

# The European Research Council



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# The European Research Council

## ERC – Starting and Consolidator Grant

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*Call Coordination and Project Follow-Up  
ERC Executive Agency*

**Austrian Research Promotion Agency  
Vienna, 2 July 2018**





# ERC Structure



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## The European Commission

- **Provides financing** through the EU framework programmes
- **Guarantees autonomy of the ERC**
- **Assures the integrity and accountability of the ERC**
- **Adopts annual work programmes** as established by the Scientific Council

## The ERC Scientific Council

- **21 prominent researchers** proposed by an independent identification committee
- **President** appointed following recommendation of an independent committee
- **Appointed by the Commission** (4 years, renewable once)
- **Establishes overall scientific strategy;** annual work programmes (incl. calls for proposals, evaluation criteria); peer review methodology; selection and accreditation of experts
- **Controls quality of operations and management**
- **Ensures communication with the scientific community**



## The ERC Executive Agency

- **Executes annual work programme** as established by the Scientific Council
- **Implements calls for proposals** and provides information and support to applicants
- **Organises peer review evaluation**
- **Establishes and manages grant agreements**
- **Administers scientific and financial aspects** and follow-up of grant agreements
- **Carries out communications activities** and ensures information dissemination to ERC stakeholders

# What does the ERC offer?

## ERC Grant Schemes



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### Starting Grants

starters  
2-7 years after PhD  
(≥ 50% commitment)  
up to €1.5 Million  
for 5 years

### Consolidator Grants

consolidators  
7-12 years after PhD  
(≥ 40% commitment)  
up to €2 Million  
for 5 years

### Advanced Grants

track-record of  
significant research  
achievements in the  
last 10 years  
(≥ 30% commitment)  
up to €2.5 Million  
for 5 years

### Proof-of-Concept

bridging gap between research - earliest stage  
of marketable innovation  
up to €150,000 for ERC grant holders only

### Synergy Grants New

2-4 PIs up to €10 million for 6 years  
to lead to breakthroughs that cannot be  
achieved by a PI working alone



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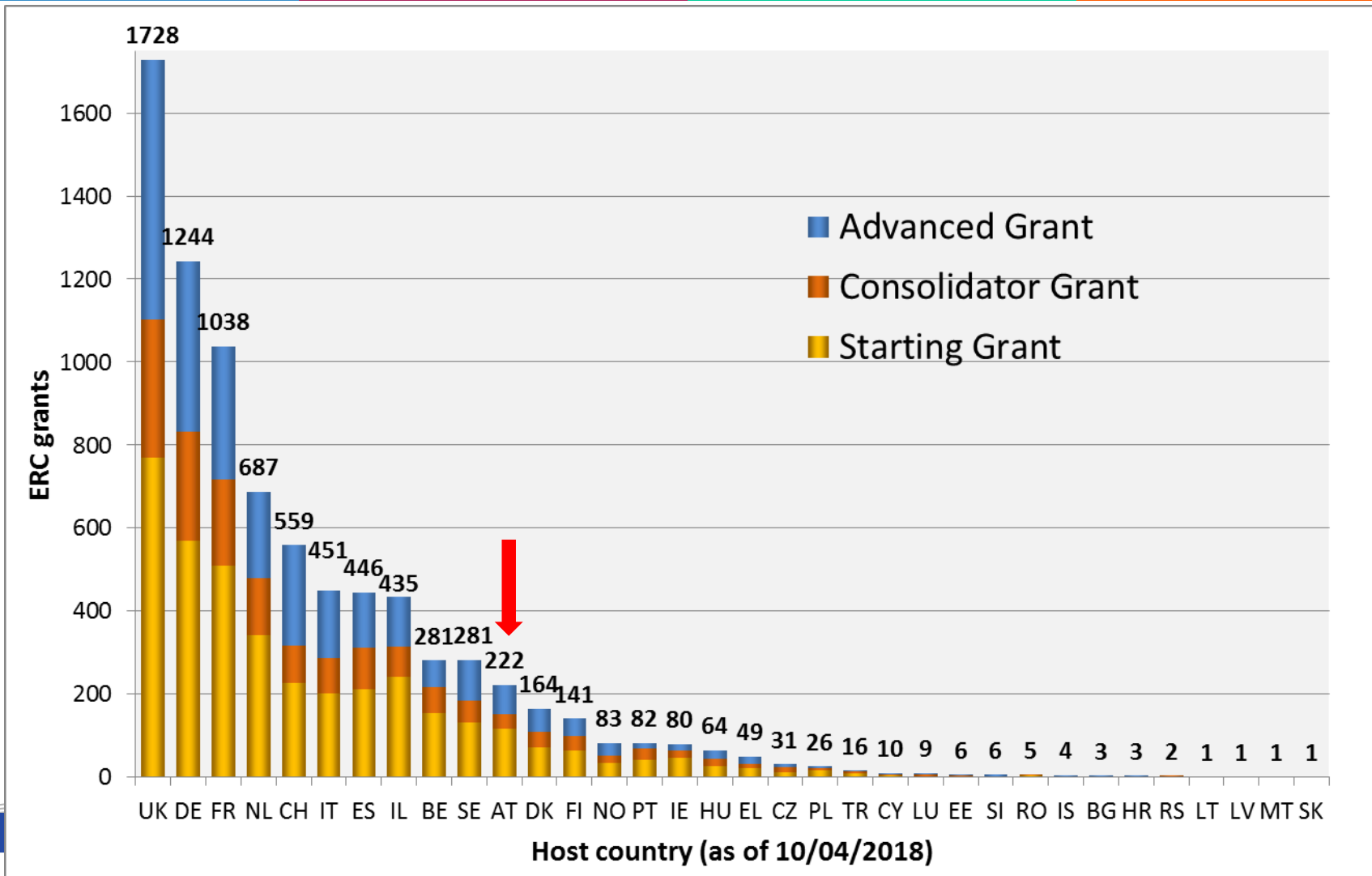
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# ERC and Austria

