



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

ERC Public Engagement with Research **Award** 2024



Horizon Europe European Research Council (ERC) Call for a prize — Rules of Contest

(ERC-2024-PERA)

Version 1.0
31 October 2023



HISTORY OF CHANGES			
Version	Publication Date	Change	Page
1.0	31.10.2023	▪ Initial version (new MFF).	
		▪	
		▪	
		▪	



EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE AGENCY
(ERCEA)
ERCEA.A2 – Communication

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS — RULES OF CONTEST

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0. Introduction

This is a call (contest)¹ for an EU **prize** in the field of Public Engagement with Research under the **European Research Council (ERC) programme, under the European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe.**

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (Horizon Europe Regulation 2021/695²)

The call is launched in accordance with the 2024 ERC Work Programme³ and will be managed by the European Research Council Executive Agency (ERCEA/the Agency).

We invite you to read the **call documentation** on the Funding & Tenders Portal Topic page carefully, and in particular these Rules of Contest and the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#).

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the [Call Document](#) (Rules of Contest) outlines:
 - the background, objectives, scope and activities that can be rewarded (sections 1 and 2)
 - the prize amounts and timetable (sections 3 and 4)
 - the admissibility, eligibility and criteria for exclusion (sections 5, 6 and 7)
 - the evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
 - the award criteria (section 9)
 - other conditions (section 10)
 - how to submit an application (section 11)
 - where additional information can be found (section 12)
- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the procedures to register and submit applications online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal').

You are also encouraged to visit the [ERC website](#).

¹ For ease of reference and consistency on the Funding & Tenders Portal, the terms 'call', 'project' and 'participant' are used as equivalent to 'contest', 'application' or 'contestants/applicants'.

² Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 (OJ L 170/1, 12.5.2021)

³ COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION C(2023) 3999 of 10.7.2023 adopting the 2024 work programme in the framework of the specific programme implementing Horizon Europe – the framework programme for research and innovation (2021-2027) in relation to the component 'European Research Council' under Pillar I 'Excellent Science'

1. Background

ERC Principal Investigators have a contractual obligation to promote their ERC funded research action and its results by providing targeted information to multiple audiences. Many Principal Investigators are outstanding science communicators who have succeeded in engaging audiences with their ERC funded research action. However, they are not obliged to provide a plan for communication activities with their grant applications, in the sense of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

2. Objectives - Themes and priorities – Activities

Objectives

The Public Engagement with Research Award is established to recognise and reward those Principal Investigators who successfully engage audiences outside their domain with ERC-funded research.

For the purposes of this award, public engagement is defined as the involvement of the public in the design, conduct or dissemination of activities funded by the ERC. Engagement is a two-way process, involving interaction and mutual understanding for mutual benefit.

The public engagement activities may include, for example:

- Citizen science activities conducted in collaboration or consultation with the public at any stage of the frontier research project, including its design. Citizen science initiatives comprise activities such as public consultations or citizen juries.
- Public outreach activities putting the spotlight on a research topic by disseminating its content, promoting discussion or inspiring potential future researchers. Public outreach initiatives can consist of diverse activities, such as art and science projects, educational programmes, exhibitions, and can include diverse audiences and venues such as students, schools, museums or science festivals.
- Activities that foster consultation and exchange with citizen groups to raise awareness on a topic, to address a societal challenge or to contribute to an issue in the public debate. These activities can be undertaken based on preliminary or final project results, as well as any particular result or output generated in the context of an ERC frontier research project. Examples of people and organisations that are likely to be engaged include journalists, policy makers at regional, national or international level, non-governmental organisations, citizen or patient groups, product users.

3. Prize amounts

Six prizes will be awarded under this work programme of a value of EUR 10 000 each.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines	
Call opening:	14 November 2023
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	21 February 2024– 17:00:00 CET (Brussels)
Evaluation:	Autumn 2024
Information on evaluation results/ award:	Autumn 2024

5. Admissibility

Applications must be submitted before the **call deadline** (see *timetable section 4*).

