ERC 2022 Synergy Grant Information Event

Session 1: Overview of the ERC, eligibility and proposal development

22 July 2021

erc-uk@ukro.ac.uk

Webinar 1 of 2 Agenda

- Introduction to UKRO

- UK Participation

- Overview of ERC

- Eligibility Criteria

- Proposal Development

Photo by Jacob Lund from Noun Project

Housekeeping

- All participants will be muted for the duration of the webinar.

- A chat function is available and will be monitored.

- Please use the Q&A function to submit questions.

- You can 'up vote' your favourite questions.

- We will be recording this session.

- Slides will be shared after the webinar on the event page.

UK Research Office

The Office, Our Mission and Our Services

About UKRO

Mission

- Maximise UK engagement in EU-funded research, innovation and higher education activities

Our office

- Based in Brussels
- EU office of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
- Delivers subscription-based advisory services for around 140 research organisations in the UK and beyond

Horizon Europe's UK National Contact Point for

- European Research Council (ERC)- erc-uk@ukro.ac.uk
- Marie Sklowdowska Curie Actions (MSCA) - mariecurie-uk@ukro.ac.uk

Who is who

Presenter

- *Dr Phil Holliday*
  European Advisor, ERC National Contact Point

Guest speakers

- *Robert Lucas, Gebhard Schertler & Gregor Ciccheti*
  Co-Principal Investigators on a Synergy 2020 Grant

Moderator

- *Sean Rowlands*
  European Advisor and ERC National Contact Point

UK's Relationship with the EU

Horizon Europe Participation

What Does Association Mean for the UK?

- **Access:** UK researchers and organisations will have access to Horizon Europe programmes on equivalent terms to EU countries

- **Collaboration:** UK organisations can have continued access to collaborative R&I funding, infrastructure and markets via the Horizon Europe programmes, and can lead and influence key collaborative projects

- **Programme Committees:** The UK can participate in Programme Committees with speaking rights, access to information and documentation.

- **Experts:** UK experts can continue to take part in evaluations and join expert groups

More on UK Participation and Access

User Experience

- UK entities will be able to **compete for funding on equivalent terms to those of Member States.**

- This means that the vast majority of UK applicants will have a **very similar user experience to previous** Framework Programmes such as Horizon 2020.

Applying to Horizon Europe

- There will be **no role for the UK Government/UKRI** in the application or grant management process.

- **UK entities will be able to participate in all areas of the Horizon Europe Programme,** including ERC, MSCA, Pillar 2 Clusters and grant elements of the EIC.

Direct Actions and COST

- They will also be able to participate in the direct actions of the
  — Joint Research Centre,
  — Article 185/187 Partnerships
  — The European Institute for Innovation and Technology

- The UK will also participate in the COST programme.

Sources of Further Information

- UKRO website provides latest information on UK participation

- The official statements on the EU-UK relationship
  - European Commission website
  - UK Government website.

- UK Government provides information on EU Funded Programmes under the Withdrawal Agreement.

- Turing scheme for students to study and work abroad - new UK programme replacing Erasmus+
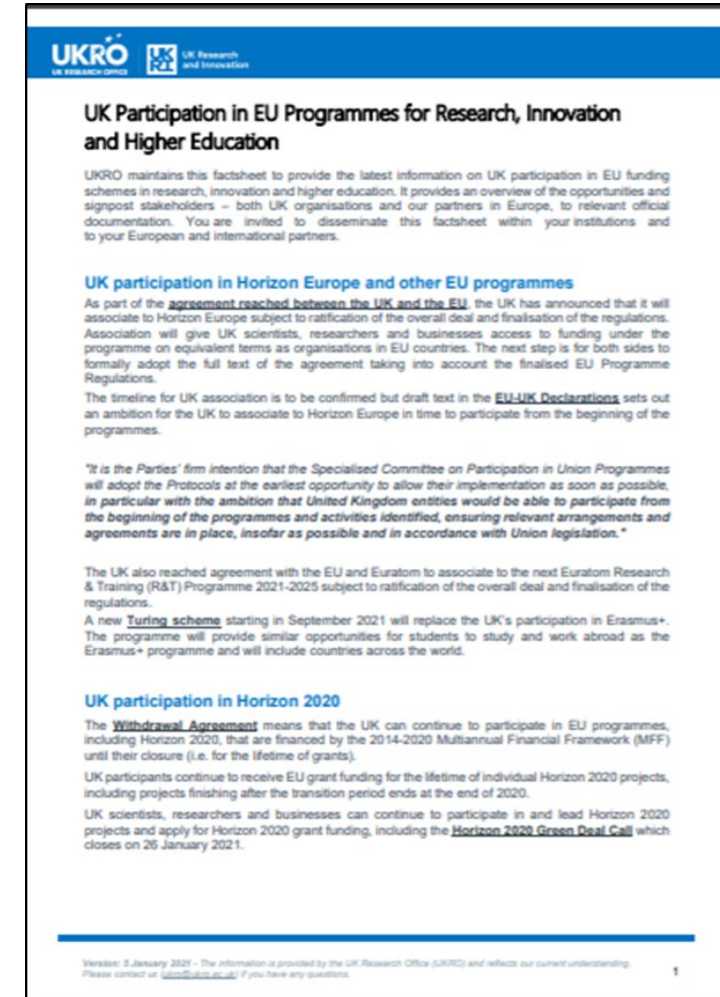
Introduction to the ERC

