

# Funding Opportunities with the European Research Council (ERC)



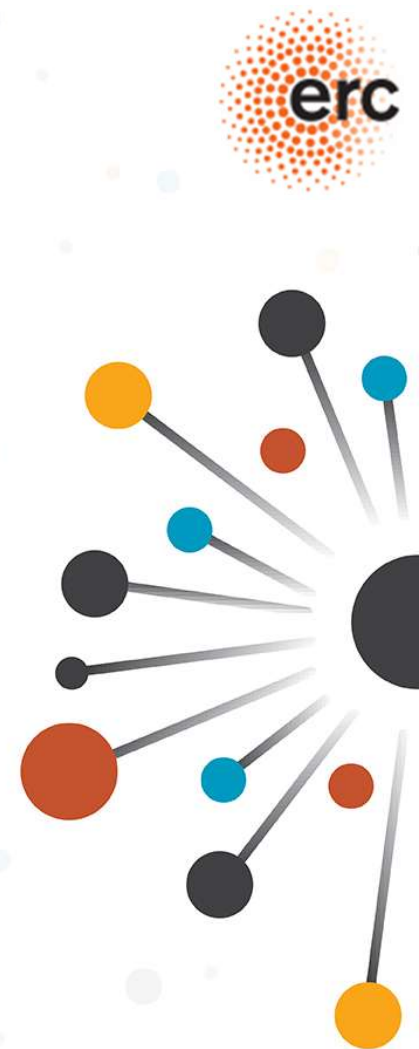
Andreja Umek Venturini, ERC national contact point  
[andreja.umek-venturini@gov.si](mailto:andreja.umek-venturini@gov.si)  
Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

