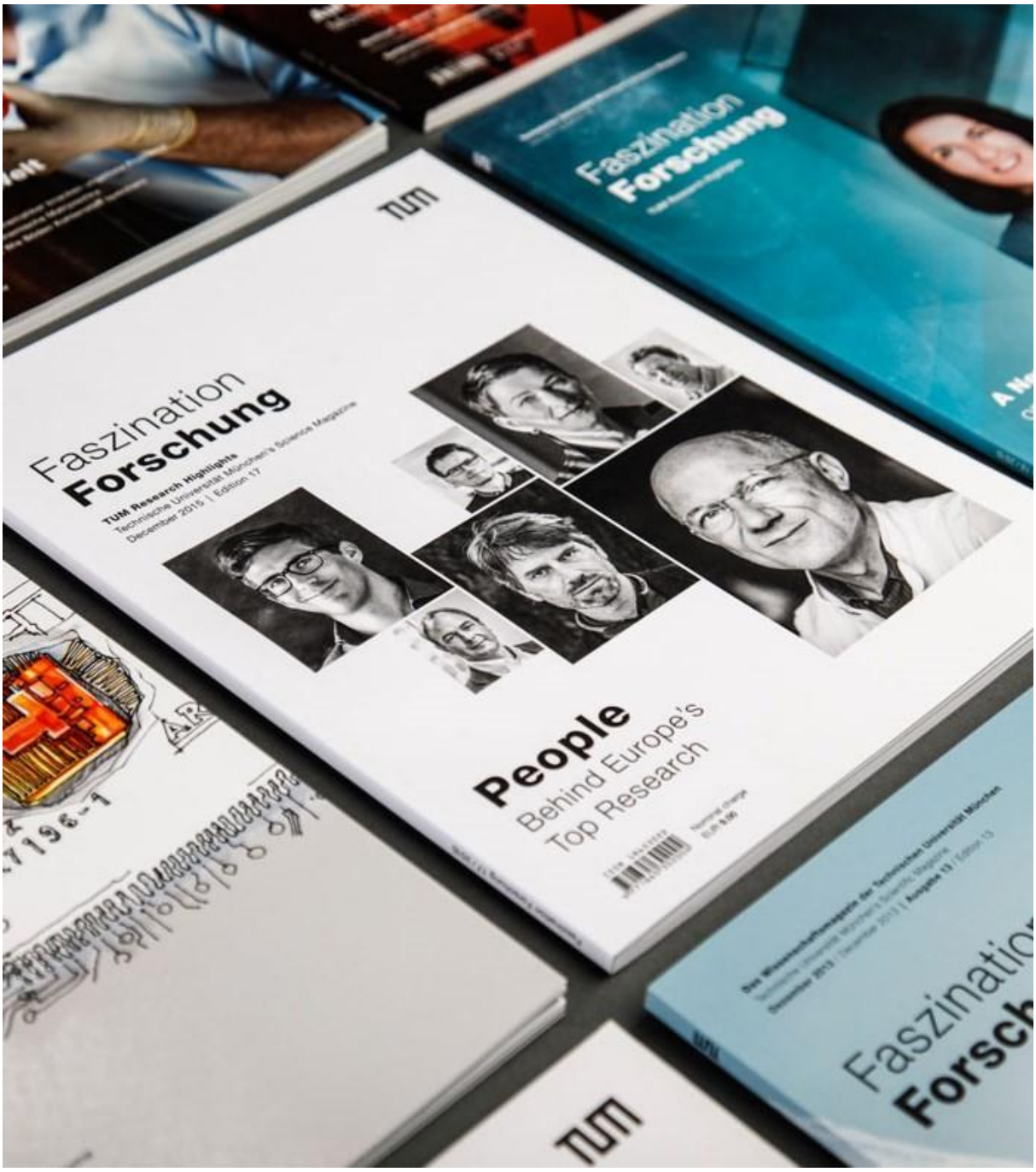
Technical University of Munich
TUM ForTe - Office for Research and Innovation

ERC Grant Application | Horizon Europe

TUM Guidelines for Applicants



Prologue

With over 250 ERC grants, the Technical University of Munich (TUM) has been very successful in applying for ERC funding over the last years. Based on our long experience and knowledge collected through recent ERC grant application rounds, the following guidelines provide support for a successful application. Please note that all comments are non-binding suggestions and that we do not guarantee a successful outcome.

