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ERC Starting Grants: €705 million to back Europe's next generation of researchers

Under embargo until 12.00 noon CEST on 3 September 2026

The European Research Council (ERC) has today announced the winners of its latest Starting Grant competition. The funding, worth €705 million in total, will go to 421 early-career researchers across Europe. Several European researchers who applied from outside the EU and Horizon Europe associated countries will now move to Europe to pursue their research. The grants will help researchers develop ambitious ideas, build their own teams and establish their independence at a pivotal stage in their careers.

Ekaterina Zaharieva, European Commissioner for Startups, Research, and Innovation, said: *“Congratulations to all the successful applicants. I am particularly pleased to see that 21 researchers currently based in the United States and Canada plan to relocate to Europe to pursue their work. Their decision reflects Europe's growing appeal for frontier research and is an encouraging sign that the EU's Choose Europe initiative is helping to attract the next generation of scientific talent while reinforcing Europe's position as a destination of choice for excellent research.”*

President of the European Research Council, **Prof. Maria Leptin**, said: *“The creativity and ambition of this new generation of grantees are inspiring. Over 50 nationalities are represented amongst these researchers who will carry out their work across Europe. ERC Starting Grants will give them independence and support early on in their careers, needed for them to push scientific boundaries. This is the best investment we can make to further strengthen our research base and Europe's future.”*

Projects selected for funding

The selected projects will cover a broad spectrum of research fields from life sciences and engineering to social sciences and humanities. A researcher moving from the US to Germany aims to understand how brains turn information from the world into actions. Another grantee in Poland will explore how inheritance laws can better reflect the realities of modern families, and a scientist in Spain will study how deadly fungi adapt, spread and resist antifungal drugs.

Read more about the [research examples](#).



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Facts and figures

A **record of 4,807 proposals** were submitted to this competition, up 22% from 3,928 last year's call. Of these, only 8.8% could be funded. The increased demand was also reflected in the number of applications from researchers based outside Europe. In particular, 169 US-based researchers applied for this funding, compared to 116 in the previously call.

The new grantees will be based at universities and research centres in 25 EU Member States and associated countries, notably in Germany (89 grants), the UK (47), France (38), Switzerland (36), and the Netherlands (33). Among the winners are 84 Germans, 50 Italians, 30 French, and 24 Spanish, as well as researchers of 48 other nationalities. Estimates show that the grants are likely to create more than 2,700 jobs in the teams of the new grantees.

In this ERC Starting Grants competition **21 researchers currently based outside Europe, representing 5% of all winners, were selected for funding, including 20 from the United States.** Last year, 11 researchers based outside Europe won Starting Grants, accounting for 2.3% of all successful applicants.

A Starting Grant provides up to €1.5 million over a maximum period of five years. Researchers may also apply for additional funding to cover eligible costs, such as acquiring major research equipment, accessing large-scale research facilities, or carrying out costly experimental work or fieldwork.

As part of the Choose Europe initiative to attract and retain scientific talent, the ERC has made available additional funding. Applicants moving to Europe can request up to €2 million to support the creation of new laboratories or research teams in Europe.

See [more statistics](#) and the [full list of researchers selected for funding](#)

Next Starting Grants call – 2027 round

Interested in applying for an ERC Starting Grant? The 2027 funding round is now open for applications, with the deadline set for 14 October 2026.

[More information](#)



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About the ERC

The ERC, set up by the European Union in 2007, is the premier European funding organisation for excellent frontier research. It funds creative researchers of any nationality and age, to run projects based across Europe. The ERC offers four core grant schemes: [Starting Grants](#), [Consolidator Grants](#), [Advanced Grants](#) and [Synergy Grants](#). With its additional [Proof of Concept Grant](#) scheme, the ERC helps grantees to bridge the gap between their pioneering research and early phases of its commercialisation. The new [ERC Plus Grants](#) scheme is open for applications since June 2026. The ERC is led by an independent governing body, the [Scientific Council](#). Maria Leptin has been the President of the ERC since November 2021. The overall ERC budget from 2021 to 2027 is more than €16 billion, as part of the [Horizon Europe](#) programme, which is under the responsibility of Ekaterina Zaharieva, European Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation.

More info

[Examples of proposed projects](#)

[Statistics](#)

[List of all selected researchers](#)

Lists of selected researchers by domain:

- [Physical Sciences and Engineering](#)
- [Life Sciences](#)
- [Social Sciences and Humanities](#)

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