Horizon Europe structure
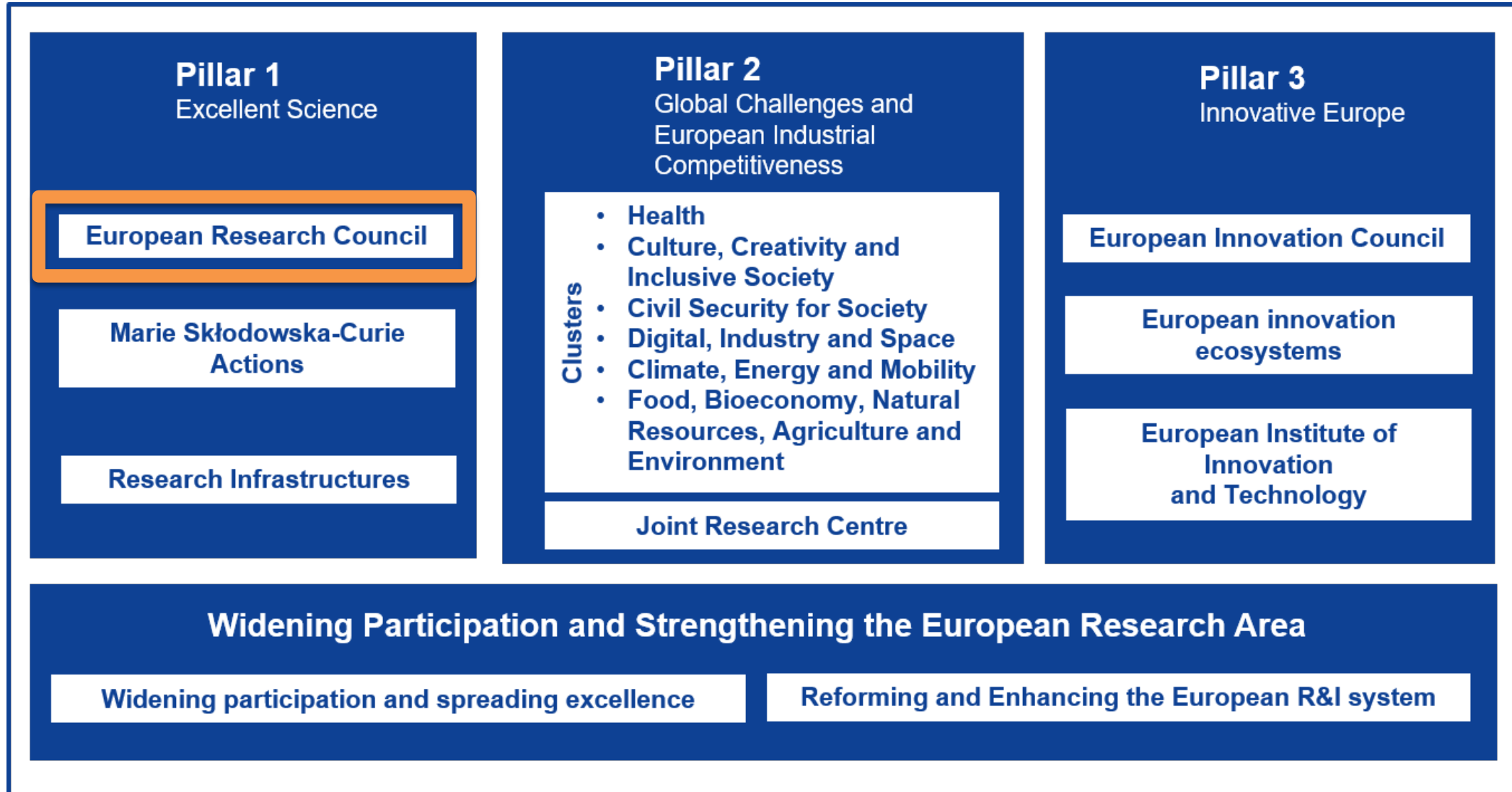
What is the ERC?

The ERC's mission:

- encourage the highest quality research in Europe
- support investigator-driven frontier research *across all fields*
- fund projects *purely* on the basis of *scientific excellence*

What makes the ERC unique:

- Excellence is the only criteria
- Funding split based on number of applications, *not* field/discipline/topic
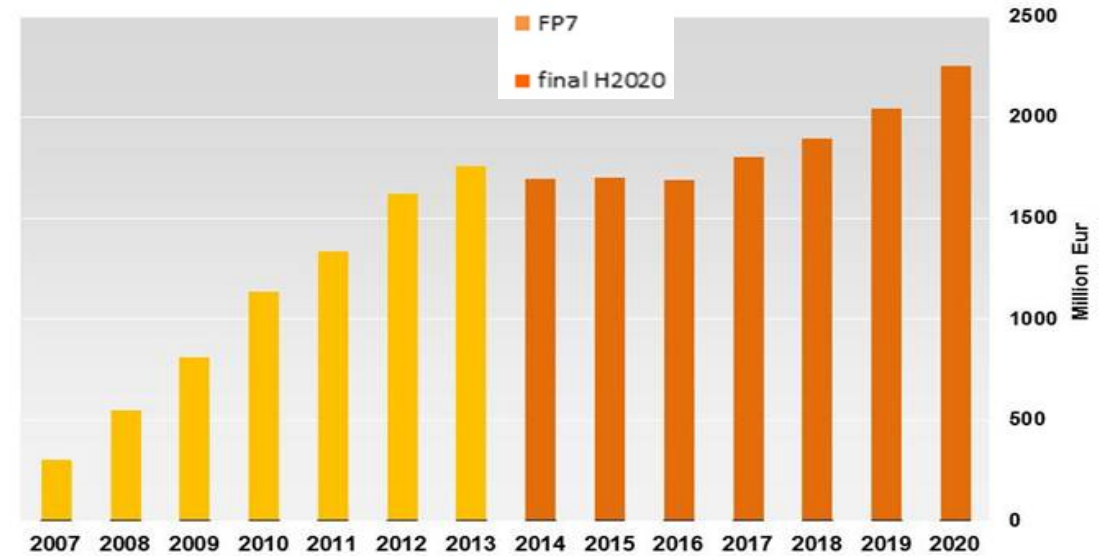- Freedom to work with and fund team members from anywhere in the world

BOTTOM-UP, CURIOSITY-LED EXCELLENT RESEARCH

ERC Budget in Horizon Europe

26% increase in real terms compared to Horizon 2020.