5 February 2026, University of Nova Gorica



ERC schemes, submission  
and evaluation

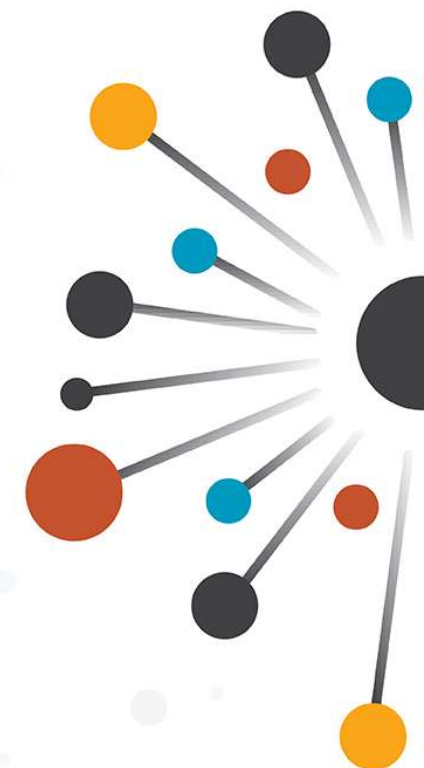
National support  
measures



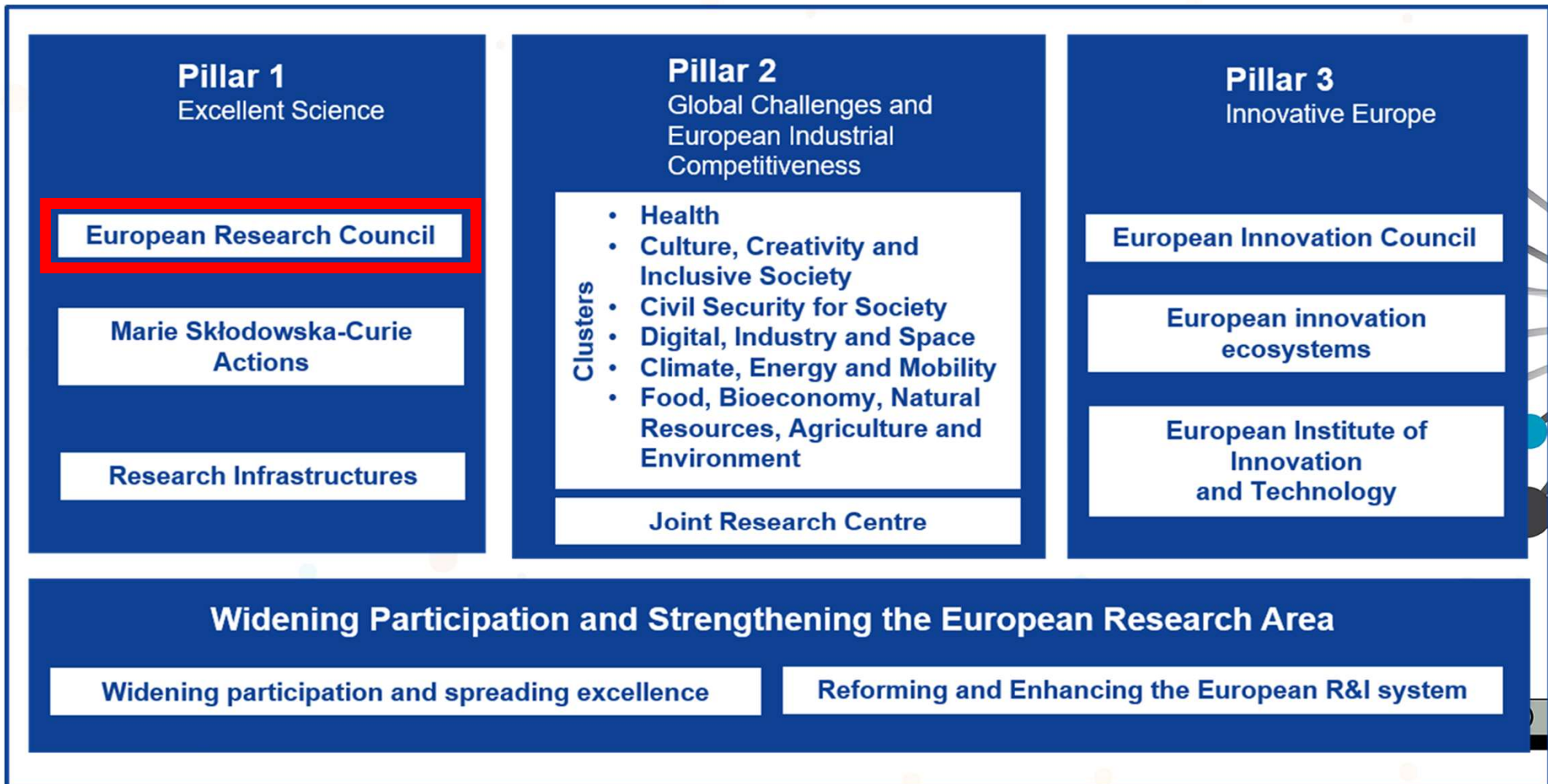
## ERC mission

*".... to support investigator-driven frontier research across all fields, based on scientific excellence."*

bottom-up  
no pre-determined priorities



# ERC is part of Horizon Europe 2021-2027



# ERC is governed by Scientific Council



## Life Sciences



Geneviève  
Almouzni  
Molecular Cell  
Biology



Liselotte  
Højgaard  
Medicine



Leszek  
Kaczmarek  
Neurobiology



Dirk  
Inzé  
Plant Biology



Luke  
O'Neill  
Biochemistry and  
Immunology



Jesper  
Svejstrup  
Vice-President  
Biochemistry



Maria Leptin  
ERC President  
Cell Biology



Gerd  
Gigerenzer  
Vice-President  
Psychology



Eystein  
Jansen  
Vice-President  
Earth Science

## Social Sciences and Humanities



Harriet  
Bulkeley  
Geography



Mercedes  
García-Arenal  
History



Torsten  
Persson  
Economics



Giovanni  
Sartor  
Law



Milena  
Žic Fuchs  
Linguistics

## Physical Sciences and Engineering



Conny  
Aerts  
Astrophysics



Tom  
Henzinger  
Computer  
Science



Maarit  
Karppinen  
Chemistry



Sylvie  
Lorente  
Mechanical  
Engineering



Björn  
Ottersten  
Electrical  
Engineering



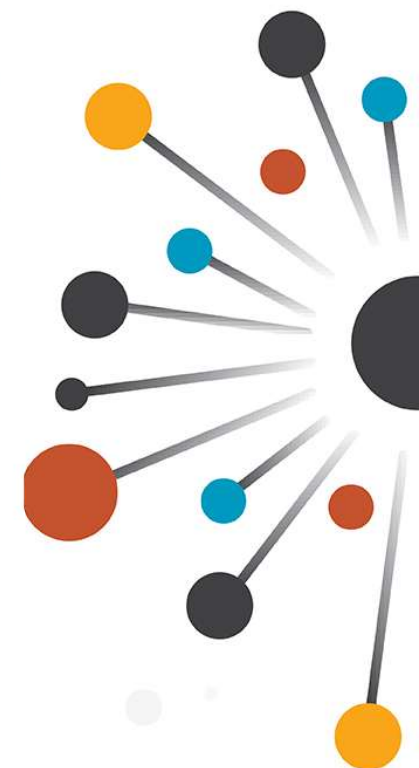
Tomaž Prosen  
Physics



Nicola  
Spaldin  
Materials Theory



András  
Stipsicz  
Mathematics



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Obzorje Evro



# Why to apply for an ERC grant?



- Research topic of own choice, with a team of own choice
- True financial autonomy for 5 years
- Negotiate with the host institution the best conditions of work
- Attract top team members (EU and non-EU) and collaborators
- Move with your grant to any place in Europe if desired ('Portability of grants')
- Attract additional funding and gain recognition: ERC is a quality label

