

The European Research Council

Roundtable discussion

Balazs Pinter
Scientific Officer
ERCEA

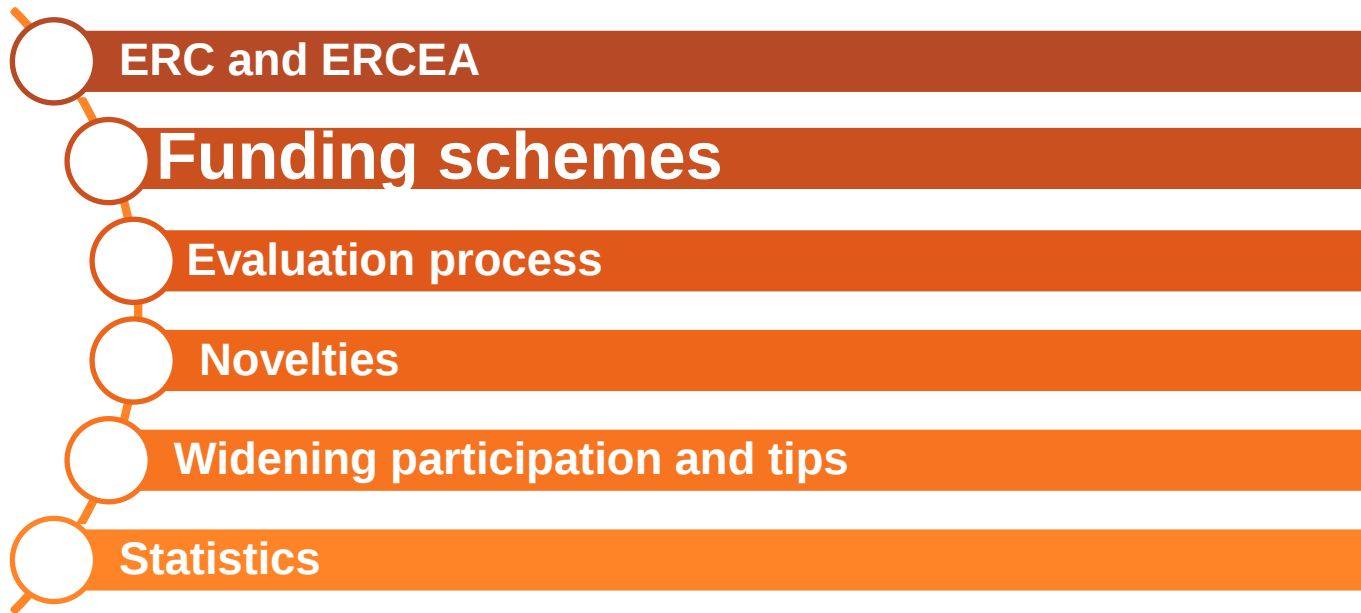
Jozef Stefan Institute, Ljubljana, 28.10.2025



European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

Outline



ERC structure

Scientific governance

- Independent **Scientific Council** with 22 members including the ERC President, with full authority over strategy

ERCEA

- Supported by a Dedicated Implementation Structure, the **ERC Executive Agency**

Scientific freedom

- Bottom-up frontier research in all fields of science and humanities (no predetermined subjects)

ERC Scientific Council

Life Sciences



Geneviève
ALMOUZNI
(Molecular Cell Biology)



Liselotte
HØJGAARD
(Medicine)



Leszek
KACZMAREK
(Neurobiology)



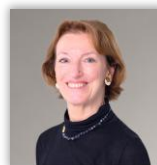
Dirk
INZÉ
(Plant Biology)



Luke
O'NEILL
(Biochemistry & Immunology)



Jesper
SVEJSTRUP
Vice-President
(Biochemistry)



Maria
LEPTIN
ERC President
(Cell Biology)



Gerd
GIGERENZER
Vice-President
(Psychology)

Social Sciences and Humanities



Harriet
BULKELEY
(Geography)



Mercedes
GARCÍA-ARENAL
(History)



Torsten
PERSSON
(Economics)