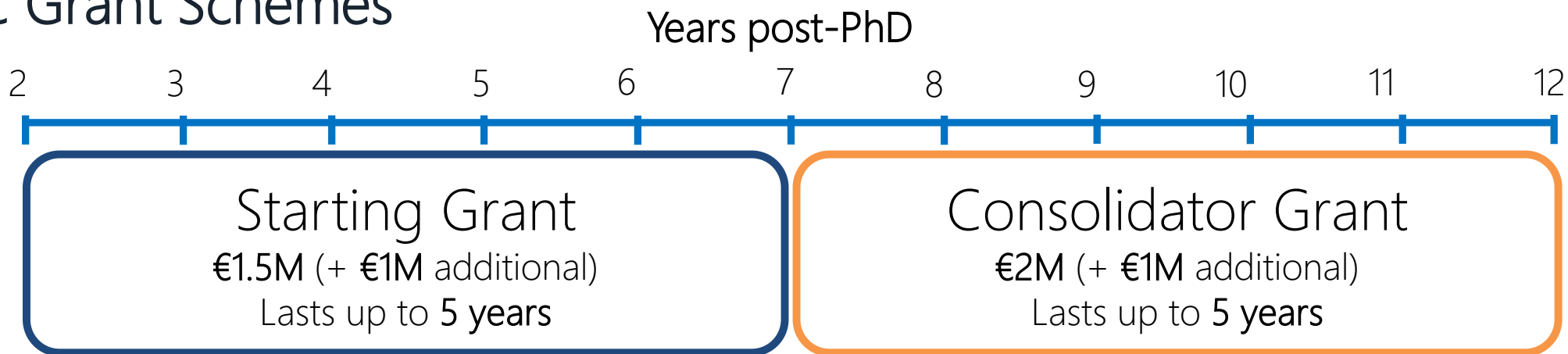Further budget increase expected once Associated Countries formally join.

Horizon Europe structure is represented below with each section proportionate to budget allocation size.

ERC BUDGET: €16 Billion

Pillar 1 Excellent science	Pillar 2 Global challenges

Pillar 3 Innovative Europe

Pillar 4

ERC 2022 Calls

	Starting Grant	Consolidator Grant	Advanced Grant	Synergy Grant	Proof of Concept	
Call Type	ERC-2022-StG	ERC-2022-CoG	ERC-2022-AdG	ERC-2022-SyG	ERC-2022-PoC	
Call Opens	23/09/2021	19/10/2021	20/01/2022	15/07/2021	15/07/2021	16/11/2021
Deadline	13/01/2022	17/03/2022	28/04/2022	10/11/2021	14/10/2021	15/02/2022 19/05/2022 29/09/2022
Budget	€749 M	€776 M	€555 M	€297 M	€25 M	€25 M

ERC Panel Structure

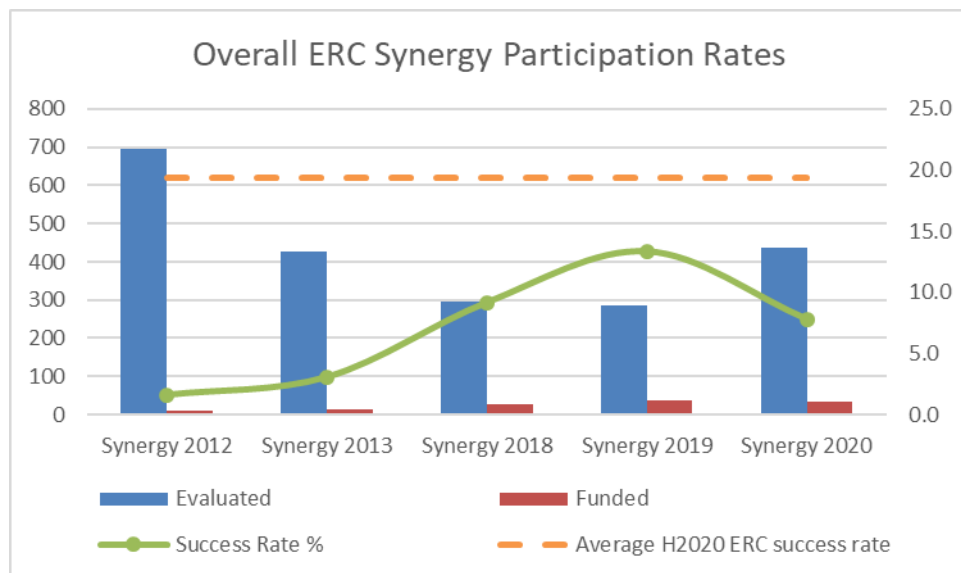| Physical Sciences & Engineering	Life Sciences	Social Sciences & Humanities
PE1 Mathematics	**LS1** Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures & Functions	**SH1** Individuals, Markets and Organisations
PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter Particle	**LS2** Integrative Biology: Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems	**SH2** Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems
PE3 Condensed Matter Physics	**LS3** Cellular, Developmental and Regenerative Biology	**SH3** The Social World and its Diversity
PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences		**SH4** The Human Mind and Its Complexity
PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials	**LS4** Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing	**SH5** Cultures and Cultural Production
PE6 Computer Science and Informatics	**LS5** Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System	**SH6** The Study of the Human Past
PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering		**SH7** Human Mobility, Environment, and Space *
PE8 Products and Processes Engineering	**LS6** Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy	
PE9 Universe Sciences	**LS7** Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases	
PE10 Earth System Science	**LS8** Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution	
PE11 Materials Engineering *	**LS9** Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering	