For a smooth and efficient preparation of the proposal submission, we kindly ask you to refer to our **TUM Information for your ERC Application**.

Please also take into account all instructions of the ERC guide **Information for Applicants** and the **Work Programme** of the relevant call.

First steps of your ERC Application:

- Log-in/ register at the Funding & Tenders Portal
- Go to *Funding - Calls For Proposals* and search for *ERC Starting Grant*
- Select the type of your submission and press the *Start Submission* button
- The up-to-date templates are automatically loaded and you can start to fill the administrative data (**Part A**) online

TUM's PIC	999977463
TUM's Main Host Institution Contact Person	Dr. Nathalie Themeßl erc-grants.forte@tum.de
Position	EU Scientific Manager
Department	TUM ForTe Arcisstr. 21, 80333 München

Table of Contents

Guidelines

1. Online Administrative Forms

a. Step-by-step guide

- Search in the Funding & Tenders Portal for your call or ask us for the link
- Log in/ register
- Create your proposal online
  - **TUM's PIC** is **999977463**
  - **TUM's** main **contact person** (in step 4 - participants list): please use erc-grants.forte@tum.de
    → see hints on Part A, 2 – Participants, below
  - Scientists who are affiliated with the University Hospital Klinikum rechts der Isar (TUM-Med), please contact Henning Pudimat for TUM-Med's PIC and main contact person

b. Hints on how to fill in Part A (administrative data) online

1 – General information:

- Declarations: please select declarations 1) to 9) if applicable to your proposal

2 – Participants:

- Gender equality plan: please select "yes".
- Departments carrying out the proposed work: please indicate the name of the relevant chair/ professorship at TUM where the ERC project will be hosted
- **Contact address of the host institution and contact persons**: Dr. Nathalie Themessl (Starting Grants), Mrs. Vivian Seidel and Dr. Nathalie Themessl (Consolidator Grants), Mrs. Vivian Seidel (Advanced Grants), Dr. Astrid De Clercq (Synergy Grants), Dr. Astrid De Clercq (Proof of Concept Grants), erc-grants.forte@tum.de, Position in organization: EU Scientific Manager, Department: TUM ForTe, Arcisstr. 21, 80333 München

3 – Budget:

- Please use the finances factsheet (ZA 3) attached to our internal TUM Information for your ERC Application.
- Section C. Resources (the maximum number of characters is limited)
- Note: State and fully justify the amount of funding required to fulfil the objectives for the duration of the project. All eligible costs requested should be included in the budget. Please use whole euro values only.
- You have to justify your budget in written text. Describe the size and nature of your team (i.e. how many postdocs/ PhDs over how many years etc.), the equipment needed and all other requested direct costs. Please specify if you will use third parties giving in-kind contributions to the action.
- If you request additional funding, you have to justify it. Please note that the size of the requested budget has no influence on the proposal evaluation.

- The estimation of the project's costs should be as accurate as possible.
- To facilitate the assessment of resources by the panels:
  - State the amount of funding considered necessary to fulfil the research objectives. The project cost estimation should be as accurate as possible. The requested budget should be fully justified and in proportion to the actual needs. Describe all the cost categories considered necessary for the project. The evaluation panels assess the estimated costs carefully; **unjustified budgets will be reduced**.
  - Describe the size and nature of the team, indicating, where appropriate, the key team members and their roles. In case one or more team members are engaged by another host institution, their participation has to be fully justified with respect to the scientific added value they bring to the project and in relation to the additional cost this may impose. When estimating your personnel costs take into account the working time dedicated to the project.
  - Explain and describe in detail any additional funding requested for the project (the requested additional funding must be included in the budget table). Please also indicate under which of the four cost categories (A-D) the request falls.
  - Include a short technical description of any requested equipment, why you need it and how much you plan to use it for the project.
  - Include a realistic estimation of the costs for Open Access to project outputs. Costs for providing immediate Open Access to publications are eligible if the publishing venue is fully open access (i.e., a fully open access journal, book or publishing platforms including APCs or BPCs) and if they are incurred during the lifetime of the project. This concerns article processing charges, book processing charges and other publishing fees such as page charges or color charges.
  - Describe any existing resources not requiring EU funding that will be used for the project, such as infrastructure and equipment.
  - If applicable, specify the cost items covered by your 'Other personnel costs' category (e.g. technician, etc.) and the cost items covered by your 'Other additional direct costs' category (e.g. certificate on the financial statement).