Applications must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Applications must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠ NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

Applications must be **complete** and contain all the requested information:

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the applicant (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the application (to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, and then assembled and re-uploaded as PDF in the system).

Your application must be **readable, accessible, printable**.

Applications, which do not meet the criteria set out in the present section must be declared inadmissible.

Applications are limited to **10 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

Applications (Part B) may include up to **3 hyperlinks** serving as evidence of the public engagement activity. Do not use hyperlinks to describe how the award criteria in section 9 are met. Evaluators will not consider as evidence any additional hyperlinks.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, bank account validation, ethics review, declaration of honour, etc*).

- 📘 For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

6. Eligibility

Eligible participants

All Principal Investigators in an ERC frontier research project, that is either ongoing or has ended on or after 31/12/2021, are eligible to apply, subject to any restrictions provided in Annex 3 of the ERC Work Programme. In case of ongoing ERC frontier research projects, only activities sufficiently mature to demonstrate impact⁴ or completed by the submission deadline can be included in the application.

Each Principal Investigator can submit only one application per ERC project.

Applications must be submitted by a single Principal Investigator, who has responsibility for the content of the application

In the case of Synergy Grants, each Principal Investigator may submit an application for the public engagement activities, which the specific Principal Investigator has worked on, provided that these activities are different from those of the other Principal Investigators. If several Principal Investigators of a Synergy project have conducted public engagement activities together, they may exceptionally submit a joint application. One of them should be the lead applicant.

Applicants can choose to apply using the Participant Identification Code (PIC) of their host institution, which was the beneficiary of the ERC funded project associated with the application for this prize, or create a personal one. Applicants choosing to create a personal PIC must provide a clear link to the project that is associated with the application through detailed evidence included in the Part B of the application. See section 11.

If applicants choose to apply using the PIC of their host institution, the Host Institution, which was the beneficiary of the ERC funded project associated with the application for this prize, is eligible to apply (subject to any restrictions provided in Annex 3 of the ERC Work Programme) See section 10 and 11.

All applicants must register in the [Participant Register](#) — before the call deadline — and will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, you will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin. (See point 11. How to submit an application)

- ❗ For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

Specific cases

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (e.g. entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)⁵ and entities covered by

⁴ Sufficiently mature means that the PI(s) has/have already engaged with the public and the impact of this activity can be assessed.

⁵ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/05⁶). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity.

Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above. All applications must refer to public engagement activities for an ERC-funded project, regardless of the sources of funding for the public engagement activities themselves.

Ethics and values

Activities must comply with the highest ethical standards and the applicable EU, international and national law on ethical principles.

Moreover, they must respect basic EU values (such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities).

The activities must comply with:

- ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity) and
- applicable international, EU and national law

and may not:

- aim at human cloning for reproductive purposes
- intend to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such changes heritable (with the exception of research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads, which may be financed), or
- intend to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer.

Moreover, activities must have an exclusive focus on civil applications and no prize can be awarded for activities carried out outside the EU, if they are prohibited in all Member States.

Applications involving ethics issues will have to undergo an ethics review to authorise funding. Applications that did not respect the above ethical principles and standards cannot be awarded a prize.

Security

Applications involving EU classified information must comply with Decision [2015/444](#)⁷ and [its implementing rules](#). Applications that are too security-sensitive cannot be awarded a prize.

⁶ Commission guidelines No 2013/C 205/05 on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).

7. Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can not participate⁸:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct⁹ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that¹⁰

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information.
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

⁸ See Articles 136 and 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

⁸ See Articles 136 and 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

⁹ Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

¹⁰ See Article 141(1) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

8. Evaluation and award procedure

Applications will be subject to a formal evaluation by a **jury**.

If there are more than 30 applications, there will be a **pre-selection** to select up to 30 best applications to pass to the jury review. Otherwise, all applications will pass directly to jury review.

The pre-selection panel and jury usually have a different composition, but jury members may participate in the pre-selection panel.

The pre-selection panel or jury will evaluate each application against the award criteria.

For applications with the same score, the pre-selection panel or jury will determine a priority order according to the following approach: the applicant who obtained a higher score for the criterion No 2, will be given a priority.

