

ERC PROOF OF CONCEPT CALL 2023 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Q1. Under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, can a spin-off company be the Host Institution (HI)?

Yes, under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, submitting an application with a spin-off company as Host Institution (HI) is feasible, as long as it complies with the eligibility criteria for an eligible HI defined in the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#). The HI of the ERC Proof of Concept (PoC) proposal does not have to be the same as the HI of the main frontier research Grant.

Q2: Under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, are there any share or quota limitations per domain or discipline?

There are no shares or quotas by domain or discipline for the ERC Proof of Concept) 2023 call. No domain or field is excluded and the possibility for innovation arising from the social sciences and humanities to apply for a PoC funding is fully recognised. As stated in the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#): "Research proposals within the scope of Annex I to the [Euratom Treaty](#), namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications, shall be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom Research & Training Programme."

Q3. Under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, which type of feedback do applicants receive during and after the evaluation of their proposals?

The Proof of Concept grant is evaluated based on the sole criterion of excellence, which comprises three evaluation elements. Reviewers will evaluate independently each eligible proposal submitted under the ERC PoC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, and mark it as "very good", "good" or "fail" for each of the three evaluation elements. The applicants are provided with feedback on the outcome of the evaluation through an information letter and an evaluation report. The evaluation report indicates whether the proposal is retained for funding or not, and provides

an overall "pass" or "fail" status for each of the three evaluation elements, the ranking range of the proposal in the final ranked list of all evaluated proposals and the written assessment of the evaluation elements by each external independent expert. More information on the evaluation procedure can be found in the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#), in the section relevant to the call.

Q4. Does a SYG Grantee applying to the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call need to have a written agreement from all the other Principal Investigators (PIs) of the ERC Synergy Grant (SYG)? If yes, what is the expected format for this agreement?

Yes, Synergy Grant (SYG) Principal Investigators are eligible to apply to the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, only with the written consent of all Principal Investigators in the same Synergy Grant project (see ERC Work Programme 2023). Please note that the ERCEA may request the applicant PI at any time during the evaluation, to provide proof of the written consent obtained prior to the call submission deadline.

If the proposal is retained for EU funding, all applicants will be requested to sign a declaration of honour (see in the online e-submission form, Part A, under Section 1 - General Information: specific declaration (mandatory field)), as regards the consent obtained from participants and researchers. You can refer also to our Information for Applicants guidance.

Q5. Under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, how many Proof of Concept (PoC) proposal(s) can a PI submit?

According to the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#), applications to the ERC-2023-PoC can be submitted at any time from the opening date of the call until its final deadline and will be evaluated and selected in three rounds, based on three specific cut-off dates. A Principal Investigator may submit only one eligible application per call. If further submissions are made at different cut-off dates of the ERC-2023-PoC call, only the first admissible and eligible proposal will be considered (inadmissible, ineligible or withdrawn applications do not count against this limit).

Q6. For ERC Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) Lump Sum actions, do PoC beneficiaries need to keep records related to their PoC project?

For ERC Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) Lump Sum actions, beneficiaries do not need to keep records on their actual costs for the purpose of triggering the payment of the lump sum. They only need to keep appropriate and sufficient evidence (documentation, records) that the action tasks (as described in Annex 1) were properly carried out. For more information, please refer to the [Multi & Mono Model Grant Agreement for Lump Sum Grants](#).

Q7. Under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, what are the requirements related to the career stage of the PoC Principal Investigator (PI)?

Principal Investigators (PIs) with different profiles can apply to the ERC-2023-PoC call at any career stage. For ERC Proof of Concept grants, excellence is the sole criterion of evaluation. It will be applied in conjunction to the evaluation of both: the breakthrough innovation potential, approach and methodology of the project; and the strategic lead and project management of the Principal Investigator. PIs must demonstrate in their PoC Part B proposal, their ability to conduct the management of the project, the consolidation of information and data needed to take strategic decisions and implement the proposed plan, including risks and contingency measures. The PIs should describe their role in the PoC project, including how they will take the strategic lead of it. They should explain any experience or achievements in leading similar innovative projects (if applicable) and how this enables them to lead their PoC project to completion. If the PIs do not have any experience with similar projects, they should explain how they are fit to lead their proof of concept project (e.g. evidence of creativity, independent thinking, and taking strategic decisions). More information on the submission and evaluation procedures can be found in the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#), in the section relevant to the call, as well as in the [Information for Applicants to the Proof of Concept Grant 2023 Call](#), and Part B of the [proposal template](#).