# ERC Funded Projects by Country of Host



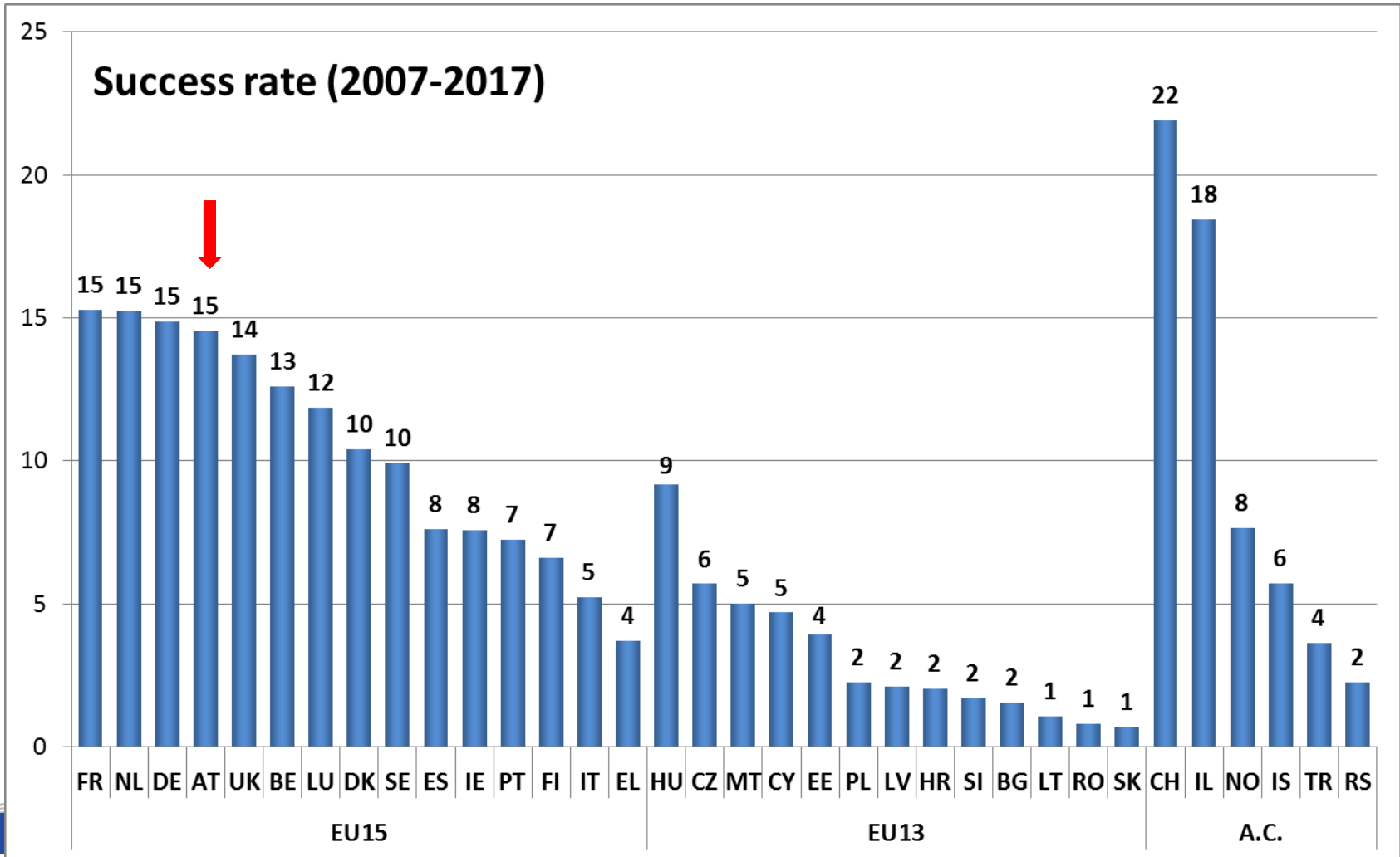
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# Success Rate by Country of HI



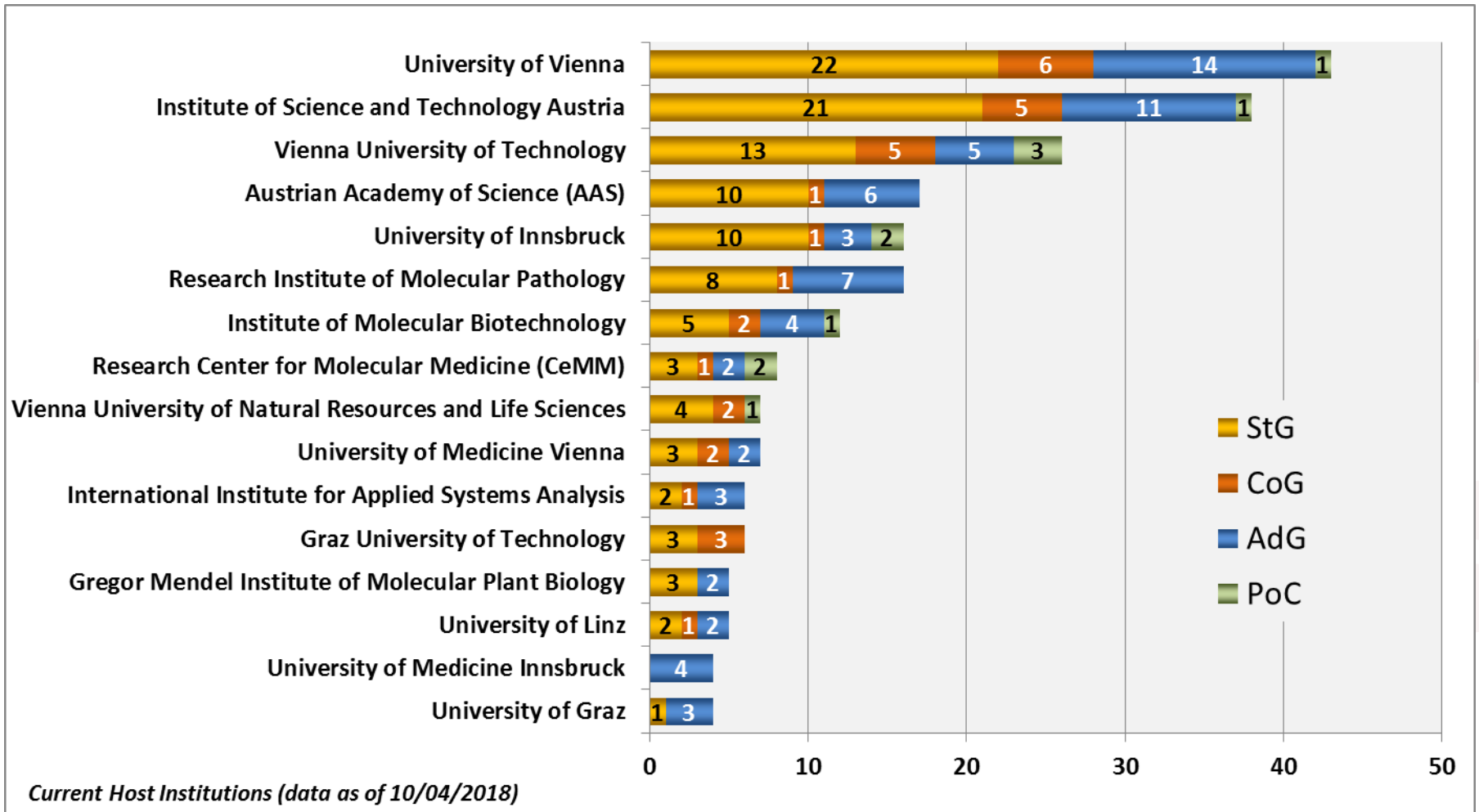
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# Top Host Institutions in Austria



