

# The European Research Council

ERC Proof of Concept

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**PI event Paris**



**European Research Council**

Established by the European Commission

# ERC Proof of Concept Grant

## *Supplementary funding for ERC grantees*

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## Proof of Concept

Size of the grant: **€150 000** (lump sum)

Duration: **18 months**

*Demonstrate that the idea funded by the original ERC grant has innovation potential and significant economic or societal benefits*

- One continuous open call: call opened on 20 January 2026
- Two cut-off deadlines: 17 March and **17 September 2026**
- PoC call budget in 2026: **60M EUR** (equally split over the 2 cut-off deadlines)



# PoC Eligibility Conditions

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- Eligible Principal Investigators have **an ERC grant**, which is either running or has ended/ends after 1 January 2025.
- The PoC idea has to draw substantially on the ERC funded research.
- Only one eligible application per PI per year (= per PoC call).
- Maximum **3 PoC grants** per ERC StG, CoG or AdG grant (can run in parallel).
- Maximum **6 PoC grants** per ERC SyG (with consent of all SyG PIs).
- The Host Institution can be different than for the main grant. Additional beneficiaries are allowed as for ERC main grants.
- The Principal Investigator has the right to change Host Institution at any time (portability).



# Proof of Concept Proposal

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- 10-page proposal (excl. abstract, references & risk mitigation table):
  1. The idea – breakthrough innovation potential (max. 3 pages)
  2. Approach and Methodology (max. 6 pages)
  3. Principal Investigator - strategic lead and project management (max. 1 page)
- Online administrative submission form A (similar to ERC main grant applications)
- Supplementary documents (e.g., Host Institution Support Letter: Letters of support or Letters of intent)



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v\\_WAkrKgWkS](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_WAkrKgWkS)

Read more: <https://erc.europa.eu/apply-grant/proof-concept>



# ERC Proof of Concept under Horizon Europe

## *Objectives and Scope*

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- Objective: facilitating the exploration of the **commercial and social innovation potential of ERC-funded research**.
- Scope: progress on the path from ground-breaking research towards innovation based on ERC-funded ideas.
- Evaluation based on the sole criterion of **excellence**, comprising:
  - Project - Breakthrough innovation potential
  - Project - Approach and methodology,
  - Principal Investigator - strategic lead and project management
- **Data Management Plan** required (within 6 months from project start).
- **Gender Equality Plan** required at the signature of the grant agreement.



# ERC Proof of Concept under Horizon Europe

## *Which activities are funded?*

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The activities to be funded **shall draw substantially on scientifically excellent ERC-funded research**. The funding will cover:

- activities aimed at **exploring the pathway from ground-breaking research towards innovation**, including at the very early stage of moving research ideas towards an innovation or socially valuable proposition.
- research activities to translate and promote research ideas **into possible application** including testing, experimenting, demonstrating and validating the idea in the lab as well as establishing viability, technical issues and overall direction.
- clarification of **IPR protection** and development of **knowledge transfer strategies**.
- involvement of **stakeholders** to help translate the innovation ideas into innovation (industry partners, societal or cultural organisations, policymakers etc.), and the assessment of potential **'end-users'** of the proposed innovation.



# ERC Proof of Concept under Horizon Europe

## *Evaluation procedure*

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Single step evaluation procedure (~100 days from submission to notification):

- Remote evaluation by 5 independent experts in technology transfer and social innovation.
- Each evaluation element receives a comment and a mark: *very good, good or fail*.
- No panel meeting discussion – only individual reviews.
- Rank listed proposals must pass all evaluation elements (pass-mark by majority of experts).
- Ranked list established by the marks given by experts to evaluation elements 1, 2 and 3.
- Highest weight is given to evaluation element 1 followed by element 2 and then 3.
- Highest ranked proposals within the budget for the evaluation round are main listed.
- A short reserve list is created in case of granting failure among the main list projects.



# ERC Proof of Concept under Horizon Europe

## *Tips for applicants*

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- Be convincing about your involvement in the project – **PI lead and project management**.
- Know your **competitors** and describe the competitive landscape.
- What is the **novelty** in your specific idea – how is it different from other solutions?
- Who are your **end-users**? Who will benefit from your innovation when fully developed?
- In case of a commercially valuable innovation idea – describe your market.
- In case of a socially valuable proposition – what will be the expected **impact** of your project idea when fully developed?
- In case of a database or application development – how will this be maintained beyond the project period?
- In case **additional funding/investment** is needed – how will this be pursued? Through which channels?