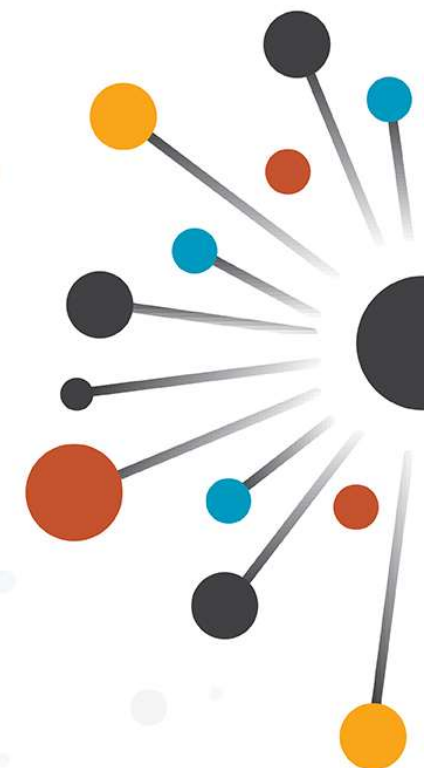


Independence & flexibility & visibility

# Call calendar – Work Programme ERC 2026



ERC call*	Call Opening	Submission Deadline
Starting Grants ERC-2026-StG	9 July 2025	14 October 2025
Consolidator Grants ERC-2026-CoG	25 September 2025	13 January 2026
Advanced Grants ERC-2026-AdG	28 May 2026	27 August 2026
Synergy Grants ERC-2026-SyG	10 July 2025	5 November 2025



# ERC grant schemes



From 2027 StG: 0-10 years after PhD

## Starting Grants

~~2-7 years after PhD~~

up to € 1.5 Mio for 5 years  
possibility for additional funding



From 2027 CoG: 5-15 years after PhD

## Consolidator Grants

~~7-12 years after PhD~~

up to € 2 Mio for 5 years  
possibility for additional funding



Lump sum funding

## Advanced Grants

**track-record of significant research achievements**

up to € 2.5 Mio for 5 years  
possibility for additional funding



## Synergy Grants

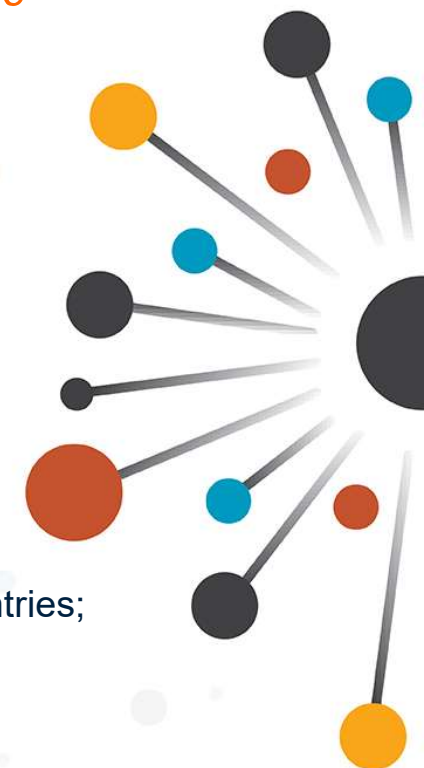
**2 – 4 Principal Investigators**

up to € 10.0 Mio for 6 years  
1 PI can be based outside EU/Associated Countries;  
possibility for additional funding



## Proof-of-Concept

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



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# StG/CoG: Extension of the eligibility window

## For documented situations before the call deadline



- **Maternity leave:** 18 months for each child born before/after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
  - **Paternity/parental leave:** documented time taken for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
  - **Long-term illness** (>90 days for the PI or a close family member) or **national service:** documented amount of leave taken for each incident that occurred after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
  - **Clinical training:** documented amount of clinical training received after the reference date of the 1st eligible degree, up to a maximum of 4 years;
  - **Major disaster** (natural or human-caused such as armed conflicts)
  - **Seeking asylum**
  - Gender-based **violence** or any other form of violence
- Researchers will be awarded no more than one StG and one CoG during their career

# Additional funding – StG, CoG, AdG\*



- Additional funding can be requested to cover further eligible costs if needed for implementing the project
- No more pre-defined cost categories for additional funding
- May include personnel costs

## Up to €1 million

Applicants already based in an EU Member State or country associated to HE

## Up to €2 million

Applicants re-locating to the EU or an Associated Country from elsewhere to take up their ERC grant

\* SyG: up to €4 million additional funding



# ERC Plus – ERC Work programme 2026 amendment



A budget of 210 mio EUR for 30 grants, planed to open in June.