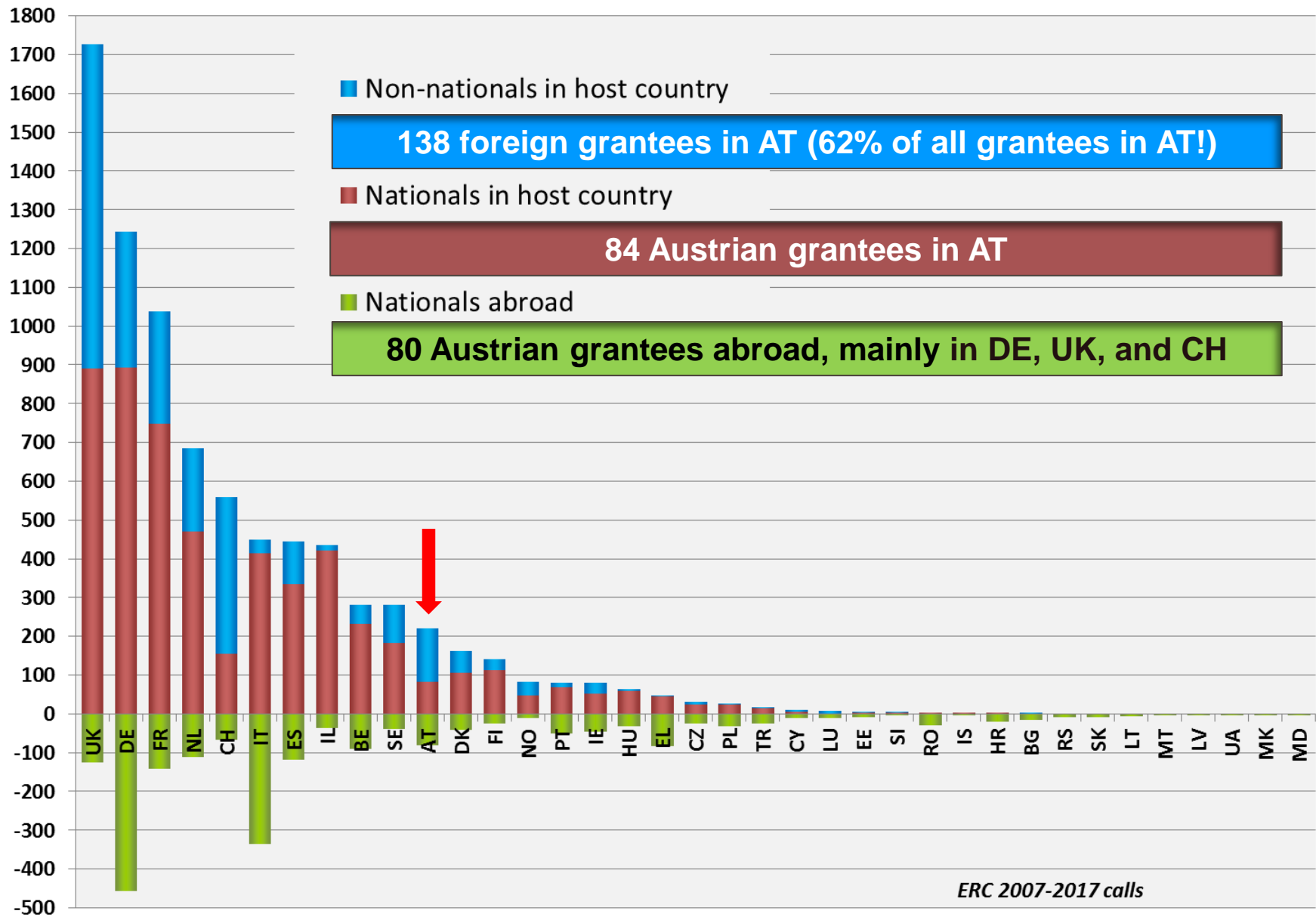
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Current Host Institutions (data as of 10/04/2018)