4 – Ethics & security:

- If relevant, please use the guidelines: How to complete your ethics self-assessment.

5 – Other questions:

- Please note that (as of 2023) the reference date for the calculation of the eligibility period for ERC Starting and Consolidator Grants is the certified date of the successful defense and not the date of the award of the PhD degree.
- Please indicate the percentage (or %) of your working time you will devote to the project during the grant period. Keep in mind that you are expected to dedicate at least 50% (Starting Grants) / 40% (Consolidator Grants) / 30% (Advanced and Synergy Grants) of your total working time to the project and spend at least 50% of your total working time in an EU member state or associated country. Upon request, you must be able to prove to the European Commission the time you have invested (e.g. with timesheets).

c. Upload

- **B1 & B2**
- **Commitment of the host institution**
- PhD certificate clearly indicating the date of the successful defense or a written confirmation from the awarding institution stating the said date
- Supporting documents for ethics self-assessment
- Any other supporting documents for extension requests, i.e. template for requesting an extension of the eligibility period (Starting and Consolidator Grants only)

d. Submit your proposal

- **Submit it.**
- Did you receive the email confirmation of your submission?
- Verify your proposal and its content by downloading all the submitted files.
- Advice: register your application well before the deadline!

2. PART B1

Add relevant header (see template)

Applicant's last name	Part B1	ACRONYM

Starting/Consolidator/Advanced Grant 2026

Part B1[1]

(Part B1 is evaluated in Step 1 and Step 2, Part B2 is evaluated in Step 2 only)

All guidelines in italic should be removed

Choose a short and eye-catching acronym (for inspiration: http://acronymcreator.net/) max. 20 characters (standard alphabet and numbers only; no symbols/ special characters except underscore, space, hyphen or dot)

Proposal Full Title

PROPOSAL ACRONYM

Choose a short and meaningful title: max. 200 characters (with spaces); should be understandable to non-specialists in your field.

Cover Page:

- Name of the Principal Investigator (PI)
- Name of the PI's host institution for the project e.g. Technical University of Munich (TUM)
- Proposal duration in months usually 60 months

Please delete all text highlighted in grey in this template.

Proposal summary (identical to the abstract from the online proposal submission forms, section 1).

The abstract (summary) should, at a glance, provide the reader with a clear understanding of the objectives of the research proposal and how they will be achieved. The abstract will be used as the short description of your research proposal in the evaluation process and in communications to contact in particular potential independent external experts and/or to inform the Commission and/or the programme management committees and/or relevant national funding agencies. It must therefore be short and precise and should not contain confidential information.

Please use plain typed text, avoiding formulae and other special characters. The abstract must be written in English. There is a limit of 2000 characters (spaces and line breaks included).

The proposal summary and title are the first impression reviewers will get of your proposal. Try to stir their interest and to summarize the most important aspects of your project in a clear and convincing manner. Use "I" in the proposal as ERC grants reward individual excellence and keep the following questions in mind when writing your summary:

- What have been recent advances in your field? What questions remain unresolved today?
- How will your project address these challenges? Clearly state the main objective(s) of your project and the acronym of the proposal.
- What are the expected breakthroughs of your project?

[1] Instructions for completing Part B1 can be found in the '*Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2026 Calls*'.