Giovanni
SARTOR
(Law)



Milena
ŽIC FUCHS
(Linguistics)



Eystein
JANSSEN
Vice-President
(Earth Science)

Physical Sciences and Engineering



Tom
HENZINGER
(Computer Science)



Maarit
KARPPINEN
(Chemistry)



Sylvie
LORENTE
(Mechanical Engineering)



Björn
OTTERSTEN
(Electrical Engineering)



Tomaž
PROSEN
(Physics)



Nicola
SPALDIN
(Materials Theory)



András
STIPSICZ
(Mathematics)

ERC Executive Agency

- Executes annual work programme as established by the Scientific Council
- Implements calls for proposals and provides information and support to applicants
- **Organises peer review evaluation**
- Establishes and manages grant agreements
- **Administers scientific and financial aspects and follow-up of grant agreements**
- Carries out communications activities and ensures information dissemination to ERC stakeholders



ERC funding schemes 2026



Starting Grants

Starters (2-7 years after PhD)
up to € 1.5 Mio for 5 years
TC: 50% and 50% in EU



Advanced Grants

Already established research leaders with a
recognized track record of research achievements
lump sum up to € 2.5 Mio for 5 years
TC: 30% and 50% in EU

**New
instrument:**
(substantial
funding for up to
7 years)



Proof-of-Concept (ERC grant holders)

bridging gap between research - earliest stage of marketable innovation
lump sum €150,000 for 18 months



Consolidator Grants

Consolidators (7-12 years after PhD)
up to € 2 Mio for 5 years
TC: 40% and 50% in EU



Synergy Grants

2 – 4 Principal Investigators
up to € 10.0 Mio for 6 years
1 PI can be based outside EU/Associated Countries



Calendar of ERC-2026-calls

ERC calls	Call Opening	Submission Deadline
Starting Grants ERC-2026-StG	9 July 2025	25 September 2025
Consolidator Grants ERC-2026-CoG	25 September 2025	13 January 2026
Advanced Grants ERC-2026-AdG	28 May 2026	27 August 2026
Synergy Grants ERC-2026-SyG	10 July 2025	5 November 2025
Proof of Concept ERC-2026-PoC	13 November 2025	17 March 2026 (deadline 1) 17 September 2026 (deadline 2)