# High Proportion of Foreign Grantees in Austria





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# Submitting a Proposal

# ERC Grant Schemes – Who can apply?

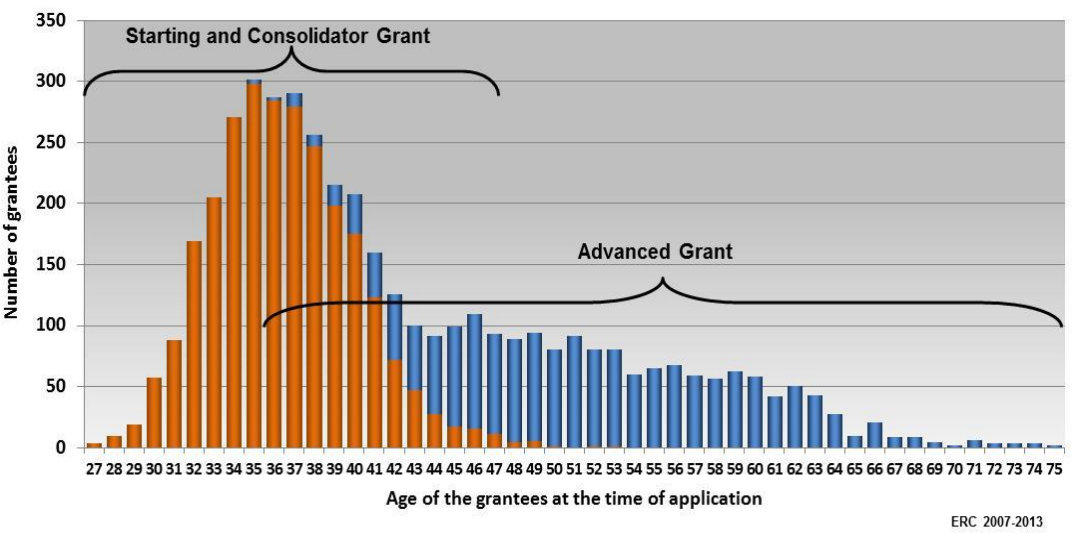


- **Excellent Researchers (PIs)**
  - Any nationality, age or current place of work
- **In conjunction with a Host Institution (HI)**
  - Based in the EU or an Associated Country (spend min. 50% (StG / CoG) of total working time)  
**Individual research team**
  - Researcher has freedom to choose national or trans-national team, if scientific added value proven
- **ERC Grants are portable**

# Priority to Young Scientists



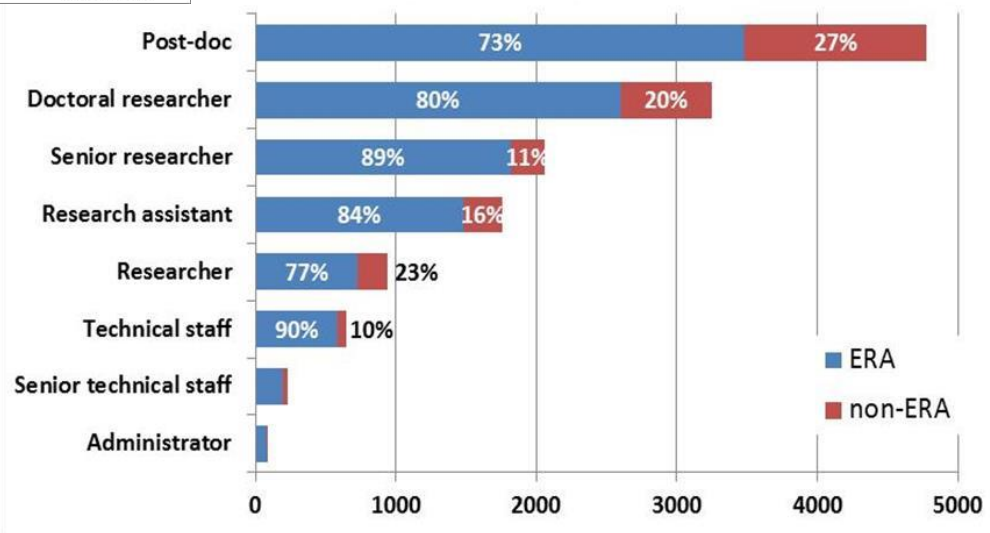
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+ 35 000 PhD and post-doc researchers working in ERC teams.

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

Reported team members (2015)  
head count (1901 projects; almost 14,000 team members)



# ERC Starting Grants (2-7 y past PhD)



- **Objective:** support excellent PIs at the stage at which they are **starting** their own independent research team or programme
- **Grant size:** €1.5M (possibility of additional €0.5M)
- **PI Profile:**
  - Potential for research independence
  - At least one publication as main author or without PhD supervisor
  - Invited presentations in conferences
  - Funding, patents, awards, prizes
  - 50% of PI's time in the project + 50% in the EU or AC



# Evaluation of Proposals:

## Review procedure for StG, CoG and AdG

### STEP 1

Remote assessment by Panel members of **section 1 – PI and synopsis (part B1)**

Panel meeting

Score:  
B or C

Proposals retained for step 2:  
Score **A**

### STEP 2

Remote assessment by Panel members and reviewers of **full proposal (B1+B2)**

Panel meeting + interview (StG and CoG)

Score:  
B

Ranked list of proposals:  
Score **A**

Feedback to applicants

# ERC Consolidator Grants (7-12 y past PhD)



- **Objective:** support excellent PIs at the stage at which they **may still be consolidating** their own independent research team or programme
- **Grant size:** €2.0M (possibility of additional €0.75M)
- **PI Profile**
  - Has achieved a certain degree of research independence
  - Several publications as main author or without PhD supervisor
  - Invited presentations in conferences
  - Funding, patents, awards, prizes, mentoring
  - 40% of PI's time in the project + 50% in the EU or AC