These two panels are new additions, they will be in place for the 2021 calls onwards

ERC Panel Structure

Physical Sciences & Engineering	Life Sciences	Social Sciences & Humanities
PE1 Mathematics	**LS1** Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures & Functions	**SH1** Individuals, Markets and Organisations
PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter Particle	**LS2** Integrative Biology: Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems	**SH2** Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems
PE3 Condensed Matter Physics		**SH3** The Social World and Its Diversity
PE4 Physical and Analytic		Its Complexity
PE5 Synthetic Chemistry		Production
PE6 Computer Science		an Past
PE7 Systems and Comm		onment, and Space
PE8 Products and Proce		
PE9 Universe Sciences		
PE10 Earth System Science		
	LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution	
PE11 Materials Engineering	**LS9** Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering	

> No predetermined ERC Panels in ERC Synergy Calls.
>
> Instead evaluation panels are set up to fit submitted proposals.
>
> More on this in tomorrow's session.

Participation Statistics for ERC Synergy Grant

Overall ERC Synergy Participation Rates

Chart legend:
- Evaluated
- Funded
- Success Rate %
- Average H2020 ERC success rate

Categories: Synergy 2012, Synergy 2013, Synergy 2018, Synergy 2019, Synergy 2020

Synergy scheme is newer and smaller than the other ERC schemes

The call has been in its current form since 2018, since then overall success rates have been at a higher level.

Although the number of projects funded is relatively small, each project involves multiple PIs so a Synergy project is larger.

## UK's Synergy Grant track record during in Horizon 2020

ERC Synergy PIs Hosted per Country

Pie chart:
- DE 20%
- FR 18%
- UK 12%
- ES 7%
- NL 6%
- IT 4%
- AT 4%
- US 4%
- DK 4%
- Other 14%
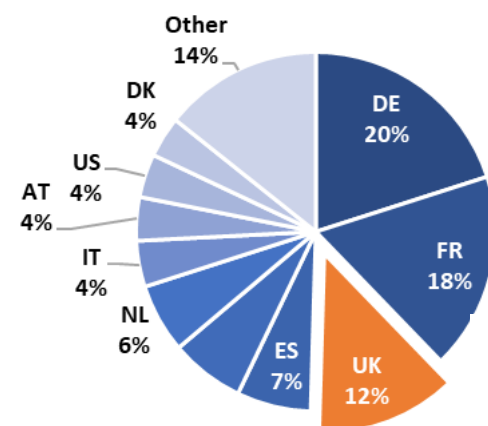
Many Synergy Projects have international PI groups, in that sense comparing projects by their countries can be misleading.

We can see that the UK is 3rd most popular host-country for Synergy PIs

Projects with 1+ UK-hosted PI over its lifetime (top ten)

Bar chart:
- DE: 47
- UK: 32
- FR: 29
- CH: 17
- IT: 14
- US: 13
- ES: 13
- NL: 11
- DK: 10
- AT: 10
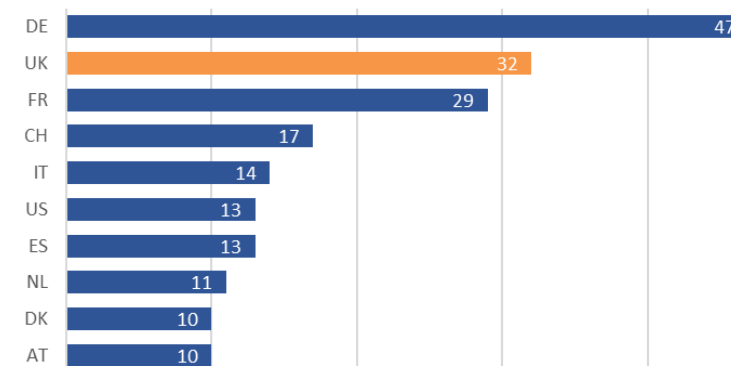
UK is second-most common collaborator on Synergy Grants

32 of the 95 Synergy Grants awarded under H2020 had at least one UK-hosted PI.

ERC-2020-SyG Results in more detail

- **34** proposals (**116** PIs) selected for funding from a total of **440** evaluated

- UK has a PI participating in 8 projects

- 10 research groups include 1 PI working in a Third Country

- ~8% overall success rate

A 2020 Synergy Grant research group will speak at the end of this webinar!

Images of 2020 Synergy Grantees sourced from the ERC website

Click here to find out more about their projects and call statistics

Covid-19 and ERC

- Panels are evaluating remotely
- Interviews were held remotely by video conferencing
- Possible to postpone project start date by 6 months
- Possible to extend duration of project by 6 months or further on case by case basis
- Flexibility on teleworking and time commitments (notify ERCEA)