See WP2026

Evaluation criterion

Excellence

is the sole evaluation criterion

Excellence of the Research Project

- Ground breaking nature
- Scientific impact
- Scientific Approach

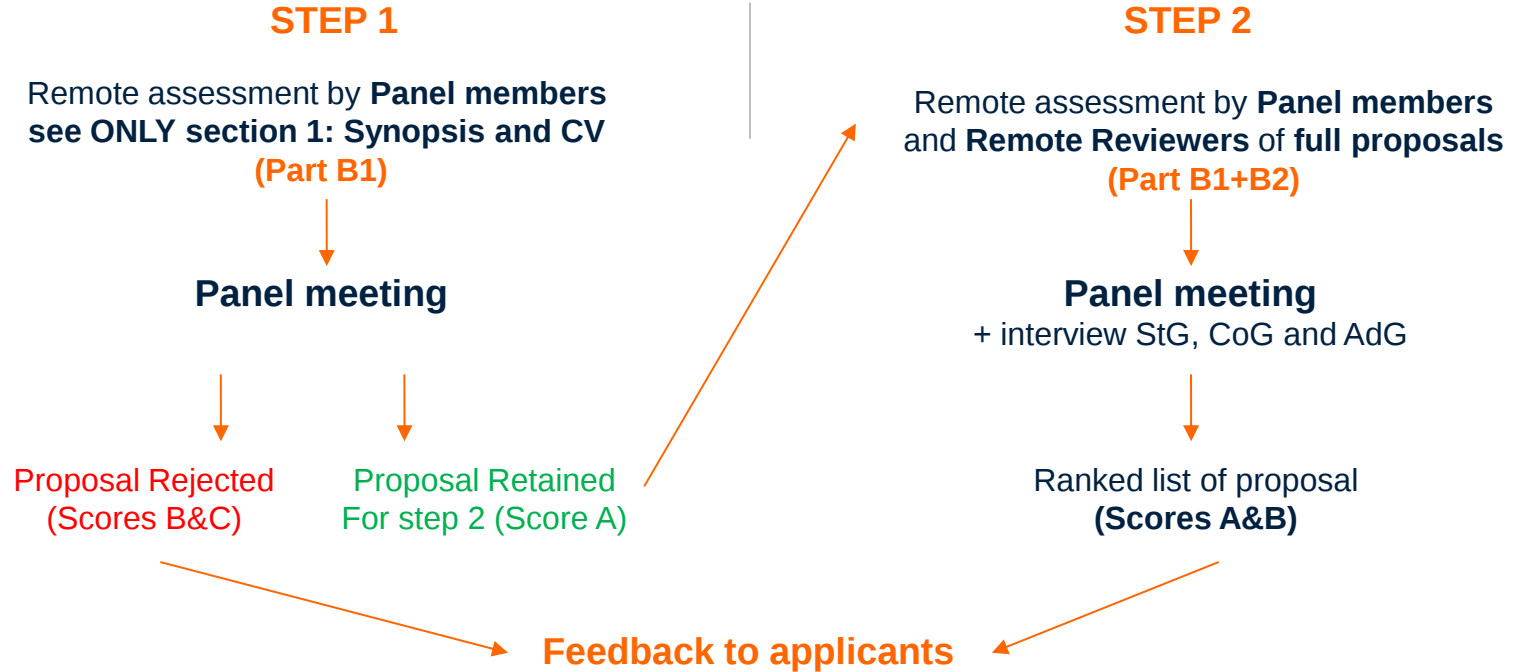
Excellence of the Principal Investigator

- Creativity
- Commitment
- CV is evaluated in a context

Since 2024 calls – panels will primarily evaluate the excellence of the project, while assessing the above aspects of the PI

Evaluation: process

For individuals calls: a single submission but a two-step evaluation



New feature from 2024 on: 44 proposal interview limit

WP2023

Change in PhD eligibility reference date

New “PhD eligibility reference date” rule:

*The reference date towards the calculation of the eligibility period shall be the **certified date of the successful defence**.*

- Allows for the eligibility window to reflect the *real academic age* instead of the “administrative age” of the PI
- Puts an end to confusion about “award according to national rules” - brings clarity to applicants
- Most PhD certificates include the defence date
- If the PhD certificate does not show defence date, the candidate has to ask for written confirmation from the awarding institution



Key changes in WP-2024

- Research assessment: **primary focus on the project**, its ground-breaking nature, ambition, and feasibility.
- Applicant's excellence: up to the extent required to **successfully execute the proposed project**.
- Broad assessment of the applicant: simplified and **narrative CV**. (list 10 research outputs, with narrative descriptions; explain career breaks or unconventional career paths, etc.)
- Lump sum funding in Advanced Grants: payment of the lump sum based on the work carried out and reported, irrespective of the actual costs incurred, **research flexibility remains!**
- 'high-risk – high-impact' 'criterion' and novel methodology dev. is removed

Additional funding (+ new features as from WP2026)

- **up to 1M €:** Applicants already based in an EU Member State or country associated to HE

Additional funding can be requested to cover the following costs (examples):

(a) purchase of **major equipment** and/or

(b) access to **large facilities** and/or

(c) other **major experimental** and **field work costs**, **including personnel costs**

(WP2026 + AdG2025)

- **up to 2M €:** Applicants currently based outside EU or Associated Countries **(WP2026 + AdG2025)**

- ✓ to facilitate the **relocation** of their laboratory/team to the EU/country associated to the ERC part of the HE programme