# ERC Grants – Size



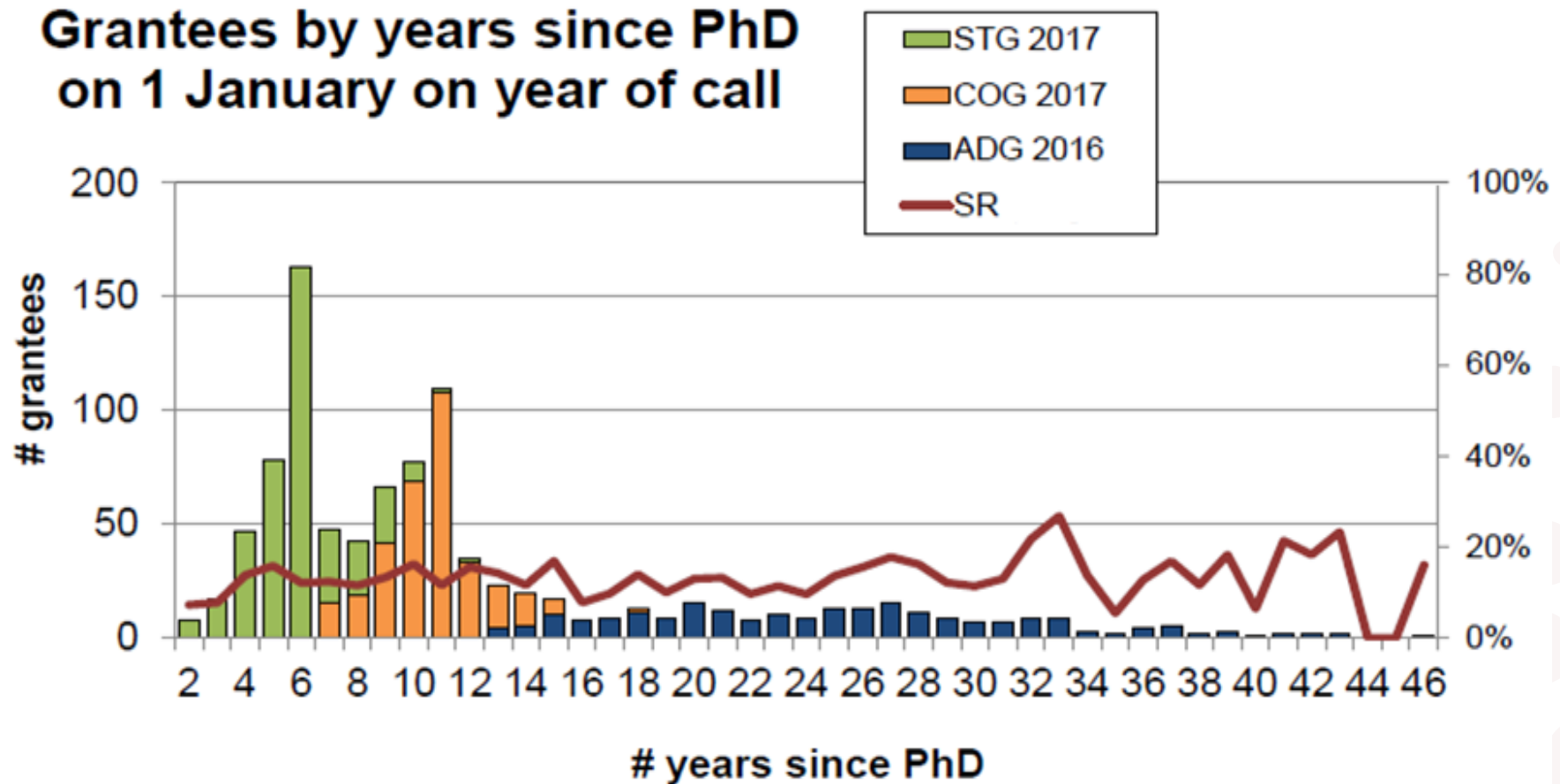
- €1.5M (StG) - possibility of an additional €0.5M
- €2.0M (CoG) - possibility of an additional €0.75M
- €2.5M (AdG) - possibility of additional €1.0M
  
- Reasons for additional funds:
  - start-up costs when moving to Europe
  - access to large facilities
  - major equipment

# Preparing your proposal

## Shall I apply now or wait another year?



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# Preparing an application

## Check the already Funded Projects



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The screenshot shows the top section of the ERC website. It includes the ERC logo, the tagline "Supporting top researchers from anywhere in the world", a search bar, and a navigation menu with items: Home, Funding and Grants, Projects and Results, Media and Events, About ERC, and Contact us. Below the menu is a breadcrumb trail: "You are here: Homepage > Projects and Results > ERC Funded Projects".

### ERC Funded Projects

- Prizes and Awards
- ERC Stories
- Statistics

Funding Scheme

Research Area

Country of Host Institution

Free text search

Clear all

### ERC Funded Projects



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

Since 2007, more than **4,500 projects** have been selected to receive ERC funding throughout the EU Member States and the associated countries. The ERC has received over **43,000 project proposals** for its calls.

**You can use the menu on the left to search quickly and easy ERC funded projects.**

Projects can be filtered according to: **Funding scheme, Research area (Panels/Domains), Country of Host Institution** and/or **free keyword(s)**.

Information displayed is automatically updated through the information available on the **CORDIS** platform.

*Please note that only funded projects, whose grant agreements have been signed, appear in this database. For this reason, the total number of projects in this database may differ from the figures provided in the statistics section which include also projects selected for funding whose grant agreements have not been signed yet.*

For specific queries, please use this **contact form** and select the category 'Web'.

Menu allows searching by Funding Scheme, Research Area, Country of Host Institution.



# Preparing an application

## Check past panel members for the call



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You are here: [Homepage](#) > [Funding and Grants](#) > [Apply for Funding](#) > [Evaluation Panels](#)

- ▶ [Funding Schemes](#)
- ▼ [Apply for Funding](#)
  - [Step by Step](#)
  - [Call for Proposals](#)
  - [Evaluation Panels](#)
  - [Host Institutions](#)
  - [For Non-European Researchers](#)
- [National Contact Points](#)
- [FAQ](#)

## Evaluation Panels

[Tweet](#)

The selection of scientific and scholarly proposals for ERC funding is based on international peer review with excellence as the sole criterion. The ERC uses a typical panel-based system, in which panels of high-level scientists and/or scholars make recommendations for funding.

### Domain and panel structure

The ERC panel structure consists of 25 panels.