Consider the following points when writing part B1:

- Please adhere to the structure of the given templates and read the section titles carefully.
- After briefly reading part B1, the reviewers have to be convinced that you are the right person for the grant: **you are an excellent researcher and your project is ground-breaking**.
- The reviewers will read many proposals, therefore, it is essential that they see all key information at once. **Optimize the layout** of your proposal through bullet points, numbered sub-titles, text in bold, breaks etc. It is possible to include graphs and figures, which should be clearly separated from the main text and numbered consecutively.
- Note that reviewers **only have access to part B1 during the first step of the evaluation**. Please do not refer to part B2.
- From the ERC Work Programme 2026 on, **feasibility will no longer be assessed at Step 1**; thus, Part I of the Scientific Proposal should no longer include details on the feasibility of the scientific approach but present a convincing overall research strategy. First and foremost, **applicants will be assessed on the ambition of their idea** in advancing present-day knowledge in the field. All aspects relating to feasibility should be covered in Part II of the Scientific Proposal.
- In the first evaluation step, B1 is only read by the panel members who act as generalists and are not necessarily experts in your specific field. Please keep this in mind when formulating your story line.
- Please be aware that B1 is your entrance ticket to the second evaluation step, therefore we recommend that you carefully prepare it.

Follow a common thread throughout the proposal: move from the general overview to the details and avoid going back and forth as well as repetitions.

Part I of the Scientific Proposal ***(max. 5 pages, references do not count towards the page limit)***

Please note the changes as from 2026 calls regarding Part I and Part II of the Scientific Proposal and read carefully the "ERC Work Programme 2026" and the "Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2026 Calls".

[***Part I of the Scientific Proposal*** *should present the envisaged research and it should:*

- *lay out the current state of knowledge,*
- *explain the scientific question and the objectives of the project, and*
- *present the overall approach or research strategy to reach the goals of the project.*

Part I should convince the evaluation Panel that it presents an original and creative idea addressing an important question in the respective research field(s). Furthermore, it should substantiate how the project will advance the frontier of knowledge, and what contribution it will make to the research field(s) i.e. what may be changed, opened, challenged or how the results of the work will alter the current understanding of the field.

At Step 1, only Part I and the Curriculum Vitae (CV) and Track Record (see below) is assessed by the evaluation Panel. *It forms the basis for the Panel's decision whether it chooses to evaluate the proposal in the next step. Therefore, all essential information must be covered in this section.*

References to literature should also be included. Please use a reference style that is commonly used in your discipline such as American Chemical Society (ACS) style, American Medical Association (AMA) style, Modern Language Association (MLA) style, etc. and that allows the evaluators to easily retrieve each reference.

Please respect the following formatting constraints: Times New Roman, Arial or similar, at least font size 11, margin sizes (2.0 cm side and 1.5 cm top and bottom), single line spacing.]

Only the panel members, who are not necessarily experts in your specific field, read part B1 in the first step of the evaluation. Thus, their judgement builds on their basic scientific understanding. To ensure the best possible understanding of your research project and its relevance to the scientific community, it is important to provide sufficient background information and clearly situate your project in the state of the art. Highlight any aspects of your project that are novel, go significantly beyond the state of the art or could make substantial advances at the frontiers of knowledge.

There are no structure specifications for part B1. However, we recommend that you **structure B1** with regard to the following aspects:

- **Short introduction** of the recent advances in your field: which questions remain unresolved today and how will your proposal address them?
- **State of the art and objectives**: clearly state your project's main objectives and the expected breakthroughs. How are the project and its objectives embedded in the state of the art, why is your proposal particularly timely?
- Overview of your **research methodology** (if possible already divided into work packages): how will you reach your objectives? Why are you the right person to carry out the project?
- **Impact**: why should your project be funded? Why is your work unique, which breakthroughs are foreseen, what impact will it have on your research field and in general?

It might be helpful to write B2 first and then B1.

Highlight key elements identified in the evaluation criteria, as the panel members are explicitly asked to base their evaluation on these criteria (see **4. Evaluation**).

Use **buzz words** if applicable: e.g. ground-breaking nature, beyond the state of the art, novel approach, for the first time.

Section b: Curriculum vitae and Track Record (max. 4 pages)

[You may modify the below template if necessary.]

Please keep in mind that the structure of the CV has changed compared to previous calls. This new format (in place since the ERC Work Programme 2024) requires a narrative style of writing, which will benefit researchers with non-traditional career paths. For more information, see Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2026 Calls, p. 23. In general, this new version asks for the same details as the older versions, only under different bullet points.

Do not hesitate to include some self-marketing in your CV!