**Objective:** support outstanding PIs to address major scientific challenges

- Projects cannot be carried out with regular ERC grant
- Application include vision statement that explains how project goes beyond regular ERC (0.5 to 2 pages)

**Main features:**

- Excellence only
- Open to researchers of all fields and nationalities at any career stage
- Awarded to a researcher only once in their career
- Duration: four to seven years
- Grant: up to 7 mio EUR, no pro-rata allocation, no additional funding, lump sum

# Excellence is the sole evaluation criteria



## Excellence of the Research Project

- Ground-breaking nature
- Ambition
- Feasibility of the research project

## Excellence of the Principal Investigator

- Intellectual capacity
- Creativity
- Commitment

The panels will **primarily evaluate the ground-breaking nature and ambition of the project.**

At the same time, the panels will evaluate the intellectual capacity and creativity of the PI, with a focus on the extent to which the PI has the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project (no numerical scoring of PI)

# Evaluation panel structure (2025, 2026)

## Life Sciences

- LS1 Molecules of Life: Biological Mechanisms, Structures and Functions
- LS2 Integrative Biology: From Genes and Genomes to Systems
- LS3 Cell Biology, Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration
- LS4 Physiology in Health, Disease and Ageing
- LS5 Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System
- LS6 Immunity, Infection and Immunotherapy
- LS7 Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment of Human Diseases
- LS8 Environmental Biology, Ecology and Evolution
- LS9 Biotechnology and Biosystems Engineering

Primary (Secondary) panel

## Physical Sciences & Engineering

- PE1 Mathematics
- PE2 Fundamental Constituents of Matter
- PE3 Condensed Matter Physics
- PE4 Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences
- PE5 Synthetic Chemistry and Materials
- PE6 Computer Science and Informatics
- PE7 Systems and Communication Engineering
- PE8 Products and Processes Engineering
- PE9 Universe Sciences
- PE10 Earth System Science
- PE11 Materials Engineering

## Social Sciences and Humanities

- SH1 Individuals, Markets and Organisations
- SH2 Institutions, Governance and Legal Systems
- SH3 The Social World and Its Interactions
- SH4 The Human Mind and Its Complexity
- SH5 Texts and Concepts
- SH6 The Study of the Human Past
- SH7 Human Mobility, Environment, and Space
- SH8 Studies of Cultures and Arts



# Evaluation process: StG, CoG, AdG



For main grant schemes (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced grants): a single submission but a **two-step** evaluation

## STEP 1

Remote assessment by **panel members**  
**Part I, CV and Track Record**

Panel meeting

Proposal rejected  
(Scores B&C)

Feedback to applicants –  
resubmission restrictions

Proposal retained  
for step 2 (Score A)  
- max. 44 per panel  
- above 44: 'A non-  
invited'

## STEP 2

Remote assessment by **panel members**  
and **remote reviewers** of **complete research proposal**

Panel meeting  
+ interview

Proposal not  
fundable  
(Score B)