Proposal Structure in WP2026



- **Administrative form**, including requested budget and resources
- **Part I – Overall idea, Objectives** and **Overall approach**/research strategy (5 pages) and **CV+Track Record** (up to 4 pages)
- **Part II - Scientific Proposal** (7 pages for StG/CoG/AdG, 10 pages for SyG): **implementation** and **methodology** (including feasibility, risk assessment and mitigating measures)
- **Host Institution support Letter**
- **For StG and CoG: PhD certificate** (+ additional document to support PhD defence date, if needed)

Annexes: Extension request documents in 1 pdf, including cover page (new form), any ethics

+ security issues

From WP2027

Widening of the eligibility period for StG and CoG



- **StG:** applicants will be eligible to apply **immediately after successfully defending their PhD**, and at **any time within the following 10-year period**.
- **CoG:** applicants will be eligible to apply between **5 and 15 years** after **defending their PhD**.
- All current policies for the extension of the eligibility periods will remain in force.
- Researchers will be awarded **no more than one StG and one CoG during their career**.

StG and CoG: Extension of the Eligibility windows

For documented situations occurring before the call deadline

- **Maternity leave:** +18 months for each child born before/after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Paternity/parental leave:** documented time taken for each child born before or after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Long-term illness** (>90 days for the PI or a close family member) or **national service:** documented amount of leave taken for each incident that occurred after the date of the successful defence of PhD degree;
- **Disability:** Extension corresponding to the reduced amount of working time (including leave taken) and/or the degree of disability as documented by the applicant
- **Clinical training:** documented amount of clinical training received **after** the reference date of the 1st eligible degree, **up to a maximum of 4 years**;
- **Major disaster and for seeking asylum;**
- **Victims of gender-based violence, or any other form of violence (as from WP2026)**



Some important notes

- The budget is distributed among the scientific panels as a function of demand → more PE applicants, more PE grantees
- The panel descriptors do not represent ERC scientific priorities
- The success rate is not linked to academic age
- **Publication record is not a sole decisive parameter** in PI evaluation (see also: DORA)
- **The Host Institution is not an evaluation criterion**
- **Mobility is not an evaluation criterion** – independence
- Supervision activities are not required

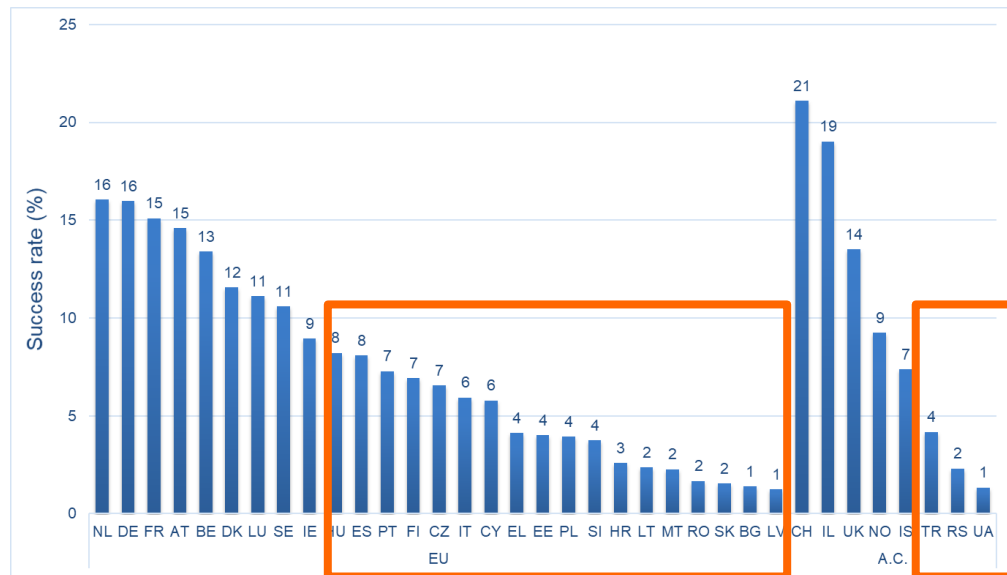
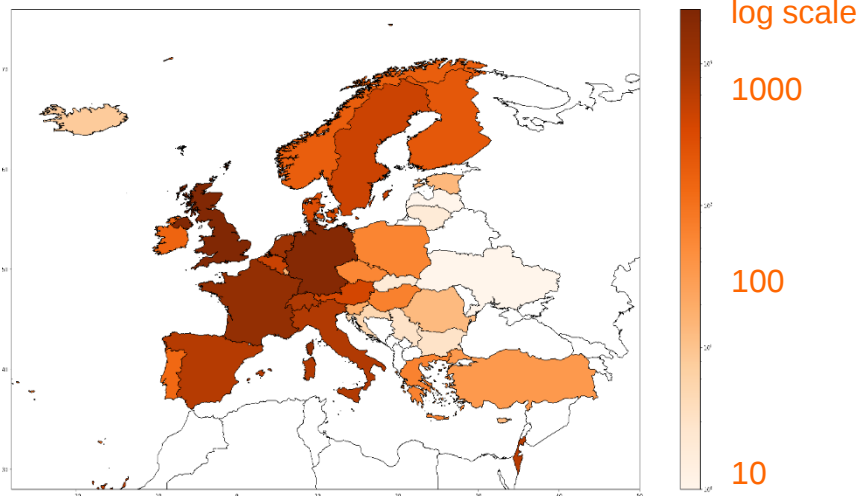