Q8. Under ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) projects, are time sheets needed for the Principal Investigator (PI)?

No, time sheets are not needed for the contractual obligations of an ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) project. For more information, please refer to the [Multi & Mono Model Grant Agreement for Lump Sum Grants](#).

Q9. For ERC 2023 calls under Horizon Europe, will the information requested in Part A concerning the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) be provided to the reviewers?

To be eligible for calls with deadlines in 2022 and 2023, legal entities from an EU Member State (MS) or Associated Country (AC) must have a gender equality plan (GEP) or an equivalent strategic document in place for the duration of the project. This information will not be provided to the reviewers and it will not be evaluated. In the Part A online submission form, there is a 'yes/no' tick box question that the Host Institution (HI)'s contact person must fill in. Only public bodies, higher education institutions (including private research organisations and private higher education institutions) must answer this question. This answer will not affect the evaluation of the proposal. In case the proposal is selected for funding, the HI must have a GEP or an equivalent strategic document in place at granting stage. The GEP or equivalent must fulfil the mandatory requirements listed in Annex 5 of the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#) and will be necessary before the signature of the grant agreement. See guidelines [here](#).

Q10. Can Principal Investigators (PIs) who submitted a proposal for the ERC-2022-PoC-1 call and/or ERC-2022-PoC2 call but were not selected for funding, resubmit a PoC proposal under the ERC-2023-PoC call?

Yes. Unlike the main Frontier Research (StG, CoG, AdG, SyG) grant calls, there are no eligibility conditions to apply for a PoC linked to the results of proposals submitted to a previous PoC call. Therefore, the PI who applied to the call ERC-2022-PoC1 and/or ERC-2022-POC2 calls, and whose proposal was not selected for funding may apply to ERC-2023-PoC, provided they fulfil eligibility conditions as stipulated in the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#).

Q11. Under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, what are the reporting requirements of a project?

Under the ERC Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) Grant call, given the shorter length (in comparison to ERC main Frontier Research Grants), the project report is required only once, at the end of the project, and will combine the technical and financial aspects in one single document. Article 21 of the [Multi & Mono Model Grant Agreement for Lump Sum Grants](#) defines the reporting requirements. The ERC PoC report must be prepared and submitted online via the Funding & Tenders Portal.

Q12. Under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, which is the general rule for Principal Investigator (PI) working time commitment?

The Principal Investigator (PI) should be engaged by the Host Institution of the ERC PoC Grant during its entire duration. There is no minimum commitment percentage of the working time required from the PI applying for the ERC-2023-PoC call. However, in the grant agreement, PIs must enter a minimum of their working time, as they are responsible for managing the ERC PoC project. It is essential that the cumulative percentage commitment that the PI spends on the ERC PoC action and on the main ERC StG/CoG/AdG/SyG Grant (if still ongoing) does not exceed 100%. For more information please refer to the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#).

Q13. Under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, should the applicant provide the names and the curriculum vitae (CV) of the team members in the proposal?

For the ERC Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, although it is not mandatory to provide the names of individual team members or their CVs, the PoC plan needs to include justification that the persons working on the tasks are well qualified for the purpose. The description of the team needs to be filled in the Part B form – section 1b.iii. Plan of the proof of concept – Description of the Action – Description of the team. More information on the submission and evaluation procedures can be found in the ERC Work Programme 2023, in the section relevant to the call, as well as in the Information for Applicants to the Proof of Concept Grant 2023 Call.

Q14. Under the ERC Work Programme 2023, can team members employed by an entity established in a non-associated third country participate in Proof of Concept (PoC) actions?

Under the ERC Work Programme 2023, in the context of a POC project, the situation for additional participants/beneficiaries from non-associated third countries is different for PoC compared to ERC main grants.

In contrast with the main ERC grants, there is no provision allowing for this possibility for PoC projects under the ERC Work Programme 2023. The applicable provision for PoC calls is Article 23.2.(b) of the Regulation establishing the Horizon Europe programme applies, i.e.:

“Legal entities established in a non-associated third country shall bear the cost of their participation. However, a legal entity established in (...) non-associated third countries, shall be eligible for funding in an action if: (...) the Commission or the relevant funding body considers that the participation of the legal entity concerned is essential for implementing the action.”