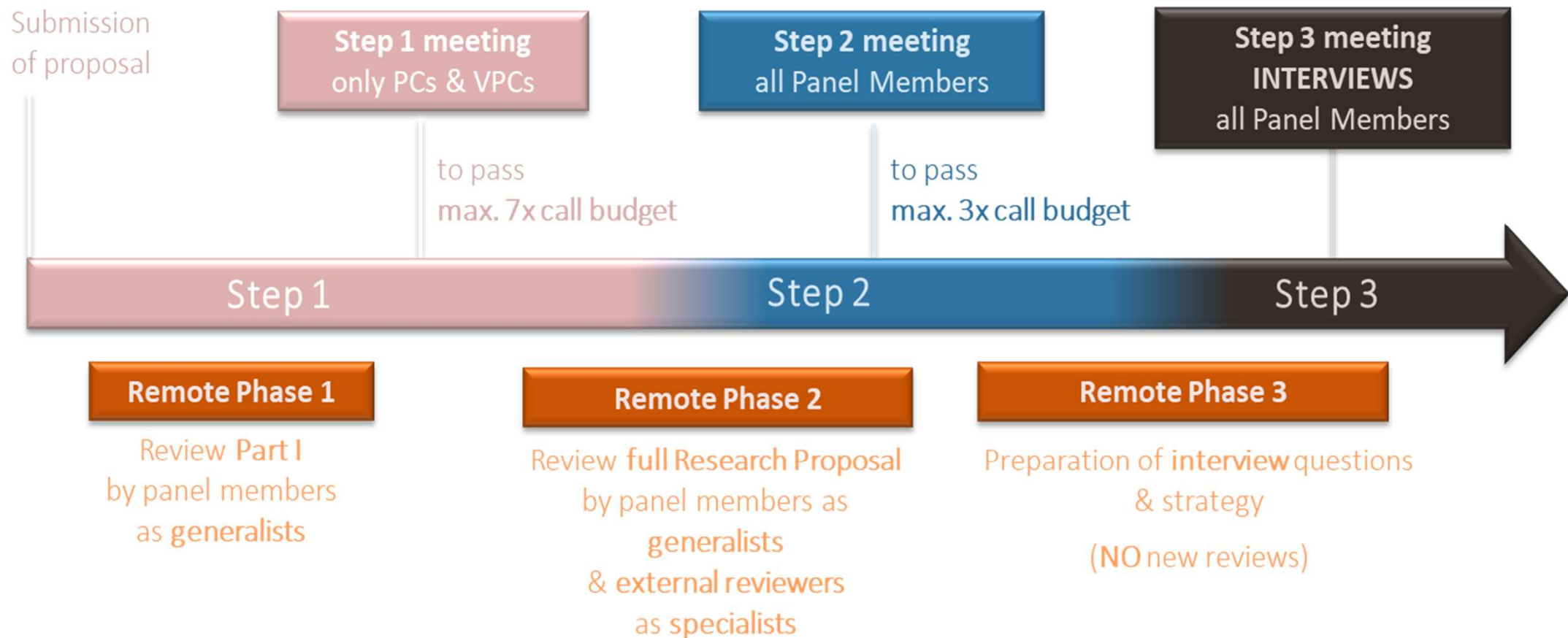
Feedback to applicants

Proposal fundable  
(score A)  
- A funded (within  
available budget)  
- A non-funded (outside  
available budget)

# Evaluation process: SyG



For Synergy grant: a single submission but a **three-step** evaluation with interviews with all PIs in step 3



# ERC Plus: main evaluation principles



## Step 1

- Evaluation performed by AdG panels (submitted to one of 28 panels)
- AdG and ERC Plus are two strictly separate calls
- „Beyond regular grant“ benchmarking – critical for credibility of ERC Plus
- Scores for ERC Plus: „Passed“/“Not passed“
- All outstanding ERC Plus applications can advance to Step 2 – no cap

## Step 2

- Evaluation performed by „Plus“ panels
- ERC Plus step 2 will involve distinct set of panel members with broad scientific overview
- Step 2 remote phase: review of each advancing ERC Plus proposal by the AdG PM, additional remote reviewers and the ERC Plus panel member
- Step 2 panel meeting: by the ERC Plus panel members only – The step 2 „**Plus**“ panels will be domain neutral, i.e. will be mixed LS/PE/SH panels
- Applicants will be interviewed

# Resubmission restrictions



Application under Previous ERC Work Programme Calls and Outcome of Evaluation		Applicants are Ineligible for the Following Calls under Work Programme 2026
Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, or Synergy Grant 2024 and 2025	Rejected on the grounds of a breach of research integrity	Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, ERC Plus, and Synergy Grant 2026
Starting, Consolidator, or Advanced Grant 2024	C at Step 1	Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and ERC Plus Grant 2026
Starting, Consolidator, or Advanced Grant 2025	B or C at Step 1	Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and ERC Plus Grant 2026
Synergy Grant 2024	C at Step 1	Synergy Grant 2026
Synergy Grant 2025	B or C at Step 1	Synergy Grant 2026

# New structure of the scientific proposal StG, CoG, AdG from 2026



## PART A – admin forms online

Section 1 General information

Section 2 Participants

**Section 3 Budget**

Section 4 Ethics and security

Section 5 Other Questions

## PART B1 – submitted as single .pdf

Abstract (2000 characters)

Secondary panel explanation (1000 characters)

**Part I Scientific Proposal** 5 p.

**References** (does not count towards page limit)

**CV & Track Record** up to 4 p.

## Annexes – submitted as .pdf

- Statement of support of HI
- copy of PhD or equivalent (StG & CoG)

*If applicable:*

- document for extension of eligibility window (StG & CoG)
- explanatory info on ethical issues

## PART B2 – submitted as single .pdf

**Part II Scientific Proposal** 7 p.

**References** (does not count towards page limit)

**Funding ID** (does not count towards page limit)

**seen by the panel**

## Part I of the scientific proposal (max 5 pages)



*References should be included (they do not count towards the page limit)*

Why your proposal is an original, creative idea about an important question in your research field(s) and how the project will advance the frontier of knowledge.

- (1) lay out the current state of knowledge
- (2) explain the scientific question and the objectives of the project
- (3) present the overall approach or research strategy you propose to use to reach the project goals.

**Feasibility of the scientific approach will no longer be assessed at Step 1**

## Part II of the scientific proposal (max. 7 pages or 10 pages for SyG)



*References should be included (they do not count towards the page limit)*

Detailed explanation of the project implementation, including research methodology, work plan, risk assessment, and mitigating measures, justification for the requested budget and resources, and any further necessary background not included in Part I.