PERSONAL DETAILS

[Provide your personal details, your education and key qualifications, current position(s) and relevant previous positions you have held.]

Family name, First name:

Researcher unique identifier(s) (such as ORCID, Research ID, etc. ...):
URL for web site: link to professional website (keep it updated!)

- **Education and key qualifications**

DD/MM/YYYY PhD
Name of Faculty/ Department, Name of University/ Institution, Country
Name of PhD Supervisor
YYYY Master
Name of Faculty/ Department, Name of University/ Institution, Country

- **Current position(s)**

YYYY - YYYY Current Position
Name of Faculty/ Department, Name of University/ Institution/ Country
YYYY – YYYY Current Position
Name of Faculty/ Department, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

- **Previous position(s)**

YYYY - YYYY Position held
Name of Faculty/ Department, Name of University/ Institution/ Country
YYYY - YYYY Position held
Name of Faculty/ Department, Name of University/ Institution/ Country

RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENTS AND PEER RECOGNITION

In addition to the tabular resume, we recommend that you write some short texts here to describe your own profile, scientific achievements and personal strengths (in particular in the additional information part). If helpful for the reviewers, do not hesitate to add additional comments on single points of your CV.

Research achievements

[Provide a list of up to ten research outputs that demonstrate how you have advanced knowledge in your field with an emphasis on more recent achievements, such as publications, articles deposited in a publicly available preprint server, books, book chapters, conference proceedings, data sets, software, patents, licenses, standards, start-up businesses or any other research outputs you deem relevant in relation to your research field and your project.

You may include a short, factual explanation of the significance of the selected outputs, your role in producing each of them, and how they demonstrate your capacity to successfully carry out your proposed project.]

Here, you should include a list of (up to) 10 research outputs, e.g. publications. For each output, your role as a PI has to become clear. Please add a description of how this research output is relevant for your proposal and how it helped you advance as a resercher.

Peer recognition

[Provide a list of selected examples of significant recognition by your peers if applicable, such as prizes, awards, fellowships, elected academy memberships, invited presentations to major conferences or any other examples of significant recognition you deem relevant in relation to your research field and project.

You may include a short explanation of the significance of the listed examples.]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You may provide relevant additional information on your research career to provide context to the evaluation panels when assessing your research achievements and peer recognition as described above.

Put here the parts of your CV that were indicated by the following bullet points in older versions of the CV template: e.g. teaching activities, organization of scientific meetings, institutional responsibilities, reviewing activities, memberships of scientific societies, major collaborations, career breaks, COVID-19 impact to scientific productivity, etc.

Career breaks, diverse career paths and major life events

[*You may include a short factual explanation of career breaks or diverse career paths such as secondments, volunteering, part-time work, time spent in different sectors or the effects of major life events such as long term illness as well as the effects of pandemic restrictions on research productivity*.]

Use this part in the CV to describe how your career evolved up to this point and how your project will benefit from your past experiences and the skills that you have learned.

Indicate relevant career breaks.

Other contributions to the research community

[*You may include a list of particularly noteworthy contributions to the research community you have made other than research achievements and peer recognition and a short explanation of these contributions. The purpose of this section is to allow the panels to take a more rounded view of your career and achievements and to ensure that any additional responsibilities, commitments and leadership roles that you have taken on beyond your individual research activities are recognised and taken into account.]*

In this part of the CV, you can elaborate on further activities you have contributed to: e.g. public outreach, student supervision, PhD panels, mentoring, etc.

[(for more information see 'Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2026 Calls')]

Do NOT split the sections and/or references in Part B1 and do NOT upload them as separate documents. The peer reviewers will only receive one single document for evaluation at Step 1. Hence, Part B1 should contain all elements as explained in this template. If some parts of Part B1 are uploaded in the submission system as separate attachments, the peer reviewers will not have access to them.

Starting Grant profile

A competitive Starting Grant Principal Investigator should have already shown evidence of the potential for research independence, for example by having produced at least one important publication as main author or without the participation of their PhD supervisor

3. PART B2

Add relevant header (see template)

Applicant's last name	Part B2	ACRONYM

Starting/Consolidator/Advanced Grant 2026
Part B2[2]
(not evaluated in Step 1)

All guidelines in italic should be removed

Part II of the Scientific Proposal (max. 7 pages, references do not count towards the page limits).

