

Technology Centre Prague together with the Expert Group for supporting ERC applicants are pleased to invite you to the

ON-LINE workshops for ERC applicants on the PREPARATION OF A COMPETITIVE PROPOSAL

This interactive workshop series is focused on the preparation of an ERC proposal. It is composed of three interconnected parts to be held in May, June and September 2024. A precondition for being eligible to participate in the training is having selected a host institution based in the Czech Republic.

To maximize the impact and effectiveness, the workshop is opened **only to the ERC Starting and Consolidator grant applicants who are intensively working on their project proposal**, which they intend to submit to the respective ERC 2025 call, and who are not restricted by resubmission limitations from the previous calls. Exceptionally, also ERC Synergy applicants whose profile falls within the ERC Starting or Consolidator age category, can apply.

DATES:

- **The 1st part of the workshop series will take place on 15, 16 and 17 May 2024, namely:**

15 May 2024: LIFE SCIENCES

16 May 2024: PHYSICAL SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING

17 May 2024: SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

The workshop will consist of individual presentations of the applicants' project ideas and a discussion with members of the Expert Group for supporting ERC applicants (EG) and other ERC evaluators as well as ERC grantees.

More specifically, participants will give a **five-minute presentation** of their intended project which will address two questions:

- 1. What is the project's main original idea that makes it competitive in the ERC terms?**
- 2. Why are you credible to achieve substantial results in the given direction?**

The participants are not requested to send their presentations beforehand. The length limitation of 5 minutes is intentional and fully in line with the purpose of the workshop. Presentations should focus on the essentials and on presenting the main idea (a lengthy overview of the state-of-the-art would not serve this goal

well). While preparing the presentation, the applicant should repeatedly ask her/himself: "How could I describe the main idea in one sentence? What is the main selling point of my proposal?" In the annex, you will find the ERC evaluation criteria/elements, which evaluators of ERC proposals are obliged to consider when assessing your proposal and also tips for the presentation as well as for the proposal itself. From our experience, it is indeed useful to pay attention to these recommendations.

- **The 2nd part of the workshop will be held between 17 and 21 June 2024 (TBD).**

You will have the opportunity to get acquainted with a successful ERC proposal from the scientific domain of your preference (PE/LS/SSH), and to meet its principal investigator. This part should help you to better understand the evaluation process and its implications for writing your own proposal.

- **The 3rd part of the workshop will be held in September 2024.**

It will consist of individual feedback on the draft B1 part of the ERC proposal and discussions with members of the EG as well as other ERC evaluators and grantees.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICANTS:

Registration will be opened on March 11, 2024, at 12:00 (noon).

The admission will be conducted on the **first-come, first-served basis**. For each ERC domain, 17 participants will be admitted (plus 7 persons on the reserve list).

To apply, **please send the requested parts of your proposal** (as specified below) **as soon as possible after filling in the online registration form**.

Applicants will be informed about their admission/rejection to the workshops by the end of April 2024.

Importantly, please pay attention to the quality of the materials that you provide. If the materials are not in line with the ERC requirements (such as not using the ERC template), or if they are incomplete, then the application will not be considered.

The on-line workshop will be held in English without interpretation.

REQUIREMENTS:

In order to attend the workshop series, the applicants are required to

- 1. fill in a registration form (to be opened on 11 March 2024 at 12:00)**
2. and subsequently, **send a preliminary abstract of the proposal** (max. 2 000 characters) and the **CV** and **track-record** (full 4 pages).

The requested materials should be sent **to the Expert Group mailbox (erc.es@tc.cz) as soon as possible after filling in the online registration form, by 14 April 2024 at the latest.** The documents should be in **one pdf file** and **in the form fully respecting the instructions** in the [Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2024 Calls](#), or the [Information for Applicants to the Synergy Grant 2024 Call](#) (using the 2024 ERC templates). In order to allow further processing of the materials, **this deadline will be strictly reinforced.**

3. Applicants are supposed to inform their future host institution about their intention to apply for an ERC grant as soon as possible. **After closing the registration, the institutions (through their ERC contact person) will be asked to confirm the list of their applicants.** This is to ensure that the institutions are committed to assisting their applicants throughout the preparation.

All materials will be considered confidential.

Annex I: EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. Research Project

Ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility

Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grants

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)?

Scientific Approach

To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the ground-breaking nature and ambition of the proposed research (based on the Extended Synopsis)?

*To what extent does the proposal go beyond what the individual Principal Investigators could achieve alone (**for Synergy Grants**, based on the Extended Synopsis)?*

*To what extent do the Principal Investigators succeed in proposing a combination of scientific approaches that are crucial to address the scope and complexity of the research questions to be tackled (**for Synergy Grants**, based on the Extended Synopsis)?*

To what extent are the proposed research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project (based on the research proposal)?

To what extent are the proposed timescales, resources, and PI commitment adequate and properly justified (based on the research proposal)?

2. Principal Investigator(s)

Intellectual capacity and creativity

Starting, Consolidator, Advanced, and Synergy Grants

To what extent has/have the PI(s) demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?

To what extent does/do the PI(s) provide evidence of creative and original thinking?

To what extent does/do the PI(s) have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

Synergy Grant Group

Synergy

To what extent does the Synergy Grant Group successfully demonstrate in the proposal that it brings together the know-how – such as skills, experience, expertise, disciplines, teams – necessary to address the proposed research question (based on the Extended Synopsis)?

Source: ERC Work Programme 2024, p. 36–37

Annex II: HOW TO PRESENT YOUR PROPOSAL

- ✓ Do not provide a lengthy overview of the state-of-the-art, focus on the basic questions:

WHAT is the challenge?

WHY is it important (expected broader impact on the field, adjacent fields, society ...) and why right now?

HOW are you going to achieve your goals?

WHO? Why do YOU have the best qualifications to successfully address the project objectives globally?

- ✓ In the first 60 seconds (presentation/interview)/ 5 minutes (project proposal) it must be clear, what your main idea is, what you are going to do and why.
- ✓ Set your project goals based on a **burning scientific question of fundamental importance/a working hypothesis/a** substantially new idea on a worldwide scale (your project should not be a simple synthesis or improvement of current methods, techniques, approaches, knowledge. It should not aim at building of infrastructures, research centres, equipment, a microscope, a bioreactor etc.
- ✓ Your project should be **risky, yet feasible**.
- ✓ You will only have 5 minutes – your slides should **not be too busy**. Do not try to say everything, **less is sometimes more** – think about what **your selling point** is.
- ✓ Be **ambitious, self-confident** (but not arrogant) **and convincing** ('not just good, but excellent'). It must be **pleasant** (make the evaluators life easier – provide them with clear answers to the questions/evaluation elements we have sent you, use simple clear text, charts, diagrams, figures, pictures, highlighting where appropriate, avoid jargon, explain abbreviations ...) **and exciting** to read your proposal/listen to you (eye contact, clear simple sentences, loud voice, **understandable English, do not speak too fast ...**)
- ✓ Be consistent throughout the proposal!
- ✓ Show that you are the right person, who has **the best qualifications to successfully address the project objectives globally** – highlight **your best achievements**, showing the ability to think out of the box and to conduct ground-breaking research as well as your leadership qualities.
- ✓ Prepare for a **heterogeneous audience**. The panels are usually very broad, consisting of experts in depth understanding your proposal as well as generalists – you **must be able to convince both groups**.
- ✓ **Allow time for a mock presentation** before you come to the workshop/**several mock presentations** before your interview with ERC panel members.
- ✓ Show passion for science and the topic! 😊