENDER-SERVICE-DESK@ec.europa.eu or get in touch with the **helpdesk** directly on **+32 (2) 29 92222** to receive immediate assistance.
- Registration and submission via the F&T Portal submission system should be done as early as possible and well in advance of the call deadline. **Applicants, who wait until shortly before the close of the call to start uploading their proposal, take a serious risk that the uploading will not be concluded in time and that their submission will fail.**
- Only the person creating the draft proposal will have the right to manage the access rights of other people to the proposal. The person who creates the proposal will be able to modify any parts of the proposal and to submit it. Further contacts will only be able to edit the parts related to their personal data.
- **Be aware that only one person should work on the forms at any given time.** If two persons work on the forms at the same time, in case of a save conflict, the last save wins, which means that you risk overwriting changes made by another person. We therefore recommend that you give 'read-only' access to your partners/additional contact persons (other contacts) unless it is absolutely necessary to grant full access. Please remember that the Main administrative contact person has full access – it is not possible to grant them 'read-only access'.
- Up to the call deadline, it is possible to re-edit, download or withdraw a proposal. **ONLY the last version of your proposal submitted before the deadline will be evaluated;** no later version can be accepted and no earlier version can be recovered from the submission system. Once the deadline has passed, no further additions, corrections or resubmissions are accepted. However, a read-only access to the submitted proposal is available for 90 days after the call deadline.
- **Do submit your proposal as early as possible** (at least 48 hours prior to the deadline of the call) to avoid being confronted with last issues shortly before the call deadline. There is no reason in delaying the submission for confidentiality concerns as the system does not allow any access to the proposals before call deadline (other than to selected data that is part of the Submission and Evaluation of Proposals Assent Disclaimer).
- In some rare occasions, the proposal may be altered while converted into a PDF file. Before uploading the file, please check that everything is correct. Additionally, please download and verify all uploaded files in due time before the submission deadline.

Submission is deemed to occur only if the sequence described in point 3.2 below has been followed and not when the applicant starts uploading the proposal.

3.2 HOW TO APPLY

ERC grant applications can only be submitted in response to a 'call for proposals' and only via the Electronic Submission Service. Calls announced in the ERC Work Programme 2023 are published on the [ERC website](#) and the [F & T Portal](#).

USER GUIDANCE

- proposals must be submitted electronically using the electronic submission system of the web-based [Funding & tender](#) portal³⁵
- the [user guide](#) of the Submission Service is available online;
- the ['IT HOW TO'](#) wiki site provides an online IT manual with screenshots;
- the HE [Online Manual](#) describes the standard process of proposal submission.

The submission of an ERC proposal includes 6 steps. For each submission step please find consult these above-mentioned guides³⁶.

[Step 1 and 2](#) – Logging in and Selecting a Topic

To be able to submit a proposal and, in general to login to the F & T Portal, you must first register an EU Login account (step 1). Each time you access the proposal for editing, this user ID is requested. The same user ID is used for all later interactions with the ERCEA, including notification of the results of the evaluation. Under 'Search Topics' you may search for 'ERC' to select an open ERC call (step 2). Soon after the opening of the call you may access the Electronic Submission Service via the PP call page. The 'Start Submission' button is available in the 'Submission Service' section of the call. When you click 'Start Submission' and confirm the call selection, you will arrive to Step 3 – Create a Draft proposal.

[Step 3](#) – Create a draft proposal

At this step, you fill in pre-registration data for the proposal. These details will be used by the ERCEA in order to plan the evaluation. You will not have access to this page again once it is completed and you have progressed to Step 4, but certain data, such as Acronym and Short Summary (abstract) can be modified at a later stage (at step 5, when editing the administrative form). **Be careful to choose the correct Participant Identification Code (PIC) number for your Host Institution.** An [online tool](#) is available to search for existing PICs and the related organisations. Organisations not yet having a PIC must self-register (via the same page) before starting the application process.

[Step 4](#) – Manage your related parties and/or Edit contact details

At this step you MUST enter the name and e-mail of the PI and the Main Host Institution Contact person³⁷. You may also add the LEAR as a contact person (e.g. as a team member with read-only rights). These data are saved into the administrative form where they cannot be edited. You may at any point return to Step 4 of the submission to add or delete any contact person or to change the

³⁵ In duly justified exceptional circumstances the ERCEA may authorise submission by other means than the electronic submission system.