At step 1, only Part I and the CV & track record are assessed

At step 2, the panel assesses the complete Research Proposal:

- both Part I and Part II (**no need to repeat sections of Part I in Part II**)
- CV and Track Record
- Resources
- Time commitment

# Life cycle of an individual ERC project



evaluation

Ethics review  
for proposals  
recommended  
for funding

grant  
agreement

Mid-term  
scientific  
report  
24M

Financial  
report 1  
30M

End:  
financial  
report 2 and  
final scientific  
report  
60M



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# Typical reasons for not making it

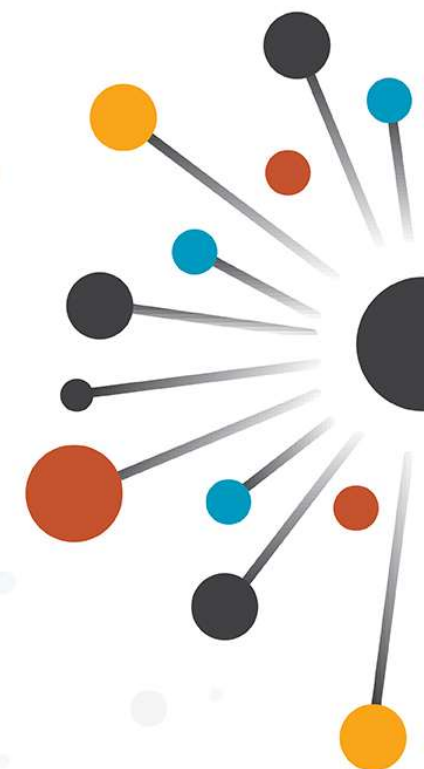


- Hypothesis and objectives not sufficiently clear
- Incremental in nature, missing the ground-breaking potential
- No realisation of risks & challenges, contingency
- Overly ambitious (promising too much) or „overselling“ yourself
- For interdisciplinary proposals: expertise missing in one area



ERC schemes, submission  
and evaluation

National support  
measures



# ERC Support Environment in Slovenia



- NCP - National Contact Point at the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation
- ARIS (Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency)
- Research institution



# ERC Support Environment in Slovenia



## Preparation of the application

- Information events
- Consultations
- ERC Reading Day / čitalnica
- ERC fokus –visiting fellowship

## Preparation for an interview

- Consultations
- Mock ERC interview

## Good rating without ERC funding

- Consultations
- ERC perspektiva – adapted project

## Getting the ERC project

- Consultations
- ERC potencial – preparatory project

## Running the ERC project

- Consultations
- In case of ERC PoC application – ERC PoC Seal of Excellence

## Completion of the ERC project

- Consultations
- ERC nova obzorja – exit project

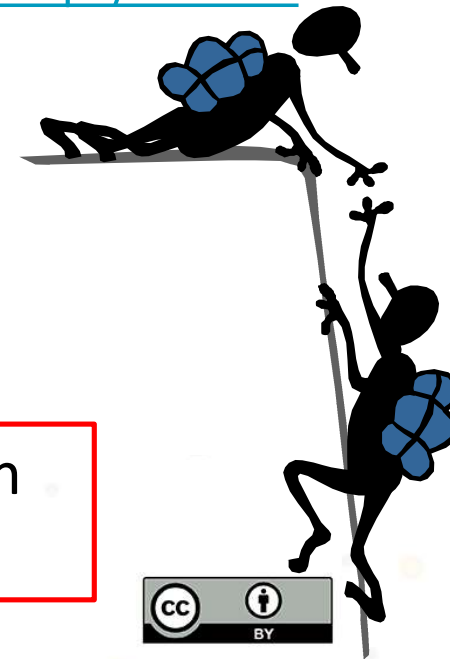


- NCP
- ARIS

# ERC National Contact Point in Slovenia



- General or focused information events
- Consultations for researchers or institutions
- E-news (contact addresses of research institutions)
- Renovated website: <https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/obzorje-evropa/odlicna-znanost/evropski-raziskovalni-svet/>
- Linkage with other Horizon Europe National Contact Points in Slovenia
- Linkage with other ERC National Contact Points - mERCury project
- **ERC Reading Day**
- **Mock ERC Interview**



If you are unsuccessful, study the evaluation report carefully ... **and try again!**

# ERC Reading Day



- Library of successful ERC project applications with Slovenian institutions + presentations for interview (currently 31 applications)
- Open twice in autumn and twice in spring → next 3 March
- Invitation with registration form in the e-news
- Opportunity to see how to present a scientific idea and your career path to date
- The opportunity to discuss the material you have read



# Mock ERC interview



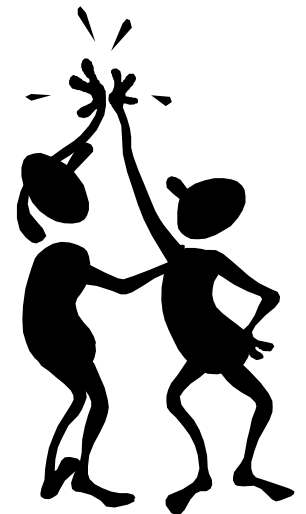
- The Mock ERC Interview takes place in the final stage of the preparation, is online and closely follows the ERC interview process
- The mock panel is composed of ERC grantees and ERC panelists in Slovenia close to your field (no conflict of interest)
  - Interview on the project proposal
  - Advice on performance and presentation
- Candidates share their project proposal in advance
  - At least the first part
  - Treated as confidential material