Remember – EU financial contribution to the project cannot be raised

[Coronavirus – business continuity measures at the ERC](#)
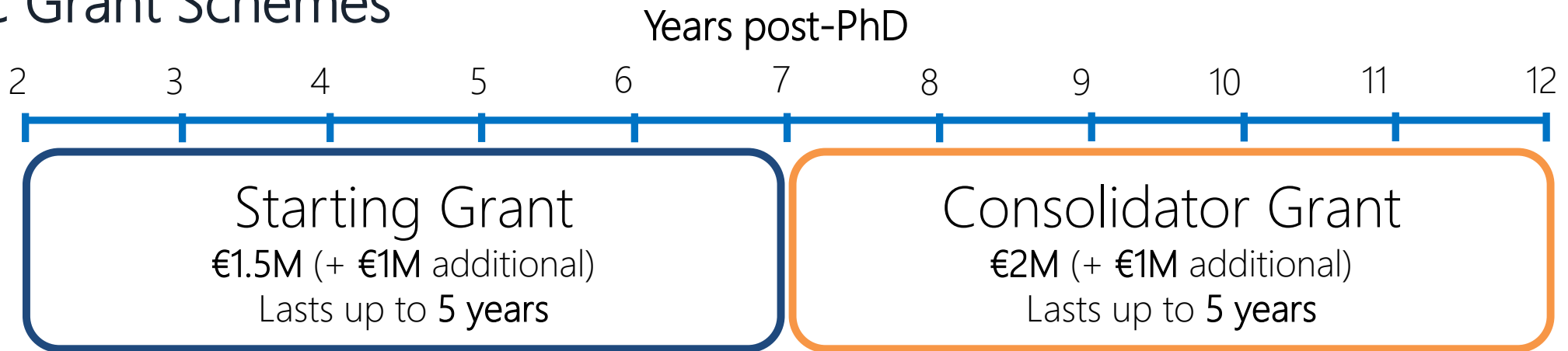
ERC Eligibility Criteria
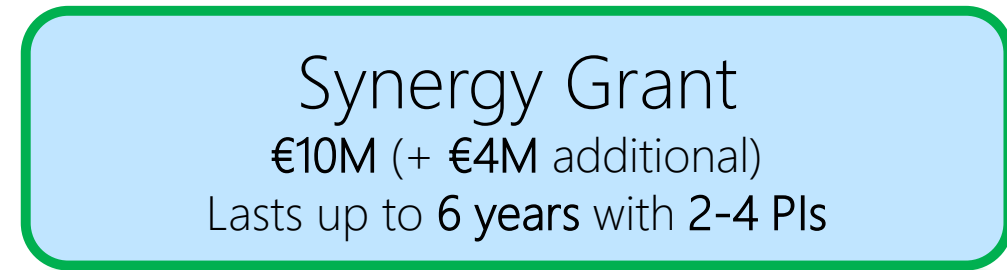
Types of research funded

Proposals:

- can be in **ANY** field of research

- must be very **ambitious** in **risk** and in **scope**

- are based around a **central Principal Investigator**, who can be supported by "team members"

- must be **"frontier research",** and should not be incremental advances

- are judged **only on the scientific excellence** of
  - the proposed project and
  - the Principal Investigator

- [Only be a PI on one ERC grant at a time](#)

More in part 2 of this webinar series on Friday on the evaluation criteria, including how panels and external experts evaluate proposals

ERC Grant Schemes

Years post-PhD

2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   11   12

Starting Grant
€1.5M (+ €1M additional)
Lasts up to 5 years

Consolidator Grant
€2M (+ €1M additional)
Lasts up to 5 years

No PhD Requirements

Advanced Grant
€2.5M (+ €1M additional)
Lasts up to 5 years

Synergy Grant
€10M (+ €4M additional)
Lasts up to 6 years with 2-4 PIs

Proof Of Concept Grant
€150k Lump Sum
Lasts for 1.5 years
Top-up grants for current ERC grantees

Principal Investigator Eligibility

Who?
• No restrictions based on age, nationality, current location or current employment/contract status.

Where?
• Must have an institution based in an EU member state or associated country willing to host them.

Calculated as an average across entire project duration, can vary to a degree year on year

Grant Type	Minimum % of Working Time on Grant	Minimum % of time in EU Member State/Associated Country*	Years since PhD Award
Starting	50	50	2-7
Consolidator	40	50	7-12
Advanced	30	50	N/A
Synergy	30	50	N/A

* Fieldwork/work abroad related to the ERC project does not count against time commitment

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Host Institution Eligibility

Can be **any type of legal entity** (university, business, public body etc.)

All but 1 based in an **EU Member State or Associated Country**

Has infrastructure and capacity to allow the PI independence

Must not constrain the PI to the institution's research strategy

Must **'engage' the PI for project duration**, if grant is successful

Not evaluated but must submit a support letter with proposal

If funded:
- signs up to the Grant Agreement
- signs a 'Supplementary Agreement' with the PI

Principal Investigators leading Team Members

- PI **leads** the research project, they are not collaborating as equals with their team

- PI has the **freedom to choose** how many team members are included in the project

- PI **names individuals or roles** that will be recruited in the proposal

- PI must **justify the team** and its composition and contribution

- Evaluators reject proposals where the PI is overshadowed by any team members

PI

TEAM MEMBERS
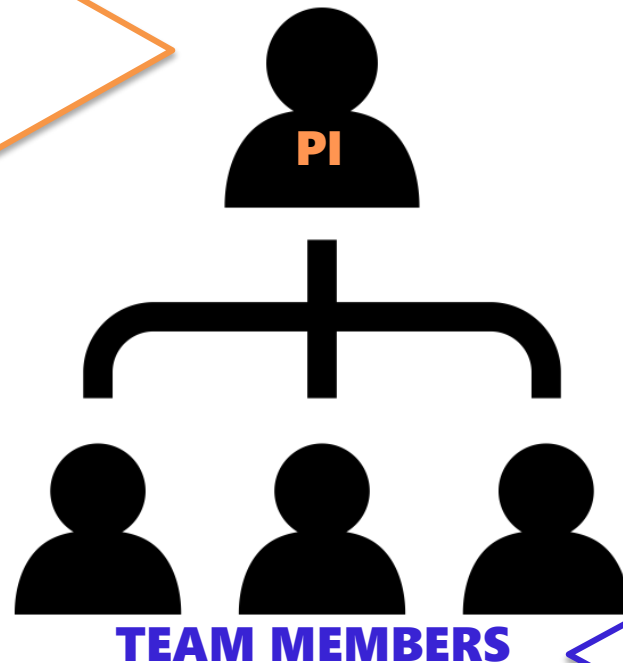
- No one can be co-investigators

- **Assigned to specific project outputs/tasks**

- Should not have purely supervisory/mentor roles

- Can be **research staff at any level** (including technicians and project managers)

- Of any age, nationality or country of residence

- Can be based **at the Host Institution or any other organisation** in the world