Situation of the Widening participation countries (WEP) 2007-2022

Not enough applications from/to WEP Host Institutes

The number of ERC main grants

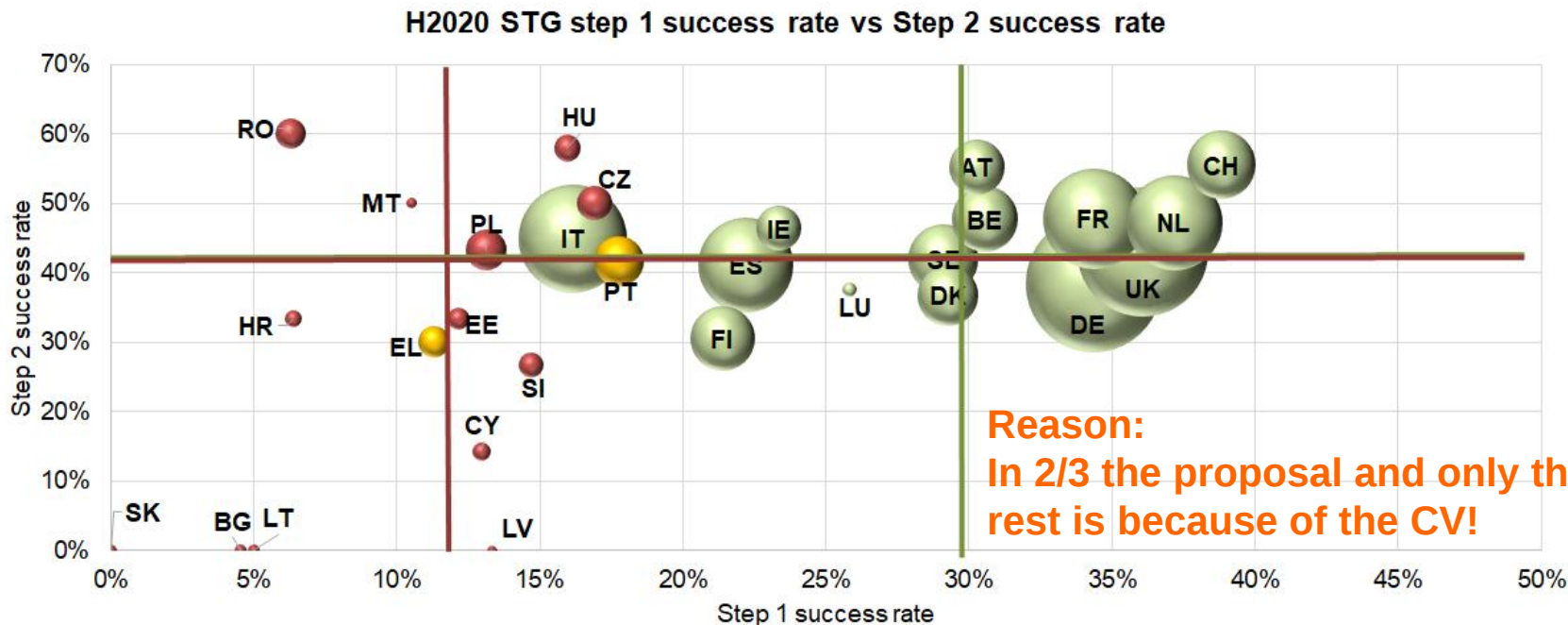
Success rates by country of Host Institution