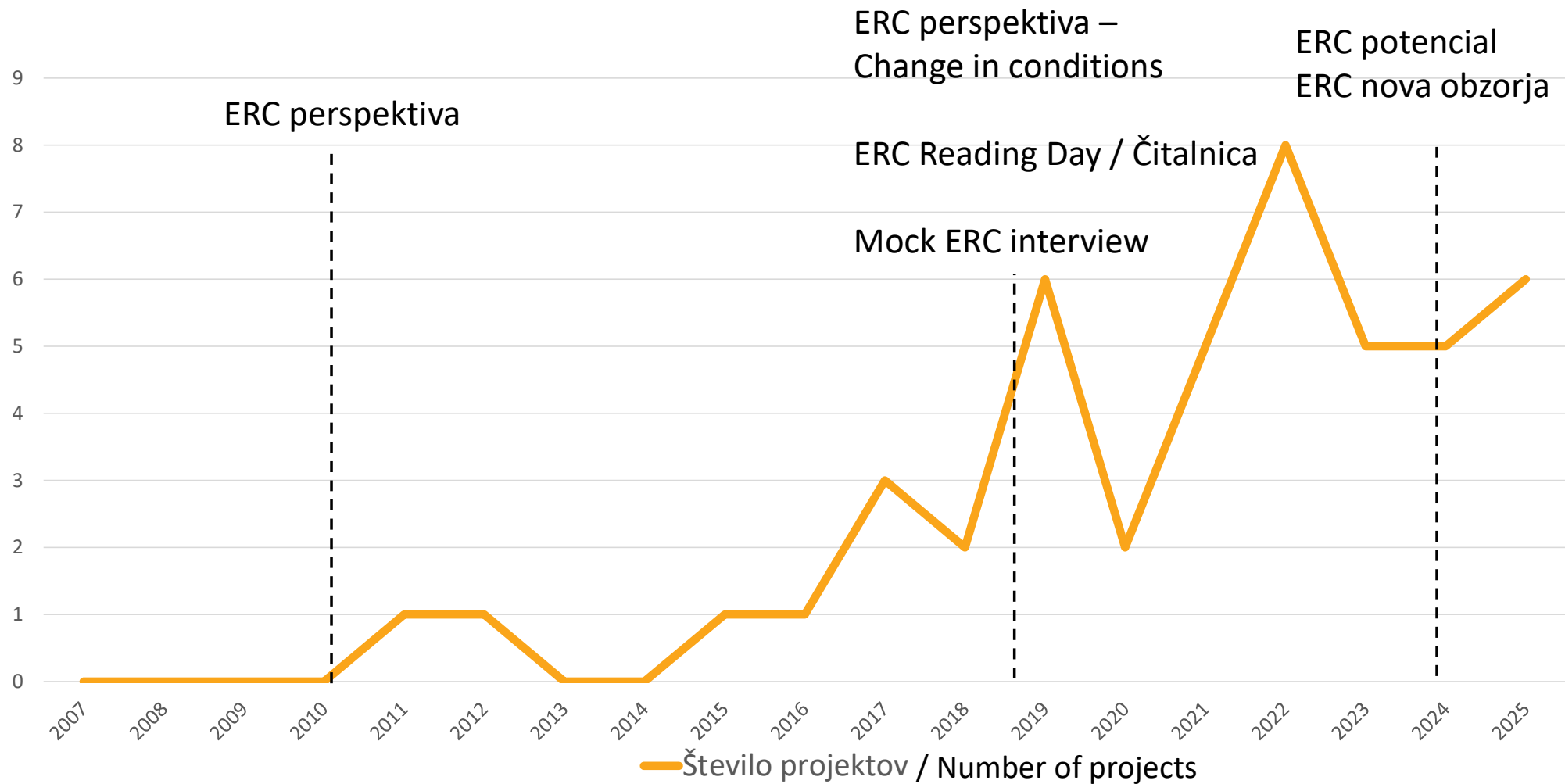
# Research institution



- Identifying potentially successful ERC applicants and supporting their career development
  - Competitive CV
- Supporting applicants through all steps of the application process
  - Involving experienced researchers
  - Involving external support
- Support for intensive interview preparation
  - Involving experienced researchers
  - Involving external assistance
- ERC project - instrument for internationalisation and reintegration