- **EU funded**, even outside member states or associated countries

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Principal Investigators in Synergy Grant Groups
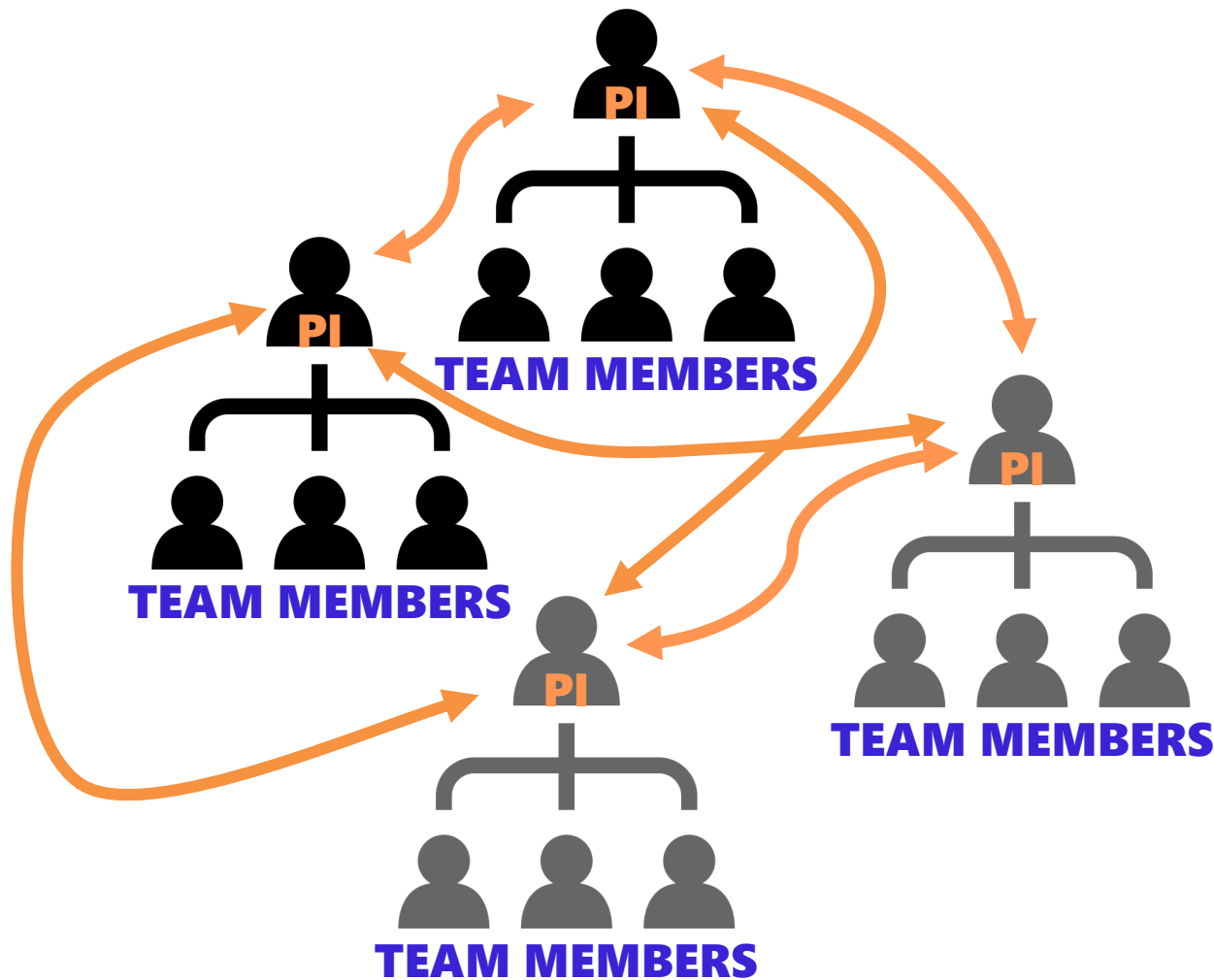
2-4 Principal Investigators of any nationality, age or career stage

- One designated as the 'Corresponding Principal Investigator'. This is not a leadership role.

- One Principal Investigator in the Group can be hosted outside the EU or Associated Countries.

- No other restrictions on HI distribution: can be all in one country, all in different countries, etc.

- PIs in the Synergy Grant Group expected to be unchanged (they can move HI, with their grant)

- Each PI can have their own team members, they can change during the lifetime of the grant

Difference between a Synergy Group and other Horizon Europe consortia

"It is of utmost importance not to confuse the term 'synergy' and its requirements with the concepts and the terminology of other parts of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme [...] Support for consortia is provided by other calls under Horizon Europe."

Synergy Group is:

- PIs (and their teams) that are capable of tackling bold research themes requiring novel approaches

- Research teams are typically characterised by exceptional combinations of knowledge and skills

- The collaborative element is expect to add a creative layer of excellence making the group greater than sum of its parts.

- Principal Investigators hold a central role

Synergy Group is not:

- Loose cooperation: e.g. essentially separate projects with networking links/events

- Simple passing of data or information from one team to another

- Long-established approaches to collaborating

- Agreement between organisations with staff participating. It must be led by each PI, who can still move the grant elsewhere

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Proposal Structure

1-Step Submission

Part A is filled in online. B1, B2 and annexes are uploaded as PDFs. All submitted together at the call deadline

Part A
Administrative Forms and Abstract

- General information
- Participating Institutions
- Budget & Description of Resources
- Ethics & security questionnaire

Part B1
Proposal Overview and Track Record & CV for each Principal Investigator

- Cover page and summary
- Extended Synopsis (5 pages)
- 2 - 4 CVs (2 pages)
- 2 – 4 Funding IDs
- 2 – 4 Track Records (2 pages)