Text highlighted in grey should be deleted.

Please note the changes as from 2026 calls regarding Part I and Part II of the Scientific Proposal and read carefully the "ERC Work Programme 2026" and the "Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2026 Calls".

[Part II of the Scientific Proposal should be a detailed explanation of the project implementation, including research methodology, work plan, risk assessment, mitigating measures and any further necessary background not included in Part I.]

Please respect the following formatting constraints: Times New Roman, Arial or similar, at least font size 11, margins (2.0 cm side and 1.5 cm top and bottom), single line spacing.

Do NOT split Part II from the references and/or the appendix (Funding ID) and do NOT upload them as separate documents.

Do NOT include any description of resources or budget table here (Part B2). The Resources section and the detailed budget table are part of the online submission form (Part A, Section 3 - Budget) which will be extracted and provided to the peer reviewers. If additional documents are uploaded in the submission system as separate attachments, the peer reviewers will not have access to them.

Follow a common thread throughout the proposal: move from the general overview to the details and avoid going back and forth as well as repetitions.

In the second evaluation step, both parts, B1 and B2, are evaluated by the panel members and external experts. B2 should therefore be more **discipline-specific** than B1. Keep the following aspects in mind when writing your proposal:

- The proposal must be concise and clear.
- Focus on the uniqueness, novelty and scientific impact of your project.
- Do not repeat or copy paste sections from your B1.
- Give a clear and detailed explanation of your methodology.
- Reconsider every "we" in your proposal as ERC grants reward individual excellence.
- If sufficient space, highlight all key aspects in a box.

[2] Instructions for completing Part B2 can be found in the '*Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2026 Calls*'.

B2 should provide a **clear and structured overview** of **how you will reach your project's objectives:**

- Clearly describe the different steps (ideally divided into work packages) of your project in detail and link them to the state-of-the-art and objectives/sub-objectives.
- Provide a risk assessment of your project. Ambitious projects are welcome, however you have to show that you are aware of the risks and that your work plan includes sufficient mitigation measures (e.g. preliminary results, interdisciplinary qualification of the team, independence between work packages). Address conceptual and operational risks.
- It is recommended that you include figures and graphs (e.g. a timeline showing who will work on which work package at what time and how risky the different project's steps are).

Do NOT include any description of resources or budget table here (Part B2). The Resources section and the detailed budget table are part of the online submission form (Part A, Section 3 - Budget) which will be extracted and provided to the peer reviewers. If additional documents are uploaded in the submission system as separate attachments, the peer reviewers will not have access to them.
(see 1. Online Administrative Forms)

Appendix: All current grants and on-going / submitted grant applications of the PI (Funding ID)

Mandatory information (does not count towards page limits)

Describe clearly any relation between your ERC application and current research grants/ on-going/submitted grant applications (no funding overlap).

Current research grants (Please indicate "No funding" when applicable):

Project Title	*Funding source*	*Amount (Euros)*	*Period*	*Role of the PI*	*Relation to current ERC proposal*[3]

On-going / submitted grant applications (Please indicate "None" when applicable):