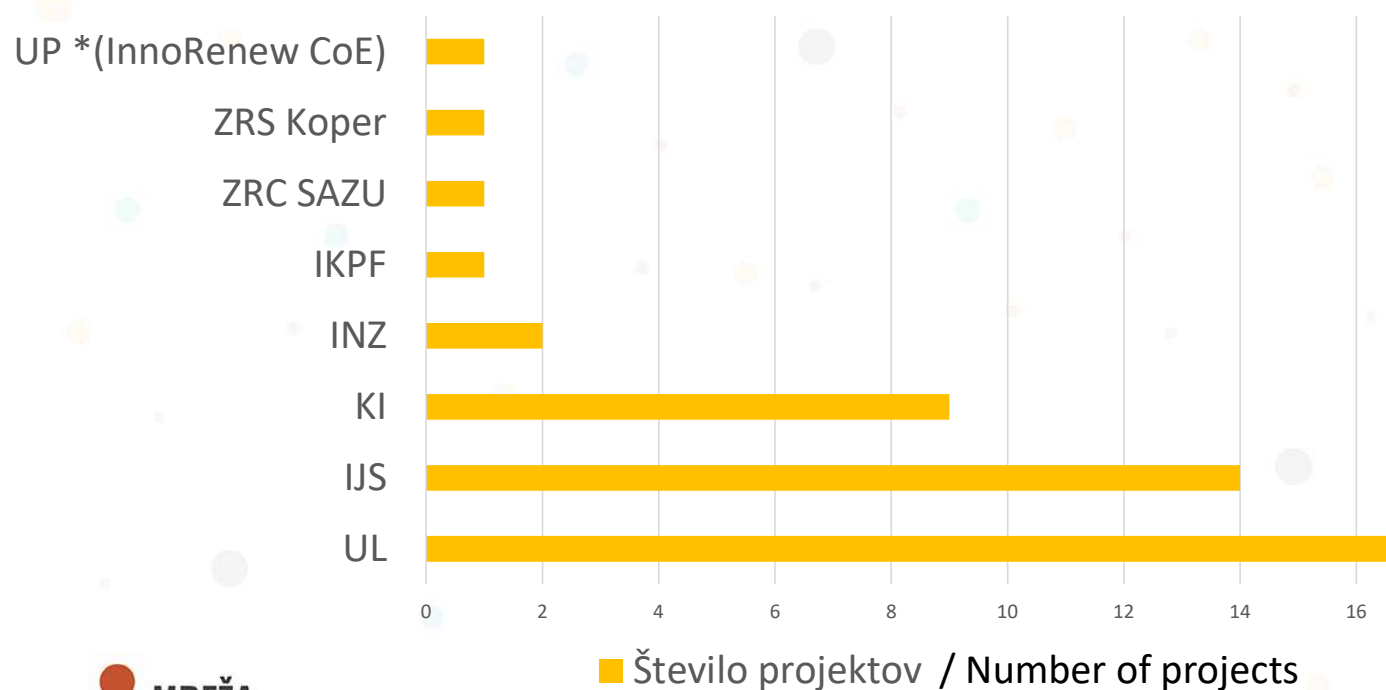
# Increasing the success of ERC applications through support measures



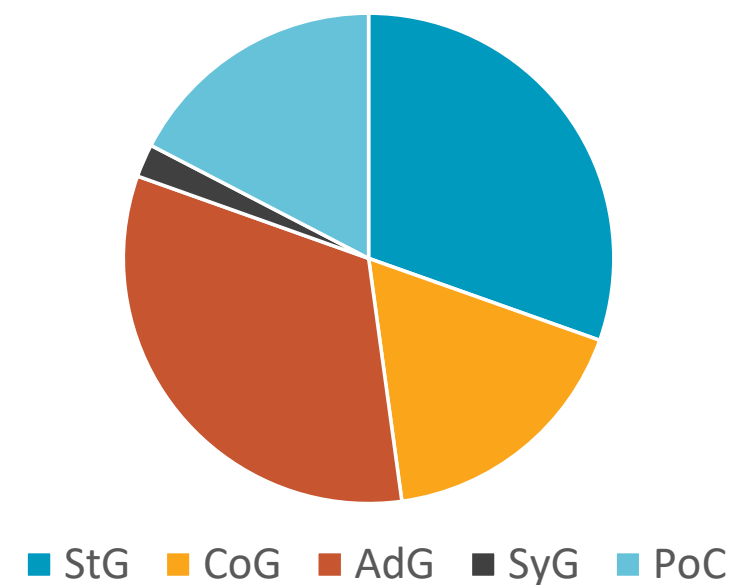
# 46 ERC projects in Slovenia



Number of ERC projects by Host Institutions



ERC projects



# KORISTNE POVEZAVE

- MVZI in Obzorje Evropa: [www.obzorje-evropa.si](http://www.obzorje-evropa.si)
- Portal za sodelujoče v Obzorju Evropa (Funding & Tenders Portal):  
<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/horizon>
- Vprašanja? Research Enquiry Service: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/enquiries>



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA  
MINISTRSTVO ZA GOSPODARSTVO,  
TURIZEM IN ŠPORT



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA  
MINISTRSTVO ZA INFRASTRUKTURO



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PODNEBJE IN ENERGIJO