³⁶ The Electronic Submission Service is used across all the funding schemes of the European Commission, thus the guidelines provided may contain a nomenclature which is not for the ERC funding schemes (e.g. there is no such a thing as 'Consortium' in any of the ERC grants funding schemes). Thus for the correct nomenclature, please refer to this document.


³⁷ Be careful to type the correct e-mail address of the PI and all contact persons at this step. Please note that if the Principal Investigator and the administrative contact person is the same person (because the PI is self-employed), you must use two different e-mail addresses, as the system does not allow two identical e-mail addresses to be entered.

access rights. Remember to save your data before leaving Step 4. Once the coordinator saves the changes, an automatic invitation is sent to all contacts' e-mail addresses. The invited persons can access the proposal after logging in to the F & T Portal – with the EU login account linked to the given e-mail address – under the 'My Proposals' tab.

If they have not yet registered an EU login account, the PI or the applicant legal entity's contact person will receive an activation e-mail inviting them to activate their EU login account. Following to this first activation, the EU login account will be maintained for following communications or feedback.

In order to be able to submit your proposal after saving changes made in Step 4 (Parties), you have to re-open the administrative form ('Edit forms' button), revise the changes, validate and save the form. Failure to do so will prevent you from submitting your proposal. Further details are available in the Submission Service user manual.

Step 5 – Edit and complete the proposal

This step is the core of the submission process, as from this step, you **can edit the online administrative** proposal submission **forms**, view the history, print the draft proposal, **download templates, upload files** and **submit** the proposal by clicking on the relevant buttons. Guidance on how to fill in the administrative forms is provided directly in the form as ghost text for the single entries or as additional help text hidden behind question-marks . Some parts of the form will be prefilled based on the data entered at pre-registration or in the Beneficiary Register. Please use the functionality '**Validate form**' button to check the validity and completeness of your data. Any warning or error will be listed at the end of the validated form.

Further information on the preparation of the application (the online administrative forms and Proposal Parts B) is given in [section 2](#) of this document.

- **All files must be uploaded in the submission system as PDF ('portable document format'). Other file formats will not be accepted by the system.** Irrespective of any page limits specified in this document, there is an **overall limit of 10 Mbytes to the size of each uploaded document (Part B and supporting documentation)**. However, it is advised to limit the size of Part B of 2 Mbytes each.
- Unless specified in the call, embedded material and any other documents (company brochures, scientific papers, reports, audio, video, multimedia, etc.) sent either electronically or by post to the ERCEA or uploaded directly in [F & T](#) Portal will be disregarded.

There are also restrictions to the name given to the Part B files: use alphanumeric characters; special characters and spaces must be avoided. You are advised to clean your document before converting it to PDF (e.g. accept all tracked changes, delete notes). Check that your conversion software has successfully converted all the pages of your original document (e.g. there is no problem with page limits or page view), and that captions and labels have not been lost from your diagrams.

Completing the Proposal submission forms in the submission system and uploading all the necessary files does not yet mean that your proposal is submitted (mandatory files: Part B , Host Institution support letter and – if applicable: supporting documentation for ethics and security issues). Once there is a consolidated version of the proposal, the '**SUBMIT**' button **must be pressed**. The system performs a limited automatic validation of the proposal. Any problems such as missing data, wrong file format or excessive file size will appear as a list of warnings and/or errors on the screen. You may submit your proposal with warnings (marked in yellow), but it is not possible to submit a proposal until all errors (marked in red) are corrected. Please note that the electronic

checks by the submission system do not replace the formal admissibility and eligibility review and do not confirm that the contents of these files respond to the requirements of the call.

Step 6 – The Proposal Submitted page

Reaching this step means that the proposal is submitted (i.e. sent to the ERCEA for evaluation). It does not mean that the proposal is valid, admissible and eligible in all respects. Within a few minutes of submission your proposal will be available for download with an e-receipt in the system. You will receive a confirmation e-mail with the summary data of the submitted proposal. The mail can end up in the spam folder or be blocked by the anti-spam system of your organisation. This automatic message is not the official acknowledgement of receipt. In Step 6 you can re-edit the proposal, going back to Step 5. **You may continue to modify the proposal and submit revised versions overwriting the previous one right up until the call deadline.** The sequence above must be repeated each time. The most recent version of your proposal submitted before the deadline is the one which will be evaluated. No earlier version can be recovered from the submission system.