If two or more applications tie for the 30th position during the pre-selection, all these applications will pass to jury review. For the award of the prize, if two or more applications still tie for the 6th position after the application of the priority order above during the jury review, the prize amount for the 6th position will be equally divided and awarded to all applications with the same score. For example

- 1 position => 2 applications tie for first, so they will receive 10.000 EUR each (i.e. **10.000 EUR + 10.000 EUR**)
- No 2nd position
- 3 position => **10.000 EUR**
- 4 position => 2 applications tie for fourth, so they will receive 10.000 EUR each (i.e. **10.000 EUR + 10.000 EUR**)
- No 5th position
- 6 position => 2 applications tie for sixth, so they will receive 5.000 EUR each (i.e. **5.000 EUR + 5.000 EUR**)

On the basis of the evaluation by the jury (and after the mandatory checks: *ethics review, security scrutiny, legal entity validation, non-exclusion, double funding, etc*), the awarding authority will decide on the award of the prize.

All applicants will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful applications will be awarded the prize; the not successful ones will be rejected.

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications are deemed to have been accessed (and received) 10 days after sending and that deadlines will be counted from then (see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)).

9. Award criteria

If admissible and eligible, the applications will be evaluated and ranked against the following **award criteria**:

- **award criterion 1, Strategy and implementation**: quality of the public engagement strategy and its implementation, including appropriateness of the used tools, channels and resources and the implementation to the objectives and audience of the action. Degree of novelty or creativity of the approach.
- **award criterion 2, Impact**: quantitative and qualitative evidence of the activity's success in achieving its own public engagement objectives, including possible evidence of learning by the research team and/or the public who engaged in the activity on how to successfully engage with the public.

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score	
Strategy and implementation	3.5	5	
Impact	3.5	5	

Maximum points: 10 points

Individual thresholds per criterion: 3.5/5.

Overall threshold: 8 points

Applications must pass both the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold. Six prizes will be awarded to the applications of the Principal Investigators with the best scores. Other applications will be rejected.

10. Other conditions

Payment arrangements

The prize money will be paid to the prize winners after the award announcement, provided all the requested documents have been submitted.

Given that the objective is to award the Principal Investigators, in the case of winners having used the PIC of their host institution, the award amount will be paid to the host institution and it is expected that the internal arrangements are put in place to transfer the prize amount to the Principal Investigator.

In case of a group of winners (e.g. Synergy Grants Principal Investigators), the payment will be made to the lead applicant. It is up to the joint applicants to agree on its possible distribution among themselves.

Communication — Dissemination — Visibility of funding

Prize winners must promote the prize and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner.

Communication activities related to the prize (*including media interviews, press statements, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.*), must acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem), the ERC logo and funding statement (translated into local languages, where appropriate):



Both the EU emblem and the ERC logo must remain distinct and separate and cannot be modified by adding other visual marks, brands or text.

Apart from the emblem and the ERC logo, no other visual identity or logo may be used to highlight the EU support.

The EU emblem and the ERC logo should always be represented together in equal sizing.

When displayed in association with other logos (*e.g. of winners or sponsors*), the emblem and the ERC logo must be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos.

For the purposes of these obligations, the winners may use the emblem and the ERC logo without first obtaining approval from the awarding authority. This does not, however, give them the right to exclusive use. Moreover, they may not appropriate the emblem and ERC logo or any similar trademark or logo, either by registration or by any other means.

Any communication or dissemination activity related to the prize must use factually accurate information.

Moreover, it must indicate the following disclaimer (translated into local languages where appropriate):

"Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council. Neither the European Union nor the awarding authority can be held responsible for them."

IPR — Rights of use

The European Research Council Executive Agency (ERCEA/the Agency) does not obtain ownership of the results produced in the context of the prize.

For communication purposes, the winners and the finalists will be contacted by the Agency and requested to submit material if they haven't done so in their application. This could include a short description and an illustration of their activity as well as a portrait photo.

The Agency has the right to use non-sensitive information relating to the prize and materials and documents received from the winners and finalists (such as summaries for publication, pictures or audio-visual material, in paper or electronic form) for information, communication, dissemination and publicity purposes.