Part B2
Detailed Research Proposal

- State of the art and objectives
- Methodology (Total of 15 pages)
- Resources and time commitment (including project costs)

Annexes
Host Institution Letters, Ethics, Eligibility Documents

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Proposal Development

Part B1 & Part B2

Part B1
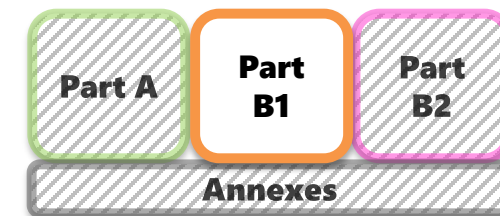
- Strict formatting requirements:

Page Format	Font Type	Font Size	Line Spacing	Margins
A4	Times New Roman, Arial or similar	At least 11	Single	2cm Side 1.5cm Bottom

- Cover Page (info repeated from Part A)

- Extended Synopsis (5 pages)
- CV (2 pages)
- Track Record (2 pages)
- Funding ID

More detail on formatting and specifics of Part B1 tomorrow!

Writing the Extended Synopsis
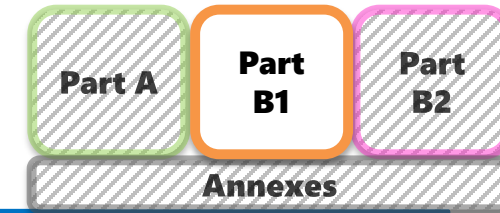
Self-contained

- **All the essential info** about your idea in **5 pages**

- **Describe where the novelty lies** – what is the state-of-the-art and how does this proposal go further?

- Your synopsis should be **referenced**, not counted towards page limits

- Must contain all relevant information and some details about **combination of the PI's scientific approaches** to show feasibility of the scientific proposal and the know-how **(skills, experience, expertise, disciplines and teams)** of the group

Persuasive to generalists

- A variety of **experts acting as generalists** come to a collective decision of whether to pass the proposal to Step 2 – so **be concise and clear without jargon**

- **Persuade them the idea and scientific approach are feasible** – include just enough and don't give a reason to reject!

- Demonstrate that the proposals goes **beyond what individual PIs** could achieve alone

Entertaining!

- Sell your idea - the synopsis should **grab the panellists' attention**

- Your idea should be ambitious – be explicit about **high risk and potentially high gain**

- The description of novelty and ambition **should leave them curious to find out more detail** in Part B2 at Step 2 and the interview at Step 3

Things to think about: Extended Synopsis
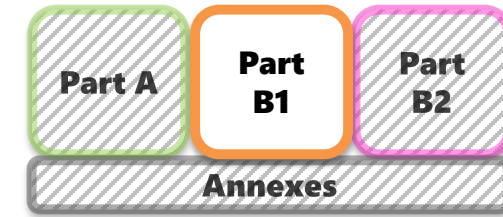
- Dual role: key text in stand-alone B1, then goes hand-in hand with the B2 full proposal. Make it work in both ways, not as a summary of the full proposal

- Consider what excites you about the research and convey this in your application

- Scientific Impact – you should be progressing the field of research beyond its current state.

- Why is a group-based approached needed? Does the proposal highlight why your group's scientific elements are well suited to the project theme and objectives?

- Timeliness and relevance should be shown throughout the project

- Research aims should clearly link to the research objectives, which should clearly link to research methodology(ies)

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Writing each PI's CV and Funding
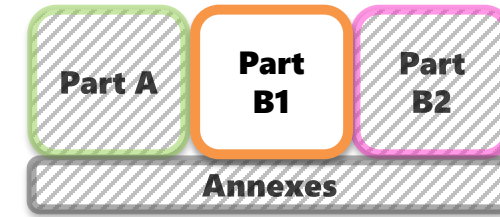
Use the suggested template

- 2 page limit (including COVID-19 section)

- Be **concise and make sure the CV is laid out clearly**. Choose additional highlights wisely

- CV template can also give an indication of **how to build your track record for future ERC bids**

## Career breaks, reduced capacity or unconventional career paths

- Complement any eligibility extensions with a descriptions of **how/when you have been restricted**

- **What were able to achieve** despite these restrictions or thanks to this unconventional path?

Describe significance

- Adding concise descriptive captions can help explain why an entry is significant

- What experience can be flagged as independent, mature or showing leadership?

- Your story will be laid out in the track record, but you can lay the groundwork in the CV

Funding ID table lists your current grants and on-going/submitted grant applications. You will also have to briefly outline any scientific overlap with the ERC proposal. (This table will not count towards the page limits).

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Things to think about: The CV
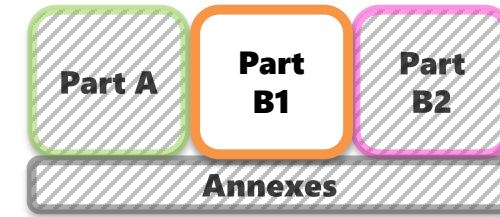
- Make your CV bespoke and well-suited to the ERC evaluation criteria

- Provide brief explanations of what entries indicate about the PI
  - Tell a story that relates directly to evaluation criteria
  - Highlight characteristics that are suited to your role in the group
  - If you were a speaker – describe what led you to being invited to give a talk/seminar/presentation
  - Be descriptive to generalist. For example if you organised the event, describe at what level the event took place i.e. was it local/national/international? Who were the key attendees? etc.