Check if the proposal is complete. Once submitted, it is recommended to verify the proposal and its content by downloading all the submitted files. We strongly advise that you **submit** a first version of your proposal **at least 48 hours in advance of the call deadline**. Incomplete proposals (where parts or sections of the proposal and/or the host institution's commitment statement are missing) may be declared inadmissible and will not be evaluated³⁸. The proposal must be submitted **before the relevant deadline of the call**.

Warning: Please note that in the last hours prior to call closure, the download option of checking your submitted proposal may be disabled due to a high pressure on the system. In this case the ERCEA will inform the applicants via the call page on the [F & T Portal](#) (under 'call summary') that the function has been disabled. **If the e-receipt and download option have been disabled, you may review your submitted proposal by going back to Step 5 to check the data in the administrative forms and click on 'View History' to verify which attachments have been uploaded.**

3.3 HOW TO WITHDRAW A PROPOSAL

To withdraw a proposal before the call deadline use the "withdraw proposal" button from the 'My proposals' tab when logged in at the **F & T Portal**. After the call deadline proposals may be withdrawn at any moment **until** the day preceding the panel meetings where a final decision on the outcome of the evaluation of the proposal is established. A withdrawn proposal will not be considered for evaluation nor count against possible re-application restrictions as set out in the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#).

To withdraw a proposal **after the call deadline**, please send an e-mail to the call-specific mailbox ERC-PoC-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu and include a signed scanned letter requesting the formal withdrawal. The letter should mention the name and the acronym of the proposal as well as the call identifier (for example ERC-2023-PoC). In the case of two or more proposals submitted by the same PI, the ERCEA services may ask the PI to withdraw one or more of those proposals. In the case of absence of reaction by the PI to this request, only the first eligible proposal will be evaluated.

³⁸ See also section 2.4 'Admissibility and eligibility check' in the [ERC Rules of Submission](#) and in the section "Proposal submission and description" of the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#).

4.1 ANNEX 1

HOST INSTITUTION SUPPORT LETTER TEMPLATE 2023

(Print on paper bearing the official letterhead of the host institution)

COMMITMENT OF THE HOST INSTITUTION FOR ERC 2023 POC Call ^{39, 40}

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 in case the application is successful>>, which is the applicant legal entity,

confirms its intention to engage the following 'principal investigator'
<<please fill in here the name of the principal investigator>>

should their proposal be retained.

Performance obligations of the applicant legal entity that will become the beneficiary of the HE 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 host and engage the Principal Investigator for the duration of the grant and to:

- a) implement the action, as it will be described in Annex 1 and in compliance with the provisions of the Agreement, and all legal obligations under applicable EU, international and national law;
- b) ensure that the work described in Annex 1 will be performed under the guidance of the principal investigator.

For the host institution (applicant legal entity):

Date

Name and Function

_____ ; _____

Email and Signature (blue ink or digitally signed⁴¹) of legal representative

_____ ; _____

Stamp of the host institution (applicant legal entity)⁴²

IMPORTANT NOTE: In order to be complete all the above mentioned items are mandatory and shall be included in the commitment of the host institution.

³⁹ A scanned copy of the signed statement should be uploaded electronically via the [Funding & Tenders](#) Portal submission service in PDF format.

⁴⁰ This statement (on letterhead paper) shall be signed (in blue ink or digitally) by the institution's legal representative and stating their name, function, email address and stamp of the institution.

⁴¹ The digital signature must have the same legal value (i.e. must be the electronic equivalent) of a handwritten signature and a stamped seal.

⁴² No stamp is needed if this document is digitally signed.

4.2 ANNEX 2 - LIST OF BLOCKING FIELDS IN THE ONLINE SUBMISSION FORM

Section 1 – General Information

Acronym

Title

Duration

Abstract

Declaration on written consent of all participants

Section 2 – Participants

PI: First name, Last name and e-Mail (can only be entered at Step 4/Participants in the submission system)

PI: Nationality, Date of birth, Gender, Country of birth, Place of birth, Town and Country.

Main contact person (for ERC HI contact person): contact First name, Last name and e-Mail (can only be entered at Step 4/ in the submission system).

Section 3 – Budget

Total Eligible Costs and Requested EU contribution per beneficiary (should always arrive at a total of EUR 150 000).

Section 4 – Ethics and security

No blocking fields

Section 5 – Other questions

Eligibility declaration

Consent obtained from participants and researchers

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