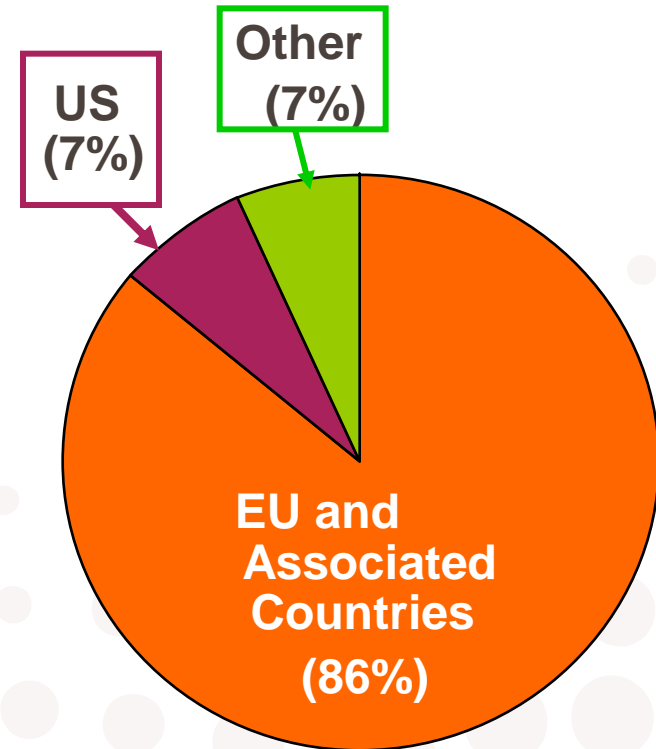
The panels of each grant are grouped into three disciplinary domains that cover the entire spectrum of science, engineering and scholarship:

1. Social sciences and Humanities (SH)
2. Life sciences (LS)
3. Physical and Engineering Sciences (PE)

Research proposals of a multi and inter disciplinary nature are strongly encouraged throughout the ERC's schemes. Proposals of this type are evaluated by the ERC's regular panels with the appropriate external expertise.

# Who evaluates your proposal?

- **Panel members:** typically 400 PMs involved per call
  - High-level scientists
  - Nominated by the Scientific Council worldwide
  - About 12-16 members
  - Steps 1 and 2
- **Remote Referees:** typically 2000 / call
  - Step 2

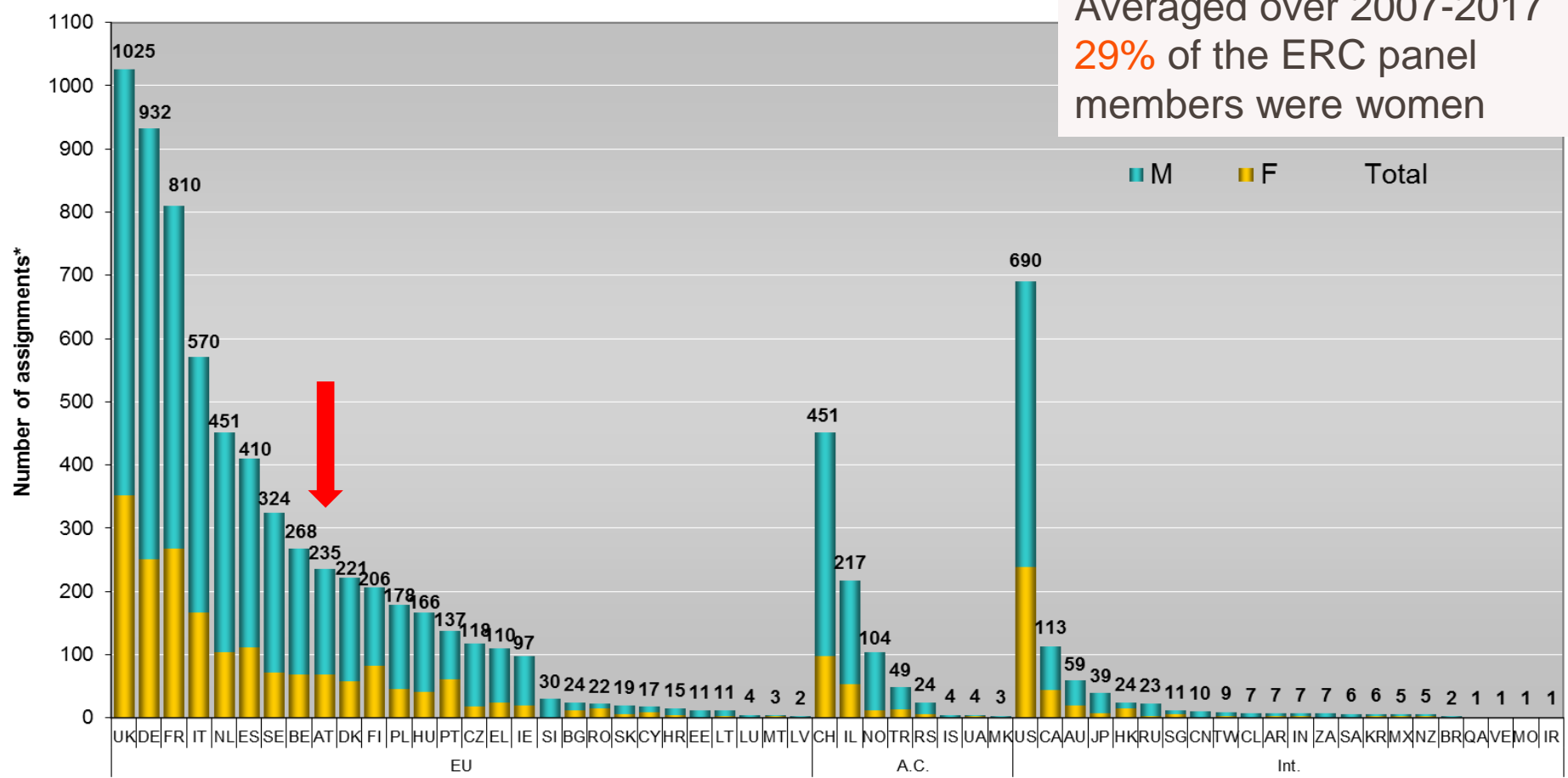


# ERC Panel Members by Country of HI and Gender



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Averaged over 2007-2017  
29% of the ERC panel members were women



Country of Panel Member's Host Institution

Based on the ERC StG, CoG and AdG calls 2007 - 2017

# Preparing your proposal - Choosing the descriptors



- Descriptors and free keywords may influence:
  - Evaluation Panel
  - Panel members
  - Whether a cross-panel evaluation is necessary

**Rumour:** some panels are more successful than others

✗ **NOT true:** budget is allocated based on submitted proposals to each panel, so success rate is ~constant across different panels.