Therefore, in accordance with this provision, for POC projects, the participation with EU funding of entities established in non-associated third countries is limited to entities whose participation is deemed essential. Applicants to the 2023 ERC Proof of Concept (PoC) call can therefore still include a beneficiary/participant from a non-associated third country, but EU funding may only be granted to this beneficiary/participant if their participation is deemed essential for implementing the action.

Q15. Under the ERC Work Programme 2023, can ERC Proof of Concept (PoC) grants be transferred to a new beneficiary?

Yes, under the ERC Work Programme 2023, ERC PoC grants can be transferred to a new beneficiary, as described in Article 41 of HE Lump sum Model Grant Agreement.

Q16. Under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, can a Principal investigator (PI) from an ERC Synergy (SyG) funded project be eligible to submit an ERC PoC proposal as Principal Investigator (PI)?

Yes, under ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, all Synergy Grant Principal Investigators (PI) from an ERC Synergy (SyG) funded project are eligible to apply to an ERC PoC

proposal as Principal Investigator (PI), but only with the written consent of all Principal Investigators in the same Synergy Grant project. Principal Investigators may submit only one proposal under the Work Programme 2023 Proof of Concept call. If further submissions are made at different cut-off dates, only the first admissible and eligible proposal will be considered. A maximum of six Proof of Concept Grants may be awarded per ERC SyG funded project. More information on the submission and evaluation procedures can be found in the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#), in the section relevant to the call, as well as in the [Information for Applicants to the Proof of Concept Grant 2023 Call](#).

Q17. Under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, is it still possible to have a project of 12 months?

Yes, under the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#), the financial contribution will be awarded as a lump sum of EUR 150 000 for a period of 18 months. The ERC expects that normally ERC-2023-PoC projects should be completed within 12 months. However, to allow for those projects that require more preparation time, grant agreements will be signed for 18 months. Given this initial flexibility, extensions of the duration of proof of concept projects may be granted only exceptionally. More information can be found in the [Multi & Mono Model Grant Agreement for Lump Sum Grants](#).

Q18. Can an applicant submit a proposal to the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call and also to one of the four main ERC Frontier Research call (Starting, Consolidator, Advanced or Synergy)?

Yes, an applicant can submit to the ERC-2023-PoC call and at the same time to one of the four main ERC frontier research call (since the restrictions stated in the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#) do not apply to PoC Grants). Nevertheless, a researcher can apply for a PoC grant ONLY if he/she is already the grantee in one ERC main frontier research grant. For more information, please refer to the eligibility criteria for PoC in the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#).

Q19. Under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, do independent experts receive all parts of a submitted proposal for the evaluation?

For the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, applicants submit the whole proposal that is evaluated in a single step by the independent external experts. The experts will review the

Part B proposal and annexes with letters of support or intent. They will also have access to a simplified budget report based on the budget figures entered in Part A. For more information on the evaluation process, please refer to ERC Work Programme 2023.

Q20. Under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, how many PoC grants can be awarded per ERC funded project?

Under the ERC 2023 Proof of Concept (ERC-2023-PoC) call, a maximum of three Proof of Concept Grants may be awarded per main grant project, except for Synergy Grant, in which case a maximum of six Proof of Concept Grants may be awarded per ERC funded project. PoC projects can run in parallel, provided they comply with the eligibility conditions set out in the Work Programme under which they have been awarded. More information on the submission and evaluation procedures can be found in the [ERC Work Programme 2023](#), in the section relevant to the call, as well as in the guide [Information for Applicants to the Proof of Concept Grant 2023 call](#).

Q21. For ERC calls under Horizon Europe, will the information requested in Part A on the career stage of the PI be provided to the reviewers?

For ERC calls under Horizon Europe, the information requested in Part A on the career stage of the PI will not be provided to the reviewers of your proposal and will not be part of the evaluation. This data is gathered for statistical purposes and used to evaluate the Horizon Europe Programme as a whole.

Q22. For ERC calls under Horizon Europe, is the written consent of collaborators and/or participants in the project required?

Yes, Principal Investigators submitting a proposal to any ERC call must have, at the time of submission, the written consent of all participants on their involvement and on the content of the proposal, as well as of any researcher mentioned in the proposal as participating in the project (either as team member, collaborator, other PI or member of the advisory board), should the proposal be funded. The ERC Executive Agency may request PIs to provide proof of the written consent (email, letter) at any time.