# ERC 2026 PoC call calendar

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	Proof of Concept Grant (call)
Call Identifier	ERC-2026-PoC
Type of Action	ERC frontier research grant
Opening of the Call	17 January 2026
Cut-off dates or Deadline(s) for Application	17 March 2026 17 September 2026
Budget EUR (estimated number of grants)	60 000 000 (400)
Dates to Inform Applicants	1 July 2026 14 January 2027
Date for Signature of Grant Agreements	1 November 2026 18 May 2027



# Seal of Excellence

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*“A Seal of Excellence will be awarded to proposals that will receive an overall pass mark in all three of the evaluation elements set out in the Work Programme but cannot be funded due to the budget constraints of the call.”*

The **Seal of Excellence** will be awarded automatically to those applicants when receiving the evaluation outcome in the F&T Portal (*after giving their consent to information sharing with other EU or national funding bodies, they will be able to download the SoE award document*).

Guidance from RTD will be provided as to where the applicants can search for funding of their project from other sources. Information on **funding bodies that recognise and support Seal of Excellence projects** is available [here](#).

National, regional or institutional level support via **ERC-Runners up initiatives**, for ERC proposals which have been awarded a Seal of Excellence under Proof of Concept calls.



# Main tools and services to beneficiaries



## Horizon Dashboard

Data & statistics visualization tool, which allows to explore the participation to the Framework Programmes by topic, country, region, organization etc.

## CORDIS

Online public platform with description of R&I funded projects and their results (incl. videos, podcasts, news, data)

## The Booster

Free personalised services to support dissemination or go-to-market effort

## Horizon Results Platform

Online platform for promotion and matchmaking of research results with relevant audiences – investors, researchers, policy makers

## European IP Helpdesk

Supports building capacity to manage intellectual assets by broad range of informative material, Helpline for direct IP support, on-site and online training

# Horizon Results Booster

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<https://www.horizonresultsbooster.eu/>

- Targets all EU-funded projects.
- Free-of-charge and tailored to individual project needs.

The services include:

## Dissemination support

- ✓ to assess and improve dissemination plans and methods.
- ✓ to identify appropriate audiences and channels.

## Go-To-Market support

- ✓ to increase maturity of results.
- ✓ develop effective business and exploitation plans.
- ✓ identify further exploitation opportunities of research results.



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# Thank You!

Contact the ERC Proof of Concept team on  
[ERC-POC-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ERC-POC-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu)

More information: [erc.europa.eu/apply-grant/proof-concept](https://erc.europa.eu/apply-grant/proof-concept)

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# ERC PoC 2016-2025 - Overall submissions and results

	POC 2016	POC 2017	POC 2018	POC 2019	POC 2020	POC 2022-1	POC 2022-2	POC 2023	POC 2024	POC 2025
Proposals submitted	435	530	432	514	527	352	476	608	728	918
Proposals evaluated	408	497	417	498	510	348	451	564	698	879
Proposals funded (Call budget)	133	124	144	167	166	156	166	200	200	200
Proposals funded (Call budget & additional funds)	159	160	159	200	No additional funding	No additional funding	210	240	245	300
Overall Success rate	37%	30%	37%	39%	32%	45%	44%	39%	35%	34%

# PoC evaluation workflow

## *Evaluation questions (ERC WP 2026)*

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### 1.a Breakthrough Innovation Potential

- Does the idea have the potential to drive innovation and business inventiveness or tackle societal challenges? ➔ *Section 1a.i*
  - Are the expected outcomes innovative or distinctive compared to existing solutions? ➔ *Section 1a.ii*
  - Is the idea high risk and with a potential high gain?
  - If successful, will the outcome result in a breakthrough innovation?
  - Is there a risk that some aspects are difficult to overcome?
- } ➔ *Section 1a.iii*

# PoC evaluation workflow

## *Evaluation Questions (ERC WP 2026)*

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### 1.b Approach and methodology

- Are the proposed activities and planning appropriate and effective to explore the pathway from ground-breaking research towards innovation? Activities may include:
  - testing, experimenting, demonstrating and validating the idea;
  - conducting research required to carry out the above activities and to address the weaknesses uncovered by them;
  - clarifying IPR protection or knowledge transfer strategy;
  - involving industry partners, societal or cultural organisations, policymakers, or any other potential stakeholder supporting the translation of research results into innovation;
  - assessing potential “end users” of the expected innovation.
- Are the proposed timescales and resources adequate for the implementation and feasibility of the project, and properly justified? Will the activities be conducted by persons well qualified for the purpose?

*Sections  
1b.i+1b.ii*

*Section 1b.iii*

# PoC evaluation workflow

## *Evaluation Questions (ERC WP 2026)*

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### **1.c. Principal Investigator - Strategic Leadership and Project Management**

- Does the PI demonstrate a clear vision on how to manage the project, the consolidation of information and data needed to take strategic decisions and implement the proposed plan, including risk and contingency measures?

➔ *Section 1c*

# Thank You!

Please take a moment to evaluate the session:



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