- What was your contribution to key publications/activities? Note that Journal Impact Factors will be disregarded

- Make sure the CV is easy to read and cross-reference

- Explain any career breaks/alternative career pathways

- If applicable, use the new COVID-19 work disruption feature: multiple choice and short free text

Writing each PI's Early Achievements/10-year Track-Record
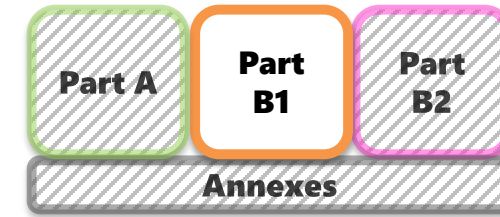
Track Record Format

- 2 pages per PI

- Synergy Grant PIs can have different profiles depending on eligibility criteria (with extensions if applicable)

- Tell your story - provide a brief explanation of how each entry on the CV & Funding ID makes you an excellent potential PI

- Text should be directly related to the PI evaluation criteria

- Each PI evaluated against the benchmarks relevant to their career stage and the field of research

- The group is evaluated as a whole

Early Achievements Track Record

- For PIs within 2-7 (Starting) and 7- 12 years (Consolidator) after PhD

- Check 2022 ERC Work Programme for full profiles
  (p19 for StG | p20 for CoG)

- Up to 5 publications for Starting profile, up to 10 publication for Consolidator

- Achievements are set according to early or mid career level. More emphasis on showing independence and potential for leadership

OR

10-year track record

- Full AdG profile on p23 of the ERC Work Programme

- Up to 10 significant publications as main author
  in leading international peer-reviewed journals of their respective field,
  or
  in major international peer-reviewed multidisciplinary scientific journals

- 3 major research monographs (for research fields where monographs are the norm)

- Expectations set to research leader in terms of achievements and major contributions to the early career researchers

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Part B2 (15 pages)

- **State of the art and objectives**
  - Objectives here become grant agreement objectives

- **Methodology**
  - Proposed methodology
  - Milestones and alternatives
  - Risk and mitigation
  - Project Management
  - Publication & Exploitation of results

Writing your State of the Art and Objectives in Part B2

Coherence with Part B1

- Elaborate Part B1 coherently: Explain precisely how you plan to achieve what you promised

- You will have at least one expert reviewer in addition to the generalist panel members, add technical detail that someone much closer to your field would need to know

- Don't copy paste from Part B1. Both parts are considered together at Step 2 so make them complementary

State of the art

- It should be clear how and why the proposed work is important for the field

- What scientific impact will your project have if successful? What new horizons or opportunities for science, technology or scholarship

Objectives

- Objectives should fit context of the state-of-the-art – they should match the ambition to go past the current frontier

- These objectives will become part of the Grant Agreement if successful – so the need to be feasible

Writing your Methodology in Part B2
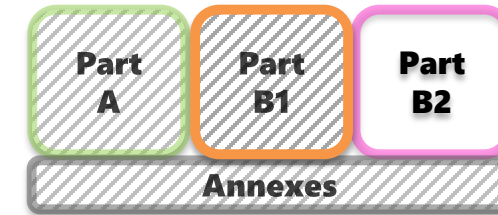
Methodology

- Should be **extensive**, include the essential detail that an expert close to your field would need to know

- Describe significant synergies, complementarity and added value of the group

- Don't leave any reasons for the remote experts to raise doubts in the generalist panel

- Work plan should also be clear and **persuade evaluators that your group can carry out the logistics** of a long term project

Risk Mitigation Strategy

- Where possible **cover every risk with a mitigation strategy**

- **ERC accepts high risk** to hopefully reach high gain – but external experts and to some extent panellist can be more risk averse

- Show evaluators you are aware and considerate of issues and how to react but **be prepared to acknowledge unavoidable uncertainty** that comes with ambitious, new ideas

Your team

- The team members under each PI

- Be sure to show how you will be the **leader of your team** and central figure for your part of project, **alongside other PIs in leadership roles**

- **Explain what each team member will do** – these can be named people or roles specified for recruitment

Justify resources

- Be ambitious but every **part of the budget must have a place in the project and be linked to objectives**

- **Show resources put towards collaborative efforts between PI**

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Writing your Resources and Time Commitment in Part B2

Resources

- Describe the **size and nature** of the Synergy Group, indicating key members and their roles

- Specify any **existing resources** that will contribute to the project

- Describe and fully justify **other necessary resources**, such as infrastructure, equipment, travel costs, consumables, publication costs etc

- Describe and fully justify any 'additional funding' requested

Time commitment

- Specify the time commitment of each PI **(min. 30% working time)**

Budget table

- Use the budget table template in Part B2

- ERC will fund 100% eligible costs and a flat-rate 25% for indirect costs

- Any unjustified budgets will be cut by the panel members

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Things to think about: The Scientific Proposal

- Recap and expand on the introduction in Part B1's Extended Synopsis

- Detail the current state of the art, highlighting the challenges, limitations, and gaps. How will your project overcome these to progress beyond the current state of the art

- Explain how, and why, your project is important to the field and what impact and implications it will have if successful

- Discuss the challenges and unconventional aspects of your project and group approach

- Timeliness and relevance should be shown throughout the project

- Coherent with clear linkages throughout: from project objectives, to the methodology(ies) and Group interaction, onto each team member and resources justification

- Include the Group's work plan with milestones, deliverables, dissemination activities

- [Register for the 2nd Information Webinar on Friday 23 July](#)

- Webinar 2 (10:00 – 12:00 UK time) - provides information on the submission process, how proposals are evaluated and other elements to consider when designing a project for your group's big research idea.

Useful links

- [ERC 2022 SyG call on the Funding and Tenders portal](#)

- [ERC 2022 SyG Information for Applicants](#)

- [PDF Application Form template](#) incl. B1, B2, CV and Host Institution Letter (editable versions will be Funding and Tenders Portal when it opens)

- [ERC Information System](#) and [Project database](#) to search through info about past Synergy Grant Projects

- [Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement](#)

- [Novelties in the Horizon Europe MGA](#) – Commission Stakeholder Workshop video

Thank you, any questions?

Image Credits:
- Top view of woman making her vacation plan sitting in front of world map by Jacob Lund from Noun Project