



European Research Council

President

Established by the European Commission

Brussels, 16 April 2026

**Subject: Letter to the research community about ERC Work Programme 2027**

Dear applicants, dear grantees, dear panel members,  
Dear researchers and colleagues in the research community,

From July 2026 to June 2027, the ERC plans to launch a new round of grant competitions. The calls for proposals will introduce several changes to the eligibility rules. These include longer restrictions for unsuccessful applicants from the last two rounds. With these measures, the Scientific Council is responding to the sharp increase in applications, which is placing growing pressure on peer reviewers and the ERC executive agency. I would like to explain the reasons behind these difficult decisions.

To evaluate the research proposals that the ERC receives, we rely on 91 peer review panels, each meeting twice a year in Brussels. In their first meeting, they shortlist the applications that will be evaluated in depth. In the second meeting, they interview applicants and decide on the final ranking of the proposals. This system has worked efficiently when each panel had to handle between 50 and 150 proposals.

However, recently the number of applications has been rising dramatically. Some panels now have more than 250 applications to assess and we expect this upward trend to persist. We have increased the number of panel members, but there is an upper limit to the size of a panel, determined by practical constraints and how panels function as groups. There is also a limit to the number of proposals that can reasonably be discussed in the one-week sessions that the panels spend together.

The Scientific Council and the scientific officers of the ERC Executive Agency have been working together over the past year to find ways of mitigating the workload of panel members. We streamlined the evaluation procedure as much as possible without compromising the quality of the process, but even with these measures in place, the burden on the reviewers remains high.

The only remaining way to mitigate this situation is to reduce the number of applications. We have been relying on soft measures to try to achieve this by communicating the need for applicants to reflect carefully on the right timing of their application and the maturity of their scientific proposal. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of this approach is limited.

We must now turn to more direct measures to restrict the possibilities for unsuccessful applicants to resubmit their proposals. Such resubmission restrictions were already in place in the past and the Scientific Council has now decided to extend each by one year. This decision was taken after much discussion and only when it was clear that no other, less painful, measures were available. You can find information about these changes on the [ERC website](#).

At this moment, these changes will affect applicants for the 2027 calls who were unsuccessful in previous calls. However, first-time applicants who are applying for the 2027 calls should be aware that the Scientific Council may need to impose similar restrictions for the 2028 and 2029 calls, and the unsuccessful 2027 applicants would then be excluded from those. This means that anyone applying this year should consider very carefully whether this is in fact the optimal time. In some cases, it may be wiser to postpone an application to allow the proposal to mature further and improve its chances of being selected for funding.

Sincerely,



**Maria Leptin**  
*President of the European Research Council*