H2020 Success rates for all Member States and CH - STG

Most of the WEP applications are lost in Step 1

	Step 1 SR	Step 2 SR
EU13	12.28%	42.86%
EU15	29.62%	42.94%



Typical reasons for rejection

Research Project

- Scope: too narrow $\leftrightarrow$ too broad/unfocussed
- Incremental research
- Work plan not detailed enough/unclear
- **Insufficient risk management – “I can do this” is not convincing.**

Principal Investigator

- Insufficient track-record
- Insufficient independence
- Insufficient experience in leading projects (AdG)



Specific opportunities for future WEP applicants

Working Group on Widening European Participation | ERC (europa.eu)

- Visiting Fellowship: visit an ERC lab and then write your ERC application (Romania, Flemish part of Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia)
- Success rate of VFP fellows is **higher than of WEP applicants**, in particular for STG, 13%
- Mentoring Initiative: personalized guidance on how to write an ERC grant (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Turkey)

Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area

Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence

Reforming and Enhancing the European R&I system

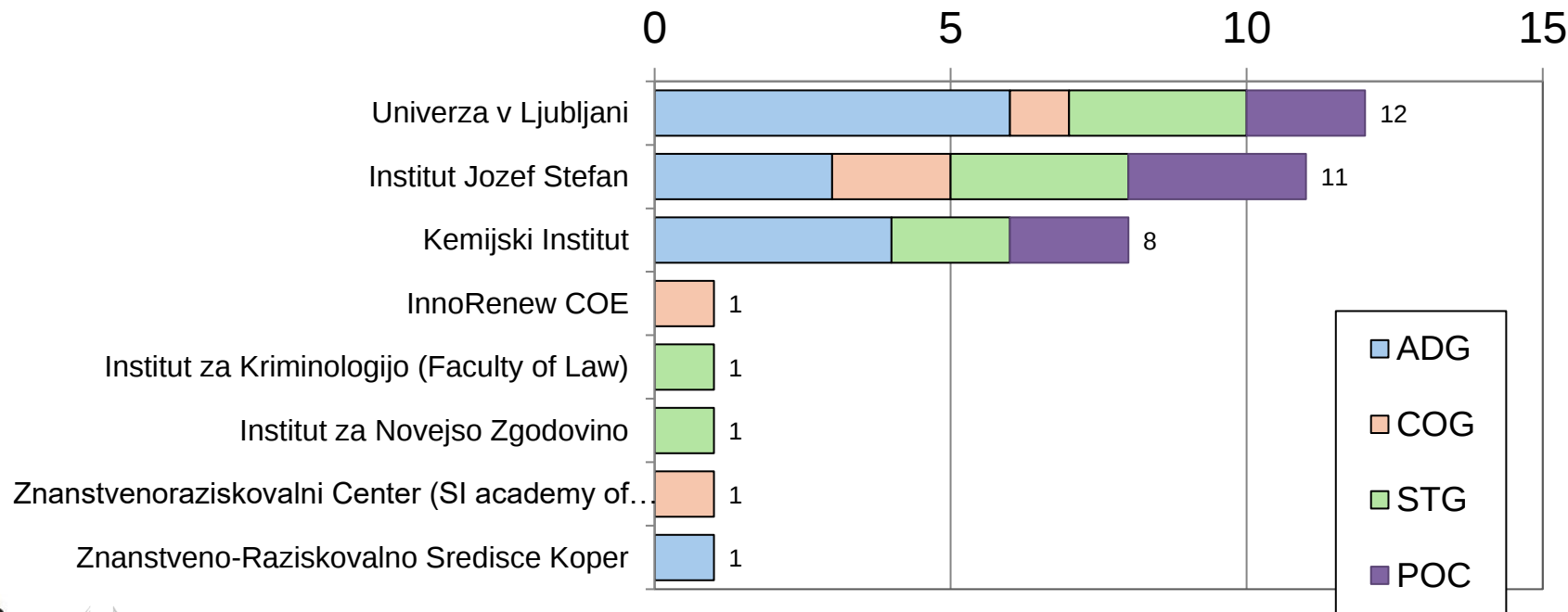


Further guidance

1. WP2026: [ERC Work Programme 2026 adopted](#)|ERC
2. Seminar on WP2026: [Webinar on ERC Work Programme 2026 - Part 1](#)
3. “Why these changes - 2024” white paper by M. Leptin: [Evaluation_of_research_proposals.pdf](#)
4. 2nd white paper: [Changes_to_ERC_evaluation_procedures_background_rationale.pdf](#)
5. Consult call documents on the [ERC website](#) (Work Programme, Information for Applicants...)
6. Check the [ERC classes](#) in Youtube
7. Look at funded projects in your field ([ERC dashboard](#))
8. Register early on the [F&T Portal](#) in the submission system
9. Contact the ERCEA and ask all your questions well ahead of the submission deadline
NNN (NNN = STG, COG, ADG, SYG) mailbox: ERC-NNN-APPLICANTS@ec.europa.eu

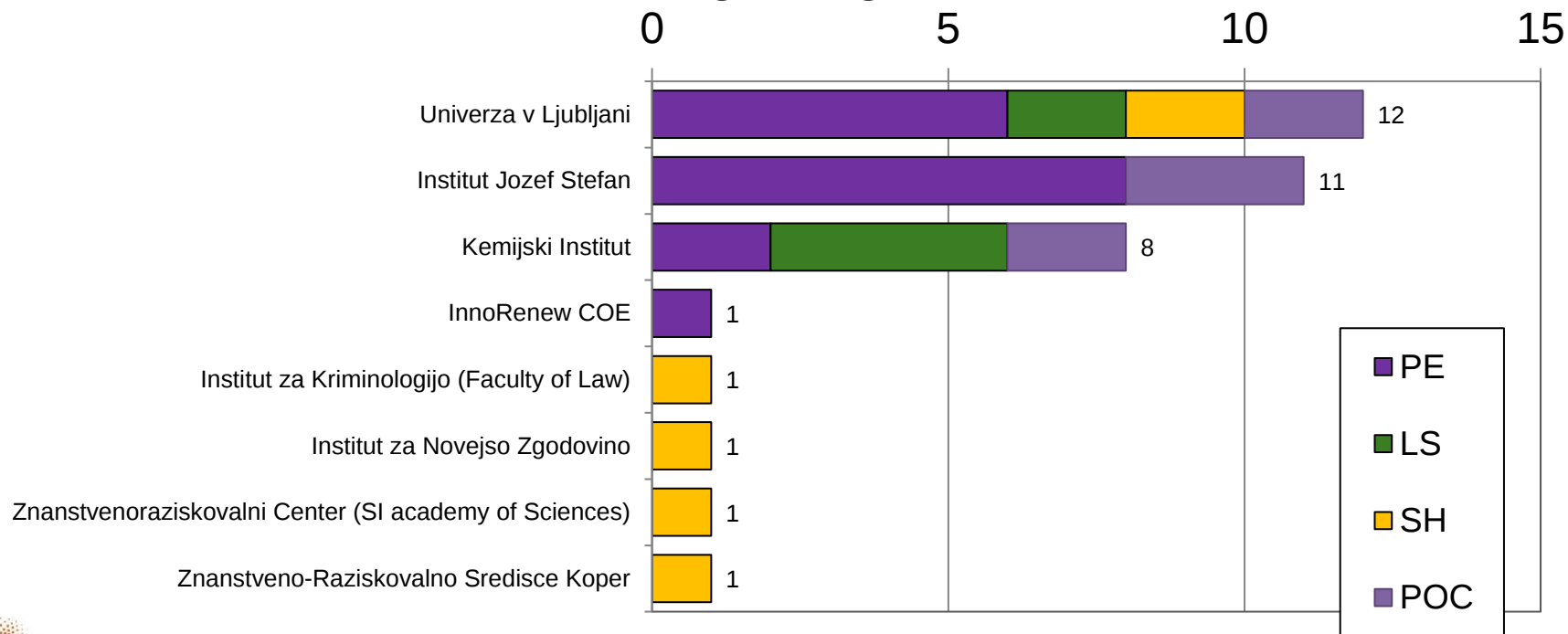
H2020 and HE signed grants HI in Slovenia by call type