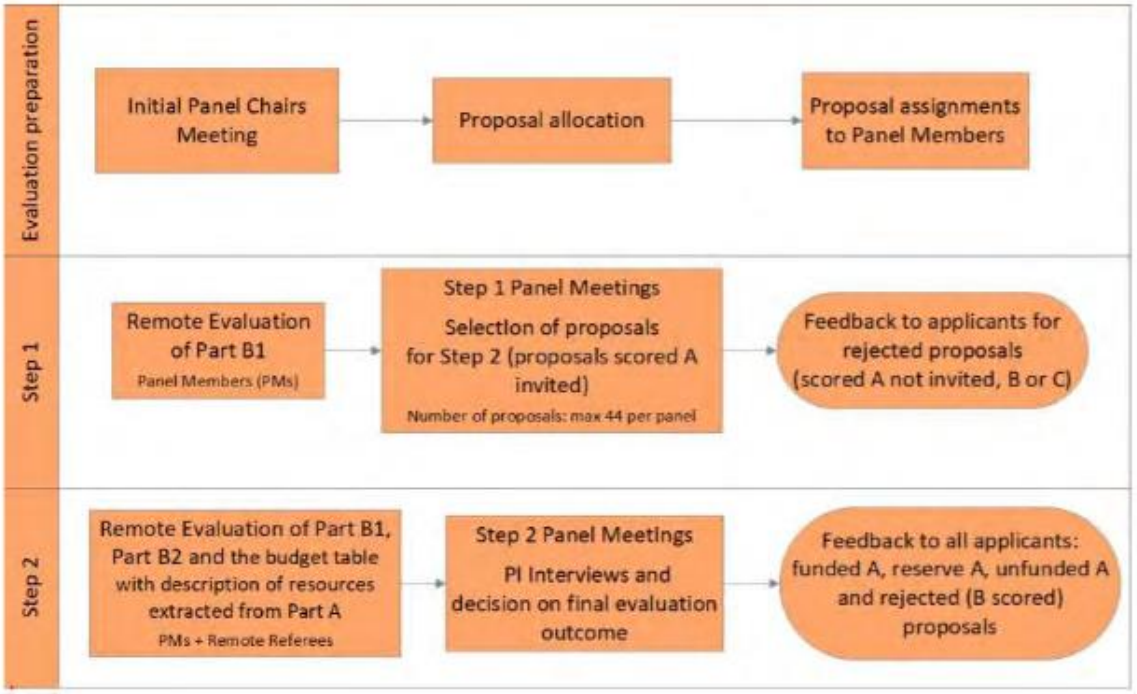
Project Title	*Funding source*	*Amount (Euros)*	*Period*	*Role of the PI*	*Relation to current ERC proposal*[3]

[3] Describe clearly any scientific overlap between your ERC application and the current research grant or on-going grant application.

4. Evaluation

a. Evaluation Process

In the ERC Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants the evaluation is performed in two steps. In step 1, only B1 is evaluated by the panel members, while in step 2 both, B1 and B2, are judged by panel members and external experts. B2 should therefore be more discipline-specific than B1.



b. Evaluation Criteria

"Excellence" is the sole criterion of evaluation.

The panels will primarily evaluate the ground-breaking nature and ambition of the research project. At the same time, the panels will evaluate the intellectual capacity and creativity of the Principal Investigator, with a focus on the extent to which the Principal Investigator has the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project. The detailed evaluation elements applying to these two categories are set out below.

Research Project. The ground-breaking nature and ambition of the Research Project is assessed as follows:

At Step 1:

- To what extent does the research address important scientific questions?
- To what extent are the project's objectives ambitious and will it advance the frontier of knowledge?

At Step 2:

- To what extent does the research address important scientific questions?
- To what extent are the project's objectives ambitious and will it advance the frontier of

knowledge?
- To what extent are the research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?
- To what extent are the timescales and resources adequate and properly justified?

Principal Investigator. The intellectual capacity and creativity of the Principal Investigator is assessed as follows:

At Step 1 and Step 2:
- To what extent has the PI demonstrated the ability to conduct groundbreaking research?
- To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative and original thinking?
- To what extent does the PI have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

Contact

TUM ForTe - Office for Research and Innovation

Dr. Astrid De Clercq I +49 89 289 25596 I astrid.de-clercq@tum.de

Vivian Seidel I +49 89 289 22042 I vivian.seidel@tum.de

Dr. Nathalie Themeßl I +49 89 289 22617 I nathalie.themessl@tum.de

Sources

Nationale Kontaktstelle ERC: **From idea to proposal: How to write a project proposal for the ERC**, 2020.

Euresearch, Swiss guide to European research & innovation, **ERC Proposal Writing Guide Starting Grant 2015**, 2014.

European Research Council, **ERC Work Programme 2026**, 2025.

European Research Council, **Information for Applicants to the Starting and Consolidator Grant 2026 Calls**, 2025.

European Research Council, **Information for Applicants to the Advanced Grant 2025 Call,** 2025.

Source:
https://www.ediundsepp.de/portfolio/magazin-faszination-forschung-technische-universitaet-muenchen/