**Rumour:** *The more cross-panel descriptors I indicate, the higher the funding chances, since I emphasize like this the interdisciplinarity of my proposal.*

✗ **NOT true:** even though these are used to allocate proposals to Panel Members, once the proposals are allocated, the Panel Members do not see the keywords and descriptors used.

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### STEP 2

Remote assessment by Panel members and reviewers of **full proposal (B1+B2)**

Panel meeting + interview (StG and CoG)

Score:  
B

Ranked list of proposals:  
Score **A**

Feedback to applicants



# Preparing your Proposal:



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## Tips - Differences between Parts B1 and B2

**In Step 1: Panel members** see only **Part B1** of the proposal (prepare it accordingly!)

- Pay particular attention to the **ground-breaking nature** of the research project – no incremental research. State-of-the-art is not enough. Think big!
- Know your competitors – what is the **state of play** and why is your idea and scientific approach outstanding?
- Part B1: **concise and clear presentation** is crucial (not all evaluators are experts in your field)
- Outline of the **methodological approach is recommended** (feasibility assessment)
- Show your **scientific independence** in your CV (model CV provided in the part B1 template)
- Select the '**right**' Panel – **very IMPORTANT!**



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Score:  
B

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Feedback to applicants

# Preparing your Proposal:



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## Tips - Differences between Parts B1 and B2

**In Step 2:** Both Part B1 and B2 are read by Panel Members & Remote Referees

→ Do not just repeat the synopsis, go into details

- Provide **sufficient details** on methodology, work plan, selection of case studies etc. (15 pages)
- Explain hypothesis or provide preliminary data (if exists)
- Make sure you give full references (excluded from page limits)
- Check coherency of figures
- Justify requested resources
  - Explain involvement of team members (ERC proposals are NOT collaborative ones)
  - show the need of collaborators (if any)

# Preparing your Proposal: Tips - Part B2: Proposal budget considerations



- Budget analysis carried out in **Step 2** evaluation (meeting)
- Panels have responsibility to ensure that resources requested are reasonable and well justified
- Panels do not 'micro-manage' project finances
- Budget cuts need to be justified on a proposal by proposal basis (no across-the-board cuts)
- But **unexplained costs are often cut!**
- Panels to recommend a final maximum budget based on the resources allocated/ removed
- **Ask for funding for Open Access – this is obligatory in Horizon 2020!**

# Typical reasons for rejection

## Research Project

- **Scope**: Too narrow  $\leftrightarrow$  too broad/unfocussed
- Incremental research
- Collaborative project, **several PIs**
- **Work plan** not detailed enough/unclear
- Insufficient **risk** management

## Principle Investigator (PI)

- Insufficient **track-record**
- Insufficient (potential for) **independence**

Before Redressing: see what you could you have done/explained/ presented better before blaming the process!

- Diverting scientific opinion is not a motivation for redress
- An obvious mistake however might result in a re-evaluation

# How ERC Research Proposals are Evaluated



## Guide for Peer Reviewers

- Performing the work
  - Impartiality
  - Confidentiality
- 
- Briefing of panel chairs at the initial panel chairs meeting
  - Briefing of panel members on the first meeting day
  - Briefing of external reviewers via emails and Guide for Peer Reviewers



# Key Messages to experts



- Conflict of Interest
- Equal treatment
  - Pay attention to career breaks
  - Gender
  - Cross-panel proposals
  - HI not an evaluation criterion
- Feedback to Applicants
- Confidentiality

# Feedback to Applicants - briefing experts

- Evaluation Report (panel comment and individual reviews) should explain the decision of the panel.
- Individual Reviews – please avoid:
  - References to re-applications (past or future)
  - References to marks
  - Comments that mainly describe or summarise the proposal
  - References to past/current institutions (not evaluated)
- Pay particular attention to the panel comments where the panel takes a position that is different from what could be inferred from the individual reviews.

# Confidentiality - briefing experts



- **Please do not:**
  - ➔ Discuss any proposals with others outside of the ERC.
  - ➔ Disclose any detail of the evaluation process and its outcomes.
  - ➔ Communicate with the PIs – when contacted, always forward the message to the Scientific Officers.
- Responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the documents and electronic files.

## Individual Evaluation Report - step 1

Hel

Threshold: 0 Evaluation progress:

[Expand](#) / [Collapse](#) all c

### - Criterion 1 - RESEARCH PROJECT

Current score: - / 4.0 ; Threshold 0

Your score: \*

1.0 - Non-competitive  1.5  2.0 - Very Good  2.5  3.0 - Excellent  3.5  4 - Outstanding

#### Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project

To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?

To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines)?

To what extent is the proposed research high risk/high gain?

Comments: \*

---

0 / 3500 cha

#### Scientific Approach

To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the extent that the proposed research is high risk/high gain (based on the Extended Synopsis)?

Comments: \*

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## + Criterion 1 - RESEARCH PROJECT

Current score: - / 4.0 ; Threshold 0

---

## - Criterion 2 - PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Current score: - / 4.0 ; Threshold 0

---

*Please click here for more information*

### Intellectual capacity, creativity and commitment

*The questions below can have one of the following four responses: Outstanding/Excellent/Very good/Non-competitive*

Your score: \*

1.0 - Non-competitive  1.5  2.0 - Very Good  2.5  3.0 - Excellent  3.5  4 - Outstanding

To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to propose and conduct ground-breaking research? \*

Non-competitive  Very Good  Excellent  Outstanding

To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking? \*

Non-competitive  Very Good  Excellent  Outstanding

To what extent have the achievements of the PI typically gone beyond the state of the art? \*

Non-competitive  Very Good  Excellent  Outstanding

Comments:

---

## + SUGGESTED REMOTE REFEREE FOR STEP 2 EVALUATION

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# How ERC Research Proposals are Evaluated



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***Excellence* is the sole evaluation criterion**

Evaluation of ***excellence*** at two levels:

- **Excellence of the Research Project**
  - Ground-breaking nature
  - Potential impact
  - Scientific Approach
  
- **Excellence of the Principal Investigator**
  - Intellectual capacity
  - Creativity
  - Commitment



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# A few tips and advice (1/2)



- Be ambitious and "daring"; panels instructed to seek out high-risk research
- Grab interest and attention of readers/ reviewers
- Remember that Part B1 will be seen by "generalists" (panel members)
- If you make it to Step 2, reviewers see both B1 and B2, so do not repeat / duplicate part B1 in part B2
- Do not include unnecessary partners and collaborators; it is not supposed to be a "consortium"

# Some tips and advice for the interview (1/2)



- Get Panel Members interested in you and what you are doing
- Practice thoroughly, several (many?) times; typically a 10 minute presentation followed by 10-15 minutes of questions
- Panels want to see that these are your ideas, not those of your supervisor

# Some tips and advice for the interview (1/2)



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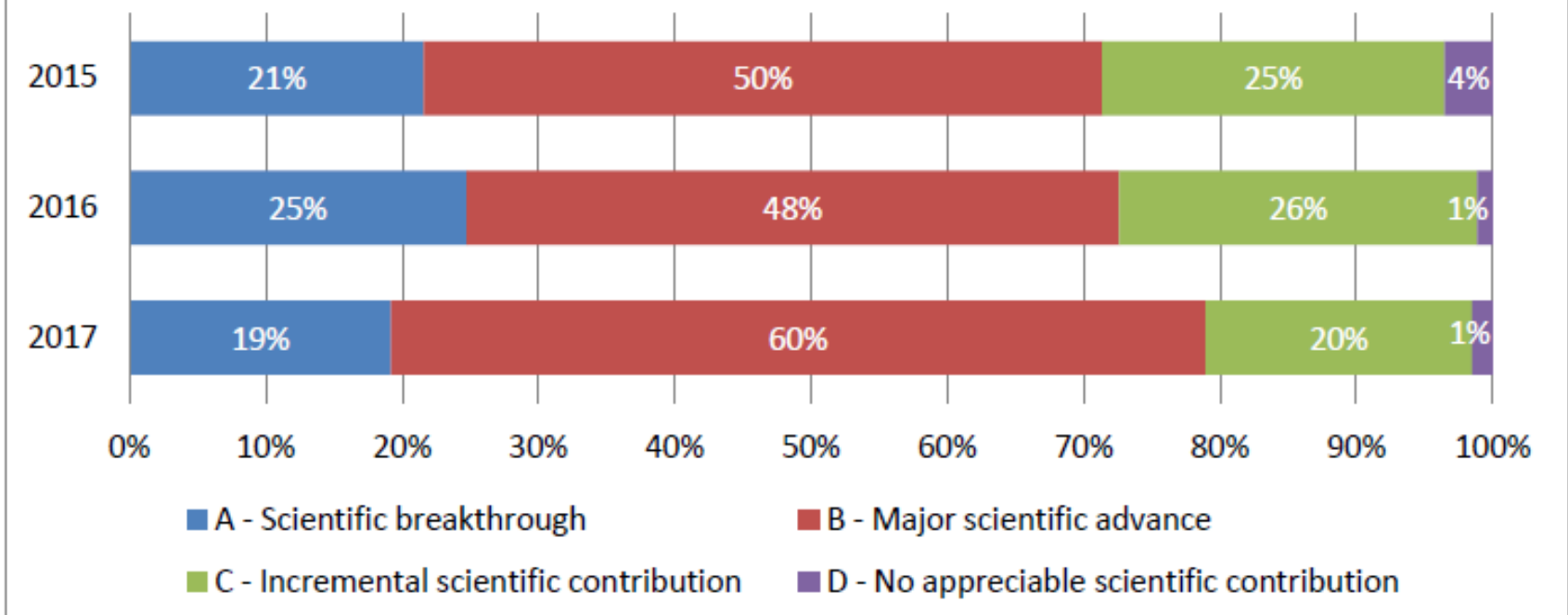
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# 21% of the ERC-funded Projects Deliver Scientific Breakthroughs



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



# Nobel Prize to ERC grantees



The Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2016 was awarded jointly to Jean-Pierre Sauvage, Sir J. Fraser Stoddart and Bernard L. Feringa *"for the design and synthesis of molecular machines"*.



Bernard Feringa  
Nobel 2016

ERC Grantee  
AdG 2008

ERC Grantee  
AdG 2015



Jean Tirole  
Nobel 2014

ERC Grantee  
AdG 2009

The Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences 2014 was awarded to Jean Tirole *"for his analysis of market power and regulation"*.



May-Britt Moser  
Nobel 2014

ERC Grantee  
AdG 2010



Edvard Moser  
Nobel 2014

ERC Grantee  
AdG 2008

ERC Grantee  
AdG 2013



Serge Haroche  
Nobel 2012

ERC Grantee  
AdG 2009



Konstantin Novoselov  
Nobel 2010

ERC Grantee  
StG 2007

ERC Grantee  
SyG 2012

The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2014 was awarded to May-Britt Moser and Edvard Moser, together with John O'Keefe, *"for their discoveries of cells that constitute a positioning system in the brain"*.

- **2** other ERC grantees received the Nobel prize in **2010** and **2012**
- Other **7** ERC grantees were already Nobel laureates at the moment they received the ERC grant



# The European Research Council



- More information: [erc.europa.eu](http://erc.europa.eu)
- National Contact Point: [erc.europa.eu/national-contact-points](http://erc.europa.eu/national-contact-points)
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[www.linkedin.com/company/european-research-council](http://www.linkedin.com/company/european-research-council)

# Some useful tools and links



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- Read Information for Applicants and Work Programme
- View the step-by-step video Introduction to application process, including tips & tricks for the interview  
<https://vimeo.com/94179654>
- Consult ERC website for latest funding opportunities, view ERC funded projects