H2020 and HE Signed grants in Slovenia



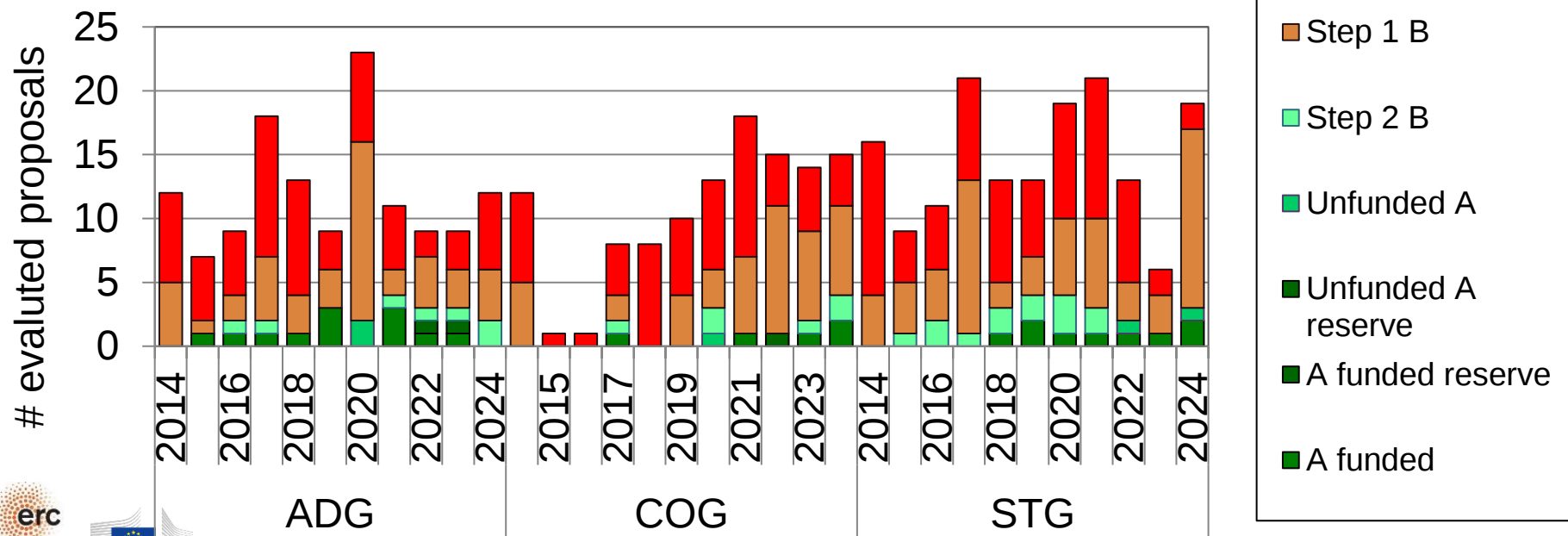
H2020 and HE signed grants HI Slovenia by scientific domain

H2020 and HE Signed grants in Slovenia



2014-2024 results of evaluated proposals HI Slovenia

2014-2024 results of evaluated proposals by call Slovenia



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