If the Agency decides to organise an event with the winners, photos and videos taken by the Agency either in preparation of the event or during the event are the sole property of the Agency.

Checks, audits and investigations

The Agency, the European Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the European Court of Auditors (ECA) may carry out checks, audits and investigations in relation to the prize.¹¹

Withdrawal of the prize — Recovery of undue amounts

The Agency may withdraw the prize after its award and recover all payments made, if it finds out that:

- false information, fraud or corruption was used to obtain it
- the prize winners were not eligible or should have been excluded or
- the prize winners are in serious breach of their obligations under these Rules of Contest.

11. How to submit an application

All applications must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

You can access the Portal [here](#), or by clicking 'Apply now' on the official prize webpage.

Submission is a 2-step process:

a) create a user account and register your organisation

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EULogin user account](#).

Once you have an EULogin account, you can register in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

ERC Principal Investigators (PIs) can apply in two ways:

- as individuals in their own name, by using their Participant Identification Code

¹¹ For the powers of OLAF, EPPO and ECA, see Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 883/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 September 2013 concerning investigations conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1073/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (Euratom) No 1074/1999 (OJ L 248, 18/09/2013, p. 1), Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/1996 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities (OJ L 292, 15/11/1996, p. 2), Council Regulation (EU) 2017/1939 of 12 October 2017 implementing enhanced cooperation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office ('the EPPO') and Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) and Article 257 of EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

(PIC) if they have one, or by creating one corresponding to a natural person in the [Participant Register](#) before the call deadline. It will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, PIs will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.¹² It is recommended to create the PIC a few weeks prior to the call deadline.

- by using the PIC of the legal entity which was one of the beneficiaries listed in the Grant Agreement.

b) **submit the application**

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section.

Submit your application in 2 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the application. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file

The application must keep to the **page limits** (*see section 5*); excess pages will be disregarded.

The application must be submitted **before the call deadline** (*see section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed and applications can no longer be submitted.

Once the application is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your application has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the application (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the [Online Manual](#). The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

12. Help

Additional information can be found:

- [Online Manual](#)
- [FAQs on the Topic page](#) (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

¹² For more information, see Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment.

— ERC [website](#)

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates.

Contact

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the [IT Helpdesk](#).

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: ERC-PROJECT-PROMOTION@ec.europa.eu.

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (*see cover page*).

13. Important



IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc.*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all applicants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all applicants must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per applicant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Joint applications** — Joint applications by a group of applicants are admitted for Synergy Grants under the conditions set out in section 6 'Eligibility'. In this case, you must appoint a lead applicant (coordinator) to submit the application and represent you towards the awarding authority. All applicants will be jointly responsible and must all fulfil and respect the conditions set out in these Rules of Contest.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget. Applications that have already received an EU prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.
- **Resubmission** — Applications may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission. For first past the post prizes with cut-off dates, applications can be changed and re-submitted until the cut-off date; the re-submission may however let you use your position as first in place.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in these Rules of Contest (and the documents they refer to). Applications that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire application will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — The awarding authority may cancel the contest or decide not to award the prize — without any obligation to compensate participants (*e.g. no applications, jury cannot determine winner, winner is not eligible or must be excluded, objectives have already been achieved, etc*). In this case, you will be informed via a call update.
- **Language** — You can submit your application in any official EU language. However, for reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English. Machine translations into English are available via this web page: https://ec.europa.eu/info/resources-partners/machine-translation-public-administrations-ettranslation_en. The Agency reserves the right to perform machine translations of applications submitted in languages other than English for the purpose of the evaluation. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, see section 12).

- **Transparency** — In accordance with Article 38 of the [EU Financial Regulation](#), information about EU prizes awarded and the winners (name, address and amount awarded) is published each year on the [Europa website](#).

The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- **Data protection** — Any processing of personal data in the context of this prize will be done in accordance with Regulation [2018/1725](#). It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your application (and subsequent management of your prize and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication). Details are explained in the